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IATE is a professional organization for teachers of English/language arts. IATE publishes the *Illinois English Bulletin* and the *IATE Newsletter* and hosts an annual fall conference. IATE is organized by districts throughout the state, each district having a district leader and providing local activities to members throughout the year.

IATE also maintains standing committees that address a number of professional interests and works with other professional organizations to further the interests of teachers. Composed of over 1,000 teachers throughout the state, IATE provides a working network for the exchange of teaching tips, current research, and professional development as well as enduring friendships.

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Editor: Janice Neuleib
Publications Unit Director: Steve Halle
Production Director and Proofreader: Holms Troelstrup
Intern: Brigid Ackerman
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JANICE NEULEIB

This spring issue of the *Bulletin* offers a delicious variety of intellectual delights with texts ranging from classroom experiences to methodology, reviews, and applied research. The issue begins with experienced middle school instructor Joy L. Kirr offering her improved approach to responding to student work. In the same mode, Jenna Grites and Rebecca Holdsworth explain approaches to enlivening their high school classrooms with student involvement in writing improvement and the development of voice in that writing. John Klein-Collins and Deborah Riggert-Kieffer dig deep into detailed instruction techniques and spelling improvement based on language history. Kristen Weisenberger demonstrates applied writing-research techniques in her study of her own beloved sport, rugby, and its effects on the young

brain. She models what our instructors have described in their essays. Finally and equally tantalizingly, Tiffany A. Flowers and Michael Soares lead us to the world of creativity, Flowers with a review of a new children's picture book on dancer Savion Glover and Soares with a deep study of materials and methodology for teaching dystopian literature. I hope you, dear readers, enjoy these works as much as I have.

As always, I thank all these authors for their contributions and their amazing work. I am always delighted at the committed community of IATE members who contribute their work to the *Bulletin*. This collection is particularly inspiring. As always, I thank our Publications Unit's faithful directors who diligently produce the *Bulletin*: Steve Halle and Holms Troelstrup. With each issue, IATE owes the Unit a deep debt of gratitude.

A GLIMPSE INTO MY JOURNEY OF GIVING MORE FEEDBACK AND FEWER GRADES

JOY L. KIRR

My journey towards emphasizing that learning is more important than grades started when I tossed out multiple-choice tests, quarterly book projects, and worksheets. I currently call this journey "Feedback and Revisions" (FaR). Over the past five years, our English Language Arts department (ELA) has gotten closer to standards-based grading. As a result, grades do not make it into my grade book unless they are based on an ELA standard. Our four-point scale is labeled as such: 1 = Beginning, 2 = Developing, 3 = Proficient, and 4 = Mastery. Since accepting revisions, I've seen students work harder toward reaching Proficient and Mastery levels. More feedback and guidance toward revisions have given students more guidance than a letter grade. Our district has not decided to go this route yet on our progress reports, and we are still confined to one letter grade for a multitude of skills in

reading (literature and informational text), writing, language usage, and speaking and listening. We've still put these levels in the grade book, but we haven't gotten our entire school to agree on percentages yet. In seventh grade, we have agreed to Mastery = 100 percent, Proficient = 90 percent, Developing = 75 percent, and Beginning = 65 percent. The past few years, I've had more discussions with students about focusing on the learning instead of the grades. I've put fewer and fewer grades into the grade book, which has resulted in more students submitting revisions in order to reach Mastery. This year, with blessings from my administration and parents, I've taken it one step further. Students in one of my three ELA classes are grading themselves, using FaR to improve their work.

The catalyst for real change on this journey was a presentation by Rick Wormeli regarding grading practices. (He used many ideas from his 2006 book *Fair Isn't Always Equal*.) The question was raised: What belongs in a grade? Student achievement belongs not effort, not habits, and not "extra credit." Make the work valuable, and allow redos. I had been doing this, but it was not enough. The same school year, I read *Role Reversal: Achieving Uncommonly Excellent Results in the Student-Centered Classroom* by Mark Barnes (2013). I was convinced: if I let my students grade themselves, not only would they work harder at learning the material, but they would also recognize how arbitrary grades can be. At an Edcamp, I facilitated a session to generate ideas on how students could grade themselves, where I met a secondary English teacher who had already made it work. Next, I read *Assessment 3.0: Throw Out Your Grade Book and Inspire Learning* by Mark Barnes (2015), which gives information on *how* this is possible, and I went to my principal with the idea. Many students strive more for learning than for grades. I know many students who can "play the school game," yet not learn

content. It's important for our society to have children who strive to learn—throughout their lives. Quarterly grades (and rewards for such grades) often hinder this because they are so arbitrary.

The use of Google Classroom was crucial to our first phase of the FaR process. Students write their pieces in a Google document, and I am able to give feedback instantly—either in an over-the-shoulder conference or at another time via typed comments. Organization is no issue, as all of our pieces are in one spot. Students can share these pieces with other students for instant peer feedback as well. We use two guidelines: (1) highlight one thing the person did well, while commenting on how it is done well; and (2) give a "quality booster" by providing a suggestion to let the person know what he or she could do better. These pieces of feedback are always connected to the documents, so students can view them at any time and make revisions should they choose. After our first quarter, students began transferring their work onto a blog. They chose among three platforms: Weebly, Blogger, or Google Sites. Plastic binders were also an option, but they were not utilized. One reason we transferred our work to a public Internet site was to begin building digital portfolios. This allowed students to showcase their best work. Using online tools allows them to continue this process throughout their lifetime, adapting the site and evidence as they grow. Parents, teachers, and even future employers can see this work and learn more about these children's skills, versus looking solely at grades.

In order to stay current with what other educators have found successful regarding students grading themselves, along with finding ways to provide feedback that won't have me working extra hours each night, I am connected with teachers around the world who are sharing their experiences

(mainly Twitter and Facebook). I have read and collected resources (research, blog posts, parent and college reactions, etc.) on the "Feedback In Lieu of Grades" LiveBinder. I scour Twitter hashtags in order to find this current, relevant information that is helpful and now accessible to all. I send my own creations to these educators and ask for their feedback. As a result, my students have many educators' input for our class discussions and final products. One side result is that other teachers are becoming more aware of what we're trying and are having discussions as to why it is important and how it can be done. Another result is that my current students feel empowered, as they are on the front lines of this type of learning. They know we are receiving help from people around the world. They know I am reflecting on the process on my blog (http://geniushour.blogspot.com/search/label/Grading). They, too, can submit questions to this community of teachers. They are more focused on creating, collecting, and sharing work that proves what they are learning. Each student uses a reflective process to assess him- or herself, and this makes the process very individualized. They are not comparing themselves to others, and they have many opportunities to demonstrate what they are learning. This choice is a difficult but valuable part of our class, and engages every learner involved. Together, students and I came up with this chart—to help them provide proof for their grade:

	Reading	Writing	Language Usage	Speaking & Listening
Polished Piece #1	(Journal from class reading time)			
Polished Piece #2				
Polished Piece #3				

Figure 1: Teacher-Student Grade Chart

Parent feedback is also integral to this project. The demographics of this class is as such: nineteen students, all born in the United States, of varying ethnicities. One child has 504 paperwork to provide him extra time with assignments and assessments. Three sets of parents speak another language besides English at home with their children, and all have their own background knowledge and opinions about grades. Keeping them in the loop is paramount to the success of this project. In fact, their questions have led me to become even more transparent about our conversations and what we're learning about ourselves and grading. Most recently, I created a flow chart to let parents and students know that not everything needs to be revised—it is the students' choice. A parent had asked for clarification. She wanted to know what assignments her son needed to revise. Once we discussed this chart (Figure 2) in class, students were able to see that

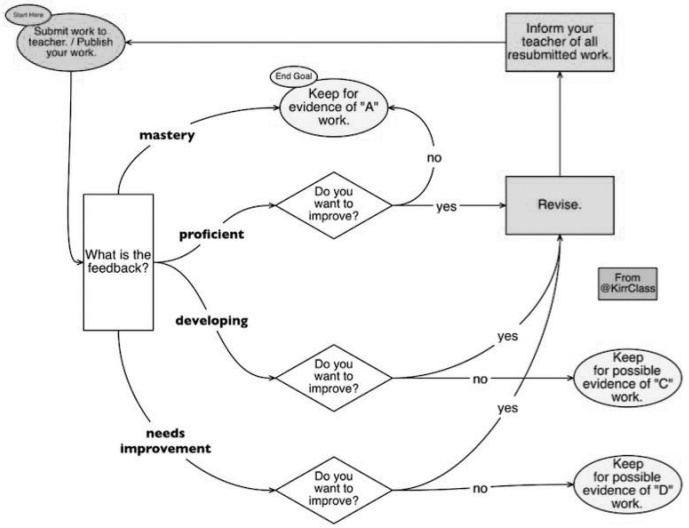

Figure 2: Revision Chart for Parents

they could not simply tell me in their reflection that they had revised certain pieces instead they had to revise, resubmit, and receive more feedback if they wanted to prove they have earned an "A" in writing or language usage.

I've seen a myriad of benefits this year. My class that is grading themselves asks me more questions than my other classes—about grades, evidence they can use, options for assignments other than what I've given in class, and independent practice so they can improve. They've asked for more feedback on their written and verbal work—from me and from each other. More of them are willing to share their writing with the class, and when they do, their classmates provide more valuable and detailed feedback to each other than my other classes. They use the same language I use when giving quality boosters to each other. They know that they are readers, writers, and orators. They work toward helping each other improve.

In order for feedback and revisions to work over grades, you'll need to believe that what you're doing is right, talk to your administration about the reasons, let the parents know right away and then give them updates every two weeks or so, and take time for valuable discussions about grades with your students. You also need a system for keeping track of work students can use as proof of their grade, and a system for them to use to reflect on the term and let you know what they think they should be earning. Check out the "Feedback In Lieu of Grades" LiveBinder online to see various teachers' journeys so you can embark on your own.

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Joy L. Kirr currently teaches seventh grade English Language Arts at Thomas Middle School in Arlington Heights, IL. She began as a special education teacher working with students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, then became a reading specialist and National Board Certified. She is passionate about students owning their own learning.

STUCK BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: MOTIVATING STUDENT WRITERS IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

JENNA GRITES

Every English teacher has been there: the groan, the shoulders dropping, and the eyeballs rolling so violently that we genuinely worry they might pop out and roll across the floor. You'd think we just announced a Simpson-esque assignment of repetition and degradation rather than a simple research assignment. "It's not even a full paper!" we cry, breaking the cardinal rule and apologizing for the work, only to find that pleading falls on selectively deaf ears.

The lack of motivation in student writers is real. It seems that teachers in low-income areas face even more adversity when trying to motivate students to write. I am in my third year of teaching, and my first year in a low-income district about ten minutes from my hometown. I spent two years teaching in a secular private school where students were all from

affluent families. We had our issues with motivation, certainly, but all of my students at least attempted most of the work. I never had a kid who refused to turn in anything, but now I do.

This makes sense, though. As Tom Romano discusses in his book *Fearless Writing: Multigenre to Motivate and Inspire*, motivation to write is heavily affected by three things: family environment, social pressure, and teacher expectation. Students living at or below the poverty line don't always have parents who are both willing and able to encourage their kids to pursue education. This leads to large groups of students becoming complacent, accepting less than they are capable of performing. They let failure roll off of their shoulders to save face with their families and social groups. When a student consistently acts like she doesn't care or just doesn't do the work, it can be easy for a teacher to lower the expectations or even accept failure on the student's end. It's a hard balance for the teacher. We want to urge them to succeed, and we want to show them all what they are capable of doing. We want to show them how delicious the water can be on our side of the pond, but the old adage holds true: you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.

Students from affluent and privileged backgrounds can certainly struggle with motivation, depression, and other mental/emotional road blocks. This is clear. But students who start out with a struggle outside of school, especially when they lack confidence and encouragement, seem to be an extra ten steps behind. It might sound cliché, but coming from a "broken home," perhaps touched by poverty, abuse, or addiction, has a drastic effect on a student's ability to focus in the classroom. This is the case with many of the students I work with now. Combine this with past failures in writing and an unstable foundation for the skill, and most students resign to give up before even starting. Researchers across the

world have found that the teen years are vital for the formation of identity in regards to competencies and values; at this point, they are realizing where their strengths lie, building their values around those strengths, and grounding their self-esteem within their values (Matsushima and Ozaki). This means assignments that bring out their perceived weaknesses also lower their self-esteem, thus diminishing any trace of intrinsic motivation. I've met some astounding individuals in my classroom this year. These teenagers are smart, strong, and they have survived some heartbreaking experiences that no human should have to endure. They have stories. Opinions. Ability. They will tell me anything; oftentimes they tell me *far* more than I need to know. But whenever I offer them the opportunity to put these stories down on paper, I'm faced with a collective apathy—a cancerous, contagious apathy.

The Process

I decided to try to challenge that apathy. My juniors have to write a research paper second semester, and I learned about mid-September that most of them have never done any research before. After studying their reactions to various assignments, new units, and class discussions, I determined that the way I introduce the assignment was vital to creating an environment of motivated learners. I needed to ease them into the project and scaffold it in a way that circumvented their knee-jerk reaction to writing. That said, I also had to be sure to continue to hold my students to a high standard, and to find ways to pique their interest in the writing. To get the process started, I had to get them to put words on paper.

Step One: Free Write. We had just read *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, so I asked them to write a one-page (minimum) rant on anything that frustrates them. The

only rules: no cuss words, no names, and no incriminating evidence. I urged them to write (or type) without thinking. Don't worry about grammar! Don't worry about complete sentences! Don't worry about transitions! Just let it out!

I have never seen a group of students so excited to write. We spent some time brainstorming possible topics together, which raised the energy in the room to a whole new level. Students wrote about driving issues like turning signals, slow drivers, texting while driving, and more. Some wrote about school lunches, or rules they felt were unfair. About half of my juniors wrote about hard-hitting issues with addiction, alcohol abuse, parents who don't care for their kids, struggles with depression, and more. They took the rant as a chance to organize their feelings on issues that are very real for them, either from first-hand experience or from watching family and friends. This practice in free writing did not feel like a writing assignment.

Step Two: Reflect. I believe that offering students the chance to reflect is vital for their performance and for mine. I asked them how the assignment made them feel, what they thought while writing, and what they could do with their finished product. Responses varied, but many of my students reported that their confidence was higher for this assignment than other writing assignments, and that they want to do more. I took this and ran with it!

Step Three: Revise. Since they wanted to write more about what bothers them, I suggested we transition from emotional writing to academic writing, but try to keep as much passion as possible. We did this by writing letters to lawmakers. They took the issues they ranted about, like bad

drivers and depression, and focused them on problems in our community, like enforcement of driving laws and resources for mental health care.

It's commonly accepted that students are more motivated when they feel they are writing for a real purpose, and when they feel their audience is more authentic than the sometimes forced relationship between student writer and teacher. Furthermore, researchers Darrington and Dousay explain that "if students feel like they are being challenged by a writing task, yet they are still able to achieve that task, they will find the task more motivating" (30). My students knew that they could write about things that bother them—they had already done it, and they loved it. The challenge came in changing their language to fit an academic tone, which raised the standard and expectation in my classroom.

Step Four: Develop. The letter was a hefty challenge for many. Some of my students struggle even to compose a complete sentence, and the foreign aspect of research was daunting to say the least. We started small, working together in class and conferencing. Students worked on one piece at a time. They had to determine what the problem was, what effects it had, who it affected, and how it could be fixed. This is where the research came into play. My students learned about the true and verifiable impact of their chosen issues, citing data from valid sources in their letters. I finally had my students researching *without* groaning; they cared, they were invested, and they wanted their letters to be convincing. They also researched to learn who would be the best recipient of this letter. Is this a national issue for the president? A statewide issue for the governor? A district-wide issue for the superintendent? It was all up to them.

Results

The level of commitment to these assignments increased at an astounding rate. I still had students who didn't do the work, and I probably always will—after all, I cannot make them drink. But many of my students who were barely scraping by in the first quarter were flying through the second, itching to turn in their assignments and get feedback to improve their final draft. Of course, we followed every step with a reflection. I asked what I needed to know: How did this project make you feel? How do you feel about research for writing? How can I help you with research and writing? My classroom had a newly invigorated atmosphere of enthusiasm. Students kept asking me when they could pick something else to research. In fact, so many students spouted out research topic ideas that we hung a poster to write them all down. Three weeks after hanging, the poster had about a hundred ideas and no vandalism. The students take it seriously.

Probably the biggest sign that I had been successful with this assignment came in a small comment from one student in particular. This student has run a rocky road for most of his life and recently lost his father to drug abuse. In the beginning of the year, this student told me that he likes me, but he hates English, and that probably won't change. After turning in his letter, he asked me if we could do another research assignment on a topic of his choice. "My family and I are really into NASCAR," he explained, "and I want to research so I can explain exactly why my favorite driver is the best of the best."

It seems that this assignment helped challenge the collective apathy to write in my classroom, but I don't think it was just the act of writing rants and letters. The foundations of this system could be applied to any assignment. Moving forward, I'm working to take the foundations of this assignment and make them transferrable to all writing.

The first vital foundation is the introduction of the initial assignment. I introduced the project in a way that was engaging and felt safe for my students. I started gently: "We're going to continue doing what we're doing: writing about things that bother us. But now, we've grown out of the rant stage—let's shift into our professional voices." By altering the rhetoric of my project delivery to reflect a gentle tone, I helped my students feel comfortable with a challenging assignment. My delivery pointed out their past successes and made the bridge to the next part seem easier to cross. This touched on the competency aspect of identity formation: I mentioned a past assignment with which every student was competent. Reflecting on their own competency helped them see that this was an achievable challenge. I also provided a safety net: "I'll mail your letter for you if it meets the assignment standards." They could feel the thrill of possibility with an achievable challenge, but they wouldn't have to share their work if they failed. It was safe to try.

I also applied the tenets of Interest-Driven Learning (IDL). Stemming from sociocultural learning theory, IDL has been shown to reach marginalized students by allowing them to meet the instructor halfway, using what they already know and understand to help engage with material they do not yet understand. These people in our classrooms are brilliant, but we won't know their potential if we don't give them the chance to show us. Accessing student interests helps the sometimes formidable task of teaching information with which students are greatly uncomfortable.

IDL works to apply that motivation to academic work that might be harder to grasp. The rant appealed to their interests. The letter expanded on that. Simply put, this was writing they all felt they could do, and they *loved* it. Students are inherently more motivated to write about something if

they are confident that they understand it. I showed them that I value their thoughts on the topics they choose, and that I think their life experiences are important. This tenant of IDL builds trust between student and teacher. A student who trusts his teacher is much more likely to take risks in that classroom.

The last vital foundation for this assignment was my attempt to identify the obstacles between our students and their grades. Sometimes we have students who truly do not care about education. Oftentimes, students who act this way are really just distracted by the hardships they're facing in other aspects of life. If a student didn't get to eat or sleep in a real bed the night before, of course focusing on research isn't easy. We can't fix all of their problems, and we can't always help all of them; however, we can make sure that our eyes, ears, and hearts are open to their sometimes disturbing realities. Trying to help starts with identifying the problem.

I believe that these foundations can be applied in any classroom with any assignment, but especially with writing. Writing opens gateways to parts of the soul we never knew we were missing, but only when we are brave enough to attempt. Creating an atmosphere of encouragement and safety is vital to teaching student writers that they can share their stories. Allowing them to access their stories, and their interests, is what will ultimately motivate them to push through the harder challenges. And finally, being realistic about what our students face outside of the classroom allows us to plan for and to pursue what they can do inside of our classroom. We have to push them. That's why we are here. We provide the catalyst for their growth. We have made a commitment to accept and embrace who they are as people, not just students. Realizing that commitment is the first step.

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Jenna Grites is an English teacher at Westville High School. She teaches American lit/comp, college prep junior English, dystopian lit, debate, historical fiction, and creative writing. Her previous experience includes both public and private schools. She is currently working towards her master's in English studies through Illinois State University.

TEACHING INTRODUCTIONS: A JOURNEY IN TRUSTING MY STUDENTS TO FIND THEIR VOICES

REBECCA HOLDSWORTH

Teaching writing to my students my first year was a discouraging process. Too many of my junior-level students still believed that writing an essay involved three body paragraphs between three and five sentences long. I had students handing in writing without introductions and conclusions and without developing their claims. Subsequently, teaching writing to my students became a journey of testing a theory that if every expectation for paragraphing was explicit, my students would become better writers. I wrote electronic outlines and told my students to write their papers on the provided outline, deleting the Roman numerals and other extra structural markers as they wrote. The provided outline communicated the content of introductions I wanted my students to write: a leading hook, a transition to the thesis, and finally a thesis

statement. I thought that my outlines would make the process very clear. While I made the structure of the paper apparent, their writing began to feel robotic, and they still had no idea how to craft a lead paragraph well.

My intentions were to support my struggling writers with a foundation for their writing; however, the outcome became decreased ownership. Their introductions lacked power of voice. While my outlines helped with development, they did not help students take ownership of their individual arguments; the writing became more about structure and what I wanted instead of their own ideas. I encountered many students who asked if they could "just write" without regard to an outline, but I was too worried with what they would produce, so I always said no. I ended up with intros, body paragraphs, and conclusions, but at the expense of their individual voices.

One assignment indicated it was time for a change of direction. In October of 2014, I assigned a literary analysis essay asking what the most important moment was in *The Crucible*. I proceeded to give them an outline that *very specifically* stated what had to be in the paper—again, delete the Roman numerals as they fill out the outline. All of the essays sounded the same, spitting back information we talked about in class…except for one student's. Kemen was gone the day that I passed out the prompt. He generally did not find out what he missed during his absences, so he had written the essay on a whim. His essay was engaging—especially the skillful ways he chose his words to distinctly express his ideas. His ability to write better without my instruction illuminated how my teaching had squelched the ideas and voices of my other students. Peter Elbow uses a metaphor of singing to explain the idea that one size of writing does not fit all: "Most of us try to sing the note we like best or the note we've been

told to sing, but the sound is usually muffled or inaudible because it's not our note. We are never heard" (282). With all but Kemen, my voice overpowered: I sang louder than I let my students sing, and honestly, it was kind of ugly.

My opportunity came to let go much of my control over my students' writing during my sophomores' persuasive writing unit. I decided I wanted to find a way *to coach* them in writing leading paragraphs instead of my general method of dictating outlines. To facilitate more engaged writing, I designed a teacher research study focused on strategies for drafting lead paragraphs. Because I believe that lead paragraphs provide a solid starting point for essays, I sought to design instruction that might support students' creative elaboration of content during this early stage of drafting. My main research question was this: How will strategies for creating lead paragraphs help sophomore-level writers to elaborate content that engages their audience? When students create elaborate introductory paragraphs, the content to follow may emerge strongly as well. In order to best answer my main research question, I developed the following sub-questions as well: What is the impact of teaching that identifies ***key features*** of lead paragraphs? What is the impact of modeling these strategies through ***teacher think-alouds?***

The Literature Review

To begin my review of the literature, I searched through online databases for English language arts publications that provided strategies for teaching essay introductions. My keywords "writing introductions" and "introductions" did not yield many results; however, I found Adriana L. Medina's article, "Where the Beginning Ends: Studying Leads in Literature in Order to Write Attention-Getting Introductions," which affirmed my idea of using literary texts as a

starting point. Medina's problem was similar to my own, "My students needed to be explicitly taught how to write an introduction that would entice the reader to continue reading" (190). Medina understood how cumbersome the grading process can be for teachers when we read one poorly written introduction after another.

Medina wanted her students to discover how to hook an audience, so she had all of her students read their current lead paragraphs without anyone commenting; once everyone had finished, she asked the class which paragraph intrigued them the most (191). This springboarded into a discussion of what made certain paragraphs powerful. Then the students analyzed leading paragraphs from age-appropriate pieces of literature. After they had examined their own and the literary exemplars, the student-writers used three different approaches: a description, startling statement, or interesting fact to craft their leading paragraph, and they collaboratively shared these pieces with a partner, who helped them decide which lead the student writer should use (193). Allowing students to become one another's audience and rhetorical evaluators helped students transfer the skill of writing introductions more easily than just telling them what makes an introduction good or bad.

I also reviewed Harry R. Noden's book, *Image Grammar*, which has a section on writing introductory leads. He likens teaching grammar to teaching an artist different brushstrokes; Noden studied "the writer as an artist, an artist using grammatical structures to paint powerful images and engaging melodies" (xv). The traditional kill and drill approach was not working for his students (xiv). Noden decided to implement an approach where writing and grammar were incorporated simultaneously. He included a chapter on literary leads which includes examples and processes for common

attention getters, including explicit ways to write an effective question (my students' favorite, but most abused, attention getter; here's an example of a junior's attention getter last semester: "Have you ever read *The Crucible*?").

I had a solid beginning point of what I wanted to teach, next was how; I turned to Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey's book, *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching*, to develop a mode of instruction to coach my students via the gradual release model. When I initially began my research, the problem of students transferring skills from one writing assignment to the next was not on my radar, but as I read peer-reviewed articles on metacognition, this issue of transfer and making strategies portable for students, appeared consistently. I want my instruction to be effective across contexts of writing instead of explaining a grade-level strategy four or five times. Fisher and Frey suggested several components in the gradual release of responsibility model in order to ensure student transfer in learning (3).

1. Teachers begin the gradual release with ***focused instruction*** that demonstrates the expert practices of the teacher: a think-aloud.
2. Teachers practice with their students using ***guided instruction.***
3. Students practice together doing ***collaborative work.***
4. The student completes works ***solo*** once a level of confidence has been built.

One of the essential steps to teaching students in order that they may transfer the skill is to use the think-aloud. Think-alouds are designed to transfer the expert knowledge of a teacher to his or her students, and teachers model metacognition to make visible the practice behind a concept.

Contrary to my initial belief, a think-aloud is not showing a finished product and explaining the whole. I discovered that teachers should go through the suggested process and not cut corners. *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching* suggests the following steps to craft an effective think aloud (26–27):

1. Name the strategy, skill, or task.
2. State the purpose of the strategy, skill, or task.
3. Explain when the strategy or skill is used.
4. Use analogies to link prior knowledge to new learning.
5. Demonstrate how the skill, strategy, or task is completed.
6. Alert learners about errors to avoid.
7. Assess the use of the skill.

Teacher demonstration necessitates that the teacher be aware of the cognitive strategy to be taught in order that she model it well for students. This kind of visible thinking rarely takes form for me on the spot. Fisher and Frey taught me I need to think through my own thinking for the sake of demonstration; this takes time.

Michelle Kelley and Nicki Clausen-Grace's article, "Ensuring Transfer of Strategies by Using a Metacognitive Teaching Framework" helped me better understand how I would design my *focused instruction* and think-aloud to ensure that my students would understand and be able to use the strategies I use. Kelley and Clausen-Grace suggest four steps in a think-aloud process: "Identify strategy components; explain and define components; notice and apply components in a variety of texts; clarify strategy's purpose to promote acquisition" (25). The sequence they have identified clarified the process of the think-aloud for me. First, the teacher needs to *identify different components of a strategy* being used (25). This

first step is focused on how writers use the strategy. I might have the words ethos and pathos on the whiteboard and have the students break down the component parts of both rhetorical devices, which transitions well into the next step: *explain and define components* (26). In this step, the teacher, and the students can bring in examples to help define and explain the strategy being used. The third step, *notice and apply components in a variety of texts* (26), relies on the teacher being the expert. In this step, I would need to write different introductions and ask the students how I used both ethos and pathos in my attention getter. The final step, *clarify the purpose of the strategy* (26), is a reiteration of the importance of having audience awareness from the beginning of the written piece. This final step could include fine-tuning my written paragraph from student suggestions.

Many of the think-aloud texts focus on reading strategies, so I wanted to identify what types of cognitive operations support the strategy of writing lead paragraphs. Instead of looking solely at contents in introductory hooks, at this point I began considering what helps the audience engage with a piece of writing. Generally, I find the strongest introductions:

1. Connect to the writer emotionally
2. Anticipate audience needs and values via the introductory hook
3. Parallel the thesis and content of the paper in the introductory hook
4. Include internal transitions connecting the introductory hook to the thesis
5. Have a powerful thesis statement that compels the paper forward

Once I developed these, I turned to Peter Elbow's book, *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*, to

help me more clearly understand and refine these features personally, and to communicate these features of leading paragraphs to my students.

Peter Elbow's book, *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*, was instrumental in my thinking about the writing features I wanted to communicate to my students. Elbow argues that to create writing that impacts an audience, the power comes from voice. Elbow writes, "Power comes from the words somehow fitting the *writer* (not necessarily the reader)" (280).

Elbow uses the terms writing *without voice* and writing *with voice* to better define writing with *real voice*—what he believes to be the most powerful of the three, (299). Writing without voice is what a reader will find in many textbooks and manuals; it "is wooden or dead because it lacks sound, rhythm, energy, and individuality" (299).

Elbow believes that many people write without voice because of a "fear of badness" (302). In my experience, my students' writing often seems to be without voice. Reading Elbow has made me believe that sometimes in our effort to teach our students correctness, we make them afraid to take risks. Elbow says: "The more criticism people get on their writing, the more they tend to use fake voices. To use real voice feels like bringing yourself into contact with the reader" (309). I think many students may come to me this way. By sophomore year, my students have had ten years of a teacher critiquing their work. My outlines may have encouraged the same fear of correctness. Before now, I thought they were solely asking to be rebellious so they didn't have to do the work of outlining. I suspect that may not be the reasoning for all of them. In the last writing assignment I gave, I allowed them to "just write" or to use an outline I gave them or an outline they created. I was pleasantly surprised by how many

students did not ask for my help but still created fairly cohesive drafts. In the last assignment, more students' writing contained *voice* as Peter Elbow defined. He suggests voice is "writing into which someone has breathed. It has that fluency, rhythm, and liveliness that exist naturally in the speech of most people when they are enjoying a conversation" (299). As I was reading my students' papers, I could pick out different papers that sounded like my students would if they were reading their essays aloud. *Real voice*, on the other hand, is more about conviction in the words versus how the writing sounds. Elbow defines it:

> Writing with *real voice* has the power to make you pay attention and understand—the words go deep.…I want to say that it has *nothing* to do with the words on the page, only with the relationship of the words to the writer—and therefore that the same words could have real voice when written by one person and lack it when written by someone else. (299)

How often do we suspect as writing teachers that our students just write what they think we want them to say? With my outlines and following my thinking, my students sound like they are trying to be me instead of who they are. I'm not sure I can explicitly teach my students to believe in something, but I can model and encourage them to write with conviction. Elbow suggests this exercise to practice conviction:

> Simply write about some belief you have—or even some experience or perception—but to get readers to give you this limited, peculiar, draft-board-like feedback: where do they really believe that you believe it, and where do they have doubts? (312)

I love this idea as an early drafting technique, it invites exigency.

The second cognitive move in the writing of introductions I would like my students to master is building trust between the writer and the reader, in other words, anticipating audience needs. My students tend to jump into their ideas and thesis statement before getting the reader prepared. I find myself reminding them to address the audience before jumping into their ideas using the analogy of starting a car in cold weather before driving. Many of my students asked a research question followed by a thesis before they got me ready for it. Peter Elbow captures this sentiment beautifully:

> There are lots of experiences that I won't let writers persuade me to create for myself till I trust them. No one can make me feel terrified or make me cry unless somehow she wins my trust.…Yet, often the very experience I refuse to create for myself in the opening page or two is one that I am willing to have later on, after I have become involved—which is the same as saying after I have come to trust the writer. (319)

My preference as a reader is to have a hook that parallels the thesis before jumping right into the argument (i.e., the introductory hook should be related enough to slowly get me ready for the argument before the writer begins defending his or her ideas).

Discussion

Equipped with a cognitivist theory model of pedagogy inspired by Fisher and Frey, and Kelley and Clausen-Grace, I designed a three-week unit on the design of leading paragraphs.

Enter room 301 during third hour last year, and a boisterous group of sophomore-level students filled the desks. These students were in the speech semester of English II. From the beginning of the semester, students wrote two informative speeches and were ready to prepare a persuasive essay to adapt for speech form. From the beginning of the school year,

I witnessed an attitudinal change in these students. These students appeared engaged in the process needed to write and deliver speeches well, and I suspected the social aspect of delivering speeches in front of their peers had much to do with their newfound motivation. Because of the decreased pressure of preparing sophomores for standardized tests (I could extend the length of implementation if necessary), I decided to implement my new knowledge of the gradual release of responsibility model with my sophomore-level students.

To begin my research, I asked my students to fill out a survey on their confidence in writing introductions. What was intriguing about my results was the lack of confidence my students suggested in their writing of introductions. For example, students were mostly *unsure* if they could write an introductory hook. And students mostly disagreed that their writing was *worth* reading. The survey results suggested that I needed to find a way to help build confidence in my young writers. I determined that my students needed to clearly define and be able to identify different rhetorical components of writing lead paragraphs in order to appropriately assess their own work. With this data at hand, I began the process of teaching via the gradual release model.

I selected two different students in order to assess the impact of my teaching key features of lead paragraphs. Reese was not a student whom I expected to rise to the challenge of writing explicitly to persuade. He barely passed English II last semester, and was retaking English I last semester as well. He often appeared to lack the motivation to complete work beyond the bare requirements. But his participation and evaluation of his writing and others during this process of identifying key features of lead paragraphs demonstrated to me he was invested in improving his own writing. My other focus student, Ruby, was a hard worker and a motivated student regardless of

what we learned in class. She often took a poetic approach to writing, but I found myself struggling at times to understand what she was trying to communicate. These two students both appeared to be highly motivated to improve their writing.

Due to time constraints, the focus of my intervention was limited to these features of leading paragraphs: applying rhetoric, writing with real voice, writing lead hooks, and writing thesis statements to guide topic sentences. For each of these key features of lead paragraphs, I began by creating lessons to define them. My greatest surprise was the impact of explicitly teaching definitions of various writing terms.

I decided to focus first on revisiting rhetoric with my students. I only briefly identified the rhetorical appeals when we read *Julius Caesar* five months prior, and I was fairly certain they would not remember the concepts enough to identify when they were used or know how to use them. Before I reviewed the terms with them, I wanted to see what they remembered. I put them in groups of three, and they worked to define one appeal per group (ethos, pathos, and logos) using graphic organizers on posters like this one:

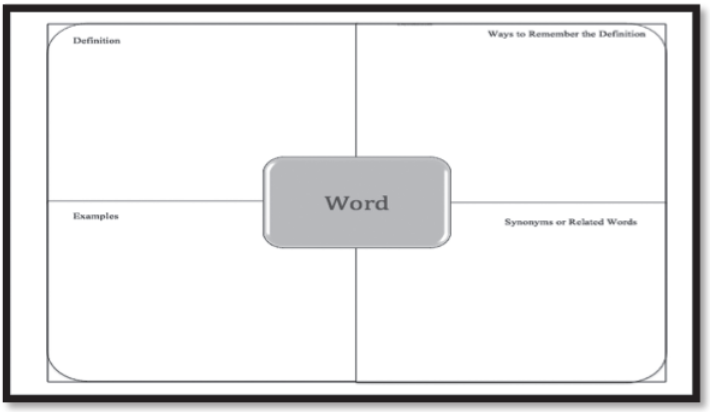

Figure 1: An example of a poster we would use to map the definition of a rhetorical appeal.

Once the groups finished, they taped them on the walls so other groups could add to them.

The following day, I gave the class an assignment where they had to demonstrate their understanding of rhetoric without *any* teacher help—this was the "we do together" phase of the gradual release model. I passed out a piece of paper face down with the following directions: "You have twenty minutes to define rhetoric and the three different appeals as a class. You must all work together to create a skit that in some way demonstrates an understanding of this appeal. If one person does not participate or follow directions, you will not receive any points for this assignment." I stood at the front of the room, pressed the stop watch, and said, "Your time has begun." They rose to the challenge and created three different skits that demonstrated understanding: for pathos, a skit about a woman losing her husband; for ethos, two candidates running for mayor and comparing their qualifications; and for logos, a drunk driver being administered a sobriety test. Once they completed this activity and shared their skits, we used the article, "Selfie Obsession Disrupts Life" by Hibah Chughtai (a journalism student at Creighton University) to test out if they could identify rhetoric in authentic writing. I had my students read and then highlight at least one example for each rhetorical appeal.

I was amazed at the depth of analysis my students were demonstrating; they were inferring the motivations behind the author's different word choices. I felt confident that my students were ready to be formally assessed. They first had to identify places in the text where specific rhetorical appeals were used, and then they needed to give evidence to explain how the identified quote showed that particular appeal. I was certain these students could have kept writing, but they ran out of space on their quizzes. Normally on a quiz that

requires textual evidence, I receive paraphrased and general answers, but my students used direct quotes and evaluated specific ways the author shaped arguments. My students finished with the highest scores on a quiz I had ever seen. Out of seventeen students, nine had the score of A and only three students did not pass. Any student who did not pass, worked with my coteacher the following day to talk through what they missed and retake the quiz.

In order to reinforce the skill and because my students are mostly visual learners, we watched two different videos. The first video we watch was a TED Talk called "The Happy Secret to Better Work" by Shawn Achor. I supplied students with a worksheet to help them identify the different ways the speaker was using rhetoric. Students continued to reference this video throughout discussions on writing lead paragraphs; the video had a clear impact. They appreciated how Achor used humor and narratives to explain his thesis. The second video (found on YouTube), "I'm Little…But I'm a Great Winner" featured a squirrel who was running from a hawk, and the intention of the video was to make the viewer feel sorry for the squirrel via the squirrel's viewpoint. I used this video to explain to my students that an effective writer needs to write in a way that allows the audience to see a situation from the writer's point of view. The video was a perfect segue into my think-aloud.

The final steps of teaching the key feature of rhetoric was to demonstrate my use of the skill via a think-aloud. I wrote a leading paragraph about my experience during my spring break of adults who asked how I was able to teach high school students. I explained to my sophomore-level students that these adults had a perspective of the students as having terrible, defiant attitudes. I told my students in order to persuade these adults, I needed to help them see what I saw.

Following my example, I assigned the students to write one page on anything they are passionate about, as inspired by Peter Elbow (312). I told them my writing piece was inspired by something that made me upset, and oftentimes if someone says something against something we enjoy, it could be an indicator that we are passionate about that particular thing. I wanted the students to have a piece of writing available to workshop when we began talking about real voice as present in Medina's article (191).

The next key feature of writing lead paragraphs I identified was writing with voice. In order to help my students define voice, I brought in my guitar and played the song "Wagon Wheel" by Old Crow Medicine Show. I instructed them before I began the song to listen for voice, not how good or bad I sounded singing necessarily, but how the words seem to fit me. After we sang the song together, we looked at the different definitions of voice, and I asked students if they thought my performance of "Wagon Wheel" had real voice, power. One student responded, "Absolutely! You were really getting into it and bringing your audience in!" My response, "Do you think it was my performance that had power or the words that I sang?" The student replied, "Definitely the performance." I asked the students, "So why do you think I didn't have real voice during this song?" Several students said, "It wasn't yours, it was a cover of a song." The students agreed some of the ideas in the song would not have fit my personality.

I reminded the students that in order for a song to have real power according to Peter Elbow's definition, the words need to fit the writer. I used that moment to do a think aloud of my own writing. I read through my example paragraph and pointed out places where I use real voice. After we finished looking at my example, I distributed their papers throughout the room. Once I had the students read between four and

five pieces, I asked them to share with the class some of their peers' writing that demonstrated the use of real voice. Reese seemed very eager to share his ideas; he said to me, "I can tell that some of this writing doesn't have voice." Wanting to redirect the negative observations to positive ones, I encouraged him to point out the examples that did contain real voice. The students were very observant and accurate as to which pieces had apparent power to them.

Next in the process of teaching features of lead paragraphs, I wanted to revisit a topic I only briefly covered while we were talking about rhetoric: the acronym RAFT, which stands for role, audience, format, and topic. With their written one-page pieces of writing, I wanted the students to be able to identify the RAFT so we could begin the process of refining it into a persuasive essay. I asked for students to volunteer their pieces of writing for me to project on the whiteboard via the Elmo machine. As a class, we helped one another decide who the target audience would be.

The next feature of lead paragraphs we examined were writing introductory hooks. Before I introduced the material I had, I gave the students a piece of paper and told them to write down all of the leads they knew and additionally, which one they used the most. I received the expected responses: question, fact, quote, story, and definition. Many of the students indicated they used the question lead. I looked forward to expanding the possibilities of leads for them—I created a list of possible leads as identified by Harry Noden *(Image Grammar)* on a PowerPoint slide, and I had the students rank which leads they thought would be the strongest. I asked the students as they were individually ranking the leads to consider which would be the best for their particular topic. The students shared with students around them which lead they thought they would use.

The final feature of the lead paragraph was the heart of their paper: the thesis statement. The thesis statement has generally given my students many troubles—they appear to not understand its importance or use, and in the past, I have read many essays missing one altogether. Because defining the features of introductions was successful to this point, I decided to continue having the students look into the meaning of the concept. I had them define the words *research question*, *thesis*, and *statement* with the hopes that having a definition in their own words would help remind them of a thesis statement's function. Once they defined these, I asked them to write them.

The next day, I had the students volunteer to take their thesis statement to the front of the room to project on the Elmo. I was surprised how willing my quietest students were to workshop their thesis statements in front of their peers. Ruby was one of my first volunteers. She knew her topic, Art, from the RAFT activity we completed together, but she was having a difficult time narrowing the focus down into something arguable. Ruby said, "I want to explain that art is an inspiration and that you can find it anywhere. I mean, some people have put together a couple of chairs and have called it art." Reese asked her, "Do you mean art in general?" Ruby responded, "Just art in general." Another student responded, "What about graffiti? Could she write something about graffiti?" I responded, "That might be a really interesting topic!" Ruby said, "Yeah, graffiti would be pretty good." The students all agreed in enthusiasm. Then Reese said, "Your research question could be: why do people think it's bad?" I asked the students to help her brainstorm why many people are against graffiti. They responded with ideas such as gang symbols or vandalism. Once we completed this activity, I reminded them that the first draft of their introduction was due in two days.

Because I was curious to have a narrative line for the transfer of learned key features, I decided to meet up with Ruby to ask her a few questions. I asked her if she thought her writing had changed because of our time spent on features of lead paragraphs, and the impact was clear. She was mulling over options of different hooks and chose the best one for the purpose of her writing. She also pointed to places with real voice. I asked Ruby where she believed she used audience awareness. She said that she tried to explain to those who are against graffiti that graffiti is an attempt to make our gloomy world a little bit prettier. We then had a conversation on how there is a time and place to use graffiti. She told me that some graffiti artists are actually hired to draw. I asked her what she felt like she needed to change from her first draft. She said she knew she needed to add more description to help her reader see what she wanted them to picture. Ruby had a clear understanding of her work.

One of my secondary questions was to assess the impact of teacher think-alouds on student work. I was curious if my think-aloud helped the students at all. I adapted it to a Google Doc and shared the link, so the students could access it at any time. I asked Ruby if seeing my example helped her and if she went back to it to gain more understanding of writing lead paragraphs. She said in a way it did, "Yes, I did [go back] at one point for the starting of my intro to see if I could make my sentencing better. Especially when you pointed out about my fragment." In the interview I had with her, she said that the videos, "The Happy Secret to Better Work" and "I'm Little…but I'm a Great Winner" helped her the most. I also asked Ruby about the workshop process we used to develop thesis statements and topic sentences. She articulated that the process was very helpful, and that developing her topic sentences actually helped her to better

understand what she was going to include in her introduction. She said that working on the leading paragraphs, the topic sentences, and the research was going to help her write cohesively.

Conclusion

I was able to have sophisticated conversations with my sophomore-level students about sentence- and word-level changes they wanted to make in their lead paragraphs. I never experienced my students being so calculated with their rhetorical choices in their lead paragraphs. I was also able to have conversations with them about using rhetoric and voice, and they understood my terminology and could ask me questions in return.

One benefit to teaching the key features of leading paragraphs is that if I use certain terminology, the students know what I am referring to; for example, if I indicate a lack of real voice in their draft, the student knows how to address it, rather than it being a teacher comment they do nothing with because they do not understand what I am referencing.

As I glance about Room 301, the atmosphere feels different. I no longer feel as if I am the only one in the room who knows how to write. I offered an outline for students to use, but many turned me down, and that was alright. Students asked around the room about the choices they were making in their drafts. The complaining lessened and the concentration increased. As I walked between, the phrases *real voice* and *audience awareness* floated around the room several times. I felt this moment lift pressure off of my shoulders; I was not the only voice in the writing.

Seventeen writers were added to our number.

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Appendix A: Identified Writing Terminology and Instruction

Identified Writing Features	Define Writing Terminology	Apply in a Variety of Contexts	Teacher Think-Aloud	Clarify, Student Practice
Voice	• Voice • Real Voice • Fake Voice • Voiceless	Comparison of cover songs. I used the song "Wagon Wheel."	Think-aloud identifying real voice in teacher sample.	Students wrote one page about something they were passionate about. We passed around the anonymous drafts and identified places with real voice.
Audience	• Rhetoric • Ethos • Pathos • Logos • Building Trust • Logical Fallacies	Identify rhetorical appeals in mentor text. "Selfie Obsession Disrupts Life."	Think-aloud identifying writer's awareness of audience in teacher sample.	Students first self-identify places where they believe they show audience awareness (organizer, journal). They then conference with classmates.
Hook	• Narrative • Quotation • Statistic • Mystery • Descriptive • Imagine • Direct	Identify in Harry Noden's examples. We talked through the benefits and drawbacks of each one.	Think-aloud in a writer's choice and thought process of choosing a hook in the teacher sample.	Students pick a lead and provide a rationale to their choice. This rationale is presented on their final screen-cast.
Thesis	• Thesis Statement • Research Question • Topic Sentences	Identify in mentor texts.	Think-aloud in identifying the main argument in the teacher's sample.	Students use a thesis generator and then workshop their drafts. I used an Elmo projector to have the students share their drafts.

Rebecca Holdsworth currently teaches English I, II, and III at Fieldcrest High School, a small school in a rural community. Her greatest teaching interest is to produce students who can think and who enjoy learning. Rebecca's current research interests include the exploration of a genre studies teaching model. She is currently introducing a writing center. It will emphasize peer tutors' growth in writing along with promoting a writing culture throughout the school. She is a teacher consultant of the Illinois State Writing Project and is completing her master's degree at Illinois State University.

THE USE OF MENTOR TEXTS TO FACILITATE IMITATION AND FUEL ORGANIC MINI-LESSONS

JOHN KLEIN-COLLINS

Imitation is often said to be the greatest form of flattery. During my high school and college baseball playing days, many of my teammates paid tribute to their favorite players. Some travelled the fairly typical route and wore their favorite player's number, while others used similar bats, mitts, or spikes. One of my college teammates, George, took his adoration to a different level. George was so enamored with Cal Ripken Jr.—then the shortstop for the Baltimore Orioles—that he emulated, or imitated, every possible nuance with which Ripken approached the game. George wore his uniform like Ripken; he cut his hair like Ripken; he took his place in the batter's box like Ripken. Even his nickname, Cal, demonstrated the degree to which George emulated his baseball role model. George was a hardworking, talented player, so imitating Ripken did not magically transform him

from someone incapable of catching and throwing into an all-conference selection. But imitating his idol did allow George to "try on" a style and experiment with techniques that had proven successful at the very highest athletic level—Major League Baseball.

George's story is not unlike many young athletes, dancers, actors, artists, singers, and musicians who seek out and imitate more talented models as a means to hone their craft. With few exceptions, young writers do not. However, once young writers are exposed to and taught how to emulate exemplary writing models, grammar and usage lessons, born from curiosity and/or necessity, become a key component of classroom instruction.

Late this summer I met Dr. Janice Neuleib, an English professor emeritus at Illinois State University. The title of her course, *Issues of Grammar*, gave me reason to pause. I am an eighth-grade language arts teacher. I do not consider myself an *English* teacher. I wasn't an *English* major. I was a business major who switched careers at the age of thirty and began teaching language arts because it was the need I could fill. Even though my Catholic school teachers fed me grammar instruction and sentence diagramming activities directly from *Warriner's English Grammar and Composition*, very little of what they taught me stuck. Dr. Neuleib greeted me with a practical and pragmatic way to teach grammar and improve student writing. What she didn't know—until I confessed to our class—was that I had been exercising these same approaches for many years, although the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) had damped some of my spirit.

Dr. Neuleib stressed the importance of models and modeling in the development of young writers, even if some of what we both believed might be viewed by others as slightly subversive, particularly in light of the perceived emphasis on

a more standardized approach to reading and writing instruction resulting from the roll-out of the CCSS.

Since their inception, the CCSS has monopolized a significant portion of my time. Over the last four years, I participated as a member of my district's middle-school literacy committee. I helped to "unpack" the CCSS, to establish where standards fit within learning progressions, to construct units of study for both reading and writing, to vet and test writing and reading resources. I also acted as a literacy curriculum liaison to my middle school. During the time I spent working with the middle-school literacy committee, I slowly lost my sense of adventure and my penchant for exposing students to exemplary models. Nothing beat identifying the successful elements of those models, generating checklists for similar pieces, teaching minilessons based on the ensuing confusion or intrigue, and writing with students as we emulated the models. Although models, rubrics, and step-by-step lesson suggestions had been provided for us in neatly-packaged writing resources, I felt obligated to abandon what I had been doing to be a good literacy team member and support my colleagues by going with the flow.

However, a saving—if not jarring—request came from my district midway through this year's first trimester. In the midst of a district-mandated unit on investigative journalism, volunteers were requested to present informational writing techniques, strategies, and student samples. The only problem was that we had not done any informational writing yet. We had not yet reached that unit map.

With just two weeks to teach informational writing strategies and generate models for a professional development presentation, I began an informational writing odyssey by first setting aside investigative journalism and returning to my roots. I turned to a trusted resource, Kelly Gallagher's *In the*

Best Interest of Students, in which he continues to model how he invests in mentor texts. In a recent article, "Making the Most of Mentor Texts," Gallagher discussed what he learned using mentor texts within his own high school classroom. "There's a lesson for writing teachers here. If we want our students to write persuasive arguments, interesting explanatory pieces, or captivating narratives, we need to have them read, analyze, and emulate persuasive arguments, interesting explanatory pieces, and captivating narratives" (29). Kelly Gallagher's advice is rather simple: students benefit from exposure to the texts they will write. These exposures provide an end point, a discussion focus, a frequent reference point. The models we use in the classroom are not unlike the models our students imitate to improve their jump shot, smooth out their windup, or integrate a dance step into their repertoire.

I adapted one of Gallagher's projects, an informational piece that follows the lead of *ESPN The Magazine*'s "Six Things You Should Know" column. I introduced students to the writing project by providing them with copies of three such articles written by a Major League Baseball grounds keeper, a professional athlete's money manager, and a professional gamer. All three presented information specific to their passions as professionals. Gallagher's adaptation places students in position to tap their individual expertise and passion as well.

After dissecting the articles, listing successful elements, and making suggestions for improvement, we brainstormed potential topics, planned and drafted together, conducted revision activities, and produced interesting pieces of writing that I could present during the professional development session. Students composed informational essays on hunting, traditional Indian dancing, being the daughter of a police officer, preparing for a first swim meet, and playing competitive

Pokémon that closely resembled the models we studied and dissected. The presentation was a success, our colleagues reported ways to integrate informational writing into their core areas of instruction, and I fell in love, again, with this very hands-on, somewhat-organic method of writing instruction, which did not follow the cookie-cutter lesson structure that so many of today's writing resources espouse.

This informational writing interlude during investigative journalism rekindled the passion I once had for writing instruction. I regained the sense that I could meet the varying needs of my students more efficiently and effectively by adapting my approach and relying more heavily on the imitation of writing models.

Revisiting the writing conversation the following Saturday at Illinois State, Dr. Neuleib urged me to flood students with essays worthy of emulation. She suggested Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, which seemed a little advanced for my eighth graders. But our conversation pushed me to the files on my laptop that had not been tapped in a long while. When I came across Russell Baker's essay "School vs. Education," I found a model that would allow eighth graders to stretch while introducing craft elements they had not yet studied. Baker's writing style is straightforward, but his voice—a concept students struggle with—comes through loud and clear. "School vs. Education" worked for a number of other reasons. It is chronologically structured, something students noticed almost immediately; it has an inviting length and does not mince words; it relies on provocative word choice; it also leans heavily on complex sentence structures we studied earlier in the year.

After I read Baker's essay aloud to my classes, I asked students to individually brainstorm contextually-relevant-yet-often-contradictory terms they could write about. Baker's

essay is unique in that it takes two terms, *school* and *education*, and juxtaposes them at the very end to make the point that school is a place where one often learns lessons we don't intend, and education is the greater privilege we must be ready to accept individually, often after our formal "schooling" is done. Asking students to connect similar and complex issues, I worried, would result in the generation of just a few titles. Much to my surprise, three writing classes offered eighty-six titles, including *Religion vs. Faith*, *Name vs. Identity*, *Practice vs. Homework*, *Rival vs. Enemy*, and *Knowing vs. Understanding*. As titles kept flowing, one seemed more enticing than the next. Students had a sense of these contradictory issues.

In keeping with routine, we looked at the organizational structure first. We broke Baker's essay down using a "chain of events" organizer, something often used to plan pieces of writing that follow a chronological pattern. Beginning our dissection of the text from a macro perspective allowed students to view the "big picture." Baker's essay follows his observations of a child's "education" from the very basic—occurring before one is even enrolled in school—until post-retirement, when one might have the "inclination to open a book with a curious mind, and start to become educated."

A close examination of Baker's essay also allowed very analytical students to quantify how much of the text he devoted to the topic of school—641 words—and how much of the text he devoted to the topic of education—forty-one words. Looking at the essay in quantifiable terms helped students to see that Baker devoted the greater majority of the essay to the problems, as he saw them, associated with formal schooling. Students also recognized through their study of this model that Baker's message for readers, summed up in forty-one words, would have to be both economical and revealed in an abrupt shift in writing voice. Further examination of "School

vs. Education" also revealed Baker's dependence on short paragraphs, AAWWUBBISS starters, and serial sentences. Having studied these two sentence structures earlier in the year, we agreed we would do the same.

It is critically important that we do the work we assign our students. This level of transparency builds trust and helps us to experience bumps in the road our students might soon encounter. Writing in front of students, in a sense, is reconnaissance that allows us to address these issues in a more natural way. It also doesn't hurt to write about a student-generated topic. With that in mind, I took on *Religion vs. Faith*, something I have struggled with for many years. Relying on the same chain-of-events organizer we used to dissect Baker's essay, I planned my own essay in front of students and verbally walked them through my thinking. Once planned, I asked students to do the same as I rolled my chair around the classroom and conferenced. Reading, dissecting, discussing, planning, and writing together creates a classroom rhythm students find comforting. As we moved on to drafting, we did not abandon the text. In fact, imitation repeatedly took us back to the text.

Imitating Baker's beginning to "School vs. Education," I began my sentence in the same manner.

Baker's "School vs. Education"	**Klein-Collins's *Religion vs. Faith***
By the age of six the average child will have completed the basic American education and be ready to enter school. (Baker)	By the time a child is old enough to understand the significance of belonging to an organized religion, his spiritual path will have already been paved.

Once I demonstrated my imitation of Baker's introduction, I asked students to do the same.

Good vs. Right	Loss vs. Defeat
By a young age, most children will already have a decent idea of what "good" means. Something "good" will bring pleasure and most likely benefit the child. Good illustrates everything nice in the world, such as kittens, rainbows, and fluffy unicorns. As the child grows up, he will add money, stuff, and winning to the list.	By the age of six the average American child will have competed in a competitive sports match. By the age of seven, the child will have learned what it's like to lose.

Imitation, at this level, allowed students to slip inside Russell Baker's shoes and even take a few steps. But these walks must occur throughout the entirety of the writing process because you never know what students might notice and how these observations will lead to authentic learning. In his 2015 book, I*n the Best Interest of Students: Staying True to What Works in the ELA Classroom*, Kelly Gallagher encourages repeatedly returning to models throughout the entire writing process:

> When it comes to the teaching of writing, effective modeling entails much more than handing students a mentor text and asking them to emulate it. It's not a "one and done" process. Rather, students benefit when they pay close attention to models before they begin drafting, they benefit when they pay close attention to models when they are drafting, and they benefit when they pay close attention to models as they begin moving their drafts into revision. (130)

Therefore, in the midst of drafting, I asked students to return to the text and isolate some of Baker's perplexing usage decisions. I was curious to see what punctuation or sentence

structures students found confusing. A few minutes later, during a sharing of their findings, the greater majority of students voiced uncertainty over Baker's use of dashes in his sentence, "The point of college is to prepare the student—no longer a child now—to get into graduate school." One of my major goals is to foster curiosity. Asking about craft confusion in texts allows me to teach spur-of-the-moment minilessons that quickly pay off. And, since imitation is our main focus, we returned to our drafts after a quick minilesson to see where we could insert dashes to emphasize important information.

Curiosity also led students to question the use of commas between adjectives, prompting a mini-lesson on coordinate adjectives. Again, we returned to our drafts and found opportunities to insert coordinate adjectives to add description or imagery, something we felt worked in Baker's piece. This all occurred very naturally as students switched back and forth between their writing and Baker's model. Student curiosity, spurred by the examination of models, led to these organic, authentic learning opportunities.

Although I teach language arts and the laundry list of associated skills—listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary—I am more fulfilled when I teach students to be curious. After forty-nine years of life, nineteen of those spent as a teacher, I'm still just as curious about some of the texts I have used year after year as I was when I first picked them up. I'm curious about the author's meaning. I'm curious about what I can learn from an author's writing style. I want that sense of curiosity for my own students, and I attempt to nurture curiosity through the examination of what we deem to be exceptional works.

"Afterward, the former student's destiny fulfilled, his life rich with Oriental carpets, rare porcelain, and full bank accounts, he may one day find himself with the leisure and

the inclination to open a book with curious mind, and start to become educated" (Baker). As Baker infers in the final paragraph of "School vs. Education," only when we are truly curious and inclined to open a book will our real education begin. Our texts are our teachers.

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John Klein-Collins teaches eighth grade language arts at Kennedy Junior High School in Naperville, Illinois. In an effort to facilitate a greater sense of student ownership, John's classroom instructional practices emphasize individualized topic selection, exemplar study, assessment rubric creation, and guided peer feedback. John is currently enrolled at Illinois State University in a post-baccalaureate certificate program emphasizing in the teaching of writing in middle school and high school.

ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY: SPELLING INSTRUCTION OR LANGUAGE INVESTIGATION?

DEBORAH RIGGERT-KIEFFER

Eye halve a spelling check her,
It came with my pea sea.
It plane lee marks four my revue
Miss steaks aye kin knot sea.

Eye ran this poem threw it,
Your sure reel glad two no.
Its vary polished in it's weigh,
My checker tolled me sew.

A check her is a bless sing;
It freeze yew lodes of thyme.
It helps me right awl stiles two reed,
And aides me when aye rime.

Each frays come posed up on my screen,
Eye trussed too bee a joule;

The checker pours o'er every word
To cheque sum spelling rule.

Bee fore wee rote with checkers
Hour spelling was inn deck line,
Butt now when wee dew have a laps,
Wee are knot maid too wine.

Butt now bee cause my spelling
Is checked with such grate flare,
There are know faults with in my cite,
Of nun eye am a wear.

Now spelling does knot phase me,
It does knot bring a tier;
My pay purrs awl due glad den
With wrapped words fare as hear.

To rite with care is quite a feet
Of witch won should be proud;
And we mussed dew the best wee can
Sew flaws are knot aloud.

That's why eye brake in two averse
Cuz eye dew want too please.
Sow glad eye yam that aye did bye
This soft wear four pea seas.

Jerrold H. Zar
"Candidate for a Pullet Surprise"

Why does English spelling create contention? The correct spelling in Zar's poem points to the one of the complexities writer's face as they strive for accuracy in English spelling. Of course, a spell-checking tool helps, but only if the writer has incorrectly spelled one of the approximately quarter-million

words that comprise the English language (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Since the spell-checking tool has not alleviated the need to learn correct English spellings, the subject of spelling remains a mainstay in English language arts instruction in elementary schools. Considering the vast challenges facing US schools in educating children with diverse experiences and backgrounds in a climate where educators are viewed to lack the professionalism necessary for effective teaching, there certainly are more pressing concerns for the educational system than the study of English spelling, and yet this is a topic that garners much controversy in the public school system and beyond. A cursory Google search questioning the teaching of spelling produced 51,600,000 results. A small sample of the results included offers for instructional materials along with opinion pieces from bloggers and journalists. White, middle-class society seems to connect incorrect spelling with laziness, carelessness, or lack of education. Yet, spelling is expected to be correct in many genres of writing, especially those produced for publication. With the necessity for correct spelling as a convention of multiple genres and a general expectation linking some level of competence to spelling, it is unlikely that spelling will be removed from the English language arts curriculum, but in what iteration and according to whose opinion? Although my Google search was far from scientific, there seems no shortage of recommendations for "correct," even "researched" approaches to spelling instruction. At the conclusion of the paper, I will also add my opinion on spelling instruction to the countless others who seem prepared, even if only based on personal experience, to opine.

In this paper, I set out to follow the course of spelling instruction in the United States (US) beginning with the colonial period and ending in the year 2014 with an endorsement for instruction in one suburban middle school where I am

currently responsible for spelling instruction in three sections of English language arts. Interestingly and perhaps more surprisingly, some of the strategies of contemporary spelling instruction continue to be retained from early American classrooms.

History of Spelling Instruction in the US: Instruction and Text in the Colonial Period

Spelling instruction in the US dates to colonial times. Teachers utilized ungraded texts imported from England or reproduced in the American colonies to guide spelling instruction (Hodges, 1977). Spelling was taught as a prerequisite to reading and initial instruction was governed by the alphabetic principle, a system in which symbols relate to spoken sound, although these symbols do not correspond in a one-to-one match of symbol to sound (Venezky, 1999). Robinson (1977) notes there were no professional resources to support conceptual bases for instruction during the colonial period, and all teaching methods were British imports. Students progressed by first learning the sequence and letter names of the symbols of the alphabet; both capital and lowercase letters were mastered before proceeding to pronunciation (Hodges, 1977; Wadewitz, 2009). Next, the "syllabarium," consonant and vowel clusters like *ba*, *be*, *bi*, *bo*, and *bu*, were spelled and pronounced (Robinson, 1977, p. 46; Wadewitz, 2009). Once the pronunciations of letter combinations were mastered, students were introduced to words and sentences (Hodges, 1977). It should be noted that this instruction was provided for an entire group of students with no age grading. All students learned letters, sounds, and syllables in isolation without connecting meaning to the words in a process that could only be described as monotonous. Later, Mann (1841) critiqued this instructional practice,

> First comes the alphabet, and this is followed by the nonsensical paricles, ab ba, bla…—in some books to the number of four or five hundred, which the sufferer is obliged to grope his dark and doleful way, without one ray of meaning to illuminate his path. By this process children are debarred from thought.… The recitations, in which the efficacy of frowns and rebukes and blows is tried to coerce attention, is a perpetual contest between the forces of nature struggling for relief, and the efforts of the teacher to stifle them. (p. 23)

School attendance was not mandatory, and students commonly remained for a short time. It is likely this type of instruction did not encourage a student's desire to extend her/his education.

The first books utilized for spelling instructions were not specified as spelling texts, rather children learned to spell from books like *The New England Primer*, a commonly employed text in New England during the colonial period (Nietz, 1961). Although an original first edition of the *New England Primer* is not known to be in existence, the first copy is thought to be produced in 1690 with authorship attributed to Benjamin Harris (Ford, 1897). Copyright laws were not enacted until May of 1790, therefore local printers reproduced the primers and made changes, additions, or omission as desired (Nietz, 1961; US copyright office, 2014).

Colonial teachers lacked formal training and as such, the text provided the foundation for instruction. An inspection of a facsimile of a 1727 edition of *The New England Primer* reveals the curriculum that guided spelling instruction. Beginning with the alphabet, twenty-seven letters including the long *s* and the ampersand, the primer continues with six upper and lowercase vowels, twenty lower case consonants, twelve "Double letters", twenty-four "Italick" letters, both upper and lowercase, and twelve "Italick" double letters

(Ford, 1897, p. 59). *The New England Primer* also includes twenty-four "Great English Letters", twenty-seven "Small English Letters" and twenty-five "Great Letters" before proceeding to "Easy Syllables for Children" also know as the syllabarium (Ford, 1987, p. 60), consisting of 145 syllables (although Nietz reported 180 syllables in the *New England Primer* he analyzed) for students to recite. A list of eighty-four words containing a single syllable each appears next; examples include: *age*, *all*, and *are* (Ford, 1897; Nietz, 1961). Two-syllable words followed with forty-eight terms including, *ab-sent* and *ap-ron*. The primer moved to 24 three-syllable words, like *ab-us-ing* and *ar-gu-ment*; 21 four syllable words included *a-bi-li-ty*; 14 five-syllable words as, *ad-mi-ra-ti-on*; and finally, 12 six-syllable words with *a-bo-mi-na-ti-on* (Nietz, 1961). Even though words were cataloged by syllable, they were also broken down by individual syllable. After the word lists, twenty-four alphabetic emblems featuring a capital letter, short rhyme, and an image were presented in alphabetical order (Ford, 1897). These emblems were included in all iterations of the *Primer* and were a renowned feature of the texts (Ford, 1897). "The Dutiful Child's Promises" follows with eleven sentences suggesting moral behaviors and attitudes for children (Ford, 1897, p. 69). Sentences drawn from the Bible featuring moral lessons and arranged to begin each paragraph with consecutive alphabetic letters, with the exception of *X*, appeared next (Ford, 1897). Each version of *The New England Primer* also included the Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer (Ford, 1897). The 1727 version of the *Primer* also included the Ten Commandments (Ford, 1897). As noted by both Ford (1897) and Nietz (1961), local printers took liberty in rearranging and changing the text; however, similar elements appeared in the approximately 37,100 copies of *Primer* sold between 1749 and 1766.

Another one of the most popular omnibus "spelling" texts was published in England in 1740 by Thomas Dilworth; originally entitled *Spelling Book* or *New Guide*, this text included spelling and grammar (Nietz, 1961; Hodges, 1977). It was revised and reissued in 1747 under the title, *A new Guide to the English Tongue* (Nietz, 1961; Hodges, 1977). This expanded version included a combination of spelling, grammar, reading, and religion and was reprinted abundantly, becoming one of the most popular of its time (Hodges, 1977). An examination of Dilworth's (1780) text reveals twenty-seven small Roman letters (with the inclusion of the long *s*) and fourteen Roman double letters that included vowels and were presented in combinations like *sb* not available in twenty-first-century English. In 1780, William Perry of the Academy of Edinburgh authored another omnibus text that made headway into the colonies (Nietz, 1961). *The Only Sure Guide to the English Tongue* or *New Pronouncing Spelling Book* was designed to focus on spelling, featuring both syllabification and pronunciation markers for words (Nietz, 1961). Lindley Murray, an American who taught and published in England, authored *English Spelling Book with Reading Lessons* in 1804; however, this speller remained obscure will minimal circulation (Nietz, 1961).

History of Spelling Instruction in the US: A Move for Independence?

The author with the most impact on spelling instruction in America was Noah Webster. With ties to England severed, Webster filled the textbook gap with American rather then English materials. Webster's original textbook, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language, Comprising an Easy, Concise, and Systematic Method of Education, Designed for the Use of English Schools in America, Part I Containing a New and Accurate Standard of Pronunciation*, the first of a series, was described

as a spelling text, although it emphasized pronunciation over spelling (Nietz, 1961). Even though Webster's intent was to design an American textbook, much of the book was modeled on Dilworth's text with three notable alterations (Nietz, 1961). American place names and abbreviations were substituted for their British counterparts, religious content was replaced by teachings molded after Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*, and American pronunciation was reflected in adjustment of syllabication to replicate American dialects (Nietz, 1961). For example, "suffixes of works ending with ti-on, si-on, and ci-on were changed to be pronounced as one syllable rather than two. Also, such words as clu-ster and ha-bit, etc., were changed to clus-ter and hab-it" (Nietz, 1961, p. 15). It is interesting to note Nietz's lack of etymological expertise in defining the suffix in the preceding sentence as a unit including *t*, *s*, and *c*. An etymological study would reveal the suffix as only *-ion*. In 1787, Webster's text underwent a much needed title abbreviation to *The American Spelling Book* and gained in popularity with over 3,000,000 in print by 1809 according to a footnote in a revised edition (Nietz, 1961). Webster was in the company of a number of text authors in the mid- to late-1700s. Like Webster's texts, the content of these "spellers" included readings and grammar as well as spelling. The increase in text options did not, however, measurably change instruction for students. Spelling was still conceptualized as a linear process with movement through the "alphabetic method" (Horn, 1957; Hodges, 1961). Even Webster acknowledged the monotony of spelling instruction (Hodges, 1961).

Criticism of spelling instruction is not reserved for contemporary critics, and the popularity of Webster's text provided no protection. Hodges (1961) reports the following critique of Webster, "Innovations should be resisted…owing

in great measure to Dr. Webster's unfortunate orthographical eccentricities, which have set so many journeyman printers agog to imitate him" (p. 3). In the preface of Cobb's *Spelling Book* (1825), the text's author condemned Webster for "departing too much from Walker's 'principles of Orthography and Orthoepy, which are universally acknowledged to be superior to any other extant; and that many matters in Webster's speller were inconsistent with those in his dictionary" (Dietz, 1961, p. 23). In 1829, Webster's speller underwent a major revision focused primarily on spelling content, and *The Elementary Spelling Book: being an Improvement on the American Spelling Book* also was changed to conform to the "rules governing spelling, syllabication, and pronunciation" consistent with the newest edition of his *American Dictionary*, published in 1828 (Nietz, 1961, p. 16).

Webster wasn't the only author shifting to subject-specific textbooks as texts in reading, geography, and grammar began to appear; however, Fiske's *New England Spelling Book* was unique as one of the first to include words commonly spoken (Nietz, 1961). Most spellers of the time gave little regard to the likelihood of usability or to the learners' needs, and most included words that would not be commonly spoken outside of a spelling lesson (Nietz, 1961). In 1842, Cobb made a move toward usability in his revised *New Spelling Book* stating his purpose in the preface, "Objects in a spelling book should be to aid the pupil in learning to spell, pronounce, and read with ease, accuracy, and precision" and should "contain most of the common and useful words of the language, properly classed, divided, pronounced, and accepted" (Nietz, 1961, p. 24). Cobb seemed to be the first author concerned with the application of knowledge gained from spelling instruction, a principle continued into the selection of words for contemporary spelling textbooks.

Other American textbook authors were implementing interesting additions in the early nineteenth century. Town's *Analysis of Words*, published in 1835, resulted from his observation that scholars struggled tracing Latin and Greek forms to their origins. Town compiled prefixes and suffixes along with their definitions as "modifiers of the significant import of radical words" (Nietz, 1961, P. 28). In *The Eclectic Progressive Spelling Book*, A. H. McGuffey, utilized a unique system to mark vowel pronunciation, as numbers indicated vowel sounds (Nietz, 1961). "The Table of Vowel Sounds" is explained as follows:

1 2 3 4
letter /A/ has four sounds: fate, far, fall, and fat;
1 2
letter /E/ has two sounds: me and met;
1 2
letter /I/ has two sounds pine and pin;
1 2 3 4
letter /O/ has four sounds: no, move, not, and good
1 2 3
letter /U/ has three sounds: tube, tub, and full
(Nietz, 1961, p. 29)

Words were separated into sounds and syllables in list form as in the following example:

4	2	4	2
nav	i	ga	ble
prac	ti	ca	ble
hab	it	a	ble
lap	id	a	ry

(Nietz, 1961, p. 29)

While other spellers featured diacritical marks to indicate pronunciation, McGuffey's use of numerical marking to

group words according to vowel sounds provides a unique linguistic sense absent in other spellers. McGuffey's numeric system acknowledges sound patterns absent in texts that group words solely by the number of syllables—a common practice in the seventeenth century. Even though McGuffey attempted to discern the different phonemes represented by a single grapheme, his phonemic representations are inconsistent. For example, the vowel a in the first syllable of the word navigable is [æ] and does not represent the same phoneme as the vowel a in the second syllable, which is pronounced [ə]. While Sanders and others did utilize the numeric system, it failed to be widely implemented and eventually was replaced with diacritic marks. Even McGuffey (1879) replaced the "superiors" numeric system with diacritical marks in the *McGuffey's Eclectic Spelling Book* revised edition in December 1879. This change, along with marking the silent e with a cancellation mark to more clearly signal its status, is noted in the preface of the text (McGuffey, 1879). In an addition still common, graded spellers were offered beginning in the late 1850s (Nietz, 1961).

As mentioned above, teachers during the colonial period received little or no formal training; as such, the spelling guided much of the spelling curriculum. Instruction was focused on oral recitation of memorized words with an emphasis on pronunciation (Nietz, 1961). Alcott's account of spelling instruction from the early 1800s reveals the continuing method of the memorization of words from alphabetically arranged lists with no attention to meaning. If a student misspelled a word in oral spelling practice, the next student who could provide a correct spelling would "go above him," the object of the lesson being to finish at the "head of the class" (Hodges, 1961). The turn to written spelling practice was not stressed until the early 1870s, when a combination of written and oral practice was suggested, as prior spelling instruction was only oral (Nietz, 1961).

History of Spelling Instruction in the US: The Mann for Change

Horace Mann, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education and an influential figure in education, suggested a change in the methodology underlying spelling instruction. Based on travel to European schools, Mann (1841) thought the whole-word method of spelling instruction was more effective than the alphabetic method. In a speech delivered to the American Institute on Instruction in 1841, Mann stated,

> To relieve children from this wanton harassing, this gratuitous vexation, one of the two following modes should be adopted. Either the descriptive marks which denote sounds… should be affixed to each of the vowels, as they are learned, and the child taught to give the true sound to the letter so marked and consonants also should be taught by giving them, not the common alphabetic sound, but the sounds which they are to have in combination,— which is called the phonetic method;— or, what I consider a far better and more philosophical mode,—whole words should be taught before teaching the letters of which they are composed. (p. 13)

Mann (1841) explained that the alphabetic method failed to engage learners and did not facilitate pronunciation. He thought students should be introduced to words before letters, as the alphabet was, "wholly foreign to a child's existing knowledge" (p. 13). Mann (1841) outlines the unconnected nature of the alphabet, "unless the thing signified be conceived by the mind, that which purports to be a sign is no sign, but a phantom, and has no point of relationship, correspondence or adaptation to the human faculties" (p. 20). Mann's comments regarding the abstract signification of the sign system point to the difficulty in teaching students alphabetic letters out of context. In utilizing

the whole-word method, learning would be associated with familiar knowledge and no "unlearning" of letter names would be necessary. Mann (1841) explains, "by far the most legitimate and efficient way of introducing a child to the knowledge of our language, is through the meaning of the words used" (p. 18). While Mann's suggestion for curricular change included a focus on meaning, he did not discount the use of rote memorization in learning to spell. Mann (1841) explains,

> To learn and to remember the spelling of each word as an individual, would be an almost interminable, if not an impossible process. It must be learned by association,—that is, by a repetition of the letter in their orthographical order, until they shall recur, as it were, like well-conned notes in music. (p. 31)

Mann (1841) suggested words should be arranged in tables and learned in a similar manner to the memorization of multiplication facts. Mann reasoned that association of ideas was the only logical method to teach spelling, as logical reasoning was not applicable in spelling instruction. Mann (1841) provides an example of this logical disconnect, "There is no reason the last syllable in impatient should be *tient*, and the last in deficient, *cient*; and so through the whole English vocabulary" (p. 33). Mann's misunderstanding of etymology and study of word origins prohibits implementation of a curriculum that would encourage early spellers to investigate and interpret the factors underlying differences in spelling. According to the Online Etymology dictionary, the word *deficient* originates in the 1580s from the Latin *deficientem* where the word *impatient* originates in the late fourteenth century from the Old French *impacient* but moves in modern French to *impatient*, from the Latin *impatientem*. An investigation of the origins of these words would reveal the difference in the spelling.

Mann (1941) did support the retention of spelling books as an anchor to the curriculum; however, he advocated for books designed primarily by word-association tables as evidenced in *The Practical Spelling Book* by William E. Fowle. Mann (1941) states,

> When the reading has become easy, and it is expedient to carry forward the orthography of the language faster than it is possible to comprehend the meaning of all is words, a spelling book, constructed according to the law of association, should be placed into the hands of the pupil. (p. 37)

While few spellers of the time focused on spelling instruction by association, publishers began to emulate Fowle, an observation Mann (1841) acknowledged in the footnotes of the book resulting from his influential speech on spelling instruction. Mann's urge for spelling reform was primarily centered on a change of curriculum and instruction, shifting the focus from the alphabetic principle to word meaning, a view shared with spelling critics of the time (Hodges, 1977). Still, spelling in the nineteenth century continued as a means of strengthening the mental faculties and a measure of ability or hard work. The influence of spelling instruction moved beyond the classroom as competitive, public spelling bees were a source of entertainment. While twenty-first-century social diversions have expanded exponentially, the spelling bee remains a vestige of this earlier period and points to the persisting view of the significance of spelling in society.

History of Spelling Instruction in the US: Rice for Reform

After two years of study at the Universities of Jenna and Leipzig, Dr. J. M. Rice returned from Germany convinced of the efficacy Herbartism, the scientific study of education

as originated and conceptualized by J. F. Herbart and ready to implement educational reform based on the scientific principles espoused by Herbart (Miller, n.d.). In 1892, Rice completed his first scientific study of schools funded by the *Forum*, a monthly publication featuring articles on education and social reform, and a publication he served as editor from 1897–1902 (Bates, 2003; Miller, n.d.). Although primarily investigating urban schools, Rice found many school environments substandard, "inhumane, demoralizing, and even cruel and barbarous" (Rice, 1893, Bates, 2003, p. 3). In 1895, Rice set out on his third tour of schools to investigate instructional methods and limiting factors in student performance including "age, nationality, heredity, and environment" along with the type of school system defined as either "progressive" or "mechanical" (Rice, 1897, p. 26; Bates, 2003; Miller, n.d.). Based on the analysis of his study materials comprised of spelling tests of 33,000 students and surveys administered to school personnel, Rice found no scientific evidence for differences in spelling based on age, nationality, heredity, or home environment (Rice, 1897). The primary factor Rice attributed to differences in spelling acquisition rested solely with the teacher (Rice, 1897). Teaching methods played a subordinate role (Rice, 1897). The individual students seemed to have no role in her own learning. Rice stated, "I believe that no means can be more effective than to prescribe a definite task, to be completed in a given time, and to make the tenure of office depend on the ability to meet the demand" (p. 99). Clearly Rice was comfortable tying teacher responsibility to student performance as measured against specified standards, a tradition that sadly continues to gain traction in K–12 public education in the US today.

Rice provided suggestions for spelling instruction reform in *The Futility of the Spelling Grind*, published in the

Forum in April 1897 and republished in *Scientific Management in Education* (Rice, 1897). Rice (1913) stated,

> First, as to oral or written, column and sentence, spelling, I shall say only this, that the wise teacher will acquaint herself with as many methods and devices as possible, and change from one to another, on order to relieve the tedium and to meet the needs of individual children.…she will beware of running off at a tangent with any particular method, because none yet discovered has proved a panacea. (p. 94)

Among Rice's (1913) other recommendations include a limit of fifteen-minutes daily devoted to spelling instruction, careful grading of words, for not only "orthographic difficulties," but also as appropriate for an individual child's vocabulary (p. 94). Additionally, Rice (1913) thought common words should take precedence over "technical and unusual" words and the focused practice of common words would result in "producing good practical spellers" (p. 94). Finally, Rice (1913) believed phonetic words should not be the focus of study, and he observed approximately half of the common words "naturally spell themselves; instead common words frequently misspelled would represent the ideal candidates for graded lists" (p. 95). Rice (1913) reasoned that words governed by similar rules should be learned collectively, although he acknowledged some rules have too many exceptions to provide much value for students. Rice (1913) insisted two reliable rules were necessary for instruction and should be taught for automaticity. These included the rule governing the double of consonants when a suffix is added to a root containing a short vowel (for example in *run-running* or *stop-stopping*) and the rule controlling the elimination of the silent *e* before adding a suffix (as in *bake-baking* or *take-taking*), rules Rice (1913) found applied variously in his spelling tests of

fourth- and fifth-year classes. Rice (1913) thought the study of individual words should be reserved for words with no sound or rule cues.

Interestingly, Rice did comment on spelling reform by suggesting, "the simple dropping of the *silent* letter in the last syllable of words as *beggar*, *driver*, *doctor*, *mantel*, *bundle*, *metal*, would enable us to strike no less than 15 percent of the words [without rule or sound clues] from the list" (Rice, 1912, p. 97). While Rice did not provide suggested spellings for the aforementioned words, it is assumed this particular spelling reform would result in the following spellings, *beggr*, *drivr*, *doctr*, *mantl*, *bundl*, and *metl*. Rice, however, limited his recommendation to this one example and made no mention of spelling reform in terms of representing the articulation of the approximately twenty sounds represented by the five (to seven) English vowels.

As a result of his study at the University of Jenna and his research with students in American cities, Rice authored a spelling text in 1898, *The Rational Speller*. Compared with earlier texts, this speller contained fewer words with approximately 400 selected for grades first through third in part one and around 4000 words selected for grades fourth through eighth in part two, and not surprisingly Rice's speller featured more "common" words (Bates, 2003). It must be noted that Rice never included a discussion of how he determined if a word should be categorized as common or uncommon or the audience who would consider these words common. Still, *The Rational Speller* (1898) met Rice's goals and provided a "progressive," narrowed, graded instructional text for students from grades first through eighth, covering the educational years for the majority of students. Rice's reforms were influential and are evident in the spelling texts produced at the beginning of the twentieth century.

History of Spelling Instruction in the US: The Twentieth Century and the Science of Spelling

J. M. Rice's influence can be seen in textbooks well into the twentieth century as graded spellers with fewer word choices continued to proliferate. The scientific movement began to influence spelling texts as researchers studied "common" words in terms of frequency of use in spoken and written English giving credibility to the words selected for inclusion (Bates, 2003). Increased research on spelling methods prompted Horn to publish a list of forty-one principles on spelling methods along with nine steps to assist word study (Horn, 1919; Hodges, 1977). The scientific movement placed a priority on usefulness, as words important for study increasingly became words in common usage, words students would read, write, and speak. This turn featured a focus on the student as a learner, as researchers began to look at the needs of the individual student. By the 1920s, researchers were beginning to view spelling as multisensory with Sudweek's suggestion that spelling creates images through sight, sound, and feel through written and spoken language (as cited in Hodges, 1977).

An increased focus on the individual demanded a closer look at spelling instruction in the classroom. Progressive researchers in the 1930s pointed to the inadequacy of the pre-test, study, test, review, final-test methods of spelling instruction (Hodges, 1977). Although systematic in its design, this method did little to support the individual learning needs of students. The instructional approach of test and study assumed word study would represent equal and consistent difficulty for students, allowing a whole group approach to a process that denied individual needs for instruction. Progressive researchers encouraged using words in authentic situations, like class projects (Hodges, 1977). Although, it

should be noted that spelling instruction continued to focus on visual memory and the principles compiled by Horn in 1919. A majority of teachers continued to rely on one spelling list for whole-class instruction coupled with the study and test model for assessment through the 1950s. It should also be noted that the teach-and-test model continues to be utilized in contemporary classrooms, and publishing companies like Houghton Mifflin Harcourt still produce graded materials that support a teach-test model of instruction.

Even though the progressives ushered in a view of students as individual multisensory learners, the view of English orthography as illogical remained. Students, teachers, and members of the general population continued to cling to the idea of English as highly irregular, requiring mastery of unstable rules and rote memorization. Linguists working in education began to challenge the irrational view of the English language. In 1953, Hanna and Moore studied 3,000 words compiled from English spelling textbooks and distinguished speech sound/word connections they believed could help students as they acquired English orthography. As a result of their textbook study, Hanna and Moore (1953) published the following procedures for teaching spelling, especially during the early elementary grades,

1. Some time should be set aside during the school day for a concentrated attack on the business of learning to translate sounds into written spelling.
2. Spelling must be integrated with other subjects of the curriculum in order that an emphasis on meaning and correct usage, and a practical application of the proficiency acquired during the regular spelling period.
3. There are definite groups of words and symbols in the English language which belong in certain

> phonic categories. The child should learn such group patterns inductively. He should develop a sense of the probable letters to be used to represent the speech sounds as they occur in words belonging to such groups' patterns.
>
> 4. The beginner must proceed slowly from the simple phonic pattern used to write simple words to those groups' of words which are complex in phonic structure.
> 5. The relatively few English words or parts of words which follow a rarely occurring phonic pattern (the irregulars) must be individually memorized. (p. 337)

Hannah and Moore's study resulted in several recommendations including teaching materials that carefully consider the regularity and consistency of spelling based on a careful analysis of letter sound representations. Utilizing meticulously constructed materials, students should initially be introduced to principles with the "highest degree of regularity" and should be guided in using practices for detecting and learning variation of phonetic elements without inducing confusion (Hannah & Moore, 1953, p. 331). Hanna and Moore (1953) saw no empirical support for teaching words in independent isolation, relating to a method that involves students repeatedly writing a word to reach spelling mastery. While Hanna and Moore's suggestions for spelling instruction represent an understanding of English orthography as regular, rule-governed, and sensitive to phonemic awareness, their research was not widely accepted within the educational community (Hodges, 1977). However, by the 1960s linguistic research was starting to have an impact on spelling instruction. Researchers utilizing new computer technology were able to analyze larger numbers of words. At Cornell,

Venezky (1967) used a program to examine and compile the spelling-to-sound correspondence in 20,000 of the most common English words based on the position of vowel clusters and of consonants within the words. In the book that resulted from the analysis of this work, Venezky (1967) discussed the fallacy of connecting alphabetic symbols directly to sound, "the graphemic system is more complex than is revealed in the notion that there are twenty-six letters or graphemes which, through careful manipulation, can be mapped into the phonemes of English" (p. 81). Venezky drew attention to the business of mapping spelling onto sound utilizing a systematic procedure, and suggested that the parsing of words into spelling units was inconsistently handled not only in dictionaries like Webster's but also in spelling textbooks. Venezky (1967) gives for example the labeling of letters that are unpronounced as silent. In the case of *bomb*, the *b* is not silent, just unpronounced. The more precise explanation is "[b] is silent before word juncture and before certain suffixes" as is the case in the word *bombing* (p. 81). Venezky went on to explain that spelling-to-sound rules apply to "functional spelling units" not solely by grapheme(s), but according to phoneme, which are governed by predictable patterns (p. 83). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to break down functional spelling units into their constituents, the work of Venezky and other researchers in examining English orthography as regular, predictable, and rule-governed began to slowly impact spelling materials and instruction.

History of Spelling Instruction in the US: Contemporary Approaches

Spelling instruction in the US broadly falls into a few approaches including the incidental, basal, developmental, and etymological methods. Of the four methods, texts produced

by large publishing companies support both the basal and the developmental approach. However, the most common of these methods appears to remain grounded in instruction tied to a basal speller, following a tradition established during the earliest days of spelling education.

The Incidental Approach

The incidental approach to spelling instruction features indirect instruction with spelling taught as a feature of reading. Students learn new words through reading and writing, and spelling lessons, when they do occur, are taught through editing workshops (Schlagal, 2002). Students may track words they personally find challenging and work on the spellings of these words individually. These words are primarily cataloged in a writer's notebook dictionary maintained by each student. While this method may be helpful to improve the spelling of a discrete list of words that students find problematic, it provides no insight into how the English language is constructed. Critics of the incidental method believe that spelling is best developed in combination with direct instruction, and only represents a part of a comprehensive approach to spelling instruction.

The Basal Approach

The still popular basal method of spelling instruction features a spelling text to guide instruction. The basal features age-graded word lists sequenced to reflect word patterns with lists compiled and based on insights from developmental research (Schlagal, 2002). The basal texts are systematic, typically produced for grade-level instruction spanning grades two through eight, include approximately 3,000 words, and provide relatively little flexibility (Schlagal, 2002). Basal texts rely on static word lists and whole-group

teaching, which makes individualized instruction difficult to facilitate. An examination of the *Vocabulary for Achievement* (Richek, 2005) reveals 30 ten-word spelling lists designed for weekly practice. Words are grouped according to themes and featured in a short text paired with multiple-choice questions. A short section of two to three true-false questions focused on text comprehension. Two sentence completion steps feature vocabulary featured in the weekly list. Bi-weekly, multiple-choice tests are included in the teacher's edition to practice skills, "often found on standardized tests" (Richek, 2005, p. vii). Ten skill features including dictionary use, reading and reasoning, taking tests, and prefixes, roots, and suffixes appear after every third spelling lesson (Richek, 2005). Students are asked to consider word derivations, in a ten-question section featuring one derivation of each word from the weekly list, but there is no support to explain why or how the affixes affect the meaning of the selected words. When affixes are discussed, they appear in separate skill worksheets, isolated from the word lists. Only 4, two-page skill worksheets are included in the text. These feature the prefixes *non-*, *un-*, *pre-*, *post-*, *sub-*, and *super-*. The lone etymological hint is the mention that the prefix *un-* comes from Old English, with no explanation of how this information might have relevance to word study. Turning to the Online Etymology Dictionary (OED) to investigate these prefixes uncovers plenty of information; *non-* is a prefix meaning "not, by no means, not at all, not a" originating from the Old Latin *noenum* (Harper, 2014). Examining the prefix *un-* reveals that it is the "most prolific of English prefixes" with origins in Old English; *un-* is used to form over 1,000 compounds (Harper, 2014). According to the OED, *un-* experienced a "mass extinction" in early Middle English; however, it reappeared in the sixteenth century to form compounds with both borrowed and native

words (Harper, 2014). The prefix *un-* can also be utilized to make words from phrases as in the case with *uncalled-for* which originates in 1600 (Harper, 2014). The prefix *pre-* means "before", and had Old French and Medieval Latin origins, coming from the Latin *prae* (Harper, 2014). Originating from the Latin *post*, the prefix *post* means "after" (Harper, 2014). It should be noted that *post* also functions as free base meaning "a piece (as of timber or metal) fixed firmly in an upright position especially as a stay or support" (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Reviewing the etymology indicates a different Latin origin, *postis*, so although the prefix and the noun share spelling, they are not related morphologically or etymologically (Merriam-Webster, 2014). The prefix *sub-* originates in Latin, meaning "under, beneath; behind; from under; resulting from further division" (Harper, 2014). The EOD also points out that <sub-> was used as a prefix in Latin, and assimilated to following " *-c-*, *-f-*, *-g-*, *-p-*, and often *-r-* and *-m-*" (Harper, 2014). This assimilation produces the prefixes <suc->, <suf->, <sug->, <sup->, <sur->, and <sum->. Finally, <super->, the last "prefix" of the six presented in the text, is defined as a word-forming element instead of a prefix, with the meaning "above, over, beyond," from Latin *super-* (Harper, 2014). Clearly, the inclusion of the six prefixes in *Vocabulary for Achievement* provides a weak investigation of the origin these units, with five of the six actually functioning as prefixes. There is no recognition of English as a dynamic language that has changed over time, relates to other words, and continues to be productive.

Few texts, including *Vocabulary for Achievement*, are designed to encourage students to engage with words in order to "perceive, manipulate, or automatize the generalization of the orthographic generalizations illustrated in the word lists," skills that would help students understand the orthographic

rules underlying the composition of words (Schlagel, 2002, p. 53). Basal texts seem to remain popular due the labor-intensity of creating individualized instruction for each student.

The Developmental Approach

The developmental spelling method has gained in popularity. This method is based on how learners acquire orthographic knowledge. Students learn to spell in logical ways from concrete sound-to-letter spelling, to pattern-driven spelling, to a growing awareness and control of meaning-by-pattern spelling of low-frequency Latin and Greek derived words (Schlagel, 2002). Research has led to systematized programs like *Words Their Way* (Baer, et al., 1996) that individualize instruction for students based on their developmental spelling level and includes a range of five developmental levels. An examination of the *Words Their Way* instructional materials includes spelling inventories to assess and determine each student's developmental spelling level, suggested methods for study, and an optional student notebook available at an additional charge. While words selected for study vary depending on the development level of the student, word study features a variety of word sorts included for all stages. Middle school students characteristically are working in the "syllable and affix stage" in the *Words Their Way* program. Words selected for study in the syllable and affix stage are based on content area vocabulary (Baer, et al., 1996). The focus of study during this stage is the examination of bases and affixes. Students work to deconstruct and assemble words as they examine meaning and orthography. Students are encouraged to use the word they are examining in the context of writing. Beyond word sorts and writing, students take a self-corrected pre-test and conclude their weekly word study with a post-test. While students do examine the meaning of

bases and affixes, word study does not include an examination of etymology. There are general references as to when an entire word sort group of words entered the English language; however, individual words are not investigated, and this information seems more like a fun fact that an serious consideration in how the bases and affixes operate to arrive at spelling and meaning of a word.

The Etymological Approach

Teaching from an approach that also incorporates an etymological perspective seems to be a rich way for students to investigate the English language in ways that have a positive impact on spelling, as most proponents of teaching from an etymological approach incorporate morphology, phonology, and etymology into their orthographic instruction. Hutchenson (2012) suggests, "[L]ater stages of spelling development involve learning the orthographic and morphological principles and generalities of the etymological roots upon which many of the rules of English spelling are based. However, there is a lack of formal instruction that targets these principles" (p. 67). While there are resources online to support this approach to instruction, including *The Teacher's Tool Box for Real Spelling* (Ramsden & Mira, 2007) and WordWorks Literacy Centre (Bowers, 2008), this curriculum seems more challenging to implement due to a lack of pre-packaged teacher and/or student texts.

An examination of the process students would utilize in the classroom might be helpful for comparison. Teachers can find samples of word inquiries at the WordWorks website, and Bowers hosts a blog to respond to teacher and student questions. An initial investigation of a word begins with inquiry as students question the structure and meaning in and between words. Bowers poses the guiding questions for teachers and

students; these include the four prompts "Mean? Built? Relatives? Pronunciation?" (Bowers, 2008, n.p.). If students inspect the spelling of the word <refugee>, they would first look for meaning. A Dicitionary.com online search of the word results in "a person who flees for refuge or safety" and the suggestion to "see" <refuge> (Random House, 2014). Moving on to investigate <refuge> shows an origin in Late Middle English and a Latin root *fugere*, which means "to flee" (Random House, 2014). From the examination of meaning, the hypothesis that the words <refugee> and <refuge> are related can be drawn. If these words are linked, students need to examine the word structure. Word sums that deconstruct words into prefix, base, suffix, and connecting letter(s) are utilized for comparison, for example, <refuge/> + <ee> <refugee>, where / denotes the omission of the <e>. If these words are related, the <-ee> suffix is the next element for investigation. A Dictionary.com search for the <-ee> suffix reveals evidence to support <-ee> as a suffix, "forming from transitive verbs nouns" and examples like *employee* and *mortgagee* (Random House, 2014). The word sums of the example words <employ> + <ee> <employee> and <mortgage/> + <ee> <mortgagee> provide evidence to support the hypothesis that words <refugee> and <refuge> are related structurally. The previous dictionary searches established the meaning link of both words, evolving from the same origin of the Latin root *fugere*. The next step is to determine if <refuge> is a base or if can it be further analyzed. If refuge is a base, there are other words that can be related in structure and meaning. Examining <refuge>, it is possible that <re-> is a prefix. Again, checking Dictionary.com reveals <re-> as a prefix "occurring originally in loanwords from Latin" (Random House, 2014). Given <re-> as a prefix, then <fuge> must be a base. In order to investigate whether <fuge> is a bound or a free base, students may choose *Word*

Searcher, a free tool provided by Neil Ramsden (2012) that facilitates pattern searches. Checking <fug> allows the pattern searcher to look for words that take on a vowel suffix that replaces the <e>. *The Word Searcher* (Ramsden, 2012) results in fifteen matches including <refugee>, which is related morphologically according to the earlier investigation. Other matches include: <fug>, <fuggy>, <fugue>, <fugues>, <refuge>, <refuges>, <refugees>, <fugitive>, <fugitives>, <centrifuge>, <subterfuge>, <centrifugal>, <centrifuges>, and <subterfuges> (Ramsden, 2012). The first four words are not structurally related, as <fug> has no <e> and <fugue> includes the <ue> combination. <Fug>, meaning "the stuffy atmosphere of a poorly ventilated space" is not morphologically related (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Since we did not find an example of <fuge> standing alone, we can assume that it is a bound base. Examining the remaining words for structure result in the following word sums that could be structurally related to <fuge>

<re> + <fuge> <refuge>
<re> + <fuge/> + <es> <refuges>
<fuge/> + <ite/> + <ive> <fugitive>
<fuge/> + <ite/> + <ive> + <s> <fugitives>
<centre> + <i> + <fuge> <centrifuge>
<centre> + <i> + <fuge/> +<es> <centrifuges>
<centre> + <i> + <fuge/> +<al> <centrifugal>
<subter> + <fuge> <subterfuge>
<subter> + <fuge/> + <es> <subterfuge>

Once the word sums are determined as structurally related, the meanings can be checked. Students can return to online dictionaries to check the morphology of the words. Looking at the phonology, students would find pronunciation differences in these words. This difference provides an opportunity

to investigate phonological rules. The grapheme <g> is pronounced [g] in the word <centrifugal>; however, the grapheme <g> is pronounced [dʒ] in <centrifuge>. This could lead to the discussion that <g> + <e>, <i>, or <y> results in a [dʒ], a phonology rule that applies to words like <knowledge> and <college>.

Since the word sums are morphologically related, students are then able to create a word matrix that will be useful in constructing words that utilize the base <fuge>, along with the prefixes and suffixes that can be used with this bound base. Word matrixes provide a graphic representation that allows students to see how word sums are constructed. Ramsden provides a *Matrix-maker* on his website, although students could create these matrixes with some knowledge of Microsoft office software and teacher guided direction. The following matrix example is provided from a word investigation from the WordWorks Literacy Centre website (Bowers, 2008).

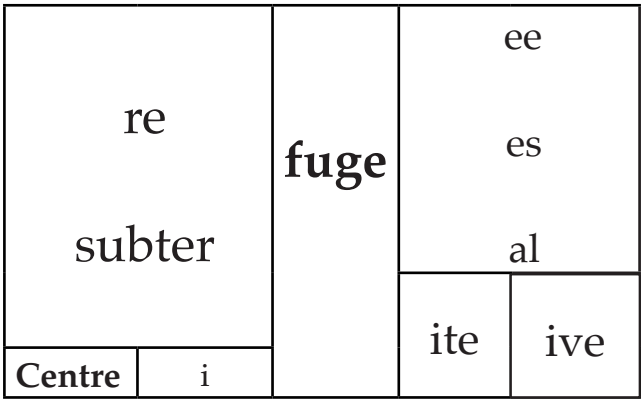

Figure 1: WordWorks Literacy Centre word investigation matrix

While an etymological approach to spelling instruction is not commonplace in K–8 education, there is evidence for the efficacy of this method. Hutcheon, Campbell, and

Stewart's (2012) empirical study of spelling instruction through etymology presents a plausible hypothesis for investigating this curricular approach. "Presenting words with the same root provides a high degree of similarity and limits the amount of learning for each new word" (p. 62). Students participating in the study examined both roots and affixes. "Throughout this study, common morphological word endings were encountered many times. It was expected that the pattern of orthography would become more predictable and understandable for the children and result in an improvement in spelling" (p.62). Hutcheon, Campbell, and Stewart (2012) found a positive effect of the etymological spelling program for female study participants. Although this was a small-scale study, lasting less than a full school year, the findings suggest a positive impact for a curriculum utilizing an etymological approach to spelling instruction.

Where are we now? A single case:

While correct spelling can be a concern, depending upon the genre, writing situation, and the audience, opinions regarding spelling instruction range from the need for direct instruction to the elimination of spelling in the middle-school curriculum. As Wilde (2008) suggests, even though teachers don't seem to be happy about student spelling, some believe spelling should be part of the middle-school curriculum. The only consistency in the opinions regarding spelling instruction seems to be the level of inconsistency exhibited among stakeholders. There can be a variety of approaches to instruction found in a single school district. An informal survey of the instructional methods utilized in the small suburban middle school where I teach uncovered five different instructional approaches spanning four grade levels; two utilizing basal

spellers, one focused on content-specific texts, one incidental approach, and one developmental approach. These include instruction focused on ten-word lists rooted in subject-area language, paired with a definition, and assessed via a weekly crossword puzzle test; twenty-word lists with varying focuses and no connection to word meaning produced by a well-known publishing company and assessed with pre-test, post-test strategy; ten-word lists connected by meaning and focusing on high-frequency words drawn from grade-level texts and tested by weekly spelling/definition tests; word-of-the-week lists selected by an English language arts teacher from a computer application and integrated into student writing with no weekly test; and developmental spelling providing diverse spelling word lists depending upon a standardized word-list test, tailored to each child's developmental needs, and assessed through classroom activities with no spelling tests.

From a student's perspective, spelling instruction must seem to fluctuate with inconsistency. Students in my classes have reported vastly divergent spelling experiences based on their early elementary history. They seem to have no understanding of why spelling is included in the English language arts curriculum. Many of my students have reported frustration with the sixth-grade spelling curriculum. Some of that frustration is attributed to the variety of spelling instruction within this single grade level. My English language arts colleague is piloting a developmental spelling program called *Words Their Way*, published by Pearson—a company with dubious intent and multiple volumes of pricy companion manuals. This program approaches spelling through word sorts and games. While instructionally friendly, this is still a packaged program minus the weekly test, and students are confused by the difference in instructional approaches. The

bulk of student frustration is centered on the lack of relevance for the words and the practice of "doing spelling" as one student clearly articulated,

> Spelling test[s] are a waste if you were like me the day after you tested you don't remember the words the next day. Therefore it's a waste to even take a test you won't even remember the words for the rest of your life. We shouldn't have to take spelling test[s]. (personal communication, March 18, 2014)

This student is not alone in the appraisal of the *Vocabulary for Achievement* spelling curriculum. Students do know that spelling is valued in this suburban, white, middle-class school district. In my experience, parents also seem to expect the weekly spelling test and frequently ask about this part of my curriculum at introductory conferences. The culture in which these students are immersed, which includes middle-school and future high-school teachers, emphasize correct spelling. One of the concerns about changing the spelling curriculum, six-headed monster that it is, revolves around meeting some of these expectations. I tend to agree with Wilde (2008) when she suggests, "Spelling is too unimportant in relation to the larger process of learning how to write, and the majority of your class is likely to need little, if any, spelling work beyond a few basic tips in the context of a larger discussion about writing" (p. 10). However, when I begin teaching the revision process in writing, students focus almost entirely on correct spelling as standing in for revision. Students' experience with revision prior to sixth grade seems to be centered entirely on spelling and grammatical construction, likely representing the values students have witnessed in prior English language arts classes. While I understand the ease in correcting spelling as opposed to providing comments that support content

revision, this practice does not assist students in becoming better writers or better spellers. Wilde (2008) notes the prevalence of this practice, "It can be hard to let go of spelling police work—I've seen professors automatically copyedit graduate students' papers as they read them—but believe me, it's counterproductive" (p. 11).

Discussion and Final Thoughts

The history of spelling instruction reaches back to the colonial period in the US. In spite of the research suggesting improved methods to teach children, English orthography remains tied to archaic methods. I tend to agree with Richards when he states, "[As] students discover the organizational patterns behind spelling, they learn to see that the language is more principled and less random than they thought" (p. 16). Students can produce correct English orthography without a complete understanding of morphology, phonology, or etymology. However, without this understanding, those correct spellings lack the rich understanding students could gain from a more complex study of the English language. Of the twenty-seven classrooms where spelling is taught in my district, only one classroom utilizes a developmental approach to spelling instruction as a pilot study of the *Word Their Way* program. Basal spelling texts provide teachers with ready-made instructional plans, which make them an easy choice for elementary teachers responsible for instruction in reading, writing, spelling, math, science, and social studies.

For each of the past two years, I have served as a member of the district spelling committee, a committee dedicated to examining our practice and selecting a spelling program for the entire district. Over the course of these two years, no decisions were made to change the curriculum and none seem

forthcoming. In a recent conversation with the curriculum director, I was encouraged to adopt an etymological approach to spelling instruction; however, I was also advised that teachers who attended a workshop introducing this approach to word study were overwhelmed by their lack of antecedent knowledge and/or preparation to implement this type of instruction. I understand the reluctance. Although I am grateful for the approval to continue to investigate the ways in which a focus on etymology, morphology, and phonology will improve my instruction, I also understand that I will be the sole educator adopting this approach. Problem solving is at the heart of my curriculum, so the etymological approach is appropriate. I think it is necessary to consider the ways in which I can assist my colleagues in considering this robust method. I concur with Richards (2002) as he states, "When they learn how our language works, students can take much of the guesswork out of spelling. It's rewarding to replace the anxious feeling of guesswork with the confident look of a student who has control over the language because [s/]he knows the reason behind the spelling" (p.16). In a year, I hope my students will share similar experiences.

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Deborah Riggert-Kieffer is a PhD student at Illinois State University in the English studies program. Her research interests include rhetorical genre theory and cultural historical activity theory within an English education context. She is the English 145 Coordinator for the ISU Writing Program and teaches English at Washington Middle School.

THE CONCUSSION EPIDEMIC

KRISTEN WEISENBERGER

Concussion: the single word that can stop any athlete dead in his or her tracks. A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that alters the way your brain functions. This type of injury is more commonly caused by a blow to the head; however, a concussion can occur when the head and upper body are violently shaken. Many individuals assume that people only receive concussions if they play sports, but anyone is at risk for a concussion. The number of concussions in the nation are increasing rapidly, so it is in the best interest of all to

be better educated on the topic so one can make an informed decision of how much they are willing to take a risk now that will affect their future.

One of the common questions that people ask is "How do I know that I have a concussion?" Many individuals are unaware, or believe false myths, of the symptoms of a concussion. When taking a poll from my peers, many knew the bare minimum or knew of the symptoms of the extreme horror-story cases. To provide clarification for all, here are the common symptoms of a concussion (See table 1 below).

Immediate Symptoms	**Delayed Symptoms**
Headache or a feeling of pressure in the head	Concentration and memory complaints
Temporary loss of consciousness	Irritability and other personality changes
Confusion or feeling as if in a fog	Sensitivity to light and noise
Amnesia surrounding the traumatic event	Sleep disturbances
Dizziness or "seeing stars"	Psychological adjustment problems and depression
Ringing in the ears	Disorders of taste and smell
Nausea/vomiting	
Slurred speech	
Delayed response to questions	
Appearing dazed	
Fatigue	

Table 1: Immediate and delayed concussion symptoms

With every medical injury/condition, multiple myths surround the facts. These false truths come in the forms of old wives' tales and assumptions. There are many myths out there surrounding concussions, but here are a few to help young children learn the truths about the severity of a concussion.

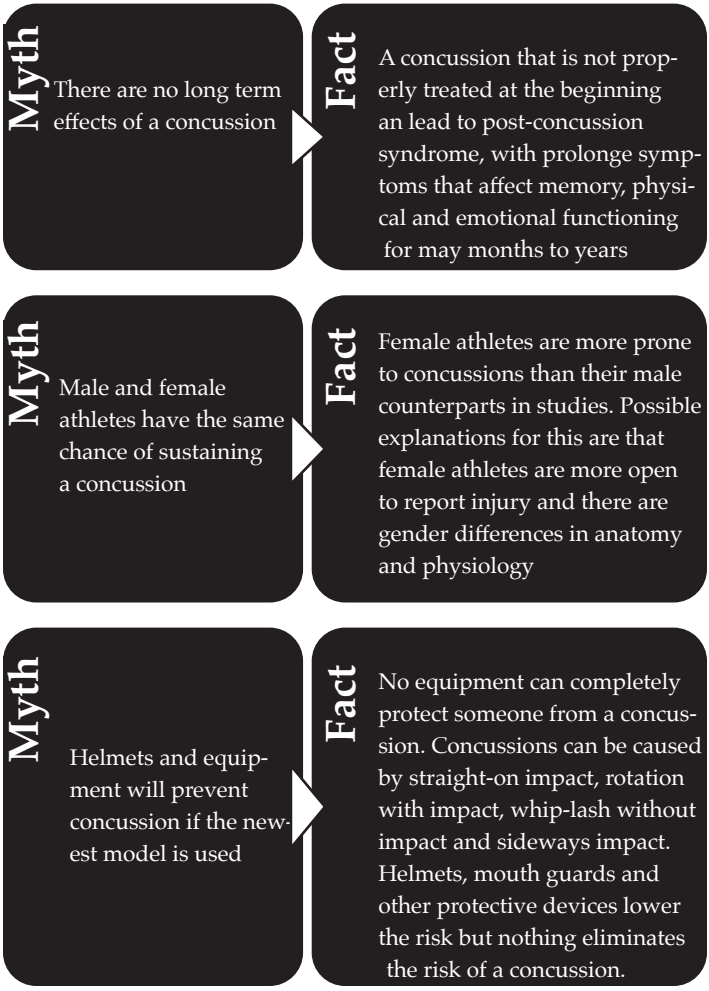

Table 2: Concussion Myth and Facts

Now that concussions have been on the rise, scientists are searching for more answers and possible solutions to the problem. Concussions, primarily known as traumatic brain injuries (TBI), are one of the "major causes of death and disability in the United States" ("TBI: Get the Facts"). This startling reality causes us to ask: What are the causes of these traumatic brain injuries? According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the major cause of a TBI is due to falls, which account for 40.5 percent of concussions. The second leading cause is unintentional blunt trauma (or being hit by an object) which accounts for 19 percent of concussions ("TBI: Get the Facts"). These factors alone relate to sport-related injuries because a major fall in a match that results in one's head hitting the floor is considered a "fall" and being hit in the head by a ball is considered an "unknown" cause. Since doctors have discovered this trend, they are now looking more into the effects these injuries will have on their patients.

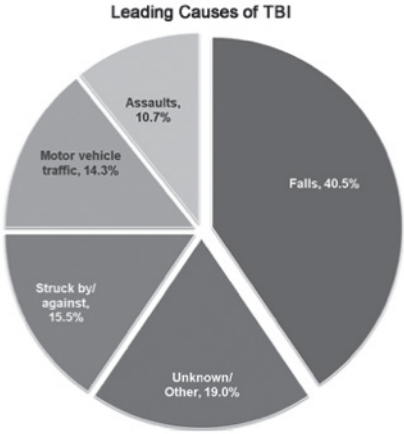

Table 3: Source: CDC.gov

One major case study that has discovered a great deal of insight into the world of concussions was conducted by Nikita Bajwa., et al. in January 2016. For their experiment,

they wanted to test the effects of repeated mild traumatic brain injuries on mice. This experiment consisted of three groups of mice: the control group who received no blow to the head, a group that received one major blow to the head, and a group that received multiple minor blows to the head. At the end of their study, they concluded that multiple minor blows to the head were more harmful than one major blow to the head. They also discovered that, "mild traumatic brain injuries can lead to long-lasting cognitive and motor deficits, increasing the risk of future behavioral, neurological, and affective disorders" (Bajwa, et al. 1). This news was rather startling to some when I presented these findings to my peers whom I previously interviewed. One individual stated that she, "definitely thought that a huge blow would be worse than multiple small hits." This is a commonly held myth that many people believed until recently.

One individual who knew about the devastating effects of multiple blows to the head prior to anyone else, was Dr. Omalu. Dr. Bennet Omalu made the first discovery of football-related brain trauma, which he later coined the term Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE). This disease describes the life-ending effects that multiple blows to the head can cause which includes losing one's mind and becoming a radically different person. He discovered this disease upon studying the brain of the famous football player Mike Webster, and in a *Frontline* interview, he discusses the process of studying Mike Webster ("League of Denial"). This discovery lead to the unveiling of the NFL controversy. The NFL had been aware of the concussion issue for a long time before Dr. Omalu made his discovery. For the NFL, the players were seen as money makers rather than actual human beings. In the 2015 Will Smith movie, *Concussion*, the actors discuss how the trainers were told to "do anything they could to keep them in the

game." Once the NFL controversy was revealed, multiple players stepped forward demanding compensation for the pain and suffering that they suffered as a result of staying in a game despite having received a brain injury. While this was happening, there was a large decline in youth involvement in high-contact sports such as football. In order to regain a positive image with the public, the NFL began conducting further research in prevention and treatment for players who suffered concussions as well as re-writing sideline protocol regarding when a player should be pulled from a game. Do they follow these new guidelines? We may never know.

Many other sports have reported high levels of concussion rates, but one sport in particular stands out from the rest: Rugby. The leading sports with concussions are football, Rugby, and ice hockey. These are merely a few. I personally play Rugby, so I can attest to this high concussion rate as I have suffered from multiple concussions myself. Majority of Rugby players will go on record and state that they were specifically taught the correct technique to tackle someone in a way that will result in the least amount of injury. This is a result of a program that USA Rugby developed called RugbySmart. This is a program that is dedicated to inform the coaches and referees about the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of concussions. In an article titled "Concussion Sideline Management Intervention for Rugby Union Leads to Reduced Concussion Claims," the authors address the issue: "the effectiveness of a concussion management education program in rugby in reducing the number and cost of concussion/brain injury moderate to serious claims was assessed" (Gianotti and Hume 181). One team in particular, the New Zealand All Blacks, radically changed their sideline protocol in order to detect concussions sooner and to prevent trainers from putting the players back onto the field. Unlike the NFL,

USA Rugby was aware of the concussion issue and decided to act upon it in order to find ways to minimize the numbers. With the revamped sideline protocol, there was an increase in identifying concussions successfully.

Now that the facts are all laid on the table, you may be asking yourself, "What's the point of all of this?" As athletes, we place ourselves at risk of injury every time that we step out onto the field, pitch, or diving board. We make the conscious decision to take that risk in order to do something that we are passionate about. But how much risk are you willing to take in order to play the sport you are passionate about? Is your sport worth losing your mind slowly over the years and losing your memory, which could lead to depression? How much are you willing to risk now that it will impact your future? For many adolescent athletes, we do not think as far into the future as we should. We fall under the false hope that, *I'll be fine* or *Something like that won't happen to me*. I am personally guilty of this. I live under the false hope that since I am doing well now (brain-function wise) I don't see my concussions having a serious impact on my health down the road. My question to you young athletes is: How much of your future are you willing to give up during the present?

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Kristen Weisenberger developed this essay while a student in an advanced writing seminar. She was invited to submit the paper as an example of a powerful and thoughtful response to a commonly discussed topic. She is currently finishing her senior year at Illinois State and hopes to teach after graduation. She is a committed Rugby player who hoped to rebut the assumptions about the dangers of Rugby.

BOOK REVIEW

TIFFANY A. FLOWERS

Glover, Savion and Bruce Weber. *Savion!: My Life in Tap*. William Morrow and Company, 2000.

"I want to tell a story, give the people some history, because that's what tap is, that's what tap carries, history, and not just the history of tap but what was going on while tap dancing was going on."

The above quote embodies the storyline of this autobiography written about Glover's life. The text is a picture book. However, it is written in a dense format with both formal and informal language. This work is illustrated using photographs from Glover's life, onomatopoeia, and meaningful quotes and captions. The text itself is seventy-eight pages in length and contains the storyline of his life on about fifty or more pages of this book. Glover's text is a unique biography of the performer's life as an emerging star in the dance world using the medium of tap dancing. Readers will be

delighted with his historical grounding in the genre of tap and his experiences abroad and in the United States crafting his voice and performance through tap. The extensions from this text could include teaching children about tap as an art form, African-American presence within history, and living African-American history. This text can be read independently in grades three through six by students who enjoy reading texts with supporting illustrations.

Dr. Tiffany A. Flowers is an assistant professor of education at Perimeter College at Georgia State University. She is an Indiana Minority Faculty Fellow, Frederick Douglass Teaching Fellow, and a 2014 NCTE Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award Recipient. Her research interests include literature, traditional literacy, diversity issues in education, African-American literacy development, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Correspondence concerning this book review may be e-mailed to tflowers@gsu.edu.

BRAVE NEW PEDAGOGY: CRITICAL ANALYSIS, SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF DYSTOPIAN TEXT IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

MICHAEL A. SOARES

> *"If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever."*
>
> George Orwell, *1984*

The Defamiliarized Zone

"Mr. Soares, can we read the *The Hunger Games*?" Sometimes it's *Divergent* or *The Maze Runner*. It used to be *The Giver*, and with the current dystopian text craze still in force, it is sure to be any number of different genre novels in the coming years. I hear the question every semester and I generally evade. Of course, I will make an attempt to meet the students halfway, offering to teach the text if students are willing to

purchase or buy it on their own. But after twenty years in the secondary school classroom, I know my regular education students, primarily seniors, won't take the initiative. In spite of my cynicism, and in my "spare time," I *have* prepared to teach many of the best sellers, and my folders with materials grow ever larger as I cut and out and print materials to use one day when my students actually rise to the occasion and secure copies of their own book; or I am able to convince the institutional purchasers of textbooks to set aside money to buy copies of a "popular" but "expensive" text. Unfortunately, as is true in many high schools, the English Department, long bled of any surplus funds to buy "extra" books, must focus almost exclusively on maintaining and replacing the same canonical paperbacks we have been using for decades. The questions I generally face from the holders of the purse strings is, "Why this particular book?" and "Don't you already teach dystopian standbys like *Brave New World* and *1984*?" While the impetus is on the instructor to rationalize the use and expense of such texts, there is a dearth of research readily available on the specifics of critical dystopian text selection to support textbook requests. In order to promote the use of compelling dystopian text in the classroom, the two-fold purpose of this essay is to articulate the usefulness of dystopian literature in the secondary classroom and also to pull together research and theory which works to guide in creating a rationale for particular dystopian texts.

M. Keith Booker's research in *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* details the characteristics of the dystopian text that includes a futuristic totalitarian state functioning to reflect current social, political, and in particular, technological concerns. He writes, "The principal technique of dystopian fiction is defamiliarization: by focusing their critiques of society on spatially or temporally distant settings,

dystopian fictions provide fresh perspectives on problematic social and political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or considered natural and inevitable" (19). Through Booker's lens, the teaching of dystopian texts is plausible as a vehicle towards moving students out of their comfort zones and promoting sophisticated critical analysis in the secondary classroom. My argument reflects a belief that teachers, with innovative and theory-inspired curriculum design expedited through the use of dystopian texts, can empower students to experience "the opening of a wider world of culture" (Scholes, *English after the Fall* 35). In a 2012 article entitled "Grim Visions in the Classroom: Dystopian Texts and Adolescent Readers," I wrote, "As a high school literature teacher, I have long taught the classics in my upperclassmen secondary courses. However, due to the advent of the recent proliferation of popular adolescent dystopian texts, I have had to reevaluate my pedagogical approach to acknowledge that students are coming into my classroom already cognizant of the genre" (27). This student familiarity with dystopian text complicates decisions as to which dystopian texts should be selected for classroom use, what qualities these texts should possess, and the text's potential for the facilitation of critical analysis.

Who Controls the Past Controls the Future

In 1946, George Orwell, reviewing Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, outlined genre characteristics of the dystopian text genre to which his own novel, *1984*, would eventually contribute in 1949. Much of the review resorts to further comparison of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* published in 1932. Orwell discusses how the novels both "deal with the rebellion of the primitive human spirit against a rationalized, mechanized, painless world" in an imagined future ("Review" 72). In each dystopia, Orwell observes that the citizens have lost

their individuality, but critiques Huxley's text as showing "no power hunger, no sadism, no hardness of any kind"; as a result, although the Zamyatin text is "less well put together," he praises its "political awareness" ("Review" 73). Ultimately, he deems *We* as the "superior" book due to its "intuitive grasp of the irrational side of totalitarianism—human sacrifice, cruelty as an end to itself, the worship of a Leader who is credited with divine attributes" ("Review" 75). Orwell later infuses these political qualities into his own *1984*, encapsulated in Big Brother's terrible reign over Oceania using psychological terror, physical torture, and technology such as the propaganda-spewing and thoughtcrime-detecting telescreen. The trajectory of *1984* has been enormous; in the wake of the 2013 US National Security Agency (NSA) scandal, sales of the novel skyrocketed and even the President of the United States invoked its title in a speech defending the program, saying, "In the abstract, you can complain about Big Brother and how this is a potential program run amok, but when you actually look at the details, then I think we've struck the right balance" (qtd. in Hendrix). Booker writes, "If Zamyatin's *We* gains a special poignancy from the striking fulfillment of its dystopian warnings under Stalin," *1984* in turn "takes its energy from the ability to look back on the worst horrors of the Stalin years—with a side glance at Hitler as well" (69). Despite the fact that it was written over sixty-five years ago, Orwell's grim vision is more relevant today than it has ever been. The novel makes genuine inquiries into the nature of technology and its potential for control in our daily lives, simultaneously provoking questions about issues of our own autonomy that affect our daily interactions, which is why I propose the use of *1984* as a lynchpin text for critical selection of dystopian texts for the secondary classroom.

For the purposes of this essay, as well as my own

classroom practice, I consider *1984* as a template for cogent dystopian curriculum; as a focal text, it's a foundation for the scaffolding of relevant themes in a dystopian text culture that builds upon previous texts. Among *1984*'s most urgent themes is the proliferation of technology and its influences on both individuals and society. Writes Booker, "Like both Zamyatin and Huxley, Orwell suggests that certain mechanical applications of technology lend themselves directly to political oppression, even while science itself remains a potentially liberating realm of free thought" (70); so while *1984* relies upon antecedent dystopian ideology from earlier texts, particularly when it comes to technology, its own particular ideology most compellingly reflects contemporary concerns, as evidenced for example by the American government keeping tabs on its citizens' electronic communications. The internet is a perfect example of a "liberating realm" because as a mode of communication it has removed barriers to publishing—providing a voice and agency to virtually anyone who has access. However, the same technology which promotes "free thought" has never made it easier to surrender one's own privacy or make information available to those who possess the tools to collect it, which includes supposedly benign entities like Google—an organization that openly admits in its User Agreement to collecting and using "your" information—as well as government agencies like the NSA, which admits only under duress that it monitors communications, purportedly for our own protection.

The influence of the media is a pressing matter, particularly for adults who interact with adolescents. Orwell, as Eric Blair, had "obtained first-hand experience of the power of mass media as a producer with BBC" and therefore in *1984* "took meticulous care to integrate artfully a coherent culture in which each event, character, and dialogue tells

something deeper about this century" (Cooper 85). Booker points out, "All culture in Oceania is produced directly by the Ministry of Truth, which works to supply party members with 'newspaper, films, textbooks, telescreen programs, plays, novels—with every conceivable kind of information, instruction, or entertainment'" (Booker 78). Without question, high-school students in 2015 are hyper-connected into all manners of multimodality; even access to novels is often through a handheld device. Furthermore, such access is not made without someone taking notice, hence Thomas W. Cooper's suggestion, in "Fictional *1984* and Factual *1984*," that, "the deeper danger is not that 1984 is coming, but rather that it *has come* in another guise, and we are unaware of it" (99–100). In Orwell's vision, the telescreens remained stationary, allowing thought criminals like Winston the illusion that they could lurk outside its vision, recording thoughts on an illicit diary or escaping beyond its peripheral field for a surreptitious rendezvous in the Golden Country. Today, we make it easier for Big Brother by carrying telescreens in our pockets, high-functioning computers in the form of smartphones and other personal electronic devices, all instruments capable of transmitting our pictures and words across the globe yet equally equipped to capture our stray virtual thoughts for collection in a database.

Paramount to the discussion is the influence of antecedent texts, which inform not only the construction but the reception of newer text available to students. Regarding familiarity with the genre, contemporary students have not only likely been exposed to children's literature such as Margaret Peterson Haddix's *Among the Hidden* series, but they may be familiar with Lois Lowry's *The Giver*—either the novel, film, or both—not to mention the many other films produced over the last few years, including Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger*

Games and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* series. The current market saturation presents dystopia in video games, graphic novels, manga, and other media that not only competes but uses each other for reference. For example, in *The New York Times*, critic Michelle Dean measures *Divergent* against both J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games*, calling the *Divergent* books "threadbare, starved orphans." Regardless of the posturing of critics or the personal tastes of students, it is exciting times for dystopian texts by any measure, and secondary teachers should also be aware of dystopian content in the students' previous classroom experiences. If students have read overtly totalitarian stories such as Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* or Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" earlier in their education, it becomes that much easier to build curriculum incorporating and making connections to genre characteristics from those texts. Later in this essay, I will discuss priming students for the implementation of more complicated and mature dystopian texts as well as scaffolding towards greater sophistication in critical reading and analysis.

Big Brother and Critical Analysis

The dystopian text is comprised of elements that position it to enhance the complex objectives of teaching literature in the secondary classroom. Such texts carry a gravitas of content that reflects the seriousness of the act of critical analysis—a complex achievement of focus for students who themselves are experiencing the defamiliarizing effects of adolescence. Adolescents are in the midst of establishing themselves as individuals and are drawn to dystopian texts where the "concept of the 'individual' is ultimately at stake"; students developing their own individuality in society would no doubt experience a vicarious sense of autonomy in the resistance to the textual power of a fictional dystopian culture "seeking to

strip everyone of it" (Soares 29). In this quest for individuality and agency, dystopian texts can be used as vehicles to help facilitate the development of students' critical analysis skills. Michael DeCesare, in "Casting a Critical Glance at teaching 'Critical Thinking'," writes, "Critical thinking skills, as well as the abilities to read and write critically, are cornerstone ideals—if not demonstrable realities—of schooling" (73). Despite his unwillingness to define critical thinking, he examines the Greek roots of the word *critic* and discusses how *kritikos* means "skilled in judging" or "able to make judgments and or discern," concluding that teachers wish "to teach our students the value of reason, of empirical evidence, of logic, of thoughtfulness" (77); in *1984*, all of these ideas are questioned, particularly as Winston endures the interrogation of O'Brien in Room 101, where the empirical evidence of two plus two, if Big Brother demands it, equals five (Orwell, *1984* 206). In the process of determining the qualities of critical thinking, DeCesare suggests, "teaching critical thinking skills is not a one-way street" because it requires consent, as well as "a certain degree or willingness" (74). He further muses, "Maybe we can most effectively teach critical thinking skills by requiring students to analyze current news stories" (77). Based on the current appetite for dystopian text and its advantageous topical conflation with headlines, the convergence of student willingness and critical thought is certainly primed for success in contemporary secondary classrooms.

Secondary students need guidance from teachers to make critical analysis from other perspectives but also to see "discourse structures themselves in all their fullness and their power" (Scholes 144). Beach, Thein, and Webb discuss the distinction of "critical engagement" that "combines critical distance with immersion and emotional investment" (138). This framework encompasses research on both print and

non-print sources, including digital media, film, and other text. The role of the teacher in this transaction is, "Once students identify a problem or issue, you can help them contextualize or frame that issue in terms of the larger institutional, cultural, psychological, or economic forces" (Beach, Thein, and Webb 140). Critical engagement from this pedagogical perspective is vital because it encompasses much of the other frameworks available to students, such as those focusing on content, skills, processes/strategies, literacy practices, and formalist activities (Beach, Thein, and Webb 78). In my own teaching, I am often hesitant to identify a particular "framework" for my approach, favoring instead an effort to draw from all of these in a comprehensive analysis of a particular text, and "critical engagement" seems to define that objective. Booker writes, "The dystopian genre thus serves as a locus for valuable dialogues among literature, popular culture, and social criticism that indicates the value of considering these discourses together and potentially sheds new light on all of them" (174).

In 2016, teachers and students are entering new territory as the headlines reflect our dystopian fiction, making it imperative to remind ourselves that, "our role and our subject are not cleanly detached from the world, but messily entangled with it" (Showalter 140). Along with the political and social discourses of dystopian texts—and lest we forget Orwell's telescreen, Huxley's decanting vials, or Collins's elaborate *Hunger Games* arena—the technological aspects are fundamental to shaping the critical analysis skills of students. In order to sidestep the mire of "science fiction" to where the technological aspects of dystopian texts are often regulated, teachers need to recognize *what* technology their students are using and *how* their students are interacting with it, likewise anticipating the implications for literacy in

these transactions. Kristi McDuffie writes in "Technology and Models of Literacy in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction," "These approaches to multiliteracies illustrate that computer and digital literacies are not simply celebrations of technology or ways to have fun. Rather, recent technology, much like traditional literacy tools, can also serve as a site of resistance and agency" (151). Therefore, digital literacy is a concern when facilitating critical analysis for dystopian text. Not only are adolescents becoming more calloused to the intrusion of technology and loss of privacy in their lives, they are actively condoning and proliferating it through their online activities. Again, explicit instruction in digital literacy is a prerequisite to critical analysis in promoting an "approach to literacy [that] provides a more productive way to engage in issues of technology and literacy than the unilateral critiques found in popular non-fiction" (McDuffie 151). The results will include readers who "will have an ideological balance of technology and its implications for human existence. Once adolescents have the tools to evaluate and predict the effects and pitfalls of technology, they will be better equipped to make decisions that will benefit the future" (Soares 8). Such a framework creates the ideal platform for dystopian texts that display "more complicated views of literacy than those that valorize handwriting and canonical literature can provide more fruitful means of engaging in these questions than texts that are overtly reproachful" (McDuffie 151).

Striking a Balance

Another aspect of the dystopian text that sustains enriched reading experiences is its interdisciplinary nature; under the direction of a skilled teacher, the dystopian text creates for students an environment in which they can participate in "content-specific expert groups engaged in

deepening conversations about their subject's standards and brainstormed events from the novel that could support the teaching of a standard" (Saunders 44). For example, in an essay entitled "What *The Hunger Games* Can Teach Us about Disciplinary Literacy," Saunders describes the multiple disciplines intersecting within the text: "Among these were probability, ratios, and drawings of the arena (math); comparison between Panem and the United States; attributes of the civilization like laws, tools, and society (social studies); character analyses, writing alternate endings, comparing the book to other dystopic novels (language arts); and ecology and the environment, adaptation, categorizing species (science)" (44). The multiplicity of skills, perspectives, genres, and all other variables in the reading of dystopian texts make the probability of strong connections for students more likely; the variety and timeliness of dystopian texts, as technology and its implications for humanity reverberate in our media and in our daily lives, makes its impact impossible for teachers and their students to ignore. Robert Scholes writes, "At some level we accept the truth of the ivory tower and secretly despise our own activities as trivial unless we can link them to a 'reality' outside of academic life" (*Textual Power* 5). Secondary school curriculums must not neglect dystopian texts; conversely, it should be shaped to accommodate it, with theory and classroom practice symbiotic in its mediation.

In addition, the explicit teaching of contemporary literary theory in the classroom creates the opportunity for revision of the classroom structure to benefit students. In *Teaching Literature*, Elaine Showalter expounds upon the consistency of theory and practice that has the tendency to alleviate constriction of knowledge in the classroom, imperative in an age of instant retrieval of information. She writes, "I'd like to see an erosion of the boundaries between literary

criticism and creative writing, between teaching and acting, between the abstract ethics of theory and the real ethical and moral problems involved in teaching material that raises every difficult human issue from racism to suicide" (viii). Facilitating a critical lens decenters the teacher in the classroom and paves the way for students to render a broader perspective and a richer interpretation of text. For example, when studying *1984*, students could delve into the basics of feminist theory and develop their understanding both of the text and the social and political aspects of their environment. In the novel, Julia, Outer Party and Anti-sex League member who seduces and subsequently joins Winston Smith in his thought-crime rebellion, is the lone female in the text. Students, from a feminist standpoint, could explore her experience, asking what social or political pressures motivate her to use sex to combat Big Brother; or, if she is such an important character, why she does not warrant a last name by which to be addressed (and sometimes be indirectly defined, like "Parsons" for example), similar to other male characters. Wayne Au positions characterization as such a political act, suggesting, "the point of such critical scholarship in curriculum studies is to influence practice by taking up real-world issues as educational inequality as a focus" (7). Fortunately, the contemporary dystopian text has enjoyed a reversal in male-centric trends, a movement not to be ignored in secondary classrooms. In a *Time* magazine article, "The New Age of Heroines: How Teenage Girls Started Saving the World," Lily Rothman writes, "Mainstream dystopian lit, of which *1984* and *Brave New World* are seminal texts, had adult, male protagonists. Teen-girl stories were separate, even when their heroines fell—literally, in the case of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland*—into situations that might merit inclusion" (54). Dystopian text, already at the cutting edge of

technological and political issues, can easily afford to create strong female models of bravery and heroism, and has had particular success with adolescent-oriented characters such as *The Hunger Games*' Katniss Everdeen who has played to wildly receptive audiences in both print and film.

Rabinowtiz and Smith, in *Authorizing Readers: Resistance and Respect in the Teaching of Literature*, reinforce the emphasis of critical analysis, adding that "if we recognize that the experience our students have as they read a text is both valuable and different from the experience we have as we re-read, and if we believe that what we do when we re-read has merit, all of our instruction should seek a balance between honoring a student's experience and educating it" (111). In recent years, serialized dystopian novels have surged in popularity. From a secondary classroom perspective, many students not only gravitate towards these types of novels like *The Giver* series or *The Hunger Games* series, but are in the crosshairs of intense marketing campaigns and even targeted by film versions. Regarding the prominence of dystopian text, Morrissey argues that "their enormous and growing popularity suggests that we live at a pivotal moment in human history just as the members of the intended youth audience are experiencing pivotal moments in their own development" (189). Therefore, teachers need to not only be accommodating of multimodal ports of access for dystopian texts, but also recognize their textual power. As I pointed out in 2012, "Adolescents, exposed to dystopian literature while fully immersed in rapidly changing technology, are able to see patterns unique to their experiences. For example, adolescents are likely to experience a range of activity from absorbing computer skills during K–12 years in order to compete later on in the workplace to buying and using equipment for the latest video game system craze" (Soares 28). Instead of being opposed to such text, whether

by skittish or overly frugal administrators, the study of prior and extracurricular reading experiences should be viewed as an opportunity for teachers and students to close the distance between themselves; even a passing familiarity with what the students are reading, on the teacher's part, is a chance to make connections to students and modeling for them a connection to text, prodding them towards more complicated reading in the meantime or future. Ultimately, teachers can "strike the balance" and "document and share their experience of reading and create contexts that encourage students to do readings of coherence" (Rabinowitz and Smith 111).

Picture of the Future: Priming

In "What Have We Been Priming All These Years? On the Development, Mechanisms, and Ecology of Nonconscious Social Behavior," John A. Bargh researches the concept of priming, which is used "to guide or channel behavior within the situation," the situation for the purposes of this essay, of course, being the high-school classroom (148). He discusses the complexity of priming, and of interest for dystopian studies, "the nonconscious activation of deep cultural ideologies" (148). The dystopian text depends in large part on the students' innate comprehension of cultural ideologies and finds its success in subverting the readers' expectations, challenging their preconceived ideas, and inviting them to explore uneasy projections of political and social upheavals in imaginary societies like Orwell's Oceania. Bargh continues, quoting a 1996 article by C. Fernyhough, "One of the requirements made of adults during this interaction is that they be sensitive to the child's current situation definition, so that they can 'pitch' their own situation definition at an appropriate level" (157). Such interaction is fraught with implications for instructors as, "it is this early and very extensive experience

with alternative perspectives given to us by our childhood caretakers, cognizant of and sensitive to our developing levels of understanding and capabilities, that becomes the basis for how we reason things out later as adults" (Bargh 157). If, by extension, teachers are caretakers of children's imaginations, building upon their students' early understanding of dystopia based on the totalitarian reign of countless fairy-tale witches and wolves, trolls under bridges, and frightening worlds thrust upon children by tornadoes or falling into rabbit holes, they can build upon this knowledge with increasingly sophisticated texts; the progression might range, for example, from the "IT" controlled dark planet Camazotz in Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, later to the adolescent stowaways in *Among the Hidden*, and later still to *The Giver*, priming them for the introduction of a more complex and mature dystopian text such as *1984*.

According to Bargh, "Nearly all forms of social representation can be primed, it seems—activated incidentally or unobtrusively in one context, to influence what comes next without the person's awareness of this influence" (147). Informed text selection and pedagogy dedicated to the critical analysis of social representations are powerful tools in this activation and priming of students' knowledge. In recent years, the subgenre of young adult dystopian texts written specifically for a secondary school-age audience has increased and gained traction in classrooms. According to Basu, Broad, and Hintz in *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers*, such texts emphasize the "trials of adolescents" and "recapitulate the conventions of the classic bildungsroman, using political strife, environmental disaster, or other forms of turmoil as the catalyst for achieving adulthood" (7). Dystopian texts, regardless of whatever mode in which they may be presented, are rarely an effervescent "read,"

particularly in our dangerous world, and especially since they are designed to "detail how the conditions of the dystopian society force protagonists to fall from innocence and achieve maturity as they realize the dystopian realities in which they live" (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 7). In Showalter's *Teaching Literature*, her "Teaching During Dark Times" chapter is a fascinating glimpse into the possibilities of introducing certain texts during tumultuous events. I certainly will never forget trying to teach, and later simply tossing out lesson plans, to just *be* with students on September 11, 2001, the same way my junior high teacher spent the day discussing with us the bravery of the Challenger crew on January 28, 1986. However, I do not just interpret "dark times" to be singular events. From the most pessimistic Orwellian perspective, it seems clear that dark days lay ahead for privacy as it slips away in the digital age, whether it's due to the internet, face-recognition technology in cameras on every street corner, GPS's in our cell phones, or agencies like the NSA collecting our personal information. Our very headlines decry the authoritarianism of which much of the dystopian text is comprised, and the students generally have instant and unlimited access to this media. Showalter advises us that, when our interactions with students are "overtaken" by public events "terrible and historic," the event "produces the desire to communicate, and insofar as we are able, we should go with that desire and facilitate it" (139). The dystopian text is a conduit to this type of communication, even confirming Showalter's remark that, "One of the most shattering discoveries of teaching in tragedy is that literature does not invariably offer the solace and the wisdom we claim for it" (138).

When adolescent students are studying dystopian texts, they might ask questions such as, "'Can society survive without basic freedoms and emotions?' or 'Is culture so

constantly redefining what is necessary that we must slow down and take account of our lives?'" (Soares 29). In "Against Schooling: Education and Social Class," Stanley Aronowitz addresses pedagogical applications of media and popular culture which has "called into question the separation of the public and private spheres" and challenges "the notion that autonomous private life any longer exists" (12). He acknowledges a contemporary sense of "big brother" where "the government now announces openly its intention to subject every telephone and computer to surveillance. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that media are a crucial source of education and may, in comparison to schools, exercise a greater influence on children and youth" (12). The impetus, therefore, is on progressive educators to harness the power of media to serve classroom purposes, which may be an uphill battle in school districts where teachers have little autonomy and curriculum may be under a Big Brother-ish system of its own. Once, I was forced to defend the screening of a trailer for the 1927 silent film *Metropolis* which had a several-second clip of a dancing flapper transforming into a robot. Despite the fact that the clip was part of a montage of dystopian imagery I used for high-school seniors to scaffold the conflicts of humanity and technology, the trailer was derisively and inaccurately referred to as "mature." Explaining that *1984* featured scenes of violence and sex, and the clip I showed involved neither, had no effect; the other party maintained objections despite admitting to never having read *1984* nor understanding the term "dystopian." Circumstances as such ironically demonstrate Big Brother's tenet "Ignorance is Strength," highlighting the power of bureaucracy in education and the tensions instructors may encounter in using media forms of dystopian texts in the classroom.

Scaffolding Dystopia

In my practice, I immediately think of novels of dystopia such as *Fahrenheit 451* or *Lord of the Flies* as texts that are accessible to my students, but also can be read on levels of increasing complexity as the unit progresses. Sally Emmons, in "We're Not in Kansas Anymore," demonstrates dystopian text scaffolding: "We begin with *Fahrenheit 451*. The diction is accessible and the action sequences are exciting. Students are immediately drawn to the young character of Clarisse McClellan, wishing in part that, if they lived in a society like Clarisse's, where free-thinking and individuality are condemned, they too would still choose to be individuals and go against the status quo" (75–76). Besides appealing to students as stories about the control of information and the very value of "text" in *Fahrenheit 451*, or intensified social interaction in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, dystopian texts are a force to "foster the literacy practices" of "identifying issues" and "critiquing systems" (Beach, Thein, and Webb 90). Furthermore, such texts lend themselves toward critically engaging activities and projects that encourage students to consider their own identities and inject their readings into text of their own composition. Later, Emmons moves students on to *1984*, which she describes as "a much less palatable read than Bradbury" (77). Orwell himself wrote *1984* after scaffolding his knowledge, his work "partly the product of his own reading of the genre" (Lorenzo 153). According to David J. Lorenzo, author of *Cities at the End of the World: Using Utopian and Dystopian Stories to Reflect Critically on our Political Beliefs, Communities, and Ways of Life*, Orwell "carefully read London's *The Iron Heel*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, as well as *We* before embarking on his own effort" (153). Lorenzo believes that Orwell is "ultimately concerned with the loss if individual autonomy" (181). Likewise, in

my own pedagogy, *1984* represents a thematic pinnacle for dystopian texts at the secondary level, scaffolding upon the students' exposure to antecedent texts and focusing analysis of themes for possible eventual reading during higher education, or at the very least equipping them to read with critical understanding on their own—outside of an academic setting.

As a text used frequently in the secondary classroom, *1984* answers Lorenzo's proposal that, "part of our confrontation with these problems be a reading and consideration of the utopian and dystopian stories that previously played important roles in fundamental political debates" (Lorenzo 2). While texts such as *Brave New World*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and the multitude of other dystopian texts are certainly effective and applicable to the circumstances of contemporary adolescents, *1984* enjoys a reputation of not only being an antecedent text to the more contemporary works, but also manages to become more relevant the further away from its publication date it becomes. A decade and half into the twenty-first century, we must acknowledge that the "science fiction fantasies of computers and technology are now real" (Lorenzo 2). Even two decades ago when I began teaching the novel, I would not have predicted that telescreens, instruments capable of both broadcasting media and conversely spying on viewers, would not only exist in the pervasiveness fictionalized by Orwell but would be voluntarily transported as "personal devices." My Orwellian sensibility inspires me to guess that we are only beginning to find out how the information gathered by these devices, and controlled by various agencies, already is or is going be used, or abused, in ways to manipulate us. Twenty years ago, the thought of relinquishing any sort of privacy was disturbing to high-school students; I can recall with clarity the strong negative student reaction to the implementation of cameras within the high school where

I was teaching at the time, resulting in T-shirts being printed featuring the principal's face accompanying the words "Big Brother is Watching." Today, I struggle to get my students to see past the convenience of their personal devices, what Lorenzo characterizes as an "insidious" reaction, as forces authoritarian and otherwise keep "appetites alive in order to sap energy from potential troublemakers, manipulating their material appetites, distracting their attention, and dividing potential rebels" (164).

Thomas J. Morrissey writes, "YA dystopias are fictive versions of the contemporary world that promote reflection and critique (189). Sixty-five years after its publication, the production of *1984*-inspired texts has intensified with a post-millennial furor, with dystopian texts designed specifically for adolescents demonstrating the genre's conduciveness to critical analysis. Unfortunately, teachers are faced with realities that constrict their abilities to develop curriculum maximizing these reflective transactions. Au describes the "terrors of performativity" placed upon both students and the teachers whose evaluations will depend, if they do not already, upon standardized test scores which display "adequate yearly progress"; because of the No Child Left Behind legislation and its successor the Race to the Top program, high-stakes testing literarily has become the curriculum in many classrooms, resulting in less rich classroom experiences (45). Morrissey points out, ironically, that, "Dystopian fiction for young adults celebrates the potential for personal and species advancement without sugarcoating the very real dangers we and our progeny face" (189). Ultimately, students in the twenty-first century live in a serious world, and they deserve to approach texts in a serious fashion; secondary teachers, the last sentries before the onset of adulthood, despite the forces contrary, bear a responsibility to students to provide them

this opportunity. The stakes are high for our students, and Lorenzo articulates a pedagogical "impoverishment" which is the "experience of standardization. Clothes are uniform; food is plain and unvarying, and days follow one another in dull succession" (164). The description smacks of the unpleasant aftertaste of standardized curriculum and testing, a "uniformity" which "is the similarity of experiences across people of the same social strata," which Orwell "paints" as "condemning people to a physically and sensually impoverished existence" (Lorenzo 164–165).

Brave New Pedagogy

In 2016, a boot threatens to stamp the face of secondary education, and I find myself in the position of trying to enhance my ability to teach the dystopian text in an increasingly dystopian educational system. In my pursuit of a PhD in English studies, I have learned not only to open myself to new, more complex, and even popular dystopian texts, but also to expand my paradigm of how texts should be taught—broadening my pedagogy to be more inclusive of students and their ranges of experience. Often, I have encountered resistance as the tide has turned to teaching toward standardized tests which are ill-equipped to assess the personal connections and critical analysis at which students excel when studying dystopian text. Showalter, acknowledging the plight of the contemporary English teacher, and encouraging those who of us who have chosen to work both inside and outside of the secondary school system writes, "Graduate training for the PhD should include training in pedagogy, and also in acting, performance, and writing. Teachers should read contemporary literature, go to the theater and movies, watch television, write in all forms, and reflect on how all these activities contribute to what we do in class" (viii). She advocates

a competency that includes multiple literacies to meet the pedagogical challenges of contemporary students, an exigent component of the explicit instruction of literary theory, and metacognitive awareness of processes in the secondary classroom. By restructuring curriculum to address these concerns, teachers can create a framework that allows them to effectively "stop teaching literature and start studying texts" (16). The dystopian text, by its very complex nature, necessitates the symbiosis of theory and practice leading students to critical analysis. Ultimately, the teacher's goal is to help students make connections with the fertile genre of dystopian texts that helps them uncover something about themselves which was otherwise inaccessible. According to Cooper, "Finally, it is the discovering of truth, not the imposition of truth, which is central to responsible education, communication, and government. With the vantage of hindsight, the reader discovers that theme to be Orwell's most substantial and relevant message" (104). When the informed and determined high-school teacher is able to enact curriculum using critically selected dystopian texts, the defamiliarization experienced by the students can motivate them toward the critical analysis of their own truths. Students can have agency in this process; they demonstrate their desire for input when they ask the teacher if they can read a certain text in class. For teachers with pockets turned out in a poorly-funded department, the challenge is to provide rationale for the texts which they have assessed and selected to best meet their students' needs.

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Michael Soares, who has taught in high school and college classrooms for twenty years, is currently completing dissertation research toward a PhD in English studies at Illinois State University. His article, "The Man of Tomorrow: Superman from American Exceptionalism to Globalization" was recently published in the Journal of Popular Culture.

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U.S. mail: Janice Neuleib, Editor
Illinois English Bulletin
Illinois State University
Campus Box 4240
Normal, IL 61790-4240
E-mail: jneuleib@ilstu.edu
Telephone: (309) 438-7858

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