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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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE *ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN* 103.2 (SPRING 2016)

JANICE NEULEIB

In the lead essay on teaching, Mark Maxwell comments, "The great teacher wants to awaken his students from the dream of living in a world of illusions." In this essay, Mark reminds us why we teach and why we love it, even in the worst of times. Then Jennifer Consilio Kukler suggests that movement and energy in the classroom can contribute to making every time the best of times. Her essay provides insight into how we can make our students healthier, happier, and smarter (editor's full disclosure: she teaches yoga). Alison Mercer-Curtis provides a perspective on teaching second language students, both through method and materials, in an essay well worth learning from for all of us. Thomas Hansen, who has reviewed for us in the past, provides one more long review but also has graciously

given us two poems as well. Read and enjoy an issue full of variety and value.

As always, I want to thank all of these authors. I am constantly inspired by the committed community of IATE members and at the quality of authors who come forward generously with their work. As always, I thank our Publications Unit's faithful editors who work so hard to produce our elegant *Illinois English Bulletin*: Steve Halle, Director and Holms Troelstrup, Assistant Director. IATE owes the Unit a constant debt of gratitude.

GRINDING GEARS: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A GREAT TEACHER?

MARK MAXWELL

We were in my classroom—a carpeted, cinder-block box, actually, with a stained drop ceiling and fluorescent bulbs buzzing overhead—in a relatively diverse, middle-class, suburban school in a fairly wealthy district (by next year, all of our students will have iPads), just northwest of Chicago, in Illinois, in the United States of America, on Earth, third planet from the Sun, in the Milky Way.

We—my students and I—were discussing things that grind our gears. I had just told them that I wanted them to write an "opinion essay." It was really just a thinly veiled persuasive assignment designed to mirror the argumentative prompts my students would find on the AP English Language and Composition exam in May. The only requirement of the essay was that it had to be about something that *mattered* to them. It had to be about something they genuinely cared

about—something they wanted to fix. Beyond that, the essay could be about virtually anything. It had to be born out of some sort of primal annoyance—something that really "pissed them off."

We made a colossal brainstorm list of potential topics on the white board: the upcoming PARCC test, unreasonable restrictions in the school parking lot, people who act like "drama queens," wrinkly old men who prance around naked without shame in health club locker rooms, and so on. The list grew as the noise level in the class exceeded acceptable levels. The kids were fired up, shouting out ideas, laughing, and bantering about all the things that make them twitch with frustration—about school, about their community, about the world at large. There was no shortage of ideas. The list, which eventually filled the board end-to-end, was like a great cathartic cleansing. They were dousing the flames of their rage simply by naming the things that enraged them.

Then rather suddenly, the board was full. There was no more space left to write their ideas. Still, a few kids continued to call out their thoughts, unable to contain themselves. Finally, the swell of enthusiasm dwindled, and the room was quiet again. And then a kid in the back row—one of my favorite students (one of those brilliant kids who only does his work when he's truly inspired)—said, "Mr. Maxwell, what grinds *your* gears?"

Whenever a student asks me this kind of question, I am initially at a loss for words. My first thought is that I should keep my mouth shut and just allow their voices to dominate the discussion. But then I remind myself that it's okay for me to be part of this process, to walk side by side with them as they make this journey—not because I want them to think what I think, but because I want them to know that, like them, I too have things about which I am passionate.

But at that moment, there in my little cinder-block box—surrounded by the stardust of our galaxy swirling all around us, unnoticed—I didn't know what to say. I have been told I am a patient and forgiving man, someone who does not get angry easily, and this is mostly true, I think. So when my shaggy-haired student asked me what makes me mad, I was initially speechless.

But it turned out that something about the students' spirited brainstorm list had awakened me, and before I knew it, I was waxing poetically and angrily about what I see as the single biggest problem in education. I said that I hated the fact that too many people in education these days see students as little more than a number. I said I despised the way that teachers assume content is king and the way that administrators worship at the altar of data. And I said that schools had become so consumed with teaching to the brain that we had forgotten how to teach to the heart.

To which that kid in the back row responded, "That's why you're so great, Mr. Maxwell." And then the class erupted in spontaneous and heartfelt applause. It was one of those rare moments in the classroom when I felt like I must have said the right thing in the right way at precisely the right moment—not because I wanted to win the admiration of my students, but because I was genuinely fired up about something, and I just let it rip.

The truth is my students had inspired me to speak my mind about something that mattered to me because I had asked them to speak their minds about the things that mattered to them. After listening to them, I had put myself "out there" and articulated a profound concern of mine without censoring myself. I had spoken from the heart about teaching to the heart. And my students understood exactly what I was talking about.

But of course they understood. They are on the losing end of our current data-driven system every day. They know the score. They know what's at stake. They know that their teachers are so obsessed with improving students' achievement on standardized tests that we sometimes forget to see them as people.

Feeling emboldened by the applause, I added this: "Too often we teachers see students as receptacles for information. Or we think that all we need to teach you is skills. And yes, knowledge and skills are important. Especially skills. Naturally, I want you to learn to read and write and speak and listen, but these things are not an end in and of themselves. What I care about most is that when you leave my classroom, you are decent, compassionate people. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are simply tools that allow me to teach decency and compassion. They are the *means* to the end. They create the pathway to the goal. But they are not the goal."

And then the bell rang. The kids packed up their backpacks and left for the weekend.

And as I sat there contemplating what had just happened in my little windowless universe—"That's why you're so great, Mr. Maxwell"—I uncovered the answer to a question I have been asking myself for almost three decades now: What's the fundamental difference between good teaching and great teaching?

I believe good teachers teach content effectively. In English, this means a good teacher's students know where the comma goes. And they know what Holden means when he says he wants to be "a catcher in the rye and all." And they know how to write an essay with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The great teacher can do all of these things too. But the great teacher teaches those things so he can inspire his students to *care*. The great teacher wants to awaken his

students from the dream of living in a world of illusions. In short, the great teacher teaches to the heart.

I hope I don't sound like I'm patting myself on the back here. I have never seen myself as a "great" teacher; there are plenty of days when I'm lucky to be mediocre. But from time to time I get a little taste of greatness in spite of myself. And it always seems to happen when I am focusing my energy on something larger than just knowledge or skill. It always happens when I am focusing my energy on the "big picture."

This may seem like hippy-dippy nonsense to some people, but it's really quite practical. We must learn to see our subject matter as an opportunity to teach the things that will send our students out into the cosmos with the ability to walk a mile in someone else's space UGGs. We must teach them to treat language as a powerful but potentially dangerous tool of expression. We must teach them where to put the comma, so they can tell the world what matters to them without causing confusion. We must teach them to find common ground with Holden even if he is unreliable and his "whining" annoys them. We must teach them to write an organized essay because without organization, their ideas about how to fix the problems that grind their gears will be lost.

In our discipline, teaching to the heart is easier than in other subjects, I suppose. The content affords us endless opportunities to teach compassion and empathy through expression. In other subjects it might be more difficult, but teachers are always sending messages about their values no matter what they teach.

How we speak to our students, how we treat them, what kind of rules we enforce, how we expect them to treat each other—these things can communicate authoritativeness, disrespect, and judgment, or they can communicate that nothing trumps compassion. Not the five-paragraph paper, not

a hall pass, not the ACT, not a dress code, not free-response questions designed by the College Board, not detention hall, not literary analysis, and certainly not comma rules.

Everything we do as teachers (and especially as English teachers) should be done to serve a master that will always trump course content. Compassion *is* the curriculum. We must teach the brain in order to reach the heart and brighten the spirit.

I have been told more than once that I should have been a preacher instead of a teacher. Maybe there is some truth to that. This is the belief in which I place all my faith: *teaching is a spiritual calling*.

Sometimes we forget that we are all comprised of the same elements that light the nighttime sky. And sometimes we teachers forget that it is our duty to ensure that every star shines brightly. As corny as it may sound, I believe we teachers are here in these nondescript, cinder-block classrooms—in the belly of this swirling galaxy—first and foremost, to serve and cultivate the stardust of the human spirit.

The greatest teachers I've ever met treat the mind as a pathway to the heart. And for those teachers, the heart is *always* the ultimate destination. And they are not the least bit ashamed or apologetic. That's what makes them great.

Mark Maxwell has been teaching English in Township High School District 214 for 26 years. He is the author of the novel nixoncarver *(1998; St. Martin's Press) and the forthcoming* Kings of the World *(March, 2016; EM Press). Maxwell's recent essays and stories have appeared in the* Illinois English Bulletin, *the* English Journal, *the* Santa Monica Review, Gargoyle, *the* Brooklyn Rail, *and* Numéro Cinq. *His recent lecture, "Cultivating Rigorous Creativity," at the University of Chicago can be viewed online at: http://news.uchicago.edu/multimedia/cultivating-rigorous-creativity-your-students?page=1.*

BEYOND EMBODIED TEACHING: INCORPORATING MIND, MOVEMENT, AND IMAGINATION INTO THE CLASSROOM

JENNIFER CONSILIO KUKLER

Over ten years ago, I fell in love with yoga. I had been a dancer for years and had struggled with negative self-body image and for me, yoga was a place where I found love, acceptance, compassion, and strength. Soon after, the teacher in me longed to share what I discovered in yoga with others, and I became a yoga instructor and found inspiration and connection with many students over the years in many of the ways I connected, inspired, and was inspired by my writing students. As a result, I began to incorporate some of my yoga practices into the writing classroom. When I teach yoga, I start class by what I call "tuning in": using breath, movement, and focus to tune in to the present moment. I also began using "tuning in" techniques in the classroom, and it became a standard practice in many of my writing classes,

and as I learned more about contemplative pedagogies, I have integrated those into my classroom as well.

In "Creating Spaces for Listening, Learning, and Sustaining the Inner Lives of Students," Gesa Kirsch asks what it would take "to create spaces in the classroom which allow students the freedom to nourish and sustain an inner life?" Kirsch goes on to share that it takes faith, wonder, courage, and most of all the willingness to take a chance. When I read that invitation, it really spoke to me. In response to that question, I have integrated a writing pedagogy that pays attention to the whole self—both mind and body—where I can bring that whole self into the classroom, take risks, and be vulnerable as a teacher, as a learner, and as a collaborator with my students. Specifically, I explore how we as instructors can best integrate mindfulness and other contemplative practices into writing pedagogy, as well as create spaces to incorporate more risk, for both us and our students, into classroom learning environments.

Broadly speaking, contemplative practices are metacognitive exercises in which we focus attention on any element of conscious experience, including mindfulness, an object, a sound, words, or even a yoga pose. Contemplative practices, such as mindfulness and yoga, help with stress relief, increased focus and attention, concentration, awareness, and compassion, which can be useful for any classroom (Barbezat and Bush; Kabat-Zinn; Kroll; Siegel).

Yoga, a type of contemplative practice, is a way of balancing and harmonizing the body, mind, and emotions and deepening self-understanding. Practicing yoga incorporates more than just the physical postures (asana), it also includes breath awareness (pranayama), meditation (dhyana), and concentration (dharana), among others. It encourages us to focus on the body, as conscious, purposeful movement. Specifically, yoga is a transformative practice, much like writing is, and through

its practice writers can become more connected to both the mind and body, have a greater awareness and metacognitive awareness of the writing process, as well as increased focus, attention, and self-awareness. Through helping both us and our students connect and be more fully present in the moment, it allows us to nourish our inner lives, incorporating "reflection, introspection, and contemplation, which lead us to know and understand things beyond the analytical mind" (Kirsch 3).

Yoga Principles as Contemplative Practices

Pranayama

In my classroom, we use breath work, or pranayama, as a way to deepen awareness; connect to ourselves, our thoughts, and emotions; and to embody writing. Pranayama is made up of the words "prana" and "yama." "Prana" means life force and "yama" means control, so pranayama literally means to control and direct the life force within ourselves (Kriyananda 192). When we breathe deeply and slowly, it stimulates a calm, content state of mind. Many of us have used breath as a way to handle anxiety or a crisis. When we breathe irregularly, it disrupts the brain's rhythm and leads to physical, emotional, and mental blocks. Regular pranayama breaks this cycle and gives us control over our breath and realigns the natural rhythms of both the body and the mind and their functions (Saraswati 373). As a result, employing breath work helps writers focus their life energy, the energy of the body and the mind, which in turn, can aid in more reflective and productive writing, as writers can tune out distractions and really pay attention to their thinking and writing.

One example exercise I use is the **Breath/Hand Massage**. I instruct students to use the thumb of one hand to massage the opposite palm, firmly, yet gently. Then, take each finger and give it a gentle twist and pull, one by one, while breathing,

connecting the movement to breath. This removes tension and soreness and tones the inner organs (Kriyananda 89) and is useful before a writing exercise. We also use other breathing-only exercises, such as **Three-Part Breath** (starting the breath from the bottom up, expanding the stomach walls, then the chest and finally lifting the collarbone and when the lungs are full, lowering the collarbone, contracting the chest and then the stomach as the breath is released); **Belly Breathing** (breathing deeply, filling up the belly and then releasing); or **Back Breathing** (breathing deeply, in and out of the back). In the classroom, I often use breath work before freewriting or reflective writing exercises to anchor writers in the present moment.

Asana

In addition to using pranayama, we also use asana, or postures, as part of our contemplative and mindfulness practices. The postures encourage what Christine Caldwell calls "bodyfulness": to be more consciously aware, more accepting and appreciative of our bodies in a contemplative environment (73). When I begin a class, I often begin with the physical postures to connect our bodies and minds, choosing poses that aid in focus, concentration, balance, and elevating mood, as well as stimulating blood flow, energy, and oxygen. Kristie Fleckenstein, in "Writing Bodies: Somatic Mind in Composition Studies," shares, "the writing figure *cannot* be separated from the figure writing…both are immanent in the other" (301). Example poses include:

Yoga Side Stretches, which stretch and tone the thoracic cavity, so we take in more oxygen, stimulating the body and promoting balance

Rag Doll, which carries blood to the brain, producing mental clarity and alertness

Standing Twist, which de-stresses the body, promoting spinal flexibility, detoxing the body, and aiding in digestion

Mountain Pose, which creates space within the body, improving breathing and circulation, leaving us invigorated and motivated

Gentle Heart Opener, which opens up chest muscles, allowing for better breathing, improving mood, and relieving tension in the shoulders and back

Many of these example poses can be found in the "Tuning In" Exercise in Appendix A. Incorporating asana allows for that strong mind/body connection, and I choose poses based on what we may be doing in class that day or what the students' particular needs might be.

Dhyana

Connected with pranayama, I also incorporate dhyana, or meditation, into our classroom practice. Many of our students have grown up immersed in a culture of distraction, always moving towards the future. Incorporating mindfulness meditation and breath work helps to anchor us to the present moment and quiet the "citta," or mental chatter (Iyengar 30–31), that is often alive in our minds. As a result, I incorporate a variety of mindfulness meditation practices. For example, I use **focused attention meditation**, which focuses attention on a singular object, which can be the breath, a picture, or even a flower (Lutz 164); or **open presence meditation**, which asks students to notice feelings, sensations, sounds and smells, without judgment (Ricard

190). For an example of focused attention meditation, please see Appendix B. By having students engage in mindfulness meditation and other contemplative exercises, it "creates safe spaces for opening up," with themselves, with the instructor, and with others (Repetti 11).

Best Practices in the Contemplative Classroom

One of the keys, I have found, to these practices working in the classroom is to actually do it—to incorporate a regular practice for students. I incorporate one or more of the concepts discussed (yoga movement, breath, meditation) into each class so it becomes a part of what it is we do. Just like adding in a daily freewriting practice, collaborative work, or reflective writing at the end of class, it becomes a daily practice, and with practice, it makes purpose. You may consider adding ritual elements, such as a bell or a chime, or consistent language to help create that space. What other elements might you add to help create a regular practice for students to signify the end of meditation or reflective writing?

As a yoga practitioner, I have practiced and taught vinyasa yoga for years. Vinyasa literally means *to flow*: to flow with awareness from one pose to the next, from one activity to the next, or from one line to the next. I try to use that idea of "vinyasa" in the classroom when I plan lessons and activities. How can I make each activity flow into the next one? How can we make those deep connections? I ask my students to do the same: to find their own "vinyasa" while working on developing their ideas for a project and to see everything they do, everything they write, as connected.

Often in our classes, we try to figure out how to pack in "more"—more content, more analysis, more assignments, more everything. And sometimes, less is more. How can we slow down an activity long enough to dig in: "to facilitate

deep attention to and intimate familiarity with—the object of study, whether it is a slide, textual passage, equation, claim or argument" (Repetti). If we focus on fewer subjects and take more time to go into each one, it allows students deeper contemplation and introspection into the content of the course, as well as their writing.

As a way to create more opportunities for connection and meaning-making for our students, another best practice many of us already incorporate into the classroom is written reflection. Whether it is reflecting on an actual contemplative exercise exploring how they felt and what they got out of it, or a class activity, or their own writing, I try to build in reflection into each class experience to help foster those deep connections. I often ask students at the end of class "What insights, challenges, questions, or comments do you have after today's (class, activity, discussion, writing, etc)?" as a way to help with planning and tailoring material for the next class period.

Finally, I incorporate open discussion into the classroom as a way to make sure students feel comfortable with what we are doing in class. As a result, I ask for feedback regarding the practices—what is working, what is not—and to see whether they want to continue. I usually make this anonymous so students feel comfortable being honest if they don't want to engage. By making the practices and content we engage in part of an open classroom discussion, it shows students we have created a collaborative atmosphere where all ideas and opinions are valued. Generally, what I have found is that the majority of the students welcome the opportunity to slow down, pay attention, and dig deeper. One writer shared: "After our meditation, the prewriting seemed to be much easier. Words flowed easily from my pen, and I felt better in touch with myself. It's silly to think that only a few minutes of silence and breath could cause this drastic of a response,

but when life seems to be a never-ending parade of appointments, assignments, and responsibilities, silent time doesn't come around very often."

Many students really are yearning for something more. By taking risks, incorporating contemplative practices like yoga, breath, and mindful meditation, and paying attention to the whole self, and asking students to do the same, we can help our students more fully attend to writing processes, texts, and the world, using both their minds and bodies—with practices cultivated in the classroom for transfer outside the classroom, seeking, like Kirsch, to make a real, radical difference in education by creating "spaces for nourishing and sustaining the inner lives of students" (11).

APPENDIX A

Tuning-In Exercise

Let's everyone stand up. Go ahead and take a deep breath in and raise your shoulders up, and when you exhale, relax your shoulders back and feel the tension melt away as you release your breath completely. Allow your chest to soften, open up your heart, and feel your feet rooted and connected to the earth below. With your next breath, scoop your arms up overhead and reach high into the sky, exhale, and then hold onto your right wrist with your left hand, inhale and reach higher, lifting up and creating space in your ribcage and then exhaling as you reach over to the side. Keep reaching, a little farther, keep breathing, and exhale as you come back to center. Let's do this Yoga Side Stretch on the other side. Switch your grip (left wrist with right hand), inhale, lift up, and create that space again in the ribs and then exhale to the side, reach farther, as far as you can comfortably, and then exhale back to center. Good! And when you are ready, come

on back up on an exhale and bring your hands together and to your heart.

Let's take another deep breath in as you scoop your arms up overhead and exhale; float all the way down to the earth, folding over from the waist. Release your head and neck, let go of any tension and just let yourself hang here. This is called Rag Doll. Your only job is to hang out and just let yourself completely go. You can swing side to side, front to back, or hold onto your elbows to create an anchor. Do whatever feels right and good to you. And breathe…deep breaths in and out, in and out. Let it all go. Good. Now, soften your knees and slowly roll up.

Now, go ahead and find a comfortable seated position; feel grounded with your feet on the floor, shoulders relaxed, face softened, and bring your attention back to your breath. As you breathe, think about your intention for today's class. What do I want to learn today? It can be an intention for this class, this day, or even this unit—whatever it is for you is completely right and completely perfect. Keep breathing. Once you have found your intention, bow your chin downwards.

APPENDIX B

Five-Minute Breath Exercise

Find a comfortable seated position, feel grounded with your feet on the floor, relax your shoulders, soften your face, and bring your attention to your breath. Take a few deep breaths in and out, in and out, anchoring yourself to this present moment. Now, really focus where you are noticing your breath—is it deep in your belly…or through your expanded ribcage…or maybe you notice your breath in your nostrils as you breathe in and out—wherever you notice, choose one and keep that focus as you breathe. Really pay attention to

the feelings, the sensations of the breath. If your mind or body starts to wander, getting distracted by noises, smells, thoughts, it's okay, just take yourself back to the breath and bring your awareness to that place you chose. It may be helpful to even offer yourself some mental anchor words like "in" and "out" when you breathe in and out. Do whatever you feels right to you. If your mind starts to wander, there's no need to judge, just notice the thoughts, notice the sensations. You don't need to change it, just breathe. Then, when you are ready, come back to the room and open your eyes.

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THE INTERSECTION OF AFFECT AND COGNITION: HELPING ELLS TO WRITE IN THE AGE OF COMMON STANDARDS

ALISON MERCER-CURTIS

Teaching All Students to Write Well

In many schools in many states, teachers now feel significant pressure to meet the demands of the new Common Core State Standards, and many sources advise how to contend with these demands, sometimes in contradiction with one another. Even though each school district will have its distinctive demographic, every teacher is expected to be able to engage and teach ALL learners, including English language learners who may have limited formal schooling. My intention here is not to bemoan the plight of beleaguered teachers, but to share some insights from my search for ways to help all learners to learn to write well, by Common Core standards, especially when a class includes English language learners representing various levels of English proficiency.

Elena's Story

To illustrate the challenge, I will share the story of a student whom I will call Elena. Just like any new student, Elena entered my classroom nervously. Just as most teachers would do, I introduced her to the class and asked her to tell the class where she was from and a little bit about her interests. Right away, I had made a mistake. As Elena timidly walked to the front of the classroom, I could tell that she was uneasy. I told her not to worry and that we were all friendly here. As she reached the front of the room, she looked at the class and said, "Hi." I again asked her to tell us where she was from and what her interests were, but she just stared at me blankly. Then I realized, Elena didn't understand what I was asking her to do. At this point, not only was she embarrassed, but both the class and I were uncomfortable. Luckily, one of my Spanish-speaking students volunteered to help her and translate for her. We learned that she was from Florida and that she liked music. Elena quickly returned to her seat, perhaps a little rattled by my awkward attempt to welcome her to her new learning environment. I reflected on my bad judgment and wondered how I was going to help Elena to write logical and elaborated academic essays.

Under normal circumstances, a student who speaks very little English would not be placed in one of my ninth-grade English classes; however, Elena's case was unique. First and foremost, Elena could speak some English; but because of how intimidated and shy she was, she barely ever spoke, and it took me a few weeks to figure out just how much English she knew. After the first few days of having her in my class, I tried to gather more information about Elena's case. Through sources such as the school counselors and her Spanish teacher, I began to piece Elena's case together. Elena had moved back and forth between Florida and Mexico throughout her life.

The counselors knew very little about her academic history. Much of what they knew about the classes she had taken Elena reported herself. Furthermore, although she could speak Spanish fluently and had a conversational ability in English, she did not have a strong academic vocabulary in either language.

Overall, looking back on Elena's time in my class, I have realized that her lack of a foundation in academic language was the main reason that I had such a difficult time helping her learn. How do you teach a student to write an essay when he or she doesn't understand what the words *sentence* or *paragraph* mean, let alone the word *essay*, or other common academic terms like *argue*, *analyze*, *summarize*, *support*, etc.? I constantly found myself backtracking during lessons to figure out where to begin because I didn't know what words she knew and what words she didn't know. Even more problematic, she struggled with the academic vocabulary in Spanish as well, so when I asked other students to help me translate, she still didn't quite understand what I was asking her to do. I had to start looking for solutions. I have several English language learners (ELLs) in all my classes, but Elena's was an atypical case, and I knew I had to find new means to help her learn. Even though other English language learners may not have the same story, Elena's story is not an anomaly; there are students like Elena across the United States—which means, there are also teachers like me struggling to help these unique learners meet the rigorous demands of the Common Core State Standards.

Looking for Help

My immediate need to help Elena, while supporting the growth of my other students as they developed as writers, led me to search the research literature to find out "what

works" in teaching all students to write well and especially to help an English language learner to integrate into a new school culture and advance her writing skills. There has been significant research reported on the teaching of writing over the last fifty years. Some influential scholarship on the teaching of writing today focuses on using methods such as scaffolding (Smagorinsky; Applebee and Langer; Daniels, Zemelman, and Steineke), differentiation (Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter), and modeling (Smagorinsky, et al.; Gallagher). A body of research encourages teachers to help students to learn task-specific procedural knowledge by framing a relatable problem that students have to solve and thus write about (Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter; Smith and Wilhem; Smagorinsky and Smith). Successful inquiry-based lessons and units require students to collaborate with their peers (Smagorinsky; Langer; Hillocks "Middle"; Hillocks *Research*; Graham and Perin), discuss the problem in new ways, and develop solutions. By being given the chance to collaborate and participate in meaningful discussions, students then practice procedures and have substantial content to write about in response to a related writing task (Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter; Smagorinsky et. al.; McCann, 2014). This type of approach to the teaching of writing requires teachers to focus on task analysis; that is, "careful analysis of the skills and sub-skills" that they want all students to learn and be able to successfully perform for a written assignment (Johannessen, Kahn, and Walter 17).

On the other hand, learning about teaching English language learners specifically has to begin with understanding accepted pedagogies for teaching a multicultural population of students. Although many English language learners may be native Spanish speakers, they still come from a wide range of differing Spanish-speaking nations that are culturally

diverse. The research on teaching in multicultural classrooms encourages teachers to move past simply welcoming and accepting English language learners, and rather advocates for the empowerment of multicultural students by encouraging them to embrace their own culture and learn about new cultures, as well as take risks in their learning (R. Garcia). In turn, the scholars argue, when teachers provide English language learners with a culturally responsive environment and effective support, they retain more of their learning and readily develop new skills. Largely, the accepted pedagogies surrounding teaching multicultural students, including English language learners and bilingual students, attend to overcoming stereotypes, inequalities, and prejudices that may be present, even unintentionally, in many schools' curricula and teachers' instruction (Nieto, *Language*).

Similarly, there has also been significant research done specifically on teaching English language learners cross-circularly. Some scholarship in teaching English language learners focuses on creating a culturally responsive environment so that students feel comfortable taking risks in their education (R. Garcia). In order to create a supportive dialogic classroom, teachers should build lessons that allow English language learners to use and share their cultural knowledge as a part of their learning. Many scholars believe that such a classroom is built through trust specifically by respecting the authentic voices of multicultural students (Atwell). David Freeman, Yvonne Freeman, and Sandra Mercuri identify "draw[ing] on students' backgrounds, [including] their experiences, cultures, and languages," as one of the four key principles in helping English language learners achieve academic success (115). These scholars also advocate for thematic curricular units that challenge students to think about a topic that is relevant and meaningful to their lives (E. Garcia; Freeman et al.).

Additionally, the teacher should provide as much support as possible by scaffolding instruction in the form of relatable peer conversation and collaborative experiences (including pairing ELLs together and with fluent English speakers), providing visual representations and graphic organizers whenever possible (Kagan; Freeman et al.; Davis), and allowing students to use translations to build their academic vocabulary in their primary language as well as their secondary language (Freeman and Freeman).

The Intersection of Fields of Research

Neither field of research (i.e., teaching of writing and teaching English language learners) in itself helps teachers to effectively teach English language learners such as Elena to write. In an effort to serve students like Elena, teachers have to look for intersections in pedagogies and adapt their curriculum and instruction in such a way that it draws from both fields of research. Much of the popular pedagogy on the teaching of writing focuses on the cognitive domain of students—that is, the intellectual collection, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and production of information—whereas, the pedagogical approach to teaching ELLs generally focuses on the affective domain of students or the emotional issues that affect learning. Very few scholars, however, focus on the overlap of the affective and cognitive domains as they relate to the teaching of writing. In my own attempts to serve students like Elena and at the same time support the development of other learners, I have tried to stay true to a few principles that represent a meeting of the cognitive and affective aspects of learning to write in a second language. The following list is a combination of what has worked for me in my own classroom as well as the principled practices recommended by the scholars in both fields of research. This list is in no way

comprehensive, but at the very least, it should offer teachers like me new ways to approach instruction.

Remain Flexible within a Common Curriculum

Because of the demands of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the expectation that all students must meet the same standards, many schools have adopted an aligned common curriculum approach—that is, a curriculum that is aligned to the CCSS and taught to all students. For example, at the school where I teach, all ninth graders take "English I" and all English I teachers should teach and assign the same pieces of literature, the same academic skill sets, the same academic vocabulary, and the same types of writing. Accordingly, the teachers then should also give the same formative and summative assessments. Every school approaches common aligned curriculum a little bit differently, but ideally a team of teachers can compare their student data and make instructional adjustments based on the data in order to meet the needs of their learners.

Still, as rigid as a common curriculum sounds, it is actually structurally ambiguous—that is, the teacher retains much autonomy in the way she delivers instruction for the common learning targets and the common texts. Viewing common curriculum as malleable allows for teacher discretion and creativity, an inherent necessity for the successful implementation of a common curriculum. A common curriculum may dictate *what* is taught, but it does not dictate *how* that material is taught. In order to teach in a classroom that includes a diverse population of English language learners, the teacher must actively adapt her approach to the teaching of writing to make the curriculum meaningful to students' lives. Too often teachers teach the same material in the exact same way across periods throughout the day when they are,

in fact, teaching a whole new group of students each period. Every lesson should look somewhat different because every class is comprised of different learners. In order to meet the needs of English language learners, teachers must actively seek new ways to scaffold, differentiate, and model writing skills and procedures.

Create a Culturally Responsive Environment

Every student deserves to feel safe at school. For English learners to feel safe in the classroom, the teacher should cultivate a culturally responsive environment. Teaching in a culturally responsive manner requires educators and students to move beyond simple tolerance of diversity; rather, educators should empower diverse learners by teaching all students to embrace diversity. Of course, the teacher must also embrace diversity themselves. Moving beyond tolerance is not simply assigning literature that is considered diverse, nor is it assigning essay prompts that require students to respond to literature from a cultural perspective. A culturally relevant pedagogy requires a reciprocal dialogue between peers that allows students to practice, evaluate, and participate in the exploration of their own culture as well as others' cultures. Furthermore, a teacher that embraces a culturally responsive environment will acknowledge and utilize the wealth of cultural knowledge that English language learners bring to the classroom and build upon that knowledge in order to help all students write about their experiences in a meaningful way. A culturally responsive environment also requires the teacher to build an expectation of patience—both with herself and her students, but also by encouraging students to exercise patience among themselves. In such an environment, students will begin to take risks that will in turn help their writing to improve significantly.

Meet Learners Where They Are Now

Too often teachers rely solely on students' reports of what they know and understand. This was a critical error that I made when I was evaluating Elena's academic abilities. Perhaps in an attempt to save me from any implied criticism of my lack of clarity, she would tell me that she understood a concept, a set of directions, or an activity; but then when it came time to assess her, she would reveal that she hadn't understood what she was being asked to do. This was an obstacle that I have encountered with many of my other ELLs as well. English language learners already have difficulty communicating in English, and they rarely want to reveal their perceived deficiencies to their teachers. In fact, in many cultures teachers are to be shown utmost respect, which can cause students to feel as if they are being disrespectful by showing a lack of understanding. When identifying a student's academic ability or skill level, a teacher would be safe in carefully probing for what students actually know, despite what they say they know.

In order to successfully teach English language learners how to write, the teacher must take significant time to identify what the students know about writing processes. This assessment effort takes a lot of time because the teacher has to evaluate a set of artifacts. Artifacts can be found in student dialogue or written work that a student has turned in, including notes, tests, etc. As we learn from Smagorinsky et al., classroom dialogue is an important component of the writing process, and the talk in class can reveal the procedures that learners command or have yet to learn. So, then, it is extremely important to encourage English language learners to talk as much as possible in class to both the teacher and their peers to evaluate what they say and how they say it in conversation.

The evaluation process should be ongoing. I find that once I have an idea of where the students are at the moment, I can meet them there and help them to build on what they already know. Since I believed Elena when she said that she understood, I often found myself backtracking to figure out what she actually did know. CCSS has already set the bar extremely high, and many students like Elena will continually fall short if we keep telling them they have to be able to meet those standards right away. We learn from Lev Vygotsky that a child cannot successfully learn a concept that is outside her Zone of Proximal Development without time and some significant help. Even the simplest of tasks can seem daunting to the English language learner. To help the ELLs to succeed, once the teacher evaluates where they are, she should start scaffolding with those proficiencies in mind and provide significant support when teaching new skills. I have learned that I should always aim to keep expectations high, but not unattainable.

Provide Opportunities to Experience Success

In my experience, when English language learners enter the classroom, they often feel defeated, insecure, and powerless. These feelings can lead to a perceived sense of helplessness, which some learners try to disguise and some surrender to. While teachers will want to maintain rigor for all students, for English language learners rigorous standards set them up for failure in the short term. As they continue through school, this notion of defeat is perpetuated as the already high standards continue to become increasingly more challenging. Many English language learners struggle to pass their classes, and if they do pass, many still only pass with relatively low grades. They have been told throughout their American education that they are below average, that

they have failed (sometimes two, three, or four classes), and that they won't get into college because of their low grades. English language learners often hear the language of failure and deficits. This trend has to be reversed, and it starts in individual classrooms where learners can celebrate their knowledge and proficiencies and experience success.

First, specifically in multicultural classrooms, a teacher has to work to create a culture of progress and growth. Rather than focusing on grades that are often dictated by someone's expression of standards, teachers should focus on student progress and thus empower students to identify and evaluate their own improvements. This is absolutely critical, especially for those students who are significantly behind. English language learners need to hear positive feedback and motivation on a daily basis. They need to believe that they are improving, even if their letter grade does not reflect their progress. The feedback has to come not only from the teacher but also from the peers, and also from parents whenever possible. A simple positive phone call home about a success that a student had in the classroom can improve a student's efficacy and worth.

Specifically, for English language learners to be successful writers, the teacher must provide opportunities for success as they learn to write. Writing is one of the most personal ways for a student to express herself. Every student has a wealth of experiences to write about. Teachers should provide opportunities for written expression that don't allow for a student to "fail." Allow students to write about themselves, their experiences, their peers, their culture, their traditions, etc. Encourage students to develop their ideas by talking to their peers. I find it helpful to provide supportive feedback that responds to the substance of the writing, and to allow students to rewrite, revise, and edit in an effort to elaborate more fully and to move writing toward more refined

expression. As part of revealing the language and the culture of the classroom, I find that I have to explicitly teach each English language learner that rewriting, revising, and editing is a *process* that all writers should embrace. And, finally, I hope that I convey that I am excited to read the final product and that I am interested in what they have to say.

Highlight the Procedural Knowledge that Learners Apply in Their Daily Lives

Much of the scholarship on best practices for the teaching of writing focuses on teaching students procedural knowledge—that is, the skills necessary to argue, analyze, summarize, support, etc. As stated before, meaningful writing requires peer collaboration and meaningful discussion that allows students to practice important procedures; however, students need to feel confident to practice using these procedures both in class and in their daily lives. As students learn and grow, they will begin to feel more confident to take risks in their communication, both written and oral, outside of your classroom.

Empowering students requires more than just a lot of dialogue; it also requires teachers to put ELLs in new roles in the classroom. Many times ELLs are placed in learning groups that do the thinking for them because students are in a hurry to finish, but teachers should place ELLs in roles that allow them to share their knowledge with their peers. Teachers should provide reciprocal learning opportunities that allow ELLs to exchange information with their peers and to teach one another. Of course, many students might simply sit back and try not to participate; however, if the student has to complete a task that only they would know how to do, then they have to participate. This can be done simply by asking students to explain a unique experience that they have had, or

asking students what they have in common with a character. Again, the teacher has to think of new ways to make learning meaningful, but also to empower students to get out of their comfort zones.

The teacher also has to avoid solving problems for students, especially ELLs. This is a really difficult task for many teachers. As natural problem solvers, our first instinct is to help the students solve the problem at hand, but we often don't give students sufficient time to work through the problem on their own. I encourage students especially to solve their own communication problems. I encounter this often when I place native English speakers with English language learners. The group will often give up, and not communicate, rather than work together to solve their communication problems. Sometimes I will give students ideas on how to communicate more effectively (hand gestures, pictures, facial expressions, etc.), but I try not to completely solve the issue for them. This shows students that they can effectively communicate, even when it's difficult, which in turn will enable students to practice their procedural knowledge both inside and outside of the classroom.

Support Yourself

All teachers, but especially early career teachers, can exhaust themselves in the scramble to find the appropriate approaches and interventions to meet the variety of needs represented by any group of learners. In trying to help English language learners to grow as writers in their second or perhaps third language, I have come to realize that I must identify and grow a resource network. This network will look different for every teacher, but for teachers that have a high ELL population, the network should include a specific set of people she can look to for help, support, and collaboration.

There are many educators throughout a school system that come in contact with ELLs and get to know them in a way that you might not be able to in your own classroom. These people can offer insight into the personal lives of your ELL students, as well as their specific academic abilities. The list of educators include, but is certainly not limited to, the other general education teachers of the ELLs in your classes, their former ESL teachers, their counselors, their social workers, their parents and siblings, their coaches, etc. Your network, however, cannot stop simply at dialogue. Teachers should look for opportunities to collaborate with these different groups of people in an effort to fully support the ELL.

Summary

As Elena's case demonstrates, it is extremely important to meet the needs of English language learners while maintaining relevance and rigor for all types of learners when teaching students how to write. Although Elena was a unique case for me, there are students just like her in classrooms across the United States, and many teachers struggle to find ways to honor the needs of English language learners while still supporting other learners. Every classroom and every teacher is different; "what works" depends on the variables that teachers adapt to each year. Still, many teachers can benefit from the principles outlined here for the teaching of writing in a heterogeneous class that includes English language learners.

The scholarship in both fields of research, the teaching of writing and teaching English language learners, offers insight into teaching diverse learners. But teachers should focus on the intersection of these two fields of research. Particularly, teachers should focus on developing their instruction to focus not only on student cognition, but also the affective domain

of student learning. The mistake that many educators make is separating cognitive and affective development, when in reality, these two domains are dependent upon each other. All in all, by focusing on the funds of knowledge that *every* learner brings to the classroom, teachers can build knowledge and work towards success. My final piece of advice encourages teachers not to get hung up on grades. Although grades are important, they can cause both the student and teacher to become discouraged. Rather, focus on student growth and applaud the improvements that students like Elena can make each day with the guidance and support of an effective teacher.

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THREE COMPLETE NOVELS: A REVIEW

THOMAS HANSEN

The Cat Who Saw Red, *The Cat Who Played Brahms*, and *The Cat Who Played Post Office*, by Lilian Jackson Braun. 1993. New York: Putnam. Cloth, 513 pages in total.

In this set of clever "The Cat Who…" novels, Lilian Jackson Braun once again gives us some clever writing and great details about the life of our character, Jim "Qwill" Qwilleran, the journalist who wants to someday write that one special book. These three novels, like all of the others, are light and entertaining reading. While not serious stuff, the novels nonetheless contain some interesting twists and turns. These novels come from the beginning of the "Cat Who…" tradition.

In these older stories, we have Qwill still in Chicago, then inheriting the money, then going about the hard work of finding out how to spend it. Those of you who are not familiar with Qwill and his interesting adventures will need to start

with the first novel to get the explanation of who he is, what he seeks, and how he seeks it. These are three key stories to introduce us to Qwill and his world—giving us essential info we need to understand the books that follow. You will discover that the twitching of his moustache is a sign there is danger, or something unexpected, or something to consider.

You will also find out early on that he has two very special friends: his Siamese cats. Koko, the male, helps Qwill solve crimes by giving him hints. Koko is a "cool cat," and he has fans among Qwill's regular readers. Yum Yum, the female, lends her support and love when needed. The cats are at the center of all of these and the following stories.

You will need to read the three novels to understand all of the interesting talents and skills the cats possess. You will probably enjoy this entertaining reading as a nice break and make good use of the books while on a bus or train. I myself am always trying to find good books to take along when I travel.

As in the other novels, there are some very funny, sometimes sarcastic, often subtle phrases and situations arising in these three stories. I have marked some page numbers here, along with the key words. See if you understand the humor: page 11: Koko's front paws; 23: dampening effect…spearing romaine; 58: gave the car a pat on the rump, seventeenth clean ashtray; 63: a Canadian; 70: proceeded to lick the base of his tail; 92: it was only the tail of the limousine; 108: should have burned down a half century before; 109: twenty-seven cream pies from instant vanilla pudding; 147: embalmed shrimp, ate the shingles off the barn roof; 269: major shipwrecks; 290: as it he had said, "Do you know it's Wednesday?"

These and other passages really struck my funny bone—yes, I really just wrote that—and sometimes I laughed out loud, scaring more serious readers in the vicinity. There are

many silly passages but also more complex ones. On page 462, Qwill notices the nervous reactions of one of the guests at the fancy dinner he gets talked into having: "Penelope appeared preoccupied; at best her remarks were guarded, and she was not sipping her wine."

All joking aside, I would have to say Lilian Jackson Braun is one hell of a writer, and she passes her talents and wit onto Qwill—who gets to be the one the reader identifies with and the one we think is the witty communicator. However, it is the author of the novels doing the actual crafting, prodding, punning, and composing.

It is Lilian Jackson Braun, the prolific and talented communicator, who is the one responsible for these enjoyable "Cat Who…" stories. I recommend all the "Cat Who…" books and hope you will enjoy this set of three. You can probably find copies in a variety of locations. As you know, I am a fan of these crazy stories and love to relax while reading a cat story. I am also a cat lover, but I will recommend this set of stories to any reader looking for some clever writing.

TWO POEMS

THOMAS HANSEN

LISTENING FOR BEATRICE

During the wee morning hours
I look up the stairway
Brown, grey, black
Swirls of dust roll down the steps
My secret powers blast up the steps
As the sun comes up
Beatrice could soon appear
Cook me some eggs
Some toast
Cook me some conversation
Just one more time

AS THE SMOKE CLEARS

As the scene gets set
We wonder about our own demise
Dad lived to be almost eighty-three
Lucy says nothing
Too many years of stress
As the smoke from the funeral clears
We pick up the pieces
Cold, wintry, stormy day
Lucy says nothing
Dad's old Chevy for sale in the front yard
Low miles, runs great
Oil leaks out of my eyes
Lucy says nothing

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE *ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN*

As the written forum in which Illinois English teachers share their ideas, the *Illinois English Bulletin* welcomes all kinds of materials related to the teaching of English.

We seek articles dealing with literature, writing, language, media, speech, drama, film, culture, technology, standards, assessment, professional development, and other aspects of our profession. Any combination of research, theory, and practice is appropriate. Some articles take a formal and conclusive approach, while others are informal and exploratory.

Book reviews, poetry, black-and-white photographs, and line drawings are also welcome.

When you are ready to share your work with your colleagues across the state, please consult the submission guidelines on page 50. We look forward to hearing from you. If you have questions or suggestions for the editor, please don't hesitate to get in touch (contact information on page

52). Thank you for reading, supporting, and contributing to the *Illinois English Bulletin*.

Submission Guidelines

(See page 52 for the editor's contact information.)

- Via U.S. mail, send one clean, paper copy of the manuscript to the editor. See below for manuscript formatting guidelines and information to include in your cover letter.
- Attached to an e-mail message addressed to the editor, send an additional copy of the manuscript in an MS Word or PDF attachment. See below for manuscript formatting guidelines and information you should include in your e-mail message.
- In your cover letter (mailed with hard copy) and in your e-mail message (with electronic copy attached), include the following information: your manuscript title, name, mailing address, institutional affiliation, and phone number. Also indicate whether you are currently a member of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (IATE). State that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.
- Manuscript formatting guidelines: follow either the current *MLA Handbook* or the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* guidelines for parenthetical in-text citations, the works cited section, and other technical elements; follow NCTE's "Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language"; place page numbers at the top right corner of every page; type and double-space throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and works cited), with one-inch margins all around.

- With both your paper and electronic manuscript submissions, please also include a biographical blurb of 50 words or fewer. (Blurbs for manuscripts with multiple authors should total 50 words or fewer.) Blurbs usually mention institutional and professional affiliations as well as teaching and research interests.
- The *Bulletin* editor will acknowledge receipt of your manuscript via e-mail.

Submission Deadlines

You are welcome to submit your materials at any time to the editor of the *Illinois English Bulletin*. Traditionally, the *Bulletin*'s spring issue features shorter articles based on presentations made at the previous autumn's IATE annual conference. Summer issues may be themed or all-inclusive. The fall issue presents the "Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose." The winter issue is the program for our annual IATE fall conference.

To be considered for inclusion in the spring issue, materials must be received by the editors by the previous November 1.

To be considered for inclusion in the summer issue, materials must be received by the editors by the previous January 15.

To be considered for inclusion in the fall issue ("Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose"), materials must be submitted electronically through the IATE submission manager (iate.submittable.com/submit) by the previous January 31. Please see page 53 for the two-page special submission guidelines for fall issues. Please note that as of 2005, the poet laureate of Illinois will designate several of the poems selected for publication in the *Bulletin* as "Poems of Special Merit." These

poems will be identified in a message written by the poet laureate and published in this issue of the *Bulletin*. The poets will receive a certificate from the poet laureate in the U.S. mail.

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CALL FOR STUDENT WRITING FROM ALL LEVELS FOR IATE'S BEST ILLINOIS POETRY AND PROSE CONTEST

DEADLINE: Submit all contest entries electronically through the IATE submission manager (iate.submittable.com/submit) no later than January 31, 2017.

FORMAT: Accepted file types include .doc, .docx, and .rtf.

COVER LETTER: The "Cover Letter" field must include:

- Full name of student
- Student's grade level at time piece was written
- Full name of school
- School's complete mailing address
- Full name of teacher (indicate if IATE member)
- E-mail address of instructor

IMPORTANT: The student's name, the school's name, and the teacher's name must not appear anywhere other than in the "Cover Letter" field.

LIMITS:
1) Five prose and ten poetry entries per teacher.
2) One thousand words of prose per entry; forty lines of poetry per entry.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FROM THE JUDGES:
1) Please see that students abide by the line and word limits. Have them revise and shorten pieces that exceed these limits.
2) Please emphasize to students that prose and fiction are not synonymous. Encourage them to explore the possibilities of expository essays, arguments, and personal narratives.

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