

about their ability to navigate difficult text.

To provide teachers more support, Lehman and Roberts include dozens of scripts that show teachers what to say as they present each lesson. The scripts address everything from what to say to introduce a study to how to respond to students' confusion. When framing the study of word choice in chapter three, for example, the script gives teachers the language to remind students how to study their evidence: "Now, we don't just want to jump around, only talking about random words we notice in the text. As we zoom in, we should start looking for patterns, to see if the words the author chose fit together in some way" (p. 41). These clear, detailed scripts also include what to say during think-alouds, what questions students should ask themselves as they read, and ways to praise and encourage students when they tackle a challenging task. While teachers should not read from the script while teaching, of course, they are a superb resource for reference and review as educators prepare to teach the structure and guide student learning.

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their depth for students. Lehman and Roberts explain how to break each study into smaller chunks when students are struggling. In their study of argument, for instance, the writers suggest focusing students on qualifying language to help them "refine their ideas." In this same unit, they suggest advancing the study to those who are ready by examining an author's assumptions, viewing those assumptions as a lens, and evaluating the patterns.

There are many professional resources that offer suggestions on how to encourage students to read closely. However, Christopher Lehman and Kate Roberts propose an exemplary strategy for this important learning process that requires students to do the heavy lifting of making meaning from the text, rather than simply

finding evidence to show a meaning given to them by their teacher. This strategy gives students a greater sense of efficacy as they learn that if they take their time, read closely, and seek commonalities, they can independently develop interesting, insightful understandings of text.

While the *Falling in Love with Close Reading* strategy is smart and accessible, its implementation is only possible because the book provides the tools teachers need to be successful. Lehman and Roberts deliver a comprehensive plan to guide teachers as they share the close reading structure with students. Their descriptions are clear, their scripts are informative, and their resources are useful. Additionally, throughout the text they offer QR codes that link to Web pages offering materials teachers can utilize while practicing this work with their students.

On page two of the book, Christopher Lehman and Kate Roberts write, "Love brings us in close, leads us to study the details of a thing, and asks us to return again and again." Teachers will return to *Falling in Love with Close Reading* again and again, finding both inspiration and preparation for showing their students how to be independent, confident, close readers of text. ●

Imagining the Possibilities: Improving the Teaching of Writing through Teacher-Led Inquiry

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The shape of writing has changed. Kids are now writing for real audiences and for real purposes, not just other kids in the class or the refrigerator door.

—Troy Hicks (qtd. in Pascopella & Richardson, 2009)

The Common Core State Standard's (CCSS) recent call for schools to emphasize the teach-

ing of college- and career-ready writing means reenvisioning the ways we approach teaching in the English language arts classroom to include more diverse and dynamic writing forms. The CCSS places emphasis on writing to establish arguments, support claims, and build informational and explanatory texts. The Standards also emphasize the need to teach writing across grade levels and disciplines

and suggest that writing curriculum include diverse and multifaceted genres with real purposes and audiences attached (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010 [<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>]).

This increased emphasis on the teaching of college- and career-ready writing means that those in the

educational community, particularly teacher-leaders in the English language arts, need to look closely at ways of supporting English teachers in opening up and creating curriculum, classrooms, and schools to mirror the diversity of writing forms and practices taking place across disciplines and in the real world. We must find ways to give students opportunities to learn and adapt to different genres of writing, especially those that may have an impact on their later lives. Teaching college- and career-ready writing across grade levels and disciplines can help open doors for students and position them for success in the academy, the workplace, and the community. By opening up the seams of a teacher-led action-research group focused on the teaching of college- and career-ready writing, this article makes the case for school leaders, educators, and curriculum specialists to empower teachers to work together to expand the writing curriculum to involve real audiences and purposes, to make writing more visible in schools, and to provide avenues for teachers to examine and improve their own teaching of college- and career-ready writing.

English department chairs, supervisors, and instructional leaders may work to improve the teaching of college- and career-ready writing in their schools by empowering teachers to examine their own teaching of writing through teacher inquiry teams and teacher-led action research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Shagoury & Power, 2012). Beginning with my work as a high school English teacher in Oregon and now as a writing researcher, teacher educator, and National Writing Project site director in Arizona, I have worked to support teacher-action research and teacher-led inquiry teams on the teaching of writing over the past 10 years in urban schools throughout Oregon, California, and Arizona (Singer Early, 2006; Singer, 2005). Through this work, I have witnessed firsthand how teachers may work from the “inside out” to implement innovative college-

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and career-ready writing curriculum in their classrooms and schools (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Saidy, 2013).

To gain perspective on teachers’ experiences as they work to address the CCSS, I recently supported the implementation of a teacher-led action-research group for teachers at an urban charter school serving grades K–10 in Phoenix, Arizona. The seven participants each teach English language arts or writing courses and are fellows of the Central Arizona Writing Project, a local site of the National Writing Project. They are in the first five years of their careers and have purposefully chosen to begin their careers in an ethnically and linguistically diverse, low-income, urban K–12 school.

The group met in person once a month over winter and spring semester (January–June 2013) and online through an online learning community created by the author and two secondary teachers. Over the course of six months, we read professional articles and books on the teaching of college- and career-ready writing, and each teacher created, implemented, and shared teacher-inquiry projects connected to the teaching of college- and career-ready writing from their classrooms. Our work together revolved around the following inquiry questions: How can I use writing to prepare my students for the next stages of their lives? How can I open up my curriculum to include the diverse forms of writing that take place in college, the workplace, and

the community? Through our time together, this teacher-led inquiry group came to understand key strategies, resources, rewards, and obstacles for implementing college- and career-ready writing in the curriculum.

Establishing Teacher-Led Inquiry on Teaching Writing

Our first in-person inquiry group meeting took place after school in the classroom of one of the co-facilitators. The group was co-led by the English department chair of the school where the inquiry group took place and two English language arts teachers (one from the same school and one from a school in a neighboring district). The teacher-facilitators helped establish a calendar of meetings, sent out invitations to recruit teachers from their schools to take part in the group, and sent out email reminders to the group twice a month to remind everyone of upcoming meetings and to make entries on the shared online space regarding their teacher-research work. The facilitators also took notes at each meeting, helped provide resource materials, and brought snacks. They took part in the inquiry group along with all of the other participants and shared their own writing, questions, ideas, successes, and obstacles revolving around the teaching of college- and career-ready writing. The informal and egalitarian nature of the group set a tone for collaborative and productive inquiry.

We began our work together by sharing overarching goals for our inquiry work. Together, we chose to focus our work on defining and examining college- and career-ready writing. Initially, we talked about how this kind of writing invites students to identify a real audience beyond the classroom teacher, to have empathy and understanding for that audience, and to attempt to reach the audience through appropriate content, purpose, and conventions (Gallagher, 2011). We also discussed how incorporating college- and career-ready writing into the curriculum means emphasizing the importance of believing in what

1. Goal statements
2. Summaries
3. College admission and scholarship essays
4. Proposals
5. Resumes, cover letters, and job applications
6. Lab reports
7. Field notes
8. Technical reports
9. Lists
10. Brochures and pamphlets
11. Book, music, film, restaurant, and television reviews
12. Menus
13. Essays
14. Blogs
15. Instructional materials (e.g., manuals, recipes, and maps)
16. Artist statements
17. Email and digital communication
18. Meeting agendas, memos, and minutes

Figure 1. Examples of college- and career-ready written genres

is possible when students learn real-world genres of writing, rather than seeing these writing tasks as rigid, indestructible barriers (Early & DeCosta, 2012). We brainstormed a list that would serve as a launching pad for what a college- and career-ready writing curriculum might include (see Fig. 1).

Next, our group of teachers established teacher-inquiry questions and action plans to help them examine, try out, and open up their curriculum to include writing assignments involving real audiences and real consequences beyond grades and test scores. For example, Heather, a 10th-grade English language arts teacher planned to design and implement a writing unit where her students prepared resumes for use at college and in the workplace. As Heather designed this unit, she shared her goals for her students through our online inquiry space:

My ultimate goal is to have students start to gather information together for their college application process. I want them to discover throughout the process what it is they need to successfully apply and attend the college of their choice. It important to do this now, at the end of sophomore year, because it gives them an opportunity to

plan and helps set them up for success for their next life steps.

Debra, an eighth-grade English language arts teacher and teacher librarian, decided to create an after-school writing group for middle school students to support their college- and career-writing beyond the formal space of her classroom. As she planned her writing workshop with students, she wrote the following reflection on our inquiry group's online blog space:

I started by thinking of small, but important writing we can do. I want to work with students on writing to the editor of a newspaper on an issue in the news. We will read model letters, choose an issue, write, and send these. Getting published will be icing on the cake.

Debra shared that her goal for this writing group was to give students opportunities "to reach out and connect their writing to a larger world than the classroom. These students will begin high school in the fall and many have never written for adults other than their teachers." By the end of her project, Debra and her students had met this goal. Three of the eight students' pieces were published in the local paper.

Anthony, a fourth-grade teacher, created college- and career-ready writing curriculum revolving around the restaurant business. His goal was to combine instruction on mathematics with the teaching of college- and career-ready writing. He knew many of his students ate at fast food restaurants and watched popular television shows about restaurants and cooking, but few of his students had an understanding of what it takes to write a strategic and realistic business plan for a restaurant.

The big idea for my unit is having students explore what it takes to be successful in the restaurant business. My students are going to write a proposal for a restaurant, create menus, and plan a realistic location. Then, we will write proposals to contractors convincing them to build the restaurant with a strict budget. Once all the paperwork is complete for building, they will present the restaurant and argue, in writing, why it will be a lucrative business.

Anthony's writing curriculum combined different writing forms and mathematical concepts, including budgeting, drafting, and proposal and argument writing, to envision, plan, and present a proposal for a restaurant of their own creation.

Tricia focused her inquiry work on finding ways to give students in her secondary language arts classes access to more public audiences and feedback for their written work. She created a Google Group for each of her classes where students could post and contribute assigned writing. By creating this shared and public

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writing space, she saw how students became more invested in their writing because it was no longer just for her, but rather for a broader audience of peers. Tricia also invited the teacher-inquiry group to participate and respond to the Google Group as an extended audience:

My students are posting topics in a Google Group. I am so excited about their contributions—the conversations in the Google Group have even extended to the classroom. Students seem so invested and thrilled to see their work “published,” even though they’re social media wizards! I’ll try to invite y’all to the group, so you can nose around if you’re interested.

By expanding the curriculum to include college- and career-ready writing opportunities, these teachers gave students opportunities to examine and explore how diverse forms of writing function in the world, who deems these forms of writing important, and why and to whom these genres matter in academic, professional, and civic settings.

Making Writing Visible

An unexpected extension or take-away from our teacher-led inquiry work was the decision we made at the end of our formal time together to expand opportunities for students to take part in college- and career-ready writing in their school beyond our classrooms. We came to a consensus in our last meeting to work collectively and individually to make writing more visible in our curriculum, classrooms, hallways, and school settings.

We talked about how, in these times of standardization, accountability, and economic hardship, we feel increased pressure to “teach to the test” or to make do with fewer resources.

In one meeting, Julia shared how “making changes to my curriculum to make room for more writing or moving away from lessons I hold dear feels like a risk.” However, even with these increased pressures and decreased resources, we found creative, simple, and innovative ways to spotlight writing in our classrooms and schools. For example, three of the teachers asked the principal to place bulletin boards outside the entryway to their classrooms for students to informally publish their work. Andrea, an eighth-grade language arts and social studies teacher, asked her principal if he could reserve a column in the school bulletin for students to publish writing. Heather announced her plan to change the hall of fame display in the entrance of the school. “Instead of sports trophies, I want the school to include student writing that has made a difference or highlights our school and community.”

Another way these teachers are continuing to work toward making writing more visible in their schools is through the creation of more writing spaces within their classrooms. They defined writing spaces as “places highlighting, inviting, publishing, or supporting student writing.” For example, Anthony planned to use writing logs for his students to record and reflect their mathematical thinking and problem solving. Andrea decided to create a writing supply station for her students on one of the counters in her classroom. Her supply station included revising pens, highlighters, sticky notes, staplers, hole punches, scissors, and tape. She also had a writing reward box for students containing erasers and writing pads and other creative writing supplies. She handed this box to students after they shared their writing in class discussions or completed pieces of written work.

Andrea also decorated and dis-

played a football propped up on a table in the corner of her classroom. She labeled the football the “Wow! I’m on Fire Ball.” When students share their writing in her class or make progress in their written work, she throws them the ball and yells in delight, “You’re on fire today!” Heather chose to work on creating a peer-tutoring center for students to receive more support for writing at her school, and she also collaborated with another teacher in the group, Tricia, who worked at a school across town, to help her establish a peer-tutoring center for her school.

Although our work together began by brainstorming ways to shift and expand our curriculum to include college- and career-ready writing, this group of teachers began to make broader changes that would send the larger message that writing is valued within and beyond their classrooms. For this group of teachers, creating spaces, invitations, and supplies for students to write worked to privilege writing within their school spaces and emphasized how college- and career-ready writing takes place as a part of learning, thinking, solving problems, and disseminating ideas. Preparing students for college, career, and the workplace means giving students opportunities to write the multifaceted and diverse forms of writing taking place in the real world, and it also means finding ways to place writing on “center stage” at their school.

This teacher-led inquiry group also demonstrated what is possible when teachers work together to initiate their own inquiry projects and professional development work. Through our time together, the teachers designed, tested, revised, shared, and celebrated work as teachers of writing. We also took part in rigorous reading, research, and writing about our instructional practices and curriculum development. Even though these teachers taught across a range of grade levels and worked at different schools, they found a common interest in finding ways to engage their students in writing forms that

would be needed in college and careers. Teachers came to see ways they could open up their curriculum and classrooms to find imaginative ways to include writing for real purposes and audiences.

In our last inquiry group meeting, Jenny shared how her students could see the direct implications and value of her “college and career writing” unit on job applications: “A student in my capstone class said something along the lines of, ‘It is so cool. We are learning about real stuff in Economics and Research & Writing, like how to write a resume for jobs and how to keep a budget.’” Heather also shared how her students were unusually invested in their resume writing because they could see the real-world applicability:

Students were motivated, engaged, and eager to learn about resume writing. It is incredibly unusual for me to get nearly every student to turn in an assignment, but with this resume for a summer job, a lot [of students] were using them for summer internships. The students were definitely interested and engaged.

This teacher-led inquiry group became a place for teachers to bounce ideas off of one another and to set goals for creating and implementing new writing curriculum. For example, Jaime, a fourth-grade teacher, said, “I felt like this group gave me the space to imagine what is possible for my students. It also gave me a group of colleagues to share my ideas, success-

Jaime, a fourth-grade teacher, said, “I felt like this group gave me the space to imagine what is possible for my students.”

es, and challenges with, and it made it feel like I could take more risks with my writing curriculum.”

As English department chairs, supervisors, and instructional leaders, we can offer teachers more opportunities to work collaboratively to share and develop curriculum ideas, set goals, and implement positive change in the teaching of writing across grade levels. Teacher inquiry work on the teaching of writing is a tangible and empowering way for English language arts teachers to expand access for all students to gain the real-world writing experience necessary to succeed in college, the workplace, and the community. ●

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