

FOSTERING COMPOSING PRE-K AND BEYOND— AVOIDING THE ARTIFICIAL NATURE OF WRITING AND TEACHING

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“Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught,” Steven Pinker—early in his argument about the language instinct—quotes from Oscar Wilde (19). As teachers of writing, what are we to make of Pinker’s use of this quote? First, Pinker wants everyone who teaches literacy to reconsider our assumptions about language acquisition. Further, I believe his use of Wilde is purposeful in its reframing the idea of “teaching”—some teach by imposing; others, by fostering. It is time for teachers of language arts to reconsider wholly our assumptions about the *direct teaching* of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Why? Because we are misusing valuable time—time in our teaching and time in our students’ learning.

The sources of this misuse of time are varied—federal and state mandates, high-stakes tests, parental pressure. But rarely are we as practitioners making assertive stands about what is best for our students; rarely are we as practitioners making our voices heard as scholars and leaders.

Many leading authorities on language and language acquisition are in agreement—speaking and listening (if not inhibited by physiological or psychological abnormalities) are natural to human development; reading and writing are artificial endeavors.

“Writing is clearly an optional accessory; the real engine of verbal communication is the spoken language we acquire as children,” Pinker explains (17).

What the above concept of language means to teachers of language arts (especially to those teaching students in the earliest years) is that we are often careless in our *imposed teaching* (because of faulty assumptions) and lax in our practice of *fostering* language development—fueling what comes naturally to encourage the artificial acts of reading and writing. Here I focus solely on writing instruction and consider several problems that face us as teachers of writing at the early childhood levels—setting the stage for all writing instruction that follows:

1. What do we know about teaching writing?
2. What are the distinctions between *writing* and *composing*?
3. What is the nature of the composing/writing process?
4. How do pre-K and early childhood teachers address composing with pre-graphic and developing-graphic students—ones just learning to physically write on paper?

With No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and reports surfacing about poor writing ability among students, primary and elementary teachers must assume their role as the voice for fostering writing and composing in students from the first days they enter our schools.

Coming to Know and to Practice What We Know About Writing

Briefly, let’s consider where our assumptions about teaching writing hinder our ability to foster composing skills in students as early as 4-year-old kindergarten. Also, we need to make a significant distinction in terms—writing versus composing.

Howard Gardner has argued that when learning, students pass through what he calls a five-year-old mind stage—one that stays with a person throughout life. For educators, Gardner’s idea is significant because he proposes that many of the misconceptions, assumptions, and stereotypes that humans form in that stage remain with a person throughout life *regardless of the evidence to the contrary in experiences and in formal education*. While addressing student misconceptions is crucial for more effective teaching, let’s here explore the need for teachers to rethink and reflect on our own crystallized ideas that may be inhibiting our ability to foster composing and writing skills in students from the earliest schooling and beyond. I believe that if we completely reinvent the ways we begin the formal fostering of student language development, subsequent years of instruction will become far more effective from this new beginning.

Our most flawed conceptions grow from three areas—how humans learn, what forms writing takes in the world outside of formal education, and what the writing process looks like as practiced by writers who compose as a profession or a calling. Constance Weaver and others help put these ideas in perspective. As Pinker’s research on the language instinct suggests, Weaver urges teachers of writing to start where students are in their evolution as writers, shown through their performances as emerging writers; she also encourages grounding writing instruction in constructivistic learning theory—not behaviorism—since language develops from within the student and it does not have to be (and cannot truly be) imprinted from without. Further, Weaver encourages teachers of writing to allow students to be experimental and to play with the language; the imposition model that attempts to imprint a standard form on children creates a false roadblock to the development of expression.

Jane Kiel offers a synthesis of what we know about how students learn and, more importantly for this discussion, how students acquire language. Her conclusion drawn from how we deal with reading and writing, vocabulary, spelling, and the many

and varied aspects we lump under language arts instruction serves well to focus us here:

Given the vast amount of language [students] have already learned on their own before starting school, this fact [that very little is learned through direct instruction—] should not surprise us. Language is learned when we are exposed to, and engaged with, meaningful language, not because we are taught. So, as Frank Smith (1994) and many others have said, maybe we should spend more instructional time not on instruction, but on giving the students a chance to interact with language in a meaningful way: through reading and writing for an audience. It is through such contact that true language learning takes place. (15)

Direct instruction—especially implemented in a blanket approach for an entire class—of grammatical and mechanical awareness already intuited by students often interferes with both their known and their expanding range of linguistic dexterity. A young student who already shows consistent awareness of subject/verb agreement in her speech and writing needs no direct instruction or isolated practice in subject/verb agreement. Essentially, nearly a century of research on teaching students to write shows that teachers need to shift from direct instruction in isolation to a coaching model that encourages more and more sophisticated experimentations with language by each child *as that child composes and writes (and rewrites) throughout years of guided experiences with language.*

I have made the following claim before (Thomas 2000) directed primarily at secondary teachers, but I have come to see through my teaching in the Spartanburg Writing Project (SWP), an affiliate of the National Writing Project, that two key changes are essential to writing instruction in early childhood education—embracing that writing forms that exist in the published world rarely conform to templates and recognizing the chaotic nature of the writing process. As I have worked with teachers of K-4

through senior English, these two ideas have resonated most with the teachers who have moved their grounding from behaviorism to constructivism and have recommitted their writing instruction to foster writing by students that springs from student *choice* both in writing form and content.

Dawn Mitchell, a fourth-grade teacher, has lived this transition herself. She came to the SWP Summer Institute after her first year of teaching; from there she has experienced a metamorphosis as a teacher, as a person, and as a scholar. She tells the story of her transformation:

After becoming immersed in the research, thoughtful discussions, writing workshops, and presentations that entail the Summer Institute of the Spartanburg Writing Project, I began to evaluate the current instructional practices I implemented in my classroom regarding writing. The experiences I had writing, reading, and listening to best practices in writing led me to make several key changes in my own classroom instruction. These changes completely transformed my classroom and the writing ability of my students.

1. Students were given a choice in what they read and wrote. Instead of always giving them a prompt or journal writing, students were allowed to choose what they wanted to write about, and also what they wanted to read.
2. Students were taught language and grammar skills within the context of their own writing. Instead of using the language handbook and the grammar practice book that came with the basal that I had used previously, students learned writing techniques and grammar skills during focused craft lessons and writer's workshop.
3. Students published what was important, and individuality was embraced. Instead of everyone publishing a piece for a bulletin board or a class book,

students chose what they wanted to publish out of their portfolios, and instead of them all looking the same, we embraced creativity and originality in everything from technique to choice of font.

4. Reading and writing became tools for learning instead of isolated entities taught alone. I began to distinguish for myself and for my students the difference between writing to learn and learning to write. This helped them to see reading and writing as more than separate subjects, but as inseparable ways of communication that are used throughout subject and content areas.
5. Students discovered writing techniques by reading real writers. I learned how vital it is to provide students with literary models when introducing a writing technique. We imitated writers like Gary Paulsen and Cynthia Rylant and made connections between what we read and what we wrote. Students began to see the craft of writing as not something magical and unattainable, but as something that can be manipulated and practiced until they too can mold a line into something that grabs and holds the reader's eye.
6. Conferences, portfolios, peer and group workshops, and public performances became pieces of valid assessment. Writing assessment changed completely from a numeric grade with a rubric to a personal conference about what the student said, what was important, how they said it, what writing techniques did they use, what strengths I saw, what suggestions I had for them, what suggestions did they have, etc. It went from something completely impersonal to something meaningful.
7. Reading and writing began to have a purpose beyond the standardized test. We wrote songs of loss, memoirs of our families, plays for the first graders, advertisements for a local restaurant, and immigration narratives for the Ellis Island museum. Instead of

writing for a grade or to practice for the standardized test, we wrote for real reasons: to inform, to persuade, to entertain—and sometimes just for ourselves.

8. I learned how to write in the Summer Institute. So I taught not how I was taught, but how I learned. I began implementing writer's workshop, read alouds, literature circles, peer conferencing, and other activities that fostered a community of writers and an environment conducive to writing because those were all activities that helped me to write in the Summer Institute. I also began to see how chaotic writing can be. Instead of teaching the writing process in a linear, step-by-step process, I began to allow students to use it as a guide.
9. The fine arts were integrated into my teaching of writing. Art, music, drama, and technology were all integrated into writing instruction. It became obvious to me during the Summer Institute that writing is just like other fine arts in that it is a way of communicating to others and how beneficial it can be for writers to make this connection. This year in my classroom we discussed the relationship all of the fine arts have with each other, their similarities, and their differences. We tried our hand at song writing and compared and contrasted it with poetry. We performed our own "Poetry Alive" for the first graders. We wrote and performed our own play. We made Power Point presentations to persuade each other, and we discussed the difference between what's art and what's popular.
10. I became a writer myself, and used my own writing as a model for my students. The biggest personal gain from the Summer Institute wasn't all of the research or the free books or even the presentations the instructors gave. It was the invaluable experience learning to write in a community of writers with support and

encouragement, where I was in control of what I wanted to write, and how I wanted to say it. The particular environment that the institute created was tremendous in its ability to motivate me to write and to give me the courage to take risks in my subject area and in my style. I wanted more than anything when I left that room every day to be a writer—and to be able to create that same environment for my students. Before then I had never thought of myself as a writer or of using my writing as a literary model for my students. In the Summer Institute, I learned how to write and how to "teach" writing. I also gained confidence in myself as a writer, a thinker, and a professional.

Making Shifts as Teachers for Students

Most students have suffered through some form of the imposed essay form. At one point, that consisted of the five-paragraph essay—introduction with a thesis statement that established three points; three body paragraphs, one for each point; and a conclusion. While many have set this aside, its evil cousin is little better—the introduction with thesis, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Only the “five” has been dropped from the formula. This slight move away from the five-paragraph essay is essentially no more legitimate or helpful to teaching students to write than the five-paragraph essay itself.

Over the course of two decades of high-stakes testing that has evolved into NCLB, students have been coerced more and more to fill false templates instead of developing as writers with ideas and linguistic command. Research is confirming that the high-stakes testing and standards movement are directly and adversely affecting writing instruction. First, rubric-driven writing assessment has become a norm that shows itself to be reductionistic and inhibiting to students’ growth as writers (Mabry 1999). If students must fulfill a prescription of both what is to be expressed and the form it must take (the rubric), those students are relieved of the key elements of being a writer. *Hillocks*

reveals research (based on Illinois, Kentucky, New York, Oregon, and Texas—which represent some of the most imposing and aggressive states in terms of standards and high-stakes tests) that is more damning: Teaching to state assessment writing rubrics “shuts down thinking,” and I would add—shutting down thinking by *both* students and teachers is the result (70).

Consider two things. The template approach to teaching students to write essays is analogous to teaching students to paint portraits in art classes by starting with paint-by-numbers. No art teacher would do that. The template essay format is merely a cousin of painting-by-numbers. Second, the formal essay form taught in schools is virtually unseen in the world outside of school—and then primarily in the world of academic publication where the writing is merely functional and often lacking in stylistic originality and voice. Teachers from the first days of fostering composing in our students must broaden what we tell students:

Writing forms have some sort of coherence that usually revolves around a beginning, a middle, and an end, and is usually guided by some focus. Ok, kids, let’s look at this wonderful picture book and see how this author does it.

From a rich and varied experience with published writing, students can begin to build their own toolboxes of forms from which they can choose as they develop their sophistication as writers.

Along with re-imagining how a piece of writing looks, we need to re-examine the writing/composing process and offer that re-examination to students—again from the first moment of formal education that addresses composing and writing. Weaver helps here also. The history of the *direct instruction* of the writing process has seen the practice develop from being a research-grounded best practice to being yet another linear template that is imposed on students; the writing process has become yet another skill we fragment and assess in artificial and isolated ways. In

South Carolina, the standards-driven state exam on language arts has included a partially filled in web based on a reading passage; students are to complete some of the empty bubbles in that web. This is no assessment of writing; it is merely a fill-in-the-blank test that *looks* different. Even more disturbing is that the question on the exam caused classroom teachers to teach webbing to all students through worksheets similar to the exam.¹

Now, consider professional writers. Of course all writers practice a writing process, and their varied processes do share what we have come to embrace as the primary components of the writing process—some sort of brainstorming (generating ideas is important to composing, not any one brainstorming technique such as webbing), some sort of drafting, some sort of editing, and some version of producing a final form. The essential elements of the writing process are not the problems. *It is how we impose a step-by-step prescription to performing the process that is counter-educational—and far from realistic or empowering for the student.* The writing/composing process as practiced by professional writers is chaotic and cross-fertilizing. Writers often perform all of the elements of the process in overlapping and idiosyncratic ways that eventually form a final piece. The youngest of children need to be coached to discover for themselves those varied processes—recognizing that a million versions could exist for a million students with all being simultaneously effective.

These three moments of clarity for all teachers dealing with language arts in the first five or six years of formal schooling—how students acquire language, what forms original writing takes, and how writers write—are the first steps needed for teachers of early childhood faced with standards, high-stakes tests, and federal mandates, all of which are often misguided in their impositions. With these ideas in place, teachers must also begin to work under a larger umbrella—composing instead of writing. The term “writing” presents two problems. First, for early childhood educators “writing” is often indistinguishable from “handwriting.” Being able to read aloud does not necessarily exhibit comprehension; not being able to graphically portray language

does not necessarily equal a student's inability to compose. Second, writing as an act of expression—as opposed to handwriting—is a subset of the larger act of composing—an essential act that needs fostering in all students even when they are not yet able to perform some of the acts that older children and adults do, such as handwriting, computing, or performing an athletic event.

Composing at Any Age—The Beginnings of the Creative Mind

Writing teachers must value the composing process *beyond* the limitations of the handwriting act in pre-graphic children so that key concepts of creative expression are developing as the ability to write by hand emerges. While I do not claim to be revealing here any unique components of the composing process, I do believe that the way teachers see or acknowledge the process must move from an intuitive level to a greater awareness by the instructor, and thus the students.

We have become accustomed to thinking of pre-writing as a first step to writing. Brainstorming, listing, webbing, charting, outlining, and a host of other strategies have been taught (and often imposed) within the step of pre-writing. In composing—which I suggest we think of as *moving from a chaotic evolving set of fuzzy ideas to a coherent set of supportable ideas to be expressed in some purposeful way*—we need to drop pre-writing as an *initial* step only and to broaden our concept to early composing, a sort of playing with ideas. The earliest stages of composing often have several components—inspiration, freedom to explore and fail, time, interaction with peers and experts—but this earliest phase of composing—like the traditional stages of the writing process—often will continue to flourish well into later phases of composing. Until a final performance, a formal performance, all evolving ideas are in some sort of brainstorming state.

All humans are inherently driven to expression; often that expression involves some form of language. For the youngest

children, expression can be extremely frustrating since their drive to emote often is more sophisticated than their ability to bring that voice to the concrete world. As adults who can anticipate that expressive skills like writing will eventually catch up with children's desire to be expressive, teachers must foster what students can do—compose in many forms like drawings, plays, visual art, etc.—and overtly help them connect that composing process to their emerging ability to write by hand or at a keyboard. If our efforts remain too heavily on imposing that which students cannot yet do, we kill their ability to generate and form ideas; those skills are far more important to preserve and encourage at the early grades than to teach surface features.

Because many ideas that we formulate simply fizzle out, children must be allowed to abandon ideas, a phase of writing that classroom teachers often ignore. When the composing process reaches some level of commitment, children will begin to work in an area parallel to what we have often called the drafting phase. Here, students have had enough time with the ideas to begin to discriminate among them—rejecting failures, reforming ideas, and making commitments to some ideas. *If we are to teach composing to pre-graphic young children, we can find ways to help them work through ideas without being inhibited by physically writing out words and sentences. Yet we are teaching students to write even if they are not physically hand writing.* Consistent with whole-to-part learning theory, guiding a student through composing phases is a larger concept that can be narrowed to structured writing as a student's language skills evolve over many years of formal education.

As a child moves toward some performance of composing, the child must make a full commitment to ideas and a format of performance—just as the writer must eventually set aside brainstorming for final drafting. That a writer must eventually commit to some ideas, that form of expression matters—these are ideas within the composing process that any age child can be guided toward within a large array of performances; these are ideas that ultimately matter most since without valuable ideas and

purpose, polishing the surface features of a piece of writing is pointless for both the student and the teacher.

Composing is a synthetic act where a person begins with ideas, wrestles with ideas, and then embraces ideas for expression in some purposeful way. As writing teachers, we cannot directly teach children language, but we can foster a concept of composing that each child can tailor to her own needs and abilities as an evolving master of her language.

Pre-K Children—Composing to Become Writers

My ideas for this article were first spurred several years ago by reading Constance Weaver's *Teaching Grammar in Context*. In that book, Weaver spends a few pages on the developmental stages of children's ability to draw people. As most brain researchers believe, people do not reach levels of cognitive development at easily prescribed rates, but people often do follow the same *sequence* of development, though their performances of those levels may manifest themselves in erratic and conflicting ways. Weaver shows (see her Fig. 4.2, 61) the stages of a child's drawing of people—which reveals conceptual leaps of understanding that the child exhibits through drawing. Children's drawings of people reveal two important aspects of a child's development of expression, as noted by Weaver: “[l]earners do not typically master something correctly all at once,” and “[s]omething learned may be temporarily not applied as the person is trying something else new” (60). One does not have to make too much of a leap to see the parallel with composing and the ability to write by hand: “These generalizations hold for emergent writers as well as for emergent artists, and for adults as well as children,” Weaver explains (62).

Pinker also helps us here. He offers a wonderful example of children's propensity to say “He goed,” though they never hear any adult speaker construct that form. He adds further that no amount of correcting from adults will stop the child's use of “goed” until that child's brain develops further. Children drop “goed” for “went” when they are cognitively able just as they begin

to give their drawings of people bodies when they cognitively can—not because they are told otherwise by some adult. What do these ideas mean for the early childhood classroom—and beyond?

I suggest that early childhood teachers can incorporate several approaches designed around teaching composing that will evolve into teaching writing throughout a child's education; some of those strategies would include:

- Purposeful and playful drawing. Having children begin to draw is often far less taxing than learning handwriting. Further, purposeful drawing—where children discuss what they want to draw, why they want to draw it, and what they produce—begins to develop in children the ability to create and express themselves by choice and with purpose; it is an act of empowerment through expression.
- Animated discussions. Children are verbal; it is a part of human nature. Nothing can help a child more than being in a psychologically healthy and intellectually stimulating environment. Small-group to large-group discussions—monitored by a coaching teacher who also participates—help foster the composing of ideas. It takes time, interaction, experimentation, reflection, revision, and public expression—all vital acts that will contribute to many things children will do in their adult lives, notably writing.
- Playing and drama. Yes, playing. Children must play—from imagining themselves as moms and dads to performing formal plays. Teachers also need to observe children who are given time to play *purposefully*. I would call this tethered playing, breaking the class into groups and giving each a kernel play activity that requires imagination. When

this tethered playing is observed by the teacher, reflective class time later can bring the process into focus. What did children do to create their play? Why did they make the choices they made?

- Discovery activities. From science to social studies, the early childhood classroom is rich with opportunities for children to be immersed in discovery projects that involve the composing process. What many classrooms lack is exposing students to how ideas have come about in the content areas. Many teachers still depend heavily on transmitting information to children as if that information came to us already fully formed and as if that information is static—no chance of further evolving. The big ideas—such as the existence of zero in our number system—have stories behind them, often stories that show the composing process in action and often stories that children can recreate on their way to being creative with ideas and with their own words in their own writing.

The greatest obstacle to moving from the transmitting of information to students, from imposing information *on* students, to a student-centered pedagogy that fosters the potential in students is that no templates exist for the teachers to implement. Once a template is imposed by some authority and practiced by the teacher, the philosophy of the child-centered room is destroyed. Just as Dawn’s story earlier reflects, many well meaning teachers fall in a “my” mentality—my class, my course, my lesson plans. For learning to occur for a child or an adult, the learner must be engaged and the learner must choose to learn. Our students need clear canvases—not paint-by-numbers.

Ultimately, early childhood teachers, perhaps all teachers, who wish to teach writing must see that each teaching and learning experience is unique and that each teacher begins with concepts

and theory and philosophy, but creates and recreates the teaching acts over and over again as new students fill the rooms.

Making the New Commitment

Having taught high school English for 18 years and having taught teachers for the last eight years as well, I have come to see that the most important teachers in a child's learning are those first teachers; thus, if we are to help students grow as writers, early childhood teachers must establish the concepts that will remain throughout a child's education. Five commitments will serve teachers of writing well, especially the first ones in our students' lives:

1. Begin writing instruction—and all language instruction—with the children themselves and with student performances. We cannot impose language onto children; they are not blank verbal slates. Language development needs *the least direct instruction necessary* for each child to grow in language skills. Most direct instruction creates problems for abilities that would form with coaching instead of shot-gun approaches aimed at the whole class.
2. Think in terms of *fostering*, not *direct teaching*. It is not the responsibility of teachers to cover prescribed material. Such an approach is in fashion today, but it is a politically motivated mind set more concerned with a false sense of accountability than student learning. Fostering student writing is much harder than dictating the five-paragraph essay, but it is the morally right thing to do. Again, writing is important, but the empowerment that comes from genuine expression is far more important. Students who are imposed upon are not being empowered. Teachers more concerned with covering the standards and documenting that coverage are not teaching.

3. Forget assumptions about writing forms, and look again for the first time at the world of published writing. What we have traditionally said about the formal essay is essentially a lie. Great writing grows from a broad range of concepts—not from templates. Looking at published writing as models that can contribute to a toolbox of choices for a growing writer will create willing and able young writers—not disenfranchised children conforming to the requests of a teacher (who is conforming to the mandates of the state).
4. Don't stop there. Look at the writing process again for the first time. Real writers work in idiosyncratic ways. A teaching writer's aim should be to help each child *discover* a writing process—not to force a linear process onto the children. We all remember faking our formal outlines *after* we wrote our research papers. Why? Because we intuitively knew that formal outlining was not a productive act for us as writers. We all did plan and outline as we wrote—but for most, that planning and outlining were indistinguishable parts of the whole composing act.
5. What's the emergency? My final plea—my final guiding thought—is be patient—even in the face of political urgency. Years ago Bill Clinton stood before the country and announced that all children would read by third grade. It sounded noble, but it is basically senseless. Concerning language acquisition, educators are far too impatient *because politicians have a habit of creating a false emergency about the educating of our children*. The conforming aspects of language—grammar and mechanics—are not crucial for small children; in fact a large proportion of adults function well in life with many grammar and mechanics issues unresolved. We must allow students more time to conform to standards by choice and shift our urgency

to a child's ability to communicate ideas—ideas that will be worth editing some day. The urgency over surface features should come *at the end of formal education*—not at the beginning (See Warner). During the first six or seven years of writing instruction, teachers should be concerned with fluency, voice, ideas, coherence—all the qualities that make writing worth editing for surface features.

Not If, But How

As the first teachers of writing, we are faced with dilemmas—thus choices to be made. If we choose as professionals and scholars, the crux of the debate over language instruction can be voiced assertively, and our students will benefit greatly.

Language instruction—especially in the first formal grades of schooling—has a long history of social debate, a debate that has been unproductive. That unhealthy debate has often focused on a misconception—*if* we teach grammar, *if* we teach Standard English, *if* we teach mechanics, *if* we teach phonics. The question is not *if*, but *how*. And we must begin now to make that clear. No writing teacher is now saying or has ever claimed that grammatical and mechanical proficiency does not matter. Skilled adult writers have virtually impeccable mechanical and grammatical dexterity; they make those surface features work for them and their creation of meaning for their audience. What we have been arguing for over seventy years, however, is that *how* one fosters those skills and *when* one expects those skills to be manifested in student performances are the issues.

Imposing language rules onto children who already possess a vital and evolving language awareness is senseless and dehumanizing. As Pinker has pointed out, children *without any formal instruction* construct verbal patterns such as “might have been seen” without ever violating the grammar “rule” that describes the order of the verbal parts. Grammar patterns have sprung from inside humans; they were not passed down as rules from on high. What we call grammar rules are actually ever-

changing descriptions of cultural agreements over what symbols and patterns reflect what meanings (See Williams).

For every teacher who deals with the writing development of children in their first six or seven years of schooling, we have a moral and professional obligation to begin practicing what we know about writing—how students acquire both natural and artificial forms of language, what writing forms exist in the published world, and how the writing process is practiced by writers. In our democracy that values human worth and dignity, we should want independently minded students who express themselves by choice and with command. Guiding them from the first days toward that dignity and power is our only hope—and ultimately our greatest gift to those children as people and as writers.

Notes

¹ This is anecdotal from many observations, conferences, and discussions with classroom teachers in my home state of SC. Schools and districts began adding webbing to curriculum guides and began purchasing support materials such as workbooks with webbing since it was on the test the year before. Hillocks (2003), already cited in the article, notes a similar phenomenon in general with the state-wide writing assessments he studied in his article for EJ. My assertion here is a specific example of the larger phenomenon found by Hillocks in the states he studied.

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