

PROCESS WRITING INSTRUCTION IN PRACTICE: WHEN REVISING LOOKS LIKE EDITING

Emily J. Isaacs

Evidence suggests that there are teachers across levels—in college writing programs, in the disciplines, and also in high schools and middle schools—who question the value of insisting on and making time for the processes that enable revision: peer review groups, collecting and responding to drafts, guiding re-writing activities (Addison and McGee; Applebee and Langer; Isaacs and Knight). These questions are often not articulated to program directors or among faculty where process-writing is publicly adopted, but they are loud and clear outside of these circles, as anyone who has spent time in an adjunct office suite of writing teachers or a high school teachers' lounge well knows. While those that align themselves with current-traditional pedagogies are perhaps particularly vocal in articulating their skepticism about the value of teaching “the process,” and the possibility that students' writing will actually improve as a result of such instruction, even instructors who embrace and practice a process-oriented approach to teaching writing harbor occasional, quiet fears that all this effort—by students *and* teachers—may be in vain, or at least of insufficient value.

At this point readers familiar with the theoretical and empirical scholarship on the value of revision—with Nancy Sommers' most persuasive series of articles originally published in *College Composition and Communication*, with Lillian Bridwell's seminal study of twelfth graders' revising practices, and the collective and compelling theory and praxis of such revision theorists as Peter

Elbow, Joseph Harris, Donald Murray and Robert Straub—may be tempted to dismiss this questioning of the value of teaching and supporting revision activities out-of-hand. For many, the idea that the value of revision activities needs to be proven beneficial is simply absurd, as instruction that promotes and requires re-drafting and revision is foundational to teaching for most of us who call ourselves compositionists. This may seem like old terrain, unnecessary questioning of established truths. Yet relatively few studies (for example, Ferris, Patthey-Chavez et al., Mlyarczyk, Simmons, and Sweeney) have sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of revision activities or detail the particulars of the ways that students are able to revise their drafts. The questioning of the value of revision instruction is most apparent when we speak with practicing writing teachers who are not performing in department or conference meetings or professional development seminars but who are in the midst of reviewing final drafts of student papers that have received formative response and worked through various revision activities.

When I get together with writing teachers who are reading final drafts, faculty return again and again to their disappointment with students' final papers. I hear laments over students' apparent misunderstanding of what revision *really* means. Faculty report of providing extensive commentary on a mid-draft which has resulted in what is perceived to be minor, barely consequential change and improvement. Teachers ask for revision and students somehow appear to hear editing. Teachers anticipate and hope for fundamental change in thinking and writing; teachers then read students' new drafts as essentially the same, with only minor word changes. Sometimes, after reading many, many "final drafts," teachers—thoughtful teachers who are clearly among the seventy-one percent whom Applebee and Langer identify as process-writing teachers—wonder if the time spent on peer review, formative response, and directed revision activities is instructionally wise.

Study Says: Revised Writing is Slightly Improved, and Small Revisions Matter

To better understand the short-term effectiveness of process-writing methodologies, I conducted a three-week qualitative study of a ninth grade integrated, untracked English class in an economically and racially diverse suburban-urban community in New Jersey.^{1,2} I had the opportunity to observe and assess a process-writing unit of study on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that included drafting, peer and adult-reader review, as well as instructor feedback and guided revision practices. After blind review of first and last drafts by three independent readers, revised student drafts were deemed either "somewhat stronger" or "stronger" than first drafts. Evidence of revision varied, yet nearly all students who engaged in revision made choices that improved the quality of their work, according to the three expert readers. This finding confirms the work of other researchers working in different contexts (institutional types and student populations) and different historical periods (Bridwell; Chanquoy; Cohen and Scardamalia, rpt. in Olson; Olson; Simmons) but who have also compared first and final drafts of papers written by students who have received guided, process-writing instruction.

This summary finding, that student writing improved through guided-writing activities, should be considered side by side with a second, equally important finding: revision is often slight and by adult, experienced-writer eyes, superficial, what most teachers would describe as surface-level changes. However, based on classroom-data and close examination of the full complement of written materials collected through the course of this instructional unit, I classify these students' revision work as substantial and valuable, central to their development as writers who can reflect critically on their work in respect to purpose, audience, and other components of the rhetorical situation. Despite their apparently superficial nature—frequently changes in word or phrase—an in-context analysis leads me to argue that seemingly small textual changes in student papers can represent thoughtful and important

acts of revision. For developing writers, changing words should be seen not as a failure to revise, but rather as a crucial, laudable and praise-worthy step toward both fuller, more effective revision, and *also*, a final draft that readers will recognize as superior to the one that preceded it.

Reaching the Tipping Point

A review of the empirical research on revision reveals that revised writing is typically judged by external readers as more successful than first drafts, though improvement is greatest when more than one instructional methodology is used; for example, by employing peer review *and* instructor feedback, or by providing instruction in revision strategies *and* delaying re-drafting (Cohen and Scardamalia, discussed in Olson 23; Lillios and Iding; Olson 28; Simmons “Responders” 692). Further, Richard Beach and Tom Friedrich argue that there is some debate in the empirical research as to whether individual interventions (that is, just peer review, or just re-drafting) lead to draft improvement at all, suggesting that as teachers we need to invest in multiple strategies for helping students revise if we are to have an effect. Simply implementing one strategy—responding to papers, adding in peer review, or providing direct instruction on introductory paragraphing—may not lead to any improvement in final drafts (though it may well have long-term positive effects in terms of training writers in the habits of successful writers). One reason process-writing practices may *seem* to fail or succeed insufficiently, therefore, is that we have only partially provided the instruction that supports revision practices by, for example, adding a quick peer review session a few days before collecting papers. Furthermore, as several researchers have noted (e.g., Patthey-Chavez et al.; Yegelski), often teachers who see themselves as teaching fundamental or conceptual revision are actually sending messages through their comments in class and on papers that undercut revision, particularly substantive revision. For example, teachers may speak generally of thinking-level revision, while only commenting on and marking surface-level errors in final

assessments. These students are likely to revise only slightly. Thus, as Ruie Pritchard and Ronald Honeycutt note, while process writing has clearly been endorsed as a practice, it is often not understood and thus enacted in the most effective and meaningful ways (282). Finally, it can never be said enough that rewriting is hard to do well—for novices but also those who are slightly beyond what is seen as the novice period. As Myhill and Jones note about the adolescent students in their study, writers are often unable to fix a problem even though they both recognize and explain it. Thus a draft-to-draft comparison that reveals a small word change may in fact not be indication of a cursory, superficial change, but a recognition of a problem that is only partially solved. While recognizing a problem is the first step to solving it, it's not the last by a long shot.

The Study Particulars

With this brief research review as a frame, I will discuss the findings of my own study that sought to demonstrate the types of revision that ninth grade students engage in and the pedagogical acts that support revision. Second, I will amplify on my assertion that overly high expectations for revision, coupled with incomplete implementation of teaching strategies to support revision, may well be what is making some teachers either give up on or lessen their engagement with the instructional activities and the time needed to promote revision.

In the ninth grade English class that I studied, an academically, socially and motivationally diverse group of twenty-four ninth grade students were able to successfully revise—read and rewrite—papers in a process-based writing instructional context facilitated by an experienced and capable writing teacher. I spent three weeks in class, attending daily, collecting all written materials, and listening in on conferences between students and adult tutor-volunteers. At the close of the study I held an hour-and-a-half interview with the teacher, Ms. Loomis.³ Ms. Loomis' ninth-grade class met at 8:30 in the morning, three days a week, most frequently in block meetings of about an hour and a half. The

academic preparedness of the students in this class ranged significantly, reflecting the district make-up and the school's decision to not track the ninth grade English classes. The class was also diverse in race, ethnicity and social and economic class, and the fourteen- and fifteen-year-old students were also varied in their social development. On the one hand there were a handful of self-possessed students who in appearance would fit into a first-year college writing class. They were organized and comfortable, appropriate in their reactions to Ms. Loomis, their peers, or to the material. In contrast was a group of several students, mostly boys, who were not so self-possessed and whose feelings and thoughts were more apparent as they responded verbally and nonverbally to the happenings of the class. They laughed easily and often needed additional guidance in following and gaining value from the assignments and activities that Ms. Loomis had organized and scaffolded for the class. Sometimes they had trouble with the organizational requirements of school and so had to scramble to find pencils and hand-outs. In each of these two groups, academic performance appeared to vary. A third group of mostly girls were nervous and often shy, speaking almost only to other girls or Ms. Loomis, carefully writing down notes, often in that loopy handwriting that is the hallmark of female adolescence. Again, while these students showed all the external attributes of "good students," their writing performance varied. Finally, there were three or four students who were at the margins, coming to class infrequently and typically under-prepared; they wrote short, under-developed essays or did not write them at all. In the midst of all this was Ms. Loomis, who had been teaching high school for five years, but who had the organization, depth, and confidence of someone who had taught longer. Significantly, at the time of this study, not only had she earned a Master's degree in English focused on writing studies, but she was writing a dissertation in an English Education doctoral program. Ms. Loomis was also socially dexterous and extremely at ease; she clearly demonstrated her interest in her students as people as well as students. She told students about her dinner with her beloved grandfather in one

minute, and easily and naturally shifted to setting up the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet* in the next.

In the period of this study Ms. Loomis' students were given a "creative/interpretive" assignment based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and they were provided with multiple opportunities for revision, which was an articulated expectation for the assignment. Over a two-week period students were required to write three drafts, and revision was supported through the following activities: peer review, instructor or adult tutor-volunteer feedback, model paper discussion, a revision checklist, mini-lessons (on Shakespearian language, for example), and whole-class discussion of the revision process. Notably, in general, the more students participated in the available resources—requesting feedback from the instructor, seeking out the adult tutor-volunteer, actively participating in the discussion of Shakespearian pronouns—the more successful they were in both revising the paper over the duration of the writing period, and in the quality of final product itself, as judged by independent readers, Ms. Loomis, and myself. The independent readers were three practicing English high school teachers who did not know Ms. Loomis, but who were recruited from a graduate course in teaching writing that I had taught the previous year. All three raters had received commendation for teaching excellence in their districts, and all three also performed well in their graduate course work. These raters were not trained or given specific criteria by which to judge the papers; instead, relying on the expert-reader model advocated by William Smith and Brian Huot, I chose raters who were also high school teachers in northern New Jersey and whose own teaching practices included assignments similar to the one under study, and who also regularly judged writing comparatively, as was requested in this study.

In-Context Instruction Sticks

Students' success with revision clustered around a number of areas. Not surprisingly, students were most successful with what is often referred to as surface-level revision. This assignment

directed students to “compose a dramatic letter” from one real or imagined witness to either the Capulets’ masquerade ball or the balcony scene. On the assignment hand-out, students were directed to, among other things, “include relevant background details about the play as well as key elements that make a personal letter worth reading” and to “emulate Shakespeare’s language.” Students showed great success in language and surface-level revision, and most of the nineteen students who participated in the study (of a class of twenty-four) were able to incorporate new, unfamiliar language; revise their language through direct instruction in use of literary devices; and edit for clarity, correctness, and sophistication of language. Expert raters typically identified students’ papers which employed surface-level revision as “slightly improved,” though occasionally a rater deemed an essay that only exhibited surface-level changes as essentially the same, reflecting the perspective that improving surface features constitutes only minor improvement.

Draft changes indicate the success of Ms. Loomis’ lessons on Shakespearian language which were delivered first in a pre-writing activity, reinforced throughout the unit, and then very concretely discussed in the class meeting held immediately prior to when final drafts were due. In this last class session, students were directed to a “Shakespearian Pronoun List” that Ms. Loomis had written on the blackboard. Although students had actually been provided with instruction in Shakespearian language throughout the week-and-a-half that preceded the writing of this assignment, on the final day of instruction in Shakespearian language most students, even those who had not previously been observed demonstrating much note-taking activities, were paying close attention to the pronoun list. They wrote in their notebooks, on their drafts, and asked clarifying questions. From this we are reminded of the importance of context: writers respond to writing advice best when they are actually engaged with writing, and have drafts in hand. Ultimately, in all but one final draft I observed evidence of Shakespearian language, and overall students had significant success in transforming the style of their prose. For

example, notice how Bart, a student with an average final paper, revises the passage below:

Version 1

“Ay it is (thee) your love, Paris, just reminding you about our marriage. It is coming up soon. I am concerned about your well being, because you have been distant from me lately. I am wondering what is troubling you. Is it me?”

Version 2

“Ay, tis thy love Paris, just reminding thee about our marriage. ‘Tis coming up soon. I am concerned about thine well being because thou hast been distant from me lately. Ever since that masquerade ball thy father threw, thou hast been slipping from mine grasp of love. I am wondering what is troubling thee. Tis me?”

Students were not only able to use Shakespearian pronouns, but also use the “language tricks” that Ms. Loomis had provided instruction in: “metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, oxymoron, hyperbole, [and] classical illusion.” The language tricks lesson was reinforced several times over the three-week unit: as the students read aloud from the play or viewed parts of a film (in both cases language tricks were highlighted and reviewed); in mini-lessons in which students were asked to come up with metaphors or similes, for example, to describe how they felt one morning; in discussion of drafts; in peer, instructor and adult-tutor feedback. As a result, in students’ final drafts new materials such as those that follow were present:

“Her touch is as soft as the light clouds of Mt. Olympus where Zeus holds his keep.”

“After our first encounter together it seemed as though my heart stopped.”

“The two families blend like oil and water. Two snakes
in the eyes of men who gallantly stride through life.”

These sentences are full additions that fit appropriately within the context of each writer’s essay, and that also allowed the writer to demonstrate his or her understanding of literary devices. At the interview conducted after the unit was over, Ms. Loomis noted that she was particularly pleased with her students’ work using literary devices, noting that most students had been able to use several different techniques, and that she believed they had made real progress in this area. More generally, although she observed that several students had not revised “very much,” or as much as she’d hoped, Ms. Loomis was clear in stating that she saw the assignment as a successful one.

Real Audience Lessons

Students were also able to revise at a deeper level. From my own examination of the student essays, more than half of the students were also able to go beyond surface-level revision, most typically by expanding on their ideas by providing additional details (as Bart does in the above passage), clarifying an interpretative point, or elaborating a character sketch. Sometimes students’ additions were, to my read, quite funny, demonstrative of the influence of peer review and therefore of students developing a sense of how to write for an audience. Here is the most memorable, but not the only, example, drawn from one of the group of cheerful, easily amused, if occasionally disorganized students I described earlier. In the first draft Samuel, writing as Mercutio to an imagined cousin in another city, concluded his dramatic letter with this:

“I fair the[e] well cousin for I hath come to an end.”

In a middle draft he adds:

“Enough about he. I am fairing well and wish to see you again. I could never have forgotten how thou was able to hath 2 young maidens in a single setting.”

In his final draft Samuel presents what is now an additional 100-word paragraph, which includes:

“Enough about them, I am fairing well and wish to see you again. I could never have forgotten how thou was able to hath 100 young maidens in a single sitting. But I must think of the others who hath neither.”

Notably, in the middle draft, the “2” in “2 young maidens,” was crossed out in favor of “100.” This decision arrived after what was clearly a very engaged peer review session with three boys and one girl all reading through parts of the draft, making suggestions, laughing, and commenting on the pros and cons of various options presented. In her interview, Ms. Loomis laughed about Samuel’s paper, but also noted that students at this age are very influenced by hormones, and that she had to be mindful of keeping students focused on school and appropriate topics. As a high school teacher, she had concerns about her students’ behavioral and social development and appropriateness, in addition to writing and reading achievement and growth. This student was judged as having significantly improved his paper over the drafting process by two of the three reviewers, yet still I can imagine that many busy teachers might respond primarily with annoyance at the students’ substitution of 100 for 2, and in fact the entire additional passage about the imagined cousin’s sexual escapades, marked as it is by prototypical male adolescent sexual preoccupation. Nonetheless it’s actually a very smart revision: it’s within a broad interpretation of an imaginable point of view for the young Mercutio; it shows an awareness of the conventions of informal letter writing; and it reflects Samuel’s responsiveness to his audience (in this case, his peers). This is an example of what I think most researchers would identify as a superficial or surface-

level change, but which I want to argue is actually an important step to becoming a substantive reviser and a strong writer. Seen through the lens of the writer and his peers, we see a writer who has come up with one idea, discussed it with his peers, and then implemented a change which has a considerably greater and better effect on his peer audience, if not necessarily his teacher audience.

Learning Revision Practices Takes a Long Time

In accord with other research (Cohen and Scardamalia, discussed in Olson 23; Lillios and Iding; Olson 28; Simmons “Responders” 692), I found that ninth grade students’ drafts improved particularly when they consulted on their writing with others through peer or adult-tutor conference and/or written commentary. Most obvious improvements came from specific suggestion or critique. Across all of the student papers, draft changes demonstrate that students responded well to direct and fairly specific questions or suggestions from peers, the instructor, or the adult-tutors who were available to students on two of the workshop days. In this unit the teacher provided feedback for students through multiple means. First, students were provided with two classes for peer review, not just one as is often the case. Further and significantly, Ms. Loomis was adept at running a peer review workshop. For the first peer review class she provided a checklist and previewed the process with a whole class workshop of one sample paper. Students were also provided with opportunity to receive feedback from Ms. Loomis or one of three adult volunteer writing coaches who work with a system of “strengths” and “suggestions for revision,” part of a program developed by two professional editors and former parents, the Writers’ Room™.⁴ Students were strongly encouraged to take advantage of the adult-volunteers, and Ms. Loomis made herself available as well, consulting with students as they workshopped, and commenting on essays that students sent her by email or left in her teacher mailbox, as she encouraged them to do. Notably, consultations with an expert reader—the adult tutors or Ms. Loomis—were not required. Not surprisingly, the several students

who took advantage of additional feedback were typically those who revised the most and, by my estimation, wrote the most successful final drafts, raising the question about whether offering additional instruction as an option inadvertently furthers the gap between low and high achievers in an untracked, diverse classroom.

As this discussion demonstrates, students in this class met two major goals through process-oriented writing instruction: first, they improved their essays; second, and more importantly, they had a meaningful experience with revision. In this assignment students practiced re-reading and re-thinking their writing in terms of the assignment and their own aims, and made several efforts to assess their initial drafts and come up with solutions to the weaknesses they or others identified. While I see significant learning outcomes in terms of improved final essays and development of students as writers, I imagine that for many teachers who have been taught to believe that process-writing instruction leads to substantive revision, these gains would not be so readily seen. Further, they are unlikely to see the gains—often modest and seemingly surface-level—as significant enough to warrant the in-class and out-of-class time that they require. The papers are better, but many students did not revise all that much, or to great *cumulative* effect.

Of related interest was one student, Kate, who is the kind of student I imagine really leaves teachers wondering about the value of revision instruction. Kate is that kind of student who behaves ideally, it appears. She drafted her paper five times, received peer and volunteer-coach feedback, and pressed her teacher into two rounds of feedback. The initial draft was the longest of all the first drafts under review, but the final draft was not greatly changed, judged by all three expert readers as being only “slightly stronger.” From my perspective, Kate’s draft could have been improved significantly in content, yet she only made surface revisions. Interestingly, in the drafting work is evidence of over-reliance on others. Despite her strong abilities as a writer, as assessed by her teacher and me, her draft changes are virtually always small

changes suggested by her teacher, peers, or her adult tutor. The experience with Kate suggests a challenge that writing teachers face—helping students to develop their own abilities to re-read and re-think their writing. This skill requires not only experience and intellectual development, but also a level of self-confidence and comfort with taking risks. In our classes our students are understandably at various levels of self-confidence, and thus we will see many students who revise conservatively, cautiously, and to our perspective, inadequately. Further, particularly with students of successful, high-achieving parents like Kate’s, we see what Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman, authors of *NurtureShock*, describe as “praise junkies,” students who are praised so much—and primarily on their intelligence, not effort—that they “become risk averse and lack perceived autonomy” (21).

From Kate, Samuel, Bart, and many of the other slight-to-moderate revisers in this class, I see two likely scenarios: teacher disappointment with the extent and level of their revision work, and simultaneously, the activities and behaviors that beginning writers can reasonably entertain. Nancy Sommers’ research (“Revision Strategies”) comparing experienced adult writers and student-writers is often discussed (in my graduate class, at least) as about the difference between “good” and “bad” writers, when in fact Sommers was surely deliberate when she identified those writers who have an “inability to ‘re-view’ their work again, as it were, with different eyes, and to start over” (382) as “inexperienced,” and who, with practice and encouragement, could presumably become like their counterparts, the “experienced” writers who “see their revision process as a recursive process—a process with significant recurring activities—with different levels of attention and different agenda for each cycle” (386). We need to see that students who are provided with process writing instruction are able to revise successfully and in ways that enable their long-term development as writers. Nonetheless, there is a large gap between the revision possibilities that we as experienced writers teachers can see and what our young, inexperienced writers are able to take on. In this gap is

where the problem lies—we are often so focused on where we would like our student writers to end up that we have trouble seeing from where they have come. Thus we have the problem of widespread teacher dissatisfaction with student revision—for many teachers, students have not revised enough.

Revising Our Expectations

Of further interest to me is that it is not just practicing process-writing teachers that I observe being disappointed by student revision. In addition, researcher-advocates who carefully review the data documenting improvement from revision sound a similar note of disappointment at the extent and nature of student revision activities. For example, Lucile Chanquoy’s research aims to show the benefits of extending the revising process—to moving students from revising as they write to revising after some passage of time and some reflective activities—and while she does find these extensions and interventions beneficial, in the end she acknowledges that revision has not gone far enough: “The results showed that postponing the revising stage led to an increase in meaning revision, although surface revisions were always more frequent than those concerning meaning” (35). Chanquoy remains hopeful, as do other researchers, that if we work harder at teaching revision, students will move further from their focus on surface revision. Similarly, Lillian Bridwell’s exemplary research on revision involving 12th grade students is perhaps one of the best known for articulating the position that students can revise if asked, but that they focus primarily on surface error correction. From her study in which one hundred 12th graders’ revision work across a two-draft process is examined for both extent and type of revision (surface, word, phrase, clause, sentence or multiple-sentence), Bridwell finds that students’ revision work was most frequently focused on changing “spelling, punctuation, and word choices” (217). Further, Bridwell finds that none of the one hundred students studied engaged in the highest, “text level” revision, and she concludes by noting her “surprise...that there

were not more single sentence changes, particularly additions of supporting statements” (209).

Thus, interestingly, researchers are a lot like practicing teachers in two ways: they are disappointed that students do not revise more, and they hold out hope that there’s a new technique out there—a magic bullet—that will enable students to revise substantively, to write compelling new sentences and paragraphs that address the open-ended questions that we regularly write on their papers.

Are these reasonable expectations? I would like to suggest that perhaps we expect too much of students, particularly our high school and even first-year writing college students. In Myhill and Jones’ research on students’ perceptions of the revision process, they found that “writers who are no longer novices but are not yet experts, . . . are sometimes aware of a better way to say something but do not yet have sufficient confidence or experience to be sure of *how* to say it better” (emphasis added, 340). Adult, accomplished writers have the experience, fluency, and most of all confidence to be ideal revisers. As mature, successful writers, we have already made the slow move from mini-reviser who makes word choice changes and carefully adds transitional words to help our essays “flow,” to the confident writer who can scrap a misleading paragraph or generate two hundred new words that are not necessarily placed at the end of the essay, but where they are most needed.

From the position of the researcher who is able to thoughtfully read through papers without worrying about deadlines (grades have to be in tomorrow!) or students’ success on upcoming writing assessments, I am able to look at these students’ revisions a little differently than I have often viewed my own students’ efforts toward revision. While some students in this study were not engaged in “real” revision, in the text changes I see the emergence of real readers and writers: students who read their own sentences and are able to assess weaknesses and possibilities for improvement. These students are on the right track, and there is evidence of significant value to Ms. Loomis’ pedagogy: the pre-

writing activities that engaged students with the plot and language of the play, the peer review sessions and opportunities for feedback from adult readers, and the mini-lessons during the drafting period. These instructional methodologies were profitably used by students—not only to improve their drafts but to become familiar with the complex processes of reading, assessing and making revision choices about their own writing. That their writing did not improve dramatically does not seem to me a reason to re-think our emphasis and activities designed to support drafting and revision, but rather, a reason to realign our expectations. Finally, for those who work with pre-service and new teachers, it is important that we explicitly address the issue of revision expectations, sharing examples of the kind of minor revision exemplified here, and describing it as worthwhile and productive, rather than a sign of student failure and, by implication, teacher failure as well. Writers and teachers can be unnecessarily frustrated and disappointed by expectations that are too high.

Notes

¹This article and the insights I received from the research and writing process were possible because of the generosity of one teacher, many students, and the district personnel who allowed me to proceed with my research. I came to new discoveries about supporting revision that I simply wouldn't have come to without the first-hand observation and interviewing that this study entailed. I appreciate the generosity of these individuals who were willing to share their teaching, learning and writing. I also thank the three independent readers who served as expert readers, the anonymous reader from the journal, and my colleague Laura Nicosia, who provided me with useful comments from her perspective as a former teacher and an English education specialist.

²This research received approval from the Institutional Review Board at my institution.

³Ms. Loomis is a pseudonym. In this article all names and identifying characteristics have been altered.

⁴More information about the Writers Room program can be found at www.writersroomprogram.org.

Works Cited

- Addison, Joanne, and Sharon McGee. "Writing in High School/Writing in College: Research Trends and Future Directions." *College Composition and Communication* 62.1 (2010): 147-79. NCTE.org. Web. 7 March 2011.
- Applebee, Arthur N., and Judith A. Langer. "The Study of Writing Instruction in America's Schools: What Existing Data Tell Us." *Albany Institute for Research in Education*. AIRE. 2006. Web. 7 July 2010.
- Beach, Richard, and Tom Friedrich. "Response to Writing." *Handbook of Writing Research*, ed. Charles A. MacArthur, Steve Graham, and Jill Fitzgerald. New York: Guilford Press, 2006. Print. 222-34.
- Bridwell, Lillian S. "Revising Strategies in Twelfth Grade Students' Transactional Writing." *Research in the Teaching of English* 14.3 (1980): 197-222. Print.
- Bronson, Po, and Ashley Merryman. *NurtureShock: New Thinking about Children*. New York: Twelve, 2009.
- Chanquoy, Lucile. "How To Make It Easier for Children To Revise: A Study of Text-Revision in 3rd to 5th Grades." *British Journal of Educational Psychology* (2001): 15-41. Print.
- Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. New York: Oxford UP, 1981. Print.
- . *Writing without Teachers*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973. Print.
- Ferris, Dana R. "Student Reactions to Teacher Response in Multiple-Draft Composition Classrooms." *TESOL Quarterly* 29.1 (1995): 33-53. ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 17 June 2011.
- Harris, Joseph. *Rewriting: How to Do Things With Texts*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2006. Print.
- Huot, Brian. *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2002. Print.
- Isaacs, Emily, and Melinda Knight. "100 College Writing Programs: A View of the Field in 2010." Writing Program Administrators' Conference. Sheraton Society Hotel, Philadelphia. 17 July 2010. Address.
- Lillios, Melin, and Marie Iding. "How Ninth Graders Respond to Teacher and Peer Comments on their Writing." *Teaching and Change* 3.3 (1996): 211-26. Print.

- Mlynarczyk, Rebecca Williams. "Finding Grandma's Words: A Case Study in the Art of Revising." *Journal of Basic Writing* 15.1 (1996): 3-22. ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 17 June 2011.
- MyHill, Debra, and Susan Jones. "More Than Just Error Correction: Students' Perspectives on Their Revision Processes During Writing." *Written Communication* 24.4 (2007): 323-43. Print.
- Murray, Donald M. *A Writer Teaches Writing*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985. Print.
- Olson, Vicki L. Brakel. "The Revising Processes of Sixth-Grade Writers With and Without Peer Feedback." *Journal of Educational Research* 84.1 (1990): 22-29. Print.
- Patthew-Chavez, G Genevieve, Lindsay Claire Matsumura, and Rosa Valdes. "Investigating the Process Approach to Writing Instruction in Urban Middle Schools." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 47.6 (2004): 462-77. Print.
- Pritchard, Ruie J., and Ronald L. Honeycutt. "The Process Approach to Writing Instruction." *Handbook of Writing Research*, ed. Charles A. MacArthur, Steve Graham, and Jill Fitzgerald. New York: Guilford Press, 2006. Print. 275-90.
- Simmons, Jay. "Improving Writing for College: The Conditions to Do It Well." *English Journal* 94.6 (2005): 75. ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 17 June 2011.
- . "Responders Are Taught, Not Born." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 46.8 (2003): 684-93. ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 17 June 2011.
- Smith, William L. "The Importance of Teacher Knowledge in College Composition Placement Testing." *Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Brian Huot and Peggy O'Neill. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. Print. 179-202.
- Sommers, Nancy. "Across the Drafts." *College Composition and Communication* 58.2 (2006): 248-57. Print.
- . "Responding to Student Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 33.2 (1982): 148-56. Print.
- . "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers." *College Composition and Communication* 31.4 (1980): 378-88. Print.
- Straub, Richard E. "Reading and Responding to Student Writing: A Heuristic for Reflective Practice." *Composition Studies* 30.1 (2002): 15-60. ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 17 June 2011.
- . "The Student, the Text, and the Classroom Context: A Case Study of Teacher Response." *Assessing Writing* 7.1 (2000): 23-55. ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 17 June 2011.

- Sweeney, Marilyn Ruth. "Relating Revision Skills to Teacher Commentary." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 27.2 (1999): 213-18. ERIC. EBSCO. Web. 17 June 2011.
- The Writers Room™. Web. 7 July 2010. <www.writersroomprogram.org.>
- Yagelski, Robert P. "The Role of Classroom Context in the Revision Strategies of Student Writers." *Research in the Teaching of English* 29.2 (1995): 216-38. Print.