

Introductory Composition Belongs in the English Department

Jay Jernigan

The teaching of writing on the college level has for nearly a century been the province of English Departments. Yet who among us can quarrel with the idea of cross-curricular writing programs administered extra-departmentally? I certainly can't. Good writing should be the responsibility of the entire academic community, not of just us English teachers, much as morality should be everyone's concern, not just the preachers'. I'm sure each of us has experienced a version of a recent conversation I had with a colleague from another department. With self-righteous attention to detail, he told me that in reaction to wide-spread report of students' verbal deficiencies he had begun to give essay exams to his lower division students in lieu of multiple-choice tests. Then he said, "My God, they're virtually illiterate! What's wrong with you guys in English? You aren't doing your job!" I thought, but, in cowardice didn't say, "Oh, if we could only make it your job too, how much more effective that would be!" Yet can we do so, pragmatically?

Perhaps we can, to some extent. Here in Michigan, for example, **Wayne State** has quite successfully put university-wide emphasis upon writing by requiring its students to pass an English proficiency exam during their junior year. Funded by the General Motors Foundation, the **Department of Humanities at Michigan Tech** sponsors four-day **Writing Across the Curriculum** workshops for other faculty of that institution. And beginning with its Class of '83 **The University of Michigan** will require for graduation a junior/senior level writing course in a student's field of concentration or a related field. Each type of program is at the least an admirable

attempt. But note: Each requires of most students a standard freshman composition course. It's my contention that to be successful a cross-curricular writing program must be built upon a conventional introductory composition course, preferably taught by the English department.

In spite of its inherent problems of administration and pedagogy, an introductory composition course is needed today as much as or more than at anytime in its 90-odd year history. Students now enter college with lower levels of writing competence and lower SAT or ACT verbal scores than well before Sputnik. For whatever reason--a McLuhan generation mesmerized by radically transformed communication media, fallout from the McCroryite's visceral approach to teaching, or our Zeitgeist itself--too many first-year college students have too little knowledge of ?
diction, syntax, and rhetoric. They use a dictionary only to look up spelling; they punctuate by the "pause rule" exclusively; they can hardly organize chunks of material larger than a paragraph.

Yet it is a truism among us that the systematic teaching of grammar (hack, spit!) and punctuation is a waste of time, and that the study of diction is both impractical and a bore, given our students' attitudes and limited attention spans. So what's left? Either "pre-writing" in its various forms or rhetoric, which in name at least has become the substance of most introductory composition courses. Here I must pause to confess a pedagogical heresy on my part--though it probably isn't, because I'm convinced that in practice most of us are eclectic and recognize the differences between letter and spirit, truism and truth. I confess that in my composition classes I've never

been able to separate rhetoric from "grammar," just as I can't teach punctuation without also teaching syntax. And I know I'm not alone in practicing this "heresy" because most introductory composition courses I'm familiar with do in actuality cover the basics of effective organization and effective English usage in conjunction with weekly writing assignments. Given the verbal inadequacies of many of our students, I believe it fruitless to try to develop a writing program without such a course as a start. I also believe that English teachers should staff that course because they have at least some commitment to the subject matter, in contrast to most other faculty members.

My own admittedly limited experience with a cross-curricular writing program suggests it won't work because it requires extraordinarily competent and faithful teachers. Once, back in the '50's, I taught **core curriculum** in eighth and ninth grades; it was a program that used the same teacher to combine the social sciences with communication skills under the rubric of "interdisciplinary studies." Most of the teachers I knew who taught such classes were social science teachers: and most taught social science to the exclusion of communication skills, especially composition and grammar. For we were too insecure about our knowledge of grammar to attempt to teach it and too overworked to assign many compositions. Besides, we thought social studies more interesting. In theory **core curriculum** seemed a good idea; in practice it failed because the teaching of composition and its elements got ignored. Perhaps team teaching could have saved it, but that's another set of promises and problems.

The concept of **core curriculum** has remained alive on the college level at **Michigan State**, where for over twenty years an **American Thought and Language Department** has handled the freshman composition requirement along with a general humanities program in a three-course sequence. Prior to that, **MSU** taught its freshman composition through a **Communication Skills Department** in the form of a speech-writing **core**. But the success of either of those forms of interdisciplinary studies in teaching freshman composition is at best moot.

MSU now requires some of its students to take a remedial composition course called the **Comprehensive English Program (ATL 101A or B)** as a prerequisite to the core sequence. And a few years ago the **English Department** at **MSU**, partially because of dissatisfaction with the **ATL** writing component, set up two conventional introductory composition courses (**English 101 and 102**) which students in the **College of Arts and Letters** may substitute for the **ATL** requirement.

It has been my experience that courses which combine literature with writing have not proven effective introductory composition courses because, first, literature and its critical apparatus too often take precedence in the classroom; and, second, only the most sophisticated first-year student is able to use literature comfortably as subject matter in learning about composition. As they have demonstrated all too fully of late, what most first-year students need is a course devoted to the practice and discussion of general expository writing taught by someone who knows rhetoric (and grammar) and who is interested in teaching writing. Many high school students have never had such a course. They have been taught writing exclusively within the context of thematic literary units, such as **Identity; Justice; Something Strange; Men, Women, Roles and Relationships; Only in America**--to name a sampling of current high school course descriptions. No matter how competent and willing the teacher is, it seems inevitable that within this format the elements of writing will be short-sheeted. Thus we have another reason why students come to college unable to write well.

I fear that without a standard introductory composition course, a cross-curricular writing program at the college level would occasion the same effect: the teaching of subject matter, whatever it is, will take precedence over the teaching of basic writing skills. And it is at this point that I have serious doubts about junior/senior level writing courses in the students' own fields. **The University of Michigan's** program, for example, is well-funded and has promise. But, if the senior professors handling those courses employ graduate assistants, who are

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Writing in the Disciplines at The University of Michigan

John Reiff

The faculty of The College of Literature, Science and the Arts of The University of Michigan is in the process of developing a variety of models for teaching writing in the content areas as it prepares for the junior class of 1981-82. Students in this class are the first in the College to be required to take writing courses, preferably in their fields of concentration, in their junior or senior year. I will (1) describe five models for writing courses which are already offered to students in the College, (2) state a rationale for these models, (3) exemplify some approaches to assignment making in these courses, as well as (4) describe the writing workshop component which I developed for one course in the History Department.

Several Models for Content-area Writing Courses

(1) Some departments offer courses whose content is writing within the discipline. Professor Robbins Burling of the Anthropology Department, for instance, teaches a course in which students develop principles of criticism by examining published anthropological writing, both good and bad. They then write on anthropological topics of their own choosing and critique each other's writing.

In the Chemistry Department's upper-level course, *Chemical Literature and Scientific Writing*, students study examples of superior organization and argument in scientific writing--especially in chemical literature--and attempt to structure their own writing on those examples.

(2) Some departments satisfy the requirement with courses which focus on content but require considerable writing. The History Department, for example, offers its *Senior Colloquia*--small seminars required of all majors and dealing with topics such as the Indochina War or the History of Science--as the vehicles by which it will satisfy the requirement. Students in these *Colloquia* read extensively and confer with faculty members and teaching assistants at several stages in the writing of each of several papers. (see p. 76).

(3) Some departments offer courses which have not required much writing in the past, but have been restructured to do so now. The Mathematics Department, for example, is changing its course *Topics in Mathematics* to one which poses problems that students solve through a series of papers.

(4) Offering courses in which writing plays a less prominent role, one department requires students to choose any two to complete the writing program. During the second term of their sophomore year, biology students must take a course which satisfies one-half of the writing requirement; they elect another designated course to complete the requirement during their junior or senior years.

(5) And some departments may ask students to fulfill the writing requirement outside specific courses. The Geology Department has established a requirement which apportions student writings among different branches of the discipline. Acceptable writings include papers prepared for courses, and reports prepared for outside employers, as well as

proposals requesting outside agencies to fund research projects.

Writing Instruction Within the Content-area Courses

Individual faculty members are developing a variety of ways to balance the presentation of their subject matter with instruction in writing. Most writing instruction is tied to specific assignments and encompasses both immediate and long-range goals. The immediate aim of this instruction is to help students produce good writing in response to a specific assignment; the long-range aim is to help students better understand and control the processes by which they create written texts. Such instruction helps students identify the writing tasks preceding and following the production of a draft--the conceptual work of pre-writing and the editorial work of revision. Faculty members and teaching assistants can attend to students' work in a series of individual conferences during which plans for a piece of writing or the revision of a draft are discussed. Also, some class time can profitably be used for a writing workshop, for pre-writing work, and for grouping students to read and criticize one another's drafts.

Writing Assignments Within the Content-area Courses

Although the traditional audience for student writing has been the teacher-as-examiner, who reads and judges the finished product, teachers may choose to serve instead as expert consultants to their students as their students revise papers and submit these revisions for comments. Frequently, in such cases, teachers construct assignments directed at audiences other than themselves. They may establish peer groups to create real audiences within the class, or they may define hypothetical or actual audiences outside the classroom.

Often teachers vary the level of formality required in assignments. For example, some classes require both the formal work of polished papers and the less formal work of journals. Journal-writing may serve as an alternate means for students

to master course material and to communicate with the instructor about their interpretation of that material, or it may be focused specifically to lead to more formal writing.

Teachers may also vary the kind and number of assignments they construct. They may require students to submit both drafts and revisions of each paper they write, or they may require several short papers of essentially the same kind. In this case, successive assignments usually move within the same form from limited problems to more complex ones. A course with two long papers may require each paper to be submitted in stages: the first stage may be a precis of the final draft. The common feature of all of these arrangements is that they allow students to write and to receive help with that writing several times during the semester. Within this framework, students have room to grow as writers.

A Writing Workshop

Many of the principles of instruction and assignment design which I have presented here, I applied in the writing workshop component that I developed for a history course. In this history course, a **Senior Colloquia** concerned with the Indochina War, I worked with students who were assigned three substantial papers, due at regular intervals throughout the term. The students met with me in a workshop setting for an hour each week to work on their current papers. During the workshop, I engaged students in pre-writing and revision activities, focusing on writing as process rather than product.

Pre-Writing

My first step was to help students to interpret each assignment: What does the assignment demand? What questions must be answered? How may information be generated and what analysis is required? What boundaries are set by the audience for that piece of writing?

At this stage, I also ask students to focus on the historical experience they were studying and to analyze that experience as historians.

After students worked on their own, I asked them to articulate the main ideas and probable organization of their papers for each other. On the occasion of one assignment, a critical essay analyzing journalistic coverage of the war, I asked everyone to write brief abstracts of their papers-to-be; I presented these abstracts with an opaque projector. Together the students and I singled out the strengths and tried to discover possible solutions to the problems the abstracts suggested. This exercise served to encourage students to formulate their own main ideas, to sketch out their proposed development of those ideas, and to discover what difficulties they still faced. It provided students with models of successful and problematic approaches to the assignment, and it engaged students in immediate critical discussion of their peers' work. Such critical discussion was an important precursor to students' own work at the later stage of revision.

In connection with another assignment, which asked students to research an issue of their own choice related to the course material, everyone in the workshop completed the research guide which follows here; after completing it, they discussed some of the problems it identified for them. Following the class discussion, I reviewed these guides with each student individually.

Research Guide

1. Topic.

Have you decided on a subject to research?
 If so, what is it?
 If not, what subjects are you considering?

2. Guiding Question.

What question will your research try to answer?
 If you haven't established one central question, what questions might you try to answer?

3. Hypothesis.

What do you think an answer to your question(s) will or might be?

4. Evidence.

What information have you already found that relates to your questions? From what sources? What further sources do you plan to explore? What do you expect to find in them?

5. Conclusions.

If the evidence you find supports your hypothesis, so what? What does this research mean in any larger context?

6. Documentation.

Do you have any questions about how to document the information you use in this paper--in handling quotes, in paraphrases, footnotes, a bibliography, etc?

7. Possible Problems.

What problems do you foresee with this assignment?
 What would you (or we) need to do to solve them?

Draft and Revision

After the class participated in these pre-writing activities, students wrote drafts of their papers. I then structured other activities for them: They worked in editing groups of three or four; a week before the finished papers were due, each gave the other members within the group a xeroxed copy of his or her first draft. Group members had a couple of days to read the drafts and write comments to the author before they met as a group with me. During this meeting I functioned as a facilitator, reading drafts and revisions on request and encouraging students to be specific in their feedback about the strengths and problems of each draft. Feedback from each student was focused as follows:

1. Can I understand everything in your paper? If not, where does it lose me?
 2. Do your evidence and your interpretation of the evidence convince me? If
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Hounding the Faculty About Writing

Max Slisher

By 3:45 p.m. the faculty have digested fire drill procedures, lamented the cutback in teaching supplies, and haggled over reinstatement of the bell system for tardies. With fifteen minutes left until freedom, a novice teacher addresses the now-squirming group, "What can we do about spelling? I can't believe the terrible writing my students turn in." Then, from the rear of the room another voice adds, "Doesn't the English Department teach kids how to write any more?"

An undercurrent of grumbling swells, and accusing eyes pinpoint the nearest English teacher. If one so brave speaks up to say we should all teach writing and spelling, he is drowned out by a variety of denials ranging from the French teacher's sincere, "I'm not qualified to teach writing," to the physical education teacher's tart, "I'll check sentence structure, if you'll make sure every kid runs ten laps around your room." Faced with these responses, the English Department usually retreats down its rabbit hole and hopes the hounds will give up by the next faculty meeting. But, of course, they won't.

Perhaps, English teachers must offer their colleagues a concrete invitation to join them in their effort to improve student writing throughout the school. Perhaps then some of the hounds might stop baying and start demanding more literate responses from their students.

The Attack: Step I

At **Jenison High School**, English teachers attacked the problem which their colleagues identified: The same students who write effective prose in English classes compose poorly spelled, illogically constructed, and even obviously plagiarized reports for teachers in other departments. One first step at **Jenison**

was to recognize that most of the teachers in the content area departments felt insecure when grading for more than their course content; furthermore, few applied the standards for composition which the English Department teaches. So, in an effort to build some consistency of expectation into our school-wide writing program, English teachers developed a set of criteria for the writing of students in all subjects. We displayed these on a **Minimum Composition Skills** poster, which suggested that each essay or report contain an organizing statement, a body of supporting detail, and a conclusion restating the main idea. It also displayed the value of good mechanics. Laminated copies of the poster, attractively lettered by an art student, were presented to each teacher for his or her room.

Everybody for Better Writing: Step II

As a second step, the English Department continued in the following year to promote the **Everybody-For-Better-Writing** goal by setting up a "mini inservice" at a faculty meeting on evaluating student reports. To dissuade instructors from giving A's for neatly copying resource books, English teachers asked others to grade three different reports on Alexander Graham Bell. One report summarized facts about Bell in a student's words, with a few mechanical problems; one plagiarized an encyclopedia; and one creatively used a few puns in relating Bell's accomplishments. A surprising number of teachers did not like the creative paper, and many rejected the paper with errors. We then talked about why the English Department found the plagiarized report unacceptable. Not everyone agreed, but we planted seeds of doubt about long-accepted expectations.

Jenison High School Research Booklet: Step III

The English Department also organized its approach to teaching research papers: The high-school media specialist and one member of the English staff, having examined a plethora of different research kits and booklets, wrote the **Jenison High School Research Booklet**, which describes how to conduct research in logical steps, how to take notes, how to organize, how to write, and how to document a report or research paper. Each student receives this booklet before writing a ninth-grade research paper. The booklet then becomes a reference tool for the student's entire high-school career. All departments at **Jenison High School** use the booklet to guide their students in all assigned writing.

A Joint Research Paper: Step IV

Once the booklet was available, the ninth-grade English teachers arranged with the ninth-grade science teachers to assign a joint research paper to their students because they were dismayed to find that students who had just completed a good research paper in English would revert to poorly organized, plagiarized reports for their science research papers. English and science teachers met together and decided that students should choose a topic in science and then rely on their English teachers to guide the development of their papers. English teachers also graded the papers for writing format and scientific content as well. Then students had the opportunity to revise any serious problems before the science teachers graded for scientific content and English skills, respectively. Students appreciated writing one final paper instead of two; teachers appreciated the improved quality of student work; and everyone appreciated the attention which could be directed to the writing process as well as the writing product.

In-service Training: Step V

As English teachers we also looked at how we taught writing within the department. We spent an in-service day at Hope College

with Professor Nancy Taylor, an exciting and innovative teacher. For the first time our staff agreed, at least tentatively, that writing should be evaluated for content, organization, development, style, and mechanics in that order. Following the in-service session, at our next department meeting, we discussed these five criteria; and then each teacher graded a dittoed student composition. The grades ranged from **B+** to **D**. After teachers had explained their several grades, the ensuing discussion revealed similar assessments of the paper's strengths and weaknesses, but great differences in the value given to the five evaluative criteria. As a group we moved closer to accepting content and organization as more important criteria than mechanics when evaluating papers. More important, we found that the errors could be handled in more constructive ways than by simply grading a paper down.

Still pursuing the school-wide goal of better student writing, our entire faculty asked Professor Walter Foote from **Grand Valley State Colleges** to conduct for us a three-hour in-service on **Writing Across the Curriculum**. Probably a third of our staff resented the loss of three hours of their time to English Department concerns. Another third expressed ambivalence. However, the remaining third evaluated the presentation as rewarding. Many indicated that they intended to assign more writing to their students and to approach these assignments more seriously. Students' comments about the number of essay tests they are assigned and about the standards their teachers apply to their compositions prove that writing has become more important in our school. Professor Foote may return to **Jenison** this year to assist individual departments as they incorporate writing into their curricula.

Writing Across the Curriculum Works in Individual Classrooms

In the years of stalking our elusive prey, we English teachers have found the science and social science departments most supportive. Some of our students even ask us for help in organizing or proofreading their reports for math.

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Writing Across the Curriculum: The British Approach

Richard W. Bailey

Educational programs in Great Britain differ in significant ways from those in the United States. British schools are not yet organized on the basis of educational democracy, and differing curricula still shape programs for "early school-leavers" and potential university students. Centralized decision-making coupled with uniform national examinations limits the scope for educational innovation by teachers and local schools, and only recently have efforts been made to recognize the special traditions and cultures of minority groups. (See the works by Edwards and the Scottish Central Committee on English listed in this issue of *forum* on p. 70). When reform does take place, however, it involves virtually all teachers in working together on a national agenda. Thus, despite important differences between American and British schools, teachers in America will find much from Britain to interest them--particularly now that a major effort is underway there to improve the teaching of writing at all educational levels.

In response to indications that reading skills were declining among British school children, Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, established a Committee of Inquiry in 1972 to explore possible reforms in the teaching of English. The Committee conceived its mandate broadly and set out to investigate the entire range of "language in education." Following extensive surveys of existing practices, the "Bullock Report"--named for the Chair of the Committee, Sir Alan Bullock--was submitted to the government at the end of 1974 and published in 1975 under the title A Language for Life. The report contains more than three hundred recommendations, each carefully argued,

for action organized around varying constituencies in education--young children, secondary students, adult illiterates, and teachers themselves. The recommendations have attracted wide attention from the general public and especially from teachers--the group most responsible, as the report says, for the "quality of learning."

Among the many provocative recommendations in the "Bullock Report," two are central to the interests of American high school teachers:

138 *In the secondary school, all subject teachers need to be aware of:*

(i) *the linguistic processes by which their pupils acquire information and understanding, and the implications for the teacher's own use of language:*

(ii) *the reading demands of their own subjects, and ways in which the pupils can be helped to meet them.*

139 *To bring about this understanding every secondary school should develop a policy for language across the curriculum. The responsibility for this policy should be embodied in the organisational structure of the school (Bullock, p. 529).*

Since these recommendations were promulgated, the British educational community
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Resources in the Teaching of Composition

Robert Root

All of these books contain material applicable or adaptable to secondary teaching; Judy and Murray specifically design their books for that level. A broader coverage of various levels occurs in recent collections.

Brady, Philip L., ed., The "Whys" of Teaching Composition (Urbana NCTE/Washington State TE, 1978).

Four essays: John Herum on transactional writing, Ann Gere on audience, Peter Elbow on the writer's sense of self, and Eugene Smith on instructional variety in the writing classroom.

Donovan, Timothy R., and Ben W. McClelland, eds., Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition (Urbana: NCTE, 1980).

Leading figures offer a variety of pedagogical approaches to the writing courses they teach: for example, Donald Murray on process, Janice Lauer on rhetoric, Stephen Judy on the experiential approach, Harvey Wiener on basic writing. Other topics include prose models, the epistemic approach, conferences, and cross-disciplinary writing.

Gebhardt, Richard C., ed., Composition and Its Teaching: Articles from College Composition and Communication During the Editorship of Edward P. J. Corbett (Urbana: NCTE, 1980).

A collection of 21 articles from 1974-1979 on a wide variety of topics related to teaching writing by a significant list of contributors.

Judy, Stephen, and Susan Judy, An Introduction to the Teaching of Writing (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1981).

Places practical suggestions about teaching writing in the context of current practices and treats the stages of the writing process--from creating an environment through revision and editing--as well as examining and

recommending designs for writing courses and interdisciplinary writing programs and assignments. Includes an appendix of "curriculum artifacts," syllabi and course descriptions from classrooms around the country.

Kasden, Lawrence N., and Daniel R. Hoerber, eds., Basic Writing: Essays for Teachers, Researchers, and Administrators (Urbana: NCTE, 1980).

Ten essays on basic writing, describing the field, summarizing current and needed research, and providing insights into the basic writer, program design and evaluation, and teacher-training in this area.

Murray, Donald M., A Writer Teaches Writing: A Practical Method of Teaching Composition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968).

Until recently, almost the only real text in teaching composition; still a reliable, humane, sensible, and very practical analysis of the relationship between student and teacher in a writing class with very down-to-earth sections on techniques.

Neman, Beth, Teaching Students to Write (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1980).

Chiefly about expository writing, takes a more traditional view, similar to Irmscher's; includes chapters on rhetoric, linguistics, non-standard dialects. Creative writing and evaluation, as well as those on "expository structure", the writing process, and the research paper.

Stanford, Gene, ed., Classroom Practices 1979-80: How to Handle the Paper Load (Urbana: NCTE, 1980).

Twenty-seven articles directed at all
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A Rationale for Writing in the Content Areas

James Middleton

"Like spinach and tetanus shots that young people must put up with because their elders say they must," (Kitzhaber, p. 3) college composition often becomes an intellectual purgatory, usually because it fails to give students a clear sense of the audience, the purpose, or even the content of their writing. In Michael Stubbs' view this vague focus makes writing the essay in a composition class more difficult than the work of the professional writer (Stubbs, p. 115).

James Britton documents for us that the intimidating "teacher-as-examiner" is, in fact, the students' most common audience. Therefore students see little real purpose for their writing beyond getting it finished and receiving a grade. In addition, overemphasis on the communicative function of writing has focused students' attention on the written product--which transmits the already known--while overlooking the writing process--which generates the writer's ideas and understanding. Without substantial content of its own, the work of the composition course becomes a true muddle: some instructors emphasize the "basics" of grammar, mechanics, and writing modes in isolation from rhetorical purpose; others attempt to create content by focusing on literature or current events, thus producing mirror images of introductory courses in literature or sociology or political science; still others change the content with each assignment, thus creating a shifting quicksand in which students are frustrated if not lost altogether.

I contend that composition can be more effective and meaningful--honest in its definition of purpose, audience, and content--by linking itself to content courses. Although instructors from both areas have avoided such unions in fear that they would not be able to cover their

individual material in such a setting, two models approach the ideal union which can guarantee time for both writing instruction and content area instruction:

*The first, the **adjunct model**, welds the three-credit composition course to the three-credit content course, forming a linked six-credit course. Although this model need not incur the expenses of team teaching, it does require that instructors share expectations and mutually reinforce each other's efforts.*

*The second, a **mutual-backscratch-model**, trades a segment of the writing course over to content instruction for a return from the content course. This model can, but need not, involve actual movement of instructors between courses.*

The goals of these models for courses which are process-oriented are not limited to what happens in the classroom. Professor Thomas Sawyer of **The University of Michigan** looks beyond the classroom in saying that specialists have a civic responsibility to explain and justify proposed policies and, "If professionals fail to write clearly and persuasively, they fail period" (Sawyer, 3). Richard Larson, of CUNY, similarly claims that students' ability to comment on their observations and experiences may be the most valuable skill they can bring to their roles as professionals and citizens (Larson, 152). Both Sawyer and Larson remind us that writing can move students beyond the limitations of the textbook and class discussion.

In the act of reaching out to readers, writers also reach inward to touch themselves. While observing that clear, graceful writing is useful in communication
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The Writing Program at Beaver College

Elaine Maimon

The philosophy of the writing program at **Beaver College** has been influenced most by the work of Mina Shaughnessy, Kenneth Bruffee, and James Kinneavy. Shaughnessy has taught us that our students' errors often reflect their innocence of how writers behave and that it is our job to model the processes of writing and revising for them. Bruffee has taught us that we can best teach these processes through collaborative learning. And Kinneavy has taught us that faculty members in all disciplines can improve the teaching of their own subject matter when they become teachers of writing who assign projects that require feedback which forces students' attention on the aims and audience of their work.

We implement these philosophical principles through a program which includes: **freshman composition; instruction in writing in all college courses; a Writing Center; and a graduate program in the teaching of writing.**

Freshman Composition

All entering students are required to take two semesters of composition. Approximately fifteen percent of the freshman class is placed in **Basic Writing** before they enter the freshman composition course. They receive full academic credit for **Basic Writing** as well as freshman composition.

The freshman composition course is designed to introduce a variety of writing processes; to teach collaborative learning procedures, including how to share drafts of work in progress; to exemplify elements of writing through a brief cross-disciplinary, reading list; and to provide opportunities for practice in the conventions of standard written English. At least one of the four major writing projects of the course is coordinated with

an assignment in another freshman course. This practice of encouraging students to make their content area writing assignments the work of their freshman level composition classes leads naturally to cooperation between the composition staff and colleagues in other departments.

Writing in All College Courses

Faculty members in all disciplines reinforce the procedures that students have learned in composition by assigning extended papers in draft stages and then providing the major portion of their commentary on preliminary drafts, reserving until the end the grade which assesses all elements of the finished product. Courses in most disciplines provide for a variety of collaborative learning procedures, and students are required to write formal acknowledgments to the responses they receive from peers and from instructors. Professors in all disciplines also use writing as a mode of teaching by asking students to do brief in-class writing exercises that supplement the usual lectures and discussions.

The Writing Center

Trained undergraduate writing consultants staff the **Writing Center**, which is a place for collaborative learning, not for remediation. These writing consultants are prepared to help students at any stage of their writing process, from the battle against writer's block to the final proofreading. But the pencil is always in the hand of the writer, not of the consultant, and writers must thank the writing consultants for their help formally on the acknowledgements page of the finished paper.

Writing Center consultants are available during specified hours in the student activities center. Writing consultants

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Two Schools Look at ECB

The Livonia Schools and the ECB

Kenneth E. Cogswell

High school teachers of English are always under the gun. When SAT scores drop, it is obviously English teachers who are not doing a good job. When a high-school graduate makes an error on an application form, it is commonly suggested that English teachers did not take enough care in the teaching of spelling and following directions. A college freshman whose writing does not immediately conform to the particular and, sometimes, peculiar wishes of his instructor must have been the product of a deficient high-school English program.

I used to become quite upset over the many and varied criticisms of English teachers from different sources. I say used to become upset, not to indicate that I have less concern for the skills of our students, but because I have learned, however belatedly, that criticism of students' writing skills is inevitable. In no way would I wish to debate whether English teachers are doing a poorer or better job than their colleagues in other departments. I now recognize that the writing proficiency of our students is on display more frequently than the skills taught in other departments.

In probably every community in the United States, employers express vague and non-specific concerns about the composition skills of our graduates. On one level, the criticisms are related primarily to cosmetic errors: our products cannot spell, punctuate, or capitalize correctly. On another level, our former students are said to be unable to organize and present data in a logical and coherent manner. The most pernicious aspect of

these criticisms is that they are true for many of our students.

For many years, I have been intrigued by the fact that we can introduce particular writing conventions in the first grade and reinforce them in each subsequent year, and yet numbers of students will not have mastered them by grade twelve. I have known too many students who can communicate well orally but who have great difficulty in communicating simple ideas on paper. I have read too many convictionless papers, written to fulfill assignments rather than because the author had something to say. I have seen too many technically correct papers, flat and drab, because the student authors had no feeling for or sense of the power of language. And I have known too many English teachers who have assigned reams of skill drill exercises instead of having their students write--in the belief that "students have to know all of the rules before they can write."

None of the statements above are intended either as an exculpation or an indictment of English teachers. One basic fact appears to be evident. Most of us, as English teachers, do not know well enough how to teach students to write.

"Teachers teach as they were taught," is a truism in education. If this is indeed true, each succeeding generation will produce good and bad teachers of composition in about the same proportion as the previous generation. This is not a comforting thought.

In my many years of working on curriculum

and instruction, I have seen various efforts to improve the outcomes of instruction in English. There have been requirement changes for students; there have been "broken-front" and common system-wide approaches to program; there have been various organizational arrangements of courses and time-frames, behavioral objectives, and mandated units of instruction. I have participated in, and I have conducted myriad workshops, many at the end of a long day when the participants were all very tired. I have seen one pattern emerge which seems to produce better and more lasting achievement for students. This pattern is relatively simple.

1. *A group of teachers decides that improvement in a particular area is important.*
2. *The group seeks out all available resources to help formulate plans for what they wish to do and how to do it.*
3. *The group develops a plan of action.*
4. *Each member of the group implements the change in the manner agreed upon by the group and shares in a common evaluation of the outcomes.*

In Livonia, we have had a nucleus from which such a pattern could emerge. Some time ago, at the request of the department chairs of our four high schools, we established a **High School Composition Committee**. This group has expended a great deal of personal time and effort in examining problems of teaching composition and making recommendations regarding improvement in this area. A not-surprising finding of the committee was the need for continuous in-service training of our high school English teachers.

With this need identified we were fortunate to find that the **ECB** was willing to assist us through its Outreach Program. In fact, we found that **ECB** members were willing to do more than provide simple assistance. Since our administration and Board of Education do not wish to have teachers away from their students very often, we could release only twelve

teachers from four half-days of instruction to attend the workshop sessions. Members of the **ECB** gave of their evening time so that we could have additional meetings.

Although it would be presumptuous of me to attempt to speak for all of our teacher participants in responding to the workshops, I do wish to comment upon several aspects of our work with **ECB** members which impressed me greatly.

Our meetings were conducted in a friendly, collegial atmosphere; while **ECB** members had some specific information to share, we were, in fact, two groups of English teachers seeking to improve the teaching of composition. In the course of our meetings, **ECB** members consistently modeled both a high level of professionalism and a consistent concern for students as developing writers. They communicated this concern not only in their statements but also in demonstrations of practices they had developed.

While our time was limited, our **ECB** workshops constituted a total package. Participants were made aware of significant findings from research; activities were related to learning theories; and specific "how-to's" were offered as examples of classroom practices or assignments. Some models were presented as tentative, or as "where we are now" conclusions, emphasizing the fact that we are all working together on common problems. The process brought to us some new perceptions, confirmation of some things we were doing or anticipated doing, and some new goals for the development of our writing programs.

The **English Composition Board of The University of Michigan** is regarded as a prestigious institution in our school community. Consequently, through our association in the workshops, we have obtained an authority base more credible than English teachers alone have in their own schools. Thus, we have been able to recommend program modifications and our administrators have supported these modifications which are influenced by the **ECB's** approach to the teaching of writing.

(cont. on p. 90)

The University-High School Connection

Aaron Stander

Note: In school year 1979-80 the ECB provided a series of ten workshops for the English Department at Andover High School in Bloomfield Hills. The following is a brief summary of that program.

Before the first meeting between the **English Composition Board (ECB)** and **Andover High School** English teachers there was apprehension and appreciation on both parts. Fortunately, **Andover's** administration felt that this staff-and curriculum-development project was important enough to provide teachers with the released time for ten workshops, a schedule that provided the opportunities necessary for sound professional growth. Planning and communication had been extensive and thorough. But there was still concern for how the project would turn out. Although **ECB** members and the **Andover** staff shared the same discipline, they did not know whether their professional concerns and sensitivities to one another's problems would provide for meaningful and helpful communication. The **Andover** teachers wondered if the **ECB** members would be able to suggest techniques and activities that would be effective with students of high-school age.

After the introductions and initial formalities, we launched into the first topic to be explored in the ten workshops. Apprehension dissolved as it became apparent that the **ECB** had not only useful ideas for teaching composition, but also the capacity to listen to the ideas and problems of high school teachers.

The workshop sessions addressed several concerns: assessment techniques, evaluation, diagnosis of problems, methods of remediation, development of good assignments, peer grouping within classes, editing techniques, and content-area writing. Although the topics for all the

workshops had been selected before the September meeting, these were modified as the year progressed.

The **Andover** teachers were impressed by the high quality of the workshops. Each one was well-organized, energetically presented, and relevant to teachers' needs. The effectiveness of the presentations was greatly enhanced by the interest of presenters as well as their understanding of the problems of teaching English in a high school. The **ECB** staff provided excellent models of enthusiastic and effective teaching.

As we progressed through this series of workshops, there was a continued growth of rapport between the two groups. The **Andover** teachers and **ECB** members became colleagues pursuing a mutual interest, the improvement of student writing. In this collegial relationship there was the necessary trust to allow participants to discuss their concerns and problems, their successes and failures, openly.

The **ECB** presenters have an effective and, in fact, creative professional relationship with one another. They are willing to explore problems from various points of view while maintaining a mutual esteem. This model was contagious. The **Andover** staff became more open and trusting among themselves. No longer working in isolation, they were part of a team with a shared goal. As one teacher phrased it on an evaluation, "I no longer feel alone."

As a culmination of the workshops for the English department, the **ECB** presented one workshop for the entire **Andover** faculty. The purpose of this workshop was to impress other departments with the importance of a cross-curricular responsibility for the written work of students. This workshop explored specific conventions of writing in the various academic

(cont. on p. 95)

Editorial

When I was twelve, I lived in a semi-rural community at the southern tip of New York City--too far from the center of things to join in organized summer recreation programs, too close to the center of things to enjoy unpolluted waters and open fields. I gave my summer days to the bounty of books I had borrowed in June, when the traveling bookmobile made its last visit of the school year. I gave my summer evenings to writing plays--murderous mysteries, most of them, set in aristocratic English households teeming with matrons and butlers and inscrutable sleuths. Scholarly analysis of my literary corpus would disclose heavy indebtedness, at this stage of my career, to Agatha Christie, A. Conan Doyle, and W. W. Jacobs.

The reading and writing of that twelfth summer were not new hobbies for me. My earliest memories are crowded with fragmentary but poignant images of pre-school literacy--the colorful illustrations of Grimm and Andersen, the chalked alphabetical characters on the small slate board that folded down into one's very own desk, the thick pencils and wide-lined paper on the "tea-table" that now belongs to my daughter. More vividly memorable than any of these images is my mother, the first and most influential teacher of them all. Untrained as a teacher, she had mastered the pedagogical basics: She loved her pupil and delighted in the subject matter.

In the time and place of my growing up, formal instruction took place in a one-room schoolhouse, that one room divided at times by partitions. The four teachers responsible for the one-hundred students, K through 8, shared their duties with their students. As an eighth-grade student, I read and wrote for younger ones when I wasn't doing assigned work on a research team with my peers. The assignments were handwritten, as I remember, and adjusted always to our "individual needs." As peer tutors, my schoolmates and I read to one another, wrote for one another, and solved assigned problems, all together. One day, as my teacher dia-

grammed a complicated sentence for our group, I was reading a book not well concealed on my lap under the desk. The teacher, who witnessed my asocial behavior, made no embarrassing comment then and there. The next day, he dropped a new, black-and-white speckled composition book on my desk and said: "Those books you read in your lap--write about them in here." I did.

That was at another time; it might as well have been in another country. One-room nostalgia may have no obvious place in such an issue of **forum** as this one--devoted to **Writing Across the Curriculum** a fashionable contemporary slogan that points to the future. Yet I yielded to the temptation to reminisce about my personal past, from the distance that lends enchantment, by questions that came to mind as I edited and aligned the articles of this issue of **forum**. Most of these articles are pervaded by a common sense that is not new. That temporarily lost but recently recovered common sense boils down to this: Reading and writing are best taught by those who read and write in any subject--by those for whom literacy is at the center of students' learning, is the teacher's whole vocation.

We do not propose to re-invent the wheel as we urge our colleagues in all disciplines to share in this vocation; we merely remind ourselves and our colleagues of its uses, including some that may have been forgotten. To determine when or where we got side-tracked from our common calling--literacy--is of less interest, in 1981, than how to get back to **Everybody's Business** that should never have been the business of English teachers alone.

Daniel Fader's **English in Every Classroom** anticipated James Britton's **Writing Across the Curriculum**. Their idea is one whose time has come and gone and come again. Our challenge is to apply the common sense that the idea elicits from us all. In doing so we are free to mouth mere slogans or make real differences.

Patti Stock

Foote (cont. from p. 72)

by keeping writing requirements separate from literature requirements and by making some literature courses electives in a **Writing Across the Curriculum** program.

Gains

Gain of a shared responsibility among departments for instruction in literacy and, by extension, gain of prestige for teaching English?

Yes. We are, after all, the experts on writing, and no **Writing Across the Curriculum** program I know deposes composition courses in English from their important function within writing programs. It is the English teacher's expertise which forms the basis of **Writing Across the Curriculum** programs, often through interdisciplinary faculty workshops offered by English faculty. Furthermore, the learning in these workshops does not move in just one direction. In workshops on all academic levels in which I have participated--the **Bay Area Writing Projects**, the **Michigan Tech** workshops, **The University of Michigan** programs, and those at my own institution--learning about writing is enriched with learning about language and philosophy and science and history. Workshop leaders become familiar with the discourse of other disciplines; and therefore they lose their literary provincialism and better appreciate the work of their colleagues in history, philosophy, science, the social sciences, and in the other arts as well.

Faculty in other disciplines become our colleagues in more than name only. At **West Chester State** (PA), Robert Weiss reports that several faculty members outside the English department are bringing the insights of their disciplines to research in basic writing. In the past academic year, at their own professional conferences, my colleagues in three of **Grand Valley's** departments--history, political science, and health science--presented papers on the teaching of writing in their fields. Other faculty at **Grand Valley** have become involved with the holistic scoring of placement essays.

The gains for English faculty from the **Writing Across the Curriculum** approach

far outweigh the losses. A language-centered English curriculum, anchored in **Writing Across the Curriculum**, will strengthen not only the teaching of writing, but also the teaching of literature. A curriculum which makes writing an integral way of learning in all disciplines will also ensure better teaching in these disciplines. The ultimate beneficiaries will be our students.

Walter Foote teaches writing and is Director of the Writing Skills Program at **Grand Valley State Colleges**, Allendale, Michigan.

Middleton (cont. from p. 82)

tion, Bruner claims that such discourse is also the "only way of saying things right and powerfully to oneself" (Bruner, **Toward**, p. 152). Although finished written products are useful, they are fossils of the living, dynamic process that produced them. Janet Emig views this process as a unique means of knowing, embodying more of the characteristics of successful learning strategies than reading, listening, or speaking. In particular, it provides immediate visible response and a record of the evolution of student thinking (Emig, 128). Analysis of writers' behavior demonstrates that writing is not merely **expression** of ideas already in memory, nor **discovery** of meaning, but the **making** of meaning--"conscious probing for analogies and contradictions, to form new concepts and restructure old knowledge of the subject" (Flower and Hayes, 28).

Finally, integrating writing into the subject course gives a means of **doing** rather than **studying** a subject. David Hamilton's description of writing in science applies to virtually all other fields. He states that the student is not ignorant without writing but is restricted to "a collection of data, an unorganized array of insights and intuitions" (Hamilton, 33). Conversely, "writing science" demands that the student "clarify meanings not only with sentences that follow each other intelligently but also with control over implications and ramifications of thoughts" (Hamilton, 37).

The union of composition with content courses will enable students to develop as

writers while helping them to learn the content of their subject area course. This union can increase interest in writing by making it useful and powerful beyond the life of the composition course. Many of the writing programs reported in this issue of **fforum** are designed to meet the concerns I have cited in this article (see pp. 65, 71, 75, 78, 83).

Writing programs which can achieve the goals outlined in this article must be based on writing experiences that emphasize the writing process, not just the term paper at the end of the course; they must require extensive pre-writing, both guided and unsystematic, free from premature evaluation; they must use writing as a problem-solving procedure; and they must occasion teacher reaction or peer reaction to multiple drafts of written texts. Such a program requires energy and commitment from both students and instructors, but such a program offers substantial rewards for the investment.

James E. Middleton, currently a Doctor of Arts in English student at **The University of Michigan**, is on leave from his position as Assistant Professor/Writing Center Coordinator at **Dundalk Community College**, Baltimore, Maryland.

Root (cont. from p. 81)

grade levels offering specific classroom strategies.

Journals

In addition to texts and anthologies on teaching writing, a number of journals focus especially on composition, some generally and some specifically.

Composition and Teaching.

Practical application of theory to high school and college classrooms. Published annually; subscriptions: individuals, \$5.00 for three years; institutions, \$8.00 for three years. Business Manager, Composition and Teaching, Dept. of English, Goucher College, Towson, MD 21204.

College Composition and Communication.

Theory and practice of composition and teaching composition on all college levels. Four issues per school year; subscription: \$8.00 per year. NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Freshman English News.

Teaching of writing and related topics: rhetoric, linguistics, etc. Three issues yearly, \$2.00 per year. Gary Tate, Editor, Dept. of English, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX 76129.

Journal of Basic Writing.

Thematic issues on basic writing, i.e., vocabulary, revision, correction, error. Four issues per academic year; individuals, \$5.00 per year, institutions, \$7.50. Journal of Basic Writing, Instructional Resource Center, 535 E. 80th St., NY, NY 10021

WLA Newsletter.

WLA is Writing as a Liberating Activity; the newsletter tries to "expand the range of instructional options" open to writing teachers, middle school through college. WLA Newsletter, English Dept. Findlay College, Findlay, OH 45840.

The Writing Center Journal.

New bi-annual publication, first issue on the function and scope of writing centers; will deal with aspects of individualized instruction. Subscription, \$5.00 per year, payable to Stephen North, Department of English, SUNY-ALbany, Albany, NY 12222.

The Writing Lab Newsletter.

Programs and procedures in writing labs and language skills centers. Donation of \$3.00 requested. Payable to Muriel Harris, Editor, Writing Lab Newsletter, Dept. of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

WPA: Writing Program Administration.

Three issues per academic year; all articles directed at the administration of writing programs. Individuals, \$10.00 per year, institutions, \$20.00. Joseph Comprone, Treasurer, WPA, English Dept., University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40208.

Events

March 26-28. **Conference on College Composition and Communication**, Dallas, Texas.

April 2-5. **Secondary School English Conference**, Nashville, Tennessee.

April 10-12. **Language Arts in the Elementary School**, Portland, Oregon.

April 24-25. **MCTE Spring Conference**, Sheraton Southfield, Detroit, Michigan.

Robert Root directs Introductory Composition and teaches writing at **Central Michigan University**, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

Freisinger, Petersen (cont. from p. 67)

And Britton argues for an interpersonal basis of learning rooted in talking, listening, writing, and discussing with one's peers. Therefore, we urge small-group work in all classes. Thom Hawkins' Group Inquiry Techniques for Teaching Writing outlines theories and methods for using groups in the composition class while also engaging students in the writing process.

Louise Rosenblatt and David Bleich, in particular, have developed models of the reading process which share theoretical assumptions with Britton's concept of the writing process. Their most accessible works are Rosenblatt's re-issued Literature as Exploration and Bleich's Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism. Both authors have expanded their theoretical considerations in, respectively, The Reader, The Text, the Poem and Subjective Criticism. These books imply significant precepts for both literary criticism and for learning in other disciplines.

Two books, in particular, offer epistemological arguments for using writing and personal, spoken language to develop knowledge in the science classroom. In The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas Kuhn claims that all scientific perception depends on a paradigm. Kuhn

argues that a paradigm is defined tautologically. That is, members of a scientific community share a paradigm on the one hand; on the other, they also define themselves as members of a scientific community because they share the paradigm (see Postscript, p. 176). This idea of the social structure of knowledge also informs Michael Polanyi's treatise Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy. A readable introduction to and discussion of the implications of Kuhn's and others' work in this area is Carolyn R. Miller's "A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing."

In this brief essay we have introduced the works which we considered essential in shaping our concept of **writing across the curriculum** at **Michigan Technological University**. On page 68 is a list, with publication data, of all the works cited in this essay, (2) a bibliography whose selections provide a more complete list of background sources which have informed our program, and (3) the publication data for other works cited elsewhere in this issue of **forum**.

Randall Freisinger, Director of Freshman English, and Bruce Petersen, a member of the Humanities Department, teach composition at **Michigan Technological University**. Both have conducted many workshops for the faculty at **Michigan Tech** and elsewhere in **Writing Across the Curriculum**. They are active contributors to professional journals.

Cogswell (cont. from p. 85)

There will always be a need for us to continue our efforts to improve our writing programs and our competencies as teachers of composition. The **ECB** presentations were consistently thought-provoking and representative of extensive thinking and research into the teaching of composition: They have been of great value to our Livonia program.

Kenneth E. Cogswell is the Language Arts Coordinator for the **Livonia Public Schools**, Livonia, Michigan.

Fader (cont. from p. 54)

Furthermore, the use of writing in any curriculum as a means to the end of comprehending all subjects is persuasive of itself in the struggle to invest writing with the importance it possesses in the world of work but no longer claims in the home. One of the interesting social dislocations of our era is the poor fit between the decline of letter writing in the home and the increase in demands for writing in many different kinds of employment. Couple absence of practice in the home with decreasing practice in school (one inevitable result of increasing the number of students in secondary English classes--as in all others--during the last three decades), and no one should be surprised at the diminished competence in writing measured by many tests and regretted by all employers.

Finally, **Writing Across the Curriculum** offers a means for investing a young person's voice with an importance it may no longer possess in home or classroom. Homes with familial hours dominated by television and schools with all hours afflicted by large classes are unkind environments for nurturing the individual voice. The sense that one has something to say and someone to say it to, is a sense dulled by silence in the home and hordes in the classroom. That same sense, so basic to the belief that communication is worth the effort, is sharpened and expanded by the experience of writing at every opportunity. Inviting continuous, coherent participation in the process of communication, "**English in Every Classroom**" provides both student and process with an importance that nothing else in the curriculum can promise.

Daniel Fader, Chairman of the **English Composition Board of The University of Michigan**, has written extensively about the relationships between literacy and learning.

Reiff (cont. from p. 77)

not, what alternatives can I suggest for you to consider?

3. Can your paper be made more effective--in its conception of its audience, in its organization, or in its style and mechanics?

Using what they had learned from this exchange and discussion of drafts, students revised their papers before handing them in for final evaluation.

Student evaluations supported my impression that the workshop's most significant intervention in their writing was in how they conceptualized their work. One student reported that the draft exchange helped her reconceive the assignment: "I was lost on the first assignment; it wasn't until after the first draft I knew what to do." Speaking of the interchange that took place at that stage, she added, "Good criticism of my draft helped me to think. I learned to criticize and analyze--something I'd never done before."

The workshop also helped students in the **fine tuning** of their papers: They selected less awkward, often more elegant phrases, as well as appropriate punctuation. Students learned a sense of responsibility to one another as part of a community of learners. As they tried to help one another think through the problems in a particular paper, they often suggested approaches and sources of information to each other. Perhaps most important for their growth as writers, they experienced their writing as a process of vision and re-vision, in which initial ideas may be continually refined or transformed, and to which a careful reader may contribute a great deal.

John Reiff serves as Consultant to the Junior/Senior Level Writing Program at **The University of Michigan**.

Slisher (cont. from p. 79)

Social studies teachers have implemented the idea most fully. Dan Scripsema, Chairman of the Department, uses the research booklet in assigning a term paper in his **Civil War** mini-class. In addition, he both expects and grades for good spelling, complete sentences, and paragraph structure in daily work and tests. He says the extra burden on him is no problem. He notes that the students realize these standards are important in the course.

Steve VerSluis, a history and government teacher, assigns a bi-weekly essay in

which students must respond personally to an historical concept, character, or situation. He may ask, "If you were a citizen in 1800 and this were election day, who would receive your Presidential vote?" His students also read Civil Disobediance and write an essay on the dilemma of following conscience or authority.

Steve VerSluis and Dave Reeves, another social studies teacher, require student journals as an important part of the work in their courses. The students transform daily notes, by filtering the notes through their own perceptions, into thoughtful, well-written, and well-organized essays. On Dave Reeves' desk one can find books on grammar and style in addition to historical reference books.

The ultimate proof of the serious approach these teachers take to composition is that like English teachers, they lug briefcases full of student writing out of school each night. Steve VerSluis sums it up when he says; "Writing is learning. In writing an idea, a person begins to understand it more fully." Dave Reeves follows through with his idea by offering two versions of his tests. On the multiple choice and short answer test the maximum grade is a B; if a student chooses the essay test, he may earn an A.

Though our plan to involve more teachers from other departments in our effort to spread **Writing Across the Curriculum** has developed slowly, students now realize that good writing skills mean better grades in all classes. They are aware of the attitude toward composition standards that is growing within the staff. Instructors often use composition not only to evaluate students' knowledge, but also to stimulate students' involvement and critical thinking about the subject matter. Indeed, at faculty meetings these days, when they hear a howl of protest about fragments, members of our department no longer look for cover; instead, we just figure we'll soon add another to our family of new writing teachers.

Max Slisher teaches English at **Jenison High School**, Jenison, Michigan.

Stock(cont. from p. 70)
Winston, 1975.

Establishes the personal nature of reading and connects to Britton's theory of expressive discourse. Also provides good summary of learning theory.

Stubbs, Michael, Language and Literacy: The Sociolinguistics of Reading and Writing, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

fforum, pp. 82.

"The Teaching of Writing in Great Britain," English Journal, 67.8 (November 1978), pp. 49-67.

fforum, pp. 93.

Weiss, Robert, "The New Writing Program at West Chester: Overview and Design," M.O. Moving Out (February 1979), pp. 1-3.

fforum, pp. 88.

Vygotsky, Lev, Mind in Society, eds. **Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner, and Ellen Souberman**, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978.

fforum, pp. 56.

_____, Thought and Language, Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1962.

fforum, pp. 66.

Bailey (cont. from p. 80)

has made considerable progress toward implementing them.

To allow informed decisions as teachers develop a "policy for language," the Schools Council has supported studies of reading and writing. James Britton's Development of Writing Abilities (11-18), now generally known in America thanks to its distribution by NCTE, explores the functions of language as children develop in and out of school. (Britton was a member of the Bullock Committee.) Nancy Martin, Britton's colleague, subsequently completed a study of the effect of **Writing Across the Curriculum**, cautioning that a simplistic "language policy" would have little effect without a thorough evaluation of the role of language in learning. She identified the primary goal of schools as extending the

use of "language more widely rather than more 'correctly'" (Martin, p. 166). A further study, of children aged 7 to 9, agrees with all the work that has followed from the Bullock Committee's recommendations: "A concern for purpose and audience, for patterns of development in language mastery, for the effects of context on writing, for the treatment of writing and action to ease the learner's difficulties, is the foundation on which a policy for writing may be elaborated with some confidence" (Harpin, p. 156).

Various professional publications have summarized the new trends in British education for an American audience (for instance, Gerrard and a series of articles in English Journal). Among the best and most provocative of the British studies is one still little known here, and its conclusion parallels the views of faculty at **The University of Michigan** and at many other American schools: "To plan ways in which we can effectively improve our pupils' learning is inevitably to consider how we use language, the language environment of our school, the language expectations we have of our pupils, and the tuition and encouragement we give in language" (Marland, p. 264). In promoting **Writing Across the Curriculum**, American teachers need imaginative and persuasive principles and techniques; the British approach has much to instruct us in our task.

Richard W. Bailey teaches language and literature courses at **The University of Michigan** where he also serves as Director of Research for the ECB. Professor Bailey, who frequently writes about language variety and stylistics, is coordinating the "**Literacy in the 1980's**" conference to be held in Ann Arbor in June, 1981.

Jernigan (cont. from p. 74)

understandably eager to demonstrate their prowess in their own fields, to teach the writing component, what will in fact happen to the onerous, unappealing task of teaching writing? I fear that, in spite of orientation programs offered them in the teaching of writing, the graduate assistants will neglect writing in favor of their subject matter. If instead these same courses are relegated to non-tenured

junior staff members, who know the facts of academic life and are eager to earn tenure, won't the same thing happen to the tedious job of teaching writing? We must wait for the Class of '83 to graduate to discover how successful the program is.

Ah, but if in actuality we could incorporate the teaching of writing in courses beyond introductory composition within the student's own field, if we could indeed convince the entire academic community that good writing is everyone's responsibility, then I too would lift my voice in strident yea-saying. For under such a system my colleague from another department would be less self-righteous, realizing that the teaching of writing is his job too.

Jay Jernigan was the first Director of Introductory Composition at **Eastern Michigan University**, Ypsilanti, Michigan, where he teaches courses in literature and writing today.

Britton (cont. from p. 56)

a radiant water galaxy. It's a world of its own in a special way. Under its foam crested surface, there exists a universe of plant and animal life. With the tiniest microscopic beings to the most humungus creature that ever lived, the sea is alive!" (Our Friends in the Waters, a Book on Marine Mammals Written by the Kids in Room 14, Old Mill School, Mill Valley, California, 1979).

I shall call this kind of learning Learning I in order to distinguish it from my third category of purpose, Learning II. In **Learning I**, we are in fact organising the objective aspects of our experience; in **Learning II** we are organising the subjective aspects of our experience, and though it is a familiar enough process, we do not usually recognize it as learning. The principle of organization of **Learning I** is, in essence, logical: that of **Learning II** is artistic. In the terms devised by the **London Writing Research Project**, **Learning I** employs language in the role of participant--a spectrum from Expressive to Transactional; that of **Learning II** is language in the role of spectator--a spectrum from Expressive to Poetic

(Britton, The Dev., Chpt. 15). As the stories children write (whether autobiographical or fictional) become "shaped stories," more art-like, they move from the Expressive towards the Poetic. The more "shaped" they become, the more effectively they enable writers to explore and express their values, those ways of feeling and believing about the world that make us the sorts of people we are. I think you will sense this happening in the little story written by a six-and-a-half-year-old English girl:

There was a child of a witch who was ugly. He had pointed ears thin legs amd was born in a cave. He flew in the air holding on nothing just playing games.

When he saw ordinary girls and boys he hit them with his broomstick. A cat came along. he arched his back at the girls and boys and made them run away. When they had gone far away the cat meowed softly at the witch child. the cat loved the child. the child loved the cat the cat was the onlee thing the child loved in the world.

In a subject-based curriculum (as far as using language is concerned), **Learning I** will be the principal focus for lessons in science, history, geography, social studies, while **Learning II** will be the principal focus in English lessons.

Whether the topic be marine animals or ugly witches, what teachers and students say and write makes learning manifest. Thus there is in every classroom evidence of one kind of learning or another--neither of which a teacher can afford to ignore. Further, it is my experience that when teachers of different disciplines study such evidence jointly, important pedagogical and curricular issues come up for discussion.

James Britton, author of numerous books and articles in the field of composition theory and research, is associated with the **University of London Institute of Education**.

Odell (cont. from p.59)

institutions, inventions, or anything else the narrator mentions.

In order to determine when the book was originally published (and thereby formulate one's thesis) one might:

--focus on inventions and customs mentioned in the book;

--identify inventions and customs not mentioned in the book but known to us today;

--determine dates (e.g., the date at which a particular invention was made) for things that are mentioned and for things that are not mentioned in the book;

--consider alternate conclusions about the publication date of the book and explain how those conclusions are less plausible than one's own.

Without presuming that this brief list identifies all the intellectual work a writer might engage in, I want to use this list to make two points. The first is that the intellectual work associated with the Looking Backward task is somewhat different from that involved in the writing assignments mentioned earlier. In their letters of complaint, the eighth graders would need to (1) explain what they expected or hoped; (2) show that their experience fell short of what they had expected; and (3) explain a specific sequence of actions that would resolve the conflict between experience and expectations. In describing their system for organizing laboratory equipment, high school chemistry students would have to classify items on the basis of their use in various experiments. My first point, then, is that different writing tasks make different intellectual demands of writers. My second point is that teachers can show students how to meet those demands. For example, the history teacher who assigned the Looking Backward paper might make a practice of having students examine short texts, trying to date those texts by determining, say, what inventions the author does mention and what inventions, known today, the author does not mention. The advantage of this teaching

procedure is that it accomplishes two goals at once: it enables the teacher to focus on materials of his or her discipline and at the same time to teach students a discovery procedure which they can use in writing their essays.

None of these suggestions, of course, will solve all the problems of teaching writing in other disciplines. None come with any guarantee of certain success. All entail a good bit of work for us and for our colleagues. That, I think, simply acknowledges reality. Improving student writing is a difficult, time-consuming task, one that demands the best efforts of all of us. These suggestions do, however, help us focus our energies; my own experience suggests that time spent in these areas is likely to pay off. At the very least, it will preclude our having to check papers for grammar and style while someone else reads them for content.

Lee Odell, a member of the English Department at **SUNY**, Albany, has written frequently about a wide variety of topics related to the teaching of writing.

Maimon (cont. from p. 83) also hold dormitory hours, sometimes during those bleak, wee hours when so many undergraduates are actually confronting that intimidating blank page.

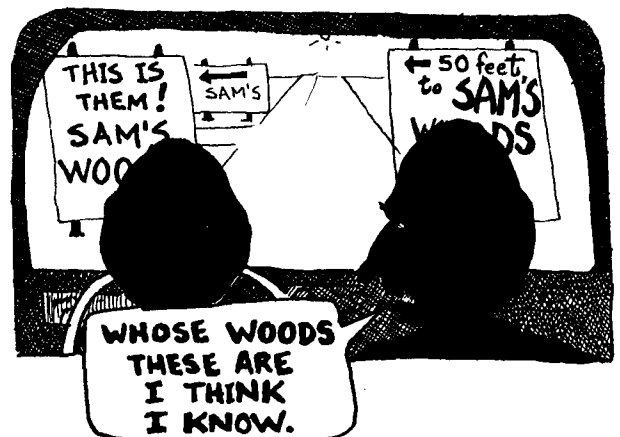
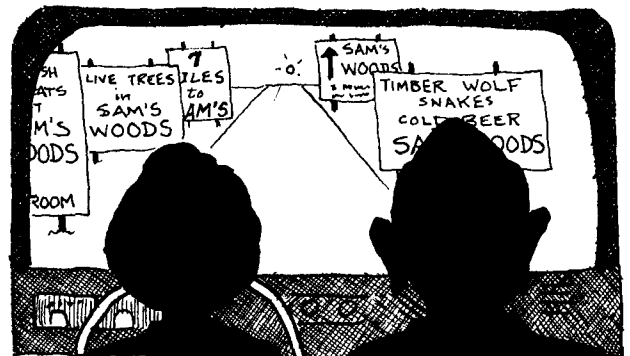
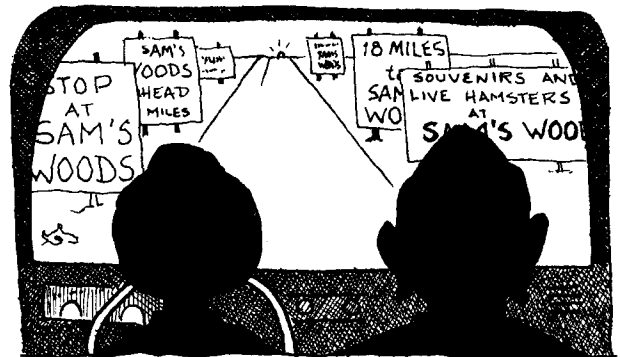
The Graduate Program in the Teaching of Writing and Other Outreach Activities

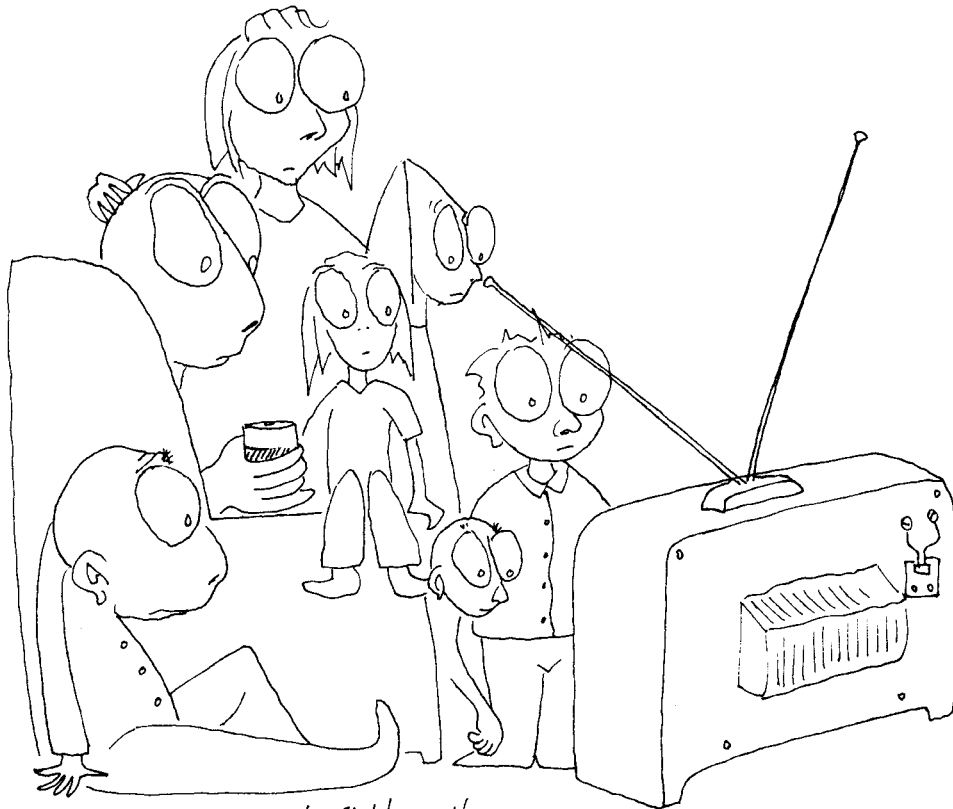
Beaver offers a Master of Arts in Education with a Concentration in Written Communications. During the summers of 1981 and 1982 the **National Endowment for the Humanities** is sponsoring extended institutes on the **Beaver College** campus for secondary and post-secondary humanists who are interested in the teaching of writing.

Elaine P. Maimon is the Director of the Writing Program at Beaver College, Glenside, Pennsylvania

Stander (cont. from p. 86) disciplines and the logical appropriateness of teaching such conventions in the content areas. Although this idea, in spite of its obvious logic, is not readily embraced by many content-area teachers, the **ECB** presentation was extremely effective. **Andover's** staff grew as a result of its relationship with the **ECB**; and it is hoped that **Andover's** writing program will be further enhanced through a continuing relationship with our **ECB** colleagues at **The University of Michigan**.

Aaron Stander is the Secondary Reading Consultant for the **Oakland Public Schools**, Pontiac, Michigan.





The Children's Hour

Editor's Note: From the very first issue of fforum, I have emphasized my interest in publishing personal letters and institutional news and views from all teachers and schools in Michigan. As they appear, letters and reports such as those featured in the article "Two Schools Look at the ECB" (p. 84) and in the article "From a Reader's View" (p. 82) are of course the freely expressed views of their authors; and these--along with everything in fforum--are, in turn, subject to readers' written responses.

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