Paths to Productive Partnerships: Surveying High School Teachers about Professional Development Opportunities and "College-Level" Writing

Melanie Burdick and Jane Greer

Abstract

This article investigates how high school English teachers define "college-level" writing and begins to map the sources of their professional knowledge. Secondary teachers in thirteen Midwestern counties were surveyed; the data suggests that English teachers who prepare high school students for writing in college and/or are offering courses that allow students to complete college writing requirements while still in high school (e.g., dual credit/concurrent enrollment; Advanced Placement; International Baccalaureate) are experienced educators who draw upon a range of professional resources to define and accomplish their pedagogical goals. These results can inform conversations among writing program administrators and other researchers about how secondary English teachers navigate complex networks of information to develop definitions of "college-level" writing. This research can initiate further investigations of how secondary and postsecondary teachers might develop more productive partnerships around writing.

With increased demands from diverse stakeholders to facilitate students' transition from secondary to postsecondary educational environments and the rising popularity of dual credit or concurrent enrollment programs (DC/CE), Advanced Placement (AP) classes and exams, and International Baccalaureate (IB) curricula, many WPAs are focusing their energies away from college campuses and toward high school classrooms.[1] In 2007, Eli Goldblatt cogently observed in his award-winning monograph, *Because We Live Here: Sponsoring Literacy Beyond the College Curriculum*, that "college writing and writing instruction as activities cannot be encapsulated, investigated, or promulgated exclusively through a curriculum on a par-

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

ticular campus" (9). Striking a similar chord, Patrick Sullivan and Howard Tinberg note in their introduction to *What Is "College-Level" Writing?* that "High school English teachers are among our most important professional colleagues in the grand enterprise of teaching writing at the college level" (xvi). Christine Denecker similarly declares that "transitioning writers across the composition threshold [from high school to college] is not so much about what *students* do as it about what the *instructors* know or understand about composition practices on both sides of the divide" (31).

The importance of shared knowledge among writing teachers across grade levels is further underscored in the CCCC's position statement on "Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment Composition: Policy and Best Practices," which insists that secondary teachers have access to postsecondary faculty with expertise in writing instruction along with stipends and travel funds for professional development workshops hosted by postsecondary institutions. The "CWPA Position Statement on Pre-College Credit for Writing" also affirms a desire "to cooperate with other stakeholders in discussing the best ways to design a coherent K–16 curriculum in writing and reading," noting that such discussions "should include how best to prepare teachers to deliver such curriculum in a way that achieves the outcomes that will best serve students as they mature and the eventual goals and needs of our democratic society" (12).[2]

Given these calls for collaboration among secondary and postsecondary writing teachers, it is surprising that researchers in writing studies and WPAs have not explored how high school teachers understand their roles in preparing students for college writing. Much of the existing literature is anecdotal. For example, four very fine essays in Sullivan and Tinberg's collection offer "High School Perspectives" from teachers in Georgia, Illinois, and New Mexico. In Kristine Hansen and Christine R. Farris's *College Credit for Writing in High School: The "Taking Care of" Business*, high school educator Steve Thalheimer eloquently shares his "Personal and Professional Evolution" as teacher of CE classes in Indiana. In the same collection, Kathleen M. Puhr richly describes her work as an AP English teacher in Missouri. Such essays provide WPAs with insights into the material realities that shape the work high school teachers accomplish and the sophisticated navigational skills they deploy to prepare students for college. Such individualized accounts offer a critical, close-in look at the pedagogical practices that unfold in particular secondary classrooms. However, as WPAs on our respective campuses, we recognized that a systematic study of how high school English teachers define "college-level writing" and their sources of professional knowledge would be valuable to us, might provide diverse stakeholders (e.g., other university administrators, school district

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

leaders, state education officials, and professional organizations) with useful data for designing professional development, and could empower high school English teachers as they position themselves within broader educational networks.

This essay thus describes findings and implications of a research study surveying English teachers who either deliver college credit writing courses (e.g., DC/CE, AP, or IB) or teach courses that explicitly prepare high school students for college writing. We recognize that each of the programs that offer opportunities for high school students to earn college credit and traditional high school courses that prepare students for college writing are founded on widely divergent notions about the purposes of higher education and the literacy tasks associated with college coursework. Our intent in this survey was, however, to understand how secondary teachers operate in complex education environments with many mandates, rather than to determine teachers' levels of adherence to prescribed pedagogical practices associated with any single program or curricula. Because we recognized that high school teachers often shift among course assignments and programs throughout their careers, and we presumed that their definitions of "college level" writing result from a synthesis of many professional development experiences and resources, we framed our research questions broadly to capture this complexity:

1. How do high school English teachers define "college-level" writing?
2. What are the origins of these definitions?

Ultimately, we hope that findings of our survey will spur other WPAs to develop data-driven understandings of the experiences and expertise of high school teachers with whom they might partner in their local communities. More broadly, the goal of our study is to lay the groundwork for more productive partnerships between WPAs and high school teachers so that we might work together to help students develop a rich repertoire of literate abilities across their entire educational careers.

Our Research Context and Preliminary Assumptions

This study unfolded in thirteen contiguous counties spread across Missouri and Kansas. Relying on the states' departments of education, we identified 99 high schools in the region. According to the urban-centric locale codes from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the schools in our study were situated in large cities, the urban fringe, suburbs, and distant rural areas.[3] Within the sample, high schools offered diverse opportunities for students to earn college credit in writing and/or to prepare for college writing classes, including IB curricula, AP classes, and DC/CE experiences.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

As longtime residents of this region, we have professional and personal ties to multiple postsecondary and secondary institutions. We have been involved with the Greater Kansas City Writing Project, a local site of the National Writing Project (NWP) for nearly two decades, and we have collaborated with high school teachers on a range of projects, including DC/CE workshops and the founding of high school writing centers. Thus, we appreciate the challenging working conditions faced by high school teachers. In recent years, class sizes have increased, tenure protections have been lost, and restrictive evaluation procedures have been implemented in Missouri and Kansas. Moreover, there is little opportunity for activities that empower teachers: reflection, collaboration, and autonomous decision-making about curricula and classroom management (Darling-Hammond et al.; Ladd; Pearson and Moomaw; Darling-Hammond and Bransford).

Our long-standing work in the borderlands between universities and secondary schools leads us to view the practices of high school English teachers who offer college writing courses and/or prepare students for writing in college as inconsistent, but not necessarily troubled. Many high school English teachers with whom we work participate in a wide range of professional development opportunities. Both states have National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) affiliates, the Missouri Association of Teachers of English (MATE) and the Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE), that sponsor state-wide conferences, typically drawing 200–700 participants from all grade levels. There are annual AP trainings in English in the region that bring together teachers from numerous high schools, and the Greater Kansas City Writing Project offers a wide range of programs for writing teachers across all grades and disciplines.

We were also well aware that high school writing instruction is affected by inharmonious stakeholders: government officials and legislators who advocate for standards and high-stakes testing; families who may have widely divergent visions of educational success; professional organizations, such as the NWP, that validate teachers' best practices; and textbook companies that heavily market assessment tools. The daily work that high school teachers undertake is a complex negotiation of these sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting, constituencies. Our professional responsibilities and long-standing relationships with high school English teachers have engendered in us an abiding respect for their expertise, energy, creativity, and commitment.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

Survey Instrument and Administration

Our survey was designed to generate an overview of teachers who teach college-level or college preparatory writing and the sources of their professional knowledge. We chose a survey because it was important that teachers self-report their understandings and experiences, so our data would portray participants' descriptions of their characteristics, assumptions, and experiences (Marshall and Rossman).

The survey consisted of three sections. The first section focused on the professional demographics and credentials of the respondents and their working conditions, including class size and course assignments. The second section posed multiple-choice questions regarding teachers' access to various channels of knowledge about college-level writing. These were two-tiered questions that asked teachers if they had participated in certain forms of professional development or had access to particular resources and then queried how often these programs or resources impacted their classroom practice. The professional development experiences and resources featured in the survey were:

- *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*
- AP training and materials
- IB training and materials
- DC/CE professional development and training
- NWP programing
- Common Core State Standards
- College composition textbooks
- Graduate coursework in composition and rhetoric
- Personal experience in an undergraduate composition course
- Professional contact with college writing teachers
- Stories from former students about college composition courses

The final survey section featured two open-ended questions asking teachers to define "college-level writing" in their own words and to describe what a student would need to do to succeed in writing in college.

Using publicly available staff directories on high school and district websites, we emailed the survey link to 455 teachers. These teachers came from 85 high schools in 55 school districts. Eighty-one teachers (18%) completed the survey.[4] We attribute this lower-than-ideal response rate in part to an unavoidable coverage error. Many school websites do not designate teachers' course assignments, in which case we emailed the survey invitation to all English/Language Arts teachers at a school knowing that many would disregard it because they were not teaching relevant courses. We also could not determine how recently a school or district had updated its online staff

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

directory. Because of the low response rate and because as, Kristine Hansen has pointed out, the "marketplace" for college-level credit includes both the regional or local brands offered on college campuses and national brands, such as AP and IB ("Composition Marketplace" 1), our primary goal is to summarize the information we gathered in our region, not to suggest that broader inferences can made about high school teachers across the country. While acknowledging these limitations, we offer our findings and analysis as a starting point for further conversation about how high school teachers develop their understandings of college-level writing and how WPAs might foster more productive partnerships with them.

Survey Results and Analysis

After amassing and reviewing the survey data, we found that some of our preliminary assumptions were correct, while other information surprised us. Through the survey, we observed three meaningful trends: (1) the participants were highly qualified and experienced teachers; (2) the participants tapped into a range of professional development resources; and (3) the participants viewed college writing in ways that are not remarkably different from how many postsecondary educators and WPAs might define college-level writing.

Survey Finding #1: Experienced, Expert Teachers

Teacher expertise is too often defined through certification processes and standardized testing, which privileges compliance to a particular curriculum rather than teachers' professional judgments of their students' needs (Darling-Hammond et al.). We see teacher expertise through a more contextualized lens. Research has shown that effective teachers do in fact respond reflectively through informed decision making that includes knowledge of students, knowledge of content, and the flexibility to adapt within particular contexts (Darling-Hammond and Bransford). Very often, expert teachers are those with varied classroom experiences who have learned to adapt instruction through the years and across learners' skill-levels. They are also highly educated in pedagogy and their subject areas (Darling-Hammond et al; Darling-Hammond and Bransford).

Survey participants were indeed highly educated, experienced professionals. Eighty-four percent of respondents held Master's Degrees—69% in Education and 25% in English. Other graduate degrees represented among the teachers included Masters in Liberal Arts and Masters in Library Science. Seventy-four percent of the teachers had seven or more years' experience, and nearly 19% of respondents had more than 20 years' experience.

© Council of Writing Program Administrators

Researchers in teacher education have identified that educators become teaching experts after five to seven years in the classroom (Berliner). Drawing upon teachers' self-reporting, D. S. Turner (cited in Berliner 201) has demonstrated that it takes between three and five years for teachers to no longer be surprised by classroom events. Research done by Omar Lopez (cited in Berliner 201) also reveals that teachers develop their educational expertise through their first seven years in the classroom. With over 74% of the teachers responding to our survey having seven or more years of experience, we feel confident in asserting that the high school college preparatory/college credit writing courses in our research area are predominantly taught by master teachers.

In terms of the material realities of our respondents' professional lives, 81% reported that they taught three or fewer college preparatory or college-level writing classes each semester. Of the college preparatory or college-level writing courses they were teaching, 48% of the teachers offered AP classes, with the literature and language course more widely offered (29.3%) than the composition and language course (18.7%); 36% were teaching DC/CE classes; 36% were teaching courses designated "college preparatory"; and 6.7% taught an IB curriculum. Nearly half the teachers (49.4%) reported they taught fifty or more students who were either earning college credit for writing in high school or were explicitly preparing for the writing demands of postsecondary education, and 18% of the teachers were responsible for more than seventy-five such writers. Such college prep or college-level writing classes though, typically made up half or less of a teacher's daily schedule. Most (80%) of the teachers taught five or six courses a semester.

In teaching a range of courses targeted to different student populations every day, the high school teachers in our survey have opportunities to develop even stronger teaching practices. Theories of culturally relevant teaching practices (Ladson-Billings) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay) point out that when teachers work with diverse students, they learn to adapt curricula to their students' cultural and cognitive frames of reference. With teaching responsibilities that include a mix of college preparatory/college credit courses and courses for students with other aspirations after high school, our survey respondents were positioned to develop complex teaching skills.

Charlie Becknell,[5] a teacher at a large suburban high school who volunteered to participate in a focus group interview with us after completing the survey, embodies these trends.[6] Becknell teaches five classes a day. He is responsible for two AP Literature and Language classes for seniors and three classes of general English Language Arts (ELA) for seniors. Becknell

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

estimated that he has twenty-eight or twenty-nine students in each of his AP courses. In his three general ELA classes, also numbering twenty-eight or twenty-nine students per section, he often has up to eight students with special education needs. Becknell is responsible for providing daily instruction to around 140 students, ranging from academically successful individuals whose matriculation at a four-year college or university is a foregone conclusion to individuals with unique learning styles and needs whose high school diplomas will serve as the pinnacle of their academic careers.[7]

Several important issues emerge from this demographic data. First, WPAs should recognize the considerable years of advanced study and classroom experience that high school teachers bring to the task of teaching college writing classes. The majority of teachers who responded to our survey (nearly 75%) have spent at least seven years building their repertoire of instructional strategies, learning how to create and manage classroom communities, and refining their understanding of how students develop as writers through daily observation. Teachers' extensive classroom experience paired with their commitment to pursuing advanced degrees suggest expertise that is solidly grounded in both theory and practice. Within their classrooms, experienced teachers have multiple opportunities to test the practical applicability of pedagogical research and theory they have encountered in their graduate coursework.

Second, we find it significant that most respondents teach college credit or college preparatory courses alongside other courses. The diversity of classes they teach and student populations they encounter demands pedagogical flexibility, and they have opportunities to develop a more socio-constructivist teaching perspective based on experiences with diverse learners, writing abilities, and curricular requirements.[8] Through multiple experiences and relationships with varied students and contexts, the teachers in our study have more background knowledge to assist them in this socio-constructivist approach to pedagogy. Unlike novice teachers who may feel most comfortable delivering a standard curriculum or who may adapt curricula based on a limited sense of pedagogical possibilities, highly educated, experienced teachers who are teaching college-level or college preparatory courses alongside other course assignments maybe better positioned to mediate in productive ways between curricula and their students' needs.

Survey Finding #2: Teachers tap into a wide range of professional development experiences and resources

Our survey asked teachers to indicate whether they were familiar with a number of formal and informal channels for accessing information about

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

college-level writing. Figure 1 (below) shows the percentage of respondents who answered affirmatively when queried about their access.

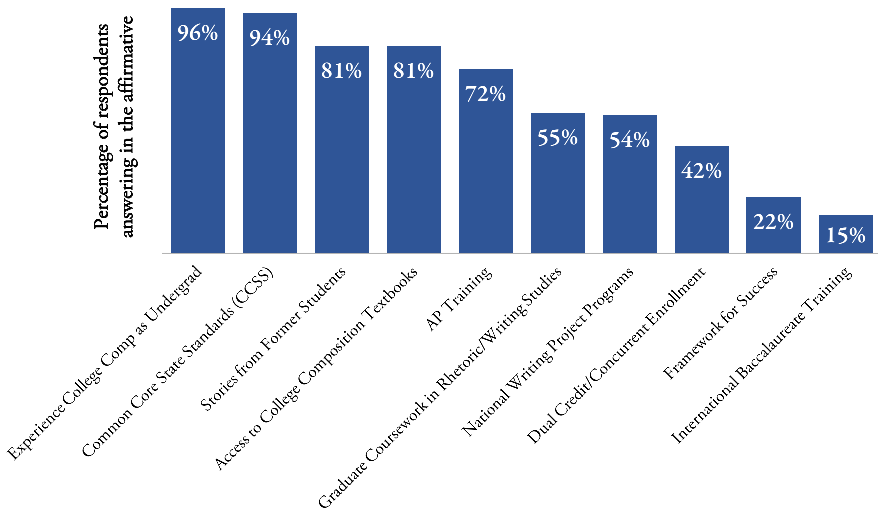

Figure 1. Teachers' access to channels of professional knowledge about college composition.

Nearly all the teachers in the survey had taken college composition as an undergrad (96%), and not surprisingly, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which are explicitly designed to ensure "college and career readiness," are nearly universally known (94%).

Conversations with former students about college experiences and college composition textbooks were also highly accessible channels of knowledge about college-level writing (81% for both). Over half or nearly half of the teachers had access to AP training (72%), had graduate coursework in writing studies (55%), were connected to NWP affiliates (54%), or participated in professional development through DC/CE programs (42%).

We recognize, though, that the most accessible forms of professional knowledge about what constitutes college-level writing may not be the most impactful. We thus also asked survey respondents whether the knowledge they acquired through these sources impacted their teaching on a daily basis. A very different graphic represents this data—see figure 2 below.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

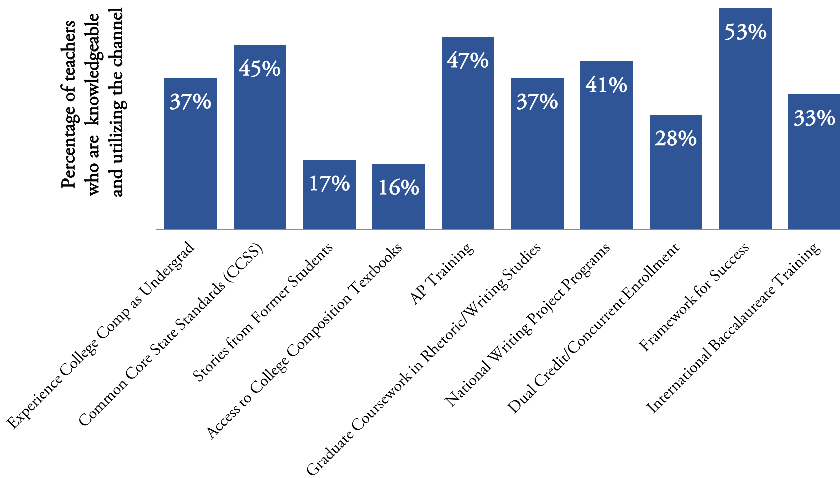

Figure 2. Influence of various channels of professional knowledge on daily classroom practices.

Though only 22% were aware of the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, over half who were aware of it (53%) felt it impacted their teaching on a daily basis. Other avenues for professional development or resources that involve interaction with college writing teachers—graduate courses in rhetoric and composition, the composition courses that future teachers are taking as undergraduates—are impactful on a daily basis for only about a third of the teachers who experienced them. Of the teachers who participated in professional development programs through DC/CE programs, which are often organized by WPAs and college faculty, only 28% felt they used that knowledge daily. That just over a quarter of the teachers who participated in DC/CE workshops reported that such experiences impacted their classroom practice on a daily basis will, no doubt, be disquieting to many WPAs. Given the level of education and experience of the teachers in our survey and the range of sources from which they derive understandings about the writing tasks students face on college campuses, we now recognize the need to design professional development experiences for DC/CE teachers that focus on the complex processes of synthesizing definitions and approaches to teaching college-level writing from multiple sources, rather than simply introducing them to an institution's standard curriculum for first-year writing classes.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

Besides the *Framework for Success*, the most impactful professional development experiences—AP Training (41%) and the CCSS (45%)—are those that we suspect most WPAs feel they have had the smallest role in helping to construct. These findings reinforce the observation from the "CWPA Position Statement" that high school teachers "may not be aware of research in the field of composition studies that informs FYW" (11). WPAs thus are essential to ensuring that our secondary school colleagues have opportunities to engage with postsecondary faculty on a regular basis and that research is available to teachers working in various contexts.

Another teacher who participated in our survey focus groups, Simone Fox,[9] illustrates the survey trends regarding professional development experiences related to college-level writing. Fox teaches AP language and composition courses to high school juniors. She described the AP institutes and mentoring by staff at the College Board as some of the most helpful professional development experiences of her career. She spoke at length about her engagement with her local NWP site and the relationships she developed with college composition teachers through NWP activities. Finally, Fox described her own experiences as a student and a writer as resources she draws upon in preparing students for college-level writing. With access to an array of resources to help her teach college-level writing, Fox has identified the types of supports she finds most useful, blending knowledge and strategies offered by diverse resources into a pedagogical program that makes sense for her students.

Fox's answers and the results of our survey point to some regional trends in how high school teachers access knowledge about college-level writing that may be disquieting for WPAs, suggesting that we have more outreach to do in order to impact the daily work of high school teachers. Indeed, the number of survey respondents and the total number of affirmative answers for each of the different channels of professional knowledge on our survey would suggest that our respondents are each tapping into just under six (5.97) professional development opportunities. Instead of attaching to one particular curricular conception of how to teach college-level writing, the high school teachers we surveyed glean from multiple sources, and then synthesize these for their particular students.

The experiences that our respondents reported were most impactful are also in tune with the material realities and pedagogical contexts of high schools. The NWP programming goals are for teachers to learn from other teachers. Advanced Placement professional development is also created by other AP classroom teachers. In describing the AP mentoring she felt was invaluable to her teaching, Simone Fox pointed out that the mentors spent time in her classroom, suggesting that it might behoove WPAs to invest

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

their energies in developing professional development opportunities that emphasize dialogue among teachers at all levels. High school teacher Milka Mustenikova Mosley makes the point:

> College instructors have to become aware of our reality and take into consideration all the responsibilities we high school teachers have in our daily English classes and provide us with advice and practical workshops so we can help our students become better prepared for college-level classes. (67)

WPAs should take Mosley's advice and invite the co-construction of college writing/college prep writing in high school classrooms. Our results show fully contextualized professional development opportunities impact high school teaching, and WPAs might find that creating dialogic relationships with their counterparts in secondary schools improves the teaching of writing both in high school classrooms and on campus.

Survey Finding #3: There is significant alignment between secondary educators' definitions of college-level writing and the definitions of postsecondary educators and WPAs

Our third preliminary finding is that high school teachers understand writing for college as a broader series of thinking abilities and activities. Many respondents included the need to teach students to write toward a variety of genres, topics, and audiences, and to consider writing across various disciplines. The data underlying this observation comes from the final survey questions:

> Question #1: Describe in 1–3 sentences what you believe are the main goals of a first-year college writing class.

> Question #2: Describe in 1–3 sentences what you believe a student needs to know/do in order to be successful in a first-year class.

These two questions were designed to elicit a descriptive summary of how teachers envisioned college writing following their identification of the professional development resources they use. The two questions had similar purposes, but they were worded in slightly different ways so teachers would align themselves differently in their answers. Question #1 was curricularly aligned, worded to elicit surveyed teachers' understandings of curriculum. Question #2 was aligned toward learner behaviors to elicit a more student-centered description.

To analyze the data from these questions, we individually used a content analysis approach and an open-coding process (Strauss and Corbin 61). We each independently identified categories from the data set of each question

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

using emic analysis, which incorporates the language of the context under investigation. We used the teachers' own words to clarify categories, which allowed us to authentically organize how teachers saw college-level writing. We then compared results and merged our categories into one list. Each of us used the new categories and definitions, went back to the data sets, and independently re-coded and confirmed our categorization of responses. The eight categories that were most often mentioned are outlined in table 1.

Table 1
Categories of High School Teachers' Responses to Survey Questions

Elements of H.S. Teachers Definitions of "College-Level" Writing	Number of Times Element Mentioned in Survey
Thinking/Critical Thinking	21
Research	20
Thesis/Support	19
Writing Across the Curriculum	16
Standard English/Grammar	16
Argumentation/Persuasion	15
Organization/Structure	15
Variety (genres, audiences, topics)	14

The following examples of teachers' responses are representative of our data.

Question #1: Describe in 1–3 sentences what you believe are the main goals of a first-year college writing class.

> The main goals of a first-year college class are:
>
> - to communicate effectively
> - to display critical thinking through writing
> - to master as many purposeful writing [modes?] as possible.
>
> A first-year college writing course should further a student's ability to compose effective prose that is more advanced than that found at the high school level. It should allow students to perfect their research skills and ability to synthesis [sic] outside information into their own text.
>
> I believe that college writing revolves around efficiently using writing process in a number of situations, synthesis of information, and utilizing the rules of standard edited American English.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

> Students should know the basic principles behind the writing process. Students should be able to write for a variety of audiences and do so in a clear and well-thought manner. Focus should be on organization, planning, and presentation.
>
> For students to: develop a clear and organized writing style; master the use of a format for style and giving credit; be exposed to other writers and styles of writing
>
> Students should build upon previous skills to become more fluent writers. The class itself should offer varied writing opportunities that will help the students to be successful in all the writing modes needed in their undergraduate classes.
>
> Students should begin to take some control of their writing style, develop thesis [sic] that are logically supported, and explore an array of writing genres.

Question #2: Describe in 1–3 sentences what you believe a student needs to know/do in order to be successful in a first-year class.

> How to read analytically
>
> Critical thinking
>
> How to develop a network of resources (peers, writing lab, etc.)
>
> How to find information that they may not know
>
> Integrate the research process into the basic writing process. Begin writing tasks with appropriate methods for discovering ideas, gathering materials, and comprehending concepts from secondary sources. Decide on a suitable controlling idea and arrangement of supporting ideas for compositions with explanatory, evaluative, and argumentative purposes drawing on secondary sources (including field, library, and on-line sources). Write essays that synthesize original positions with the ideas of others and develop the student's thesis with critically sound and interesting sources.
>
> Since writing well is the result of practice, first-year college students should expect to do a lot of writing in the composition class—arguably more than they would be expected to do in future college classes. The student should develop patience and perseverance. The student should, through practice in the class, have a well-oiled writing process in place to help him/her proceed through future college writing assignments.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

> The student needs to know how to express, in academic language and syntax, their response to a piece of text or an experience, using persuasion, analysis, and argumentation, rather than regurgitation of the material. Also, the student needs to have a strong understanding of clarity in organization and structure of the particular mode in which he/she is being asked to write.
>
> Integrate the research process into the basic writing process. Begin writing tasks with appropriate methods for discovering ideas, gathering materials, and comprehending concepts from secondary sources. Decide on a suitable controlling idea and arrangement of supporting ideas for compositions with explanatory, evaluative, and argumentative purposes drawing on secondary sources (including field, library and on-line sources). Write essays that synthesize original positions with the ideas of others and develop the student's thesis with critically sound and interesting sources.

Though the teachers only had a few sentences to describe their ideas of college writing, we believe their definitions are not noticeably divergent from what many college-level instructors might say. These teachers consider thinking skills an important part of curriculum (synthesis, analysis, evaluation) and revision an important part of the writing process. Along with these responses, teachers voiced the belief that students needed a number of skills such as documentation, organization, and proofreading. Most significantly, the responses to these open-ended questions reveal that high school teachers ask students to take up a wide range of rhetorical challenges. A notable absence in the teachers' responses was the personal experience narrative and the five-paragraph theme: none of the teachers mentioned such assignments in describing skills or abilities that a student needs to be successful as a college-level writer. The absence of such assignments among the responses suggests to us that high school teachers who teach such forms may be doing so because they believe these types of assignments are developmentally appropriate for adolescents or are preparation for the types of writing required by standardized testing. In sum, the ways in which the high school teachers described the curriculum of a first-year writing class and the skills a student needs to be successful in such a class are not remarkably different from the "CWPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Writing (3.0)," which focuses on rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; processes; and knowledge of conventions.

Our findings are consistent with findings of other researchers who have attempted to determine the alignment between writing curricula and teachers' practices in high school and college classrooms. By analyzing data col-

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

lected by ACT, Inc. in its nationwide surveys of English teachers working in high schools and colleges, Patterson and Duer conclude that "high school teachers and college instructors for the most part agree on which skills are most important" (82), including topic selection and the formulation of a thesis; revision skills (content not mechanics); and attention to editing and proofreading. Similarly, Joanne Addison and Sharon James McGee surveyed twenty-one teachers and fourteen students from three diverse high schools, determining that in general "high school faculty are following the lead of college faculty and working to prepare students for the types of writing they will encounter in college" (164).

Christine Denecker's research on DC/CE courses serves, however, as an important cautionary note. She observes that high school and college teachers may use broad terms, such as "thesis" or "process" to describe a range of textual features and rhetorical abilities. For example, Denecker notes that "since secondary writers are often required to *report* information in their writing assignments or on state tests . . . rather than *research* information or *argue a position*, the definition of a 'thesis' differs between high school and college writing instruction" (33). Similarly, "writing processes" in high school may involve students moving through a series of steps that a teacher has determined for the successful completion of an assignment, while college writing instruction may expect students to engage in a more self-directed process of determining appropriate invention activities, composing and revising multiple drafts, and undertaking the work of editing and proofreading (38–39). While we recognize the nuances that lie beneath the surfaces of broad terms, we believe that both appreciating and interrogating the vocabulary shared by writing teachers across educational institutions can serve as a starting point for more productive conversations.

Conclusion

Our survey data suggests that high school teachers are experienced, expert educators who draw upon a wide range of professional resources and theories as they work to prepare students for writing in college. As WPAs, we would be wise to engage more energetically with high school teachers, sharing documents such as the *Framework for Success*, extending invitations to collaboration with on-campus writing instructors, and creating opportunities for mutual interrogation of common terms and concepts. As WPAs, we should not be looking to improve high school writing instruction through more constricted modes of teacher training or by working to ensure that high school teachers move in lock step through prescribed curricula. Jeanne Gunner has rightly warned of the dangers of defining "college-level" writ-

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

ing in simplistic ways, noting that we risk that "boxing effect" when we "invoke a formulation that encourages the commodification of writing, writing students, writing curricula, and writing instructors, a formulation that reifies a system of nonporous institutional boundaries. If college writing is an object to be defined in order to be produced efficiently, then we become mere delivery people uninvolved in packaging the contents of the boxes we hand out" (111).

While our study provides a significant glimpse into how high school teachers understand college-level writing, we also understand our aperture is narrow. Much more work should be done to continue the conversations between college and high school instructors. In particular, the field would benefit from more regional surveys, to see if our findings are representative of other areas of the country. More in-depth understandings of how both high school teachers and college writing instructors synthesize different sources of professional knowledge for classroom use could lead to more productive conversations.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the Council of Writing Program Administrators for providing a research grant to fund this study; we also appreciate in-kind support provided by Washburn University and the University of Missouri–Kansas City (UMKC). This study was approved by the Institutional Review Boards at Washburn University (#12-43) and UMKC (#SS12-79).

Notes

1. See the CWPA Position Statement on Pre-College Credit for Writing for a useful history and overview of the curriculum, student readiness, and teacher preparation associated with each of these options for earning college writing credit before matriculation at a postsecondary institution.

2. The Two-Year College Association's Executive Committee Statement on Concurrent Enrollment supports the standards established by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), which covers five critical areas—curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation.

3. NCES locale codes are based on geographic data compiled by the US Census Bureau. Full details on the locale codes can be found at nces.ed.gov/programs/handbook/data/pdf/appendix_d.pdf

4. Though we identified 99 high schools in the region under study here, we could only obtain publicly available email addresses for teachers at 85 of those schools.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

5. Charlie Becknell is a pseudonym.

6. This essay focuses on the initial survey we conducted as a first phase of our work to develop a regional portrait of high school teachers who are teaching college preparatory/college credit writing courses. We intend in subsequent publications to offer further details about the results of focus groups we conducted with a subset of the teachers who completed the initial survey.

7. Since 1960, NCTE has recommended that educators in secondary schools not be expected to teach more than 100 students a day, and in 2014, the organization re-affirmed its advocacy for smaller class sizes and reasonable workloads for instructors as essential to student achievement. Large class sizes negatively impact student engagement, academic performance, and long-term success, and additional course preparations and overcrowded classes are factors that lead to teacher turnover ("Why Class Size Matters Today").

8. A response to behaviorism, constructivism is a teaching theory that opposes standardization and requires teachers and students to actively construct knowledge (Schallert and Martin; Tanner and Tanner). From a socio-constructivist perspective, learning involves teachers and students in the building of knowledge within a context. Sonia Nieto describes this concept:

> Learning develops primarily from social relationships and the actions that take place within particular sociopolitical contexts . . . learning emerges from the social, cultural, and political spaces in which it takes place, and through the interactions and relationships that occur among learners and teachers. (2)

9. Simone Fox is a pseudonym.

Works Cited

Addison, Joanne, and Sharon James McGee. "Writing in High School/Writing in College: Research Trends and Future Directions." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 62, no.1, 2010, pp. 147–79.

Berliner, David C. "Describing the Behavior and Documenting the Accomplishments of Expert Teachers." *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2004, pp. 200–12.

CCCC "Statement on Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment Composition: Policy and Best Practices." CCCC, ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/dualcredit.

Council of Writing Program Administrators. "CWPA Position Statement on Pre-College Credit for Writing." *Council of Writing Program Administrators*, wpacouncil.org/cwpa-statement-pre-college-credit.

Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and The National Writing Project. *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. Council of Writing Program Administrators*, wpacouncil.org/framework.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

Council of Writing Program Administrators. "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0)." *Council of Writing Program Administrators*, wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html.

Darling-Hammond, Linda, Audrey Amrein-Beardsley, Edward Haertel, and Jesse Rothstein. "Evaluating Teacher Evaluation." *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 93, no. 6, 2012, pp. 8–15.

Darling-Hammond, Linda, and John Bransford. *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do.* Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Denecker, Christine. "Transitioning Writers across the Composition Threshold: What We Can Learn from Dual Enrollment Partnerships." *Composition Studies*, vol. 41, no.1, 2013, pp. 27–50.

Gay, Geneva. *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice.* Teachers College P, 2000.

Goldblatt, Eli. *Because We Live Here: Sponsoring Literacy Beyond the College Curriculum*. Hampton P, 2007.

Gunner, Jeanne. "The Boxing Effect (An Anti-Essay)." Sullivan and Tinberg, pp. 110–20.

Hansen, Kristine. "The Composition Marketplace: Shopping for Credit versus Learning to Write." Hansen and Farris, pp. 1–39.

Hansen, Kristine, and Christine R. Farris, eds. *College Credit for Writing in High School: The "Taking Care of" Business*. NCTE, 2010.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teaching of African American Children.* 2nd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Ladd, Helen F. "Teachers' Perceptions of Their Working Conditions: How Predictive of Planned and Actual Teacher Movement?" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2011, pp. 235–61.

Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. *Designing Qualitative Research*. Sage, 2006.

Mosley, Milka Mustenikova. "The Truth about High School English." Sullivan and Tinberg, pp. 58–68.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. *Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts,* 2010.

Nieto, Sonia. *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*. Teachers College P, 1999.

Patterson, J. P., and David Duer. "High School Teaching and College Expectations in Writing and Reading." *The English Journal*, vol. 95, no. 3, 2006, pp. 81–87.

Pearson, Carolyn L., and William Moomaw. "The Relationship Between Teacher Autonomy and Stress, Work Satisfaction, Empowerment, and Professionalism." *Educational Research Quarterly*, vol. 29, no.1, 2005, pp. 37–53.

Puhr, Kathleen M. "The Evolution of AP English Language and Composition." Hansen and Farris, pp. 68–85.

Schallert, Dianne Lemonnier, and Debra Bayles Martin. "A Psychological Analysis of What Teachers and Students do in the Language Arts Classroom." *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*, edited by James Flood,

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators

Diane Lapp, James R. Squire, and Julie M. Jensen, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003, pp. 31–45.

Strauss, Anselm, and Juliette Corbin. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques.* Sage Publications, 1990.

Sullivan, Patrick, and Howard Tinberg, editors. *What Is "College-Level" Writing?* NCTE, 2006.

Tanner, Daniel, and Laurel Tanner. *Curriculum Development: Theory into Practice*. Pearson, 2007.

Thalheimer, Steve. "From Advanced Placement Student to Concurrent Enrollment Teacher: A Personal and Professional Evolution." Hansen and Farris, pp. 119–37.

TYCA Executive Committee Statement on Concurrent Enrollment. Two-Year English College English Association, ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/TYCA/Concurrent_Enrollment.pdf.

"Why Class Size Matters Today." *NCTE*, ncte.org/positions/statements/why-class-size-matters.

Melanie Burdick is an associate professor of English and director of the Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas. She has published articles in journals including, *English Education*, *The Journal of Teaching Writing*, *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, and *English Journal.* She is co-author, with Heidi Hallman, of *Community Fieldwork in Teacher Education* (Routledge, 2015). Her research interests cover a range of topics including the teaching of writing in high school and college, community field work in English teacher training, and literacy experiences of marginalized students.

Jane Greer is a professor of English and women's and gender studies at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. She is the co-editor, with Laurie Grobman, of *Pedagogies of Public Memory* (Routledge, 2015), and her work has been published in *College English*, *College Composition and Communication*, *English Journal* and numerous edited collections. She currently serves as UMKC's director of undergraduate research, and she teaches courses on the literacy practices and rhetorical performances of girls and women in the U.S. since 1800 as well as courses in partnership with local museum professionals.

WPA: Writing Program Administration, Volume 41, Number 1, Fall 2017
© Council of Writing Program Administrators