Seeking Connections, Articulating Commonalities: English Education, Composition Studies, and Writing Teacher Education

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This article, co-authored by former and current Composition–English Education Connections CCCC SIG leaders, describes the SIG's history, its member profile, and the nature of its collaborative work.

English educators and composition scholars often live parallel professional lives, especially when their pedagogical and scholarly energies target new writing teachers. This group, which is surprisingly large, encompasses writing program administrators, writing center coordinators, and professorial writing faculty, as well as writing methods professors, field experience supervisors, and National Writing Project directors. Despite overlapping professional interests, however, this group’s paths do not cross traditionally or automatically in terms of conference attendance, journal subscriptions, and departmental affiliations. Lacking a
Lacking a forum for discussion and exchange, individuals typically self-identify with NCTE or CCCC, but not both. In 1999, we recognized this gap and developed a modest proposal for a CCCC SIG (special interest group) to provide a much-needed forum for English educators and composition scholars with similar “graduate school” roots in composition and rhetoric and current professional interests in new writing teachers. A decade later, the Composition–English Education Connections SIG continues meeting annually at the CCCC Convention with a large attendance, numerous stimulating articles, conference presentations, and workshops, and it is the impetus for a partner group within the Conference on English Education (CEE), the Commission on Writing Teacher Education. Taken together, these two groups have developed and defined a space for conversation within and about the teaching of writing teachers, reaching across disciplinary boundaries for a better understanding of the intricacies of teaching and guiding novices and experienced teachers alike.

As NCTE prepares to mark its centennial anniversary, we celebrate this SIG as an NCTE and CCCC bridge, one that brings together writing teachers who nurture professional identities, relationships, and spaces in both English education and composition studies. This article, which is coauthored by former and current SIG leaders, describes the SIG’s history, its member profile, and the scholarly and teacherly endeavors that have grown from our work together. The article also describes the significance of this successful partnership beyond the immediate work of the SIG, including examples of curricular innovation and disciplinary scholarship emerging from these scholarly collaborations. We end with goals for the future of the SIG as well as the future of English educator–compositionist collaboration as NCTE moves into its second century.

The Idea Sparks: Proposing the Composition–English Education Connections SIG
Janet Alsup and Jonathan Bush—the initial co-chairs of the SIG—recognized the gap in the field and created a proposal for the new SIG. Even though they were technically in separate fields, they both had secondary school teaching experience and understood, through experience and study, many of the
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Theoretical and philosophical connections between composition studies and English education. They also knew firsthand of the unfortunate stereotyping and tension that often existed between those teaching writing at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Believing that a SIG meeting at the annual CCCC Convention could increase collaboration among those interested in the teaching of writing at the secondary and postsecondary levels, Alsup and Bush devised a SIG proposal and submitted it to the CCCC organization. It was accepted, and the SIG met for the first time in 2001.

There were seven presenters at this first SIG meeting and at least twenty attendees representing a wide range of institutions and positions. The recruitment of speakers for this initial session was a challenge in itself; without any pre-existing common group to which to disseminate calls, we had to rely on formal and informal contacts, such as “friends of friends” and others whose work we knew through professional outlets. The SIG’s presentation and discussion topics encompassed many key ideas and controversies in the teaching of writing and regarding writing teachers, and suggestions were made for increased collaboration and cross-talk. These topics included portfolio assessment, the development of writing teacher identity, varied institutional contexts and the work of English education, the National Writing Project as writing teacher educator, and the literature/writing divide in teacher education. Such practical and philosophical presentations were the subject of much lively discussion and debate at this first meeting, which easily filled its hour-long evening timeslot. Not only would this meeting set a general agenda for future SIG meetings, but it also began the journey toward defining writing teacher education. The topics that came forth in this inaugural SIG represented the types of discussions that would guide future meetings and, by consequence, the scholarly presentations, articles, and texts that members of the SIG would create.

After the SIG ended, Alsup and Bush agreed the SIG was destined to become an annual event—a prediction reinforced by one anonymous participant’s enthusiastic response. This participant admitted that she had long felt like an outsider at both NCTE and CCCC. Her academic training and credentials in composition and rhetoric had marginalized her at NCTE, while her pedagogical focus on adolescent writers and their teachers had marginalized her at CCCC.
At the SIG meeting this participant felt that she had at last found her own kind. Her story shows that by discussing these issues, the SIG legitimized writing teacher education as a rightful focus of academic and professional work. The SIG provided a home for scholars and teachers who work among these boundaries and created the scholarly support network that helped build collaboration, a sharing of ideas, and pedagogical and scholarly innovation.

The SIG Experience: A Typical Composition–English Education Connections SIG Session

For the past decade, the SIG has continued to meet during the Thursday night session of the CCCC Convention, with over one hundred presentations given since 2001 (see the appendix on the CCCC website). In early years, the SIG began with a formal presentation. For example, in 2003 Patricia Dunn and Kenneth Lindblom discussed a new graduate program at Illinois State University in composition exclusively for middle and high school teachers. In 2007, Richard Gebhardt gave a retrospective on his seminal 1977 CCC article “Balancing Theory and Practice in the Training of Writing Teachers.” Given the time constraints of the Thursday night session, however, co-chairs have eliminated the major presentation to provide more time for participant presentations and dialogue; even so, the session consistently runs long.

So what does a SIG session look like? What are the “nuts and bolts” of a typical session? After a quick introduction, the co-chairs divide the presenters into previously determined groups representing common themes. In 2006, for example, thirteen presenters were divided into four groups:

Group 1: Seeking Connections between English Education and First-Year Composition

• Richard Gebhardt, Bowling Green State University: “Seeking Crossovers in Writing Teacher Courses”

• Elizabeth Brockman, Margaret Feddar-Hauke, Laura Grow, Mary Rosalez, and Marcy Taylor, Central Michigan University: “Piloting a New Field Experience Placement: ENG 101”

• Jennifer Seibel Trainor, Santa Clara University: “Writing with Teachers: The Undergraduate Major, Teacher Education, and Composition Studies”
Group 2: New Collaborations and Conceptions in Teaching Writing

- Virginia Pompei Jones, University of North Carolina at Pembroke: “Toward a Worthwhile Partnership: One Writing Center's Efforts for English Education Majors”
- Kenneth Lindblom, Stony Brook University: “The Post–9/11 Writing Teacher Educator”

Group 3: Supporting Teachers in Coursework and the Field

- Jonathan Bush, Western Michigan University: “But What about After They Leave the University? Writing Teacher Education for New Teachers”
- Karen Vocke, Western Michigan University: “Writing as Community: Creating an Optimal Learning Community for Migrant Farm Worker Children”
- Kia Jane Richmond, Northern Michigan University: “Teaching Writing to Teachers of K–12: Different Passions but Similar Goals”
- Leah Zuidema, Michigan State University: “Bringing the Politics of Composition Education to Life for Pre-Service Teachers”

Group 4: Innovative Assignments in English Education and First-Year Composition

- Patricia Dunn, Stony Brook University: “Teaching Writing Teachers through Grammar Rants”
- William Broz, University of Northern Iowa: “Fast Food Friday Night Ophelia’s: Book-Length Nonfiction Texts in First-Year Composition”
- Rick Hansen, California State University Fresno: “Teaching Is Writing: Refocusing the Pre-Service Student’s Literacy Orientation”

Once divided, the individual groups operate informally and dialogically—an important topic addressed in the next section. Without facilitators, presenters take turns sharing their papers with SIG attendees, and then groups open up for questions and commentary in a roundtable discussion that often
continues much later and even more informally over dinner for interested SIG participants.

This dialogic and somewhat informal setting is an important aspect of the SIG. The focus in the session is on the participants—both the listed presenters and others who attend. The listed titles are as much heuristics for conversation among these participants as they are fully polished presentations. Unlike a typical conference session, the SIG works primarily as a discussion about current and future academic work.

By examining the list of 2006 presenters, we can recognize the diversity of the community that has developed within the SIG. Topics range from specific pedagogical talks about writing methods classes to issues of literacy and cultural studies to first-year composition and beyond. Participants’ professional roles encompass a wide range of teaching and administrative responsibilities and allegiances: writing projects and writing centers; first-year composition and basic writing programs; methods courses and graduate seminars; and field experience and student teaching supervision. Some participants teach or, in the case of graduate students, take classes in English departments, others in education departments, and still others have dual placements in both professional spaces. Regardless, everyone is welcome. What ties the SIG members together, then, are not departmental, programmatic, or other institutional issues, but common academic and professional concerns, questions, and interests—whether they are applied to new teachers in traditional undergraduate programs and settings, to graduate students in first-year writing mentorship situations, or to experienced K–12 teachers at National Writing Project sites.

In the section that follows, we consider briefly the kinds of SIG presentations so as to examine the themes that reflect intellectual trends with the larger fields of English education and composition studies.

**Topics of Consideration: Themes Emerging from SIG Sessions**

Over the ten years of the SIG’s existence, several themes have emerged through its sessions and presentations, reflecting both disciplinary differences and commonalities. A review of the topics of the sessions and presentations indicates three main themes: identity construction of new writing teachers and the
challenges associated with “crossing the border” between composition studies and English education; practical suggestions and sharing of ideas related to teaching the writing methods class or mentoring; and an overall focus on growth, change, and innovation. In the paragraphs that follow, we describe each of these themes and how it has developed during the SIG’s tenure.

Identity Construction of New Writing Teachers “Across Borders”

Over the years of the SIG’s life, participants have presented many sessions focusing on the identity of writing teachers and writing teacher educators. In fact, the identity struggle that writing teachers and writing teacher educators often experience may have been the impulse behind the very creation of the SIG. Those working “across the border” between English education and composition studies often struggle in their institutional contexts with a disciplinary or department affiliation. In addition to such pragmatic identity confusions, we often are caught in the midst of a “push and pull” between our own scholarly agendas: are we working in English or education? Are we focusing on research or practice? Do we teach methods or teach theory?

Those working “across the border” between English education and composition studies often struggle in their institutional contexts with a disciplinary or department affiliation. In addition to such pragmatic identity confusions, we often are caught in the midst of a “push and pull” between our own scholarly agendas: are we working in English or education? Are we focusing on research or practice? Do we teach methods or teach theory? Many of us would argue that as writing teacher educators we do all the above; however, the academy isn’t always the kindest context when it comes to rejecting established categories and opting for a new self-definition.

Many SIG sessions have addressed this border-crossing, cross-disciplinary theme, including Alsop’s 2003–2004 sessions, Brockman’s 2006–2007 sessions, and the presentations of Heidi Estrem in 2003 (“Teaching the Teaching of English: Conversations between English Educators and Writing Program Administrators”) and Lori Baker in 2002 (“English Education and the Writing Center: Connections and Collaborations”). As discussed elsewhere in this essay, the theme of dual identity construction of those who work in writing teacher education is reflected in many well-known publications in the field, including those of Robert Tremmel and William Broz and of Thomas Thompson—all three of whom are former SIG presenters or keynoters. Perhaps one SIG presenter, Claire Lamonica in 2004, put it best when she named her session “With
One Foot in Each Camp, How Do I Keep My Balance?” How indeed? Through sharing scholarship and providing an empathetic ear, the various SIG sessions throughout the decade have helped dozens of us who teach writing teachers stand more steadfast in this precarious position.

**Practical Teaching and Mentoring Suggestions**

The second theme emerging through the ten years of SIG sessions is a consistent focus on practical teaching and mentoring ideas for the teacher of writing teachers and the teacher of writing. While this theme should be no surprise to readers who understand that the conferences often provide opportunities for sharing methods, it is interesting to note that consistent with the first theme, even the practical suggestions emphasize connections, conversations, and crossovers among disciplines. While providing ideas for the classroom teacher, the presenters bring to bear their variety and duality of experience and how they have learned to thrive within it.

Examples of this theme are many: William Broz discussed using book-length nonfiction texts in first-year composition (2006); Jon Davies discussed how to use autobiography in writing methods courses to explore equity and social justice (2005); Frances Johnson described using case studies to teach writing (2007); and Mark Letcher explored how the multigenre research paper can help “shift” students from “writers to writing teachers” (2007). Throughout the years, SIG participants have provided numerous ideas of how to integrate theoretically sound, research-based practices into day-to-day writing teacher education. They have also described creative, exiting new methods for educating and mentoring teachers of writing.

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**Overall Focus on Growth, Change, and Innovation**

The final theme permeates all aspects of the SIG, as well as the professional lives of the SIG participants: change and innovation. When professionals live their lives on the border of multiple scholarly and practical endeavors, they tend to reach out to those doing similar work that might inform their own. Therefore, they experience an ongoing synergy in their professional lives—
out of choice, yes, but also from necessity. Many of the SIG sessions over the years have reflected this theme of change, growth, or “thinking outside of the box.” Examples include Patricia Shelley Fox’s “The Kid’s Café Literacy Project” (2003), Jonathan Bush’s “Extending the Realm of Research and Scholarly Publication in Writing Teacher Education” (2004), and Patricia Dunn and Kenneth Lindblom’s “Creating a Graduate Program in Composition Exclusively for Middle and High School Teachers” (2004). As the years of the SIG progressed, more papers focused on creative approaches to English education pedagogies, including technology, nontraditional genres and classroom settings, writing instruction/writing teacher education, and unique collaborations between writing centers/writing project sites and undergraduate English education and composition programs. As the SIG itself was built on the ideas of once-unlikely collaborations and unexpected, yet productive, connections, it only seems fitting that a major theme of the presented papers is capitalization on creative leaps and discovering new pathways to pedagogic success in challenging environments.

**Contributions to the Profession: What the SIG Has Helped Us Learn**

Robert Tremmel and William Broz’s *Teaching Writing Teachers of High School English and First-Year Composition* provides the most obvious frame for the SIG’s contribution to the field. In the introduction, Tremmel explains that he began his career as a graduate assistant teaching English 101 before going on to teach English education courses for nearly twenty years. Looking back over those twenty years, he asks hard questions of himself and, by extension, his colleagues at the national level, as he wonders why he never thought to connect the fields of English education and composition studies:

“How is it,” I have begun—to my extreme discomfort—asking myself lately, “that I can be the coordinator of an English education program in an English department, working daily to prepare beginning writing teachers, yet I never walk down the hall to consult with our department’s composition director, who is also working daily to prepare beginning writing teachers whose students are often only three months older than my students’ students? How is it that other English educators and writing program administrators around the country generally act this same way, teaching and even writing about their work as if they had no disciplinary connection with each other and no significant shared traditions? More importantly, given where all of us have come from and where we find ourselves today, why haven’t we thought about forming an alliance based upon our consilient actions and needs in order a broader, more coherent, mutually supportive environment for each other?” (1–2)
SIG members have long identified Tremmel’s hard questions, as well as the entire Tremmel and Broz text, as a writing teacher education call to action, one that the SIG has consistently addressed in two separate, but overlapping, ways: ongoing informal discourse about pedagogy and related theory, and relevant partnerships. In addition to the more specific presentation themes described above of identity construction, pedagogic developments, and innovation, these larger categories encompass not only the content of individual presentations, but also the larger mission of the SIG and the philosophic impulse behind its creation. If the SIG can successfully encourage continuing informal, yet synergistic, discussions about pedagogy as well as commit to building connections with other groups inside and outside NCTE to expand the breadth of its conversations, it has the potential to assist members and participants in professional identity construction and daily decision making as writing teacher educators.

Informal Discourse about Pedagogy
The SIG’s primary function is providing space for informal discourse about successful pedagogy. This combination of informal discourse and experience with successful pedagogies brings to mind Tremmel’s hard questions in the introduction to Tremmel and Broz’s text and, additionally, Stephen Wilhoit’s response to them: “The revolution begins with a walk across campus, a knock on a door, and long conversations over cups of coffee” (18). When institutional silos do not allow for disciplinary cross talk, events such as the SIG provide time and space for them to happen. When people from two similar, yet sometimes competing, disciplines share a room and speak in real time, stereotypes and preconceptions break down, experiences are shared, and scholarly identities are expanded. Even books about composition–English education connections (such as Thomas Thompson’s *Teaching Writing in High School and College: Conversations and Collaborations*), which aspire to create a text-based conversation about the transition from high school to college, cannot completely reproduce real-time, one-on-one conversation and debate. Individuals must be prompted to come together, to convene at a time and place conducive to critical discussion and the sharing of ideas.

On a much broader level, however, informal discourse about pedagogy invokes two competing perspectives regarding the value that the field assigns to teaching and teaching-related matters. On the one hand, such discussions grow out of Stephen North’s 1987 claims in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. In this landmark text, North asserts that teaching
and teacher-related matters might be characterized as practitioner lore, “what has worked or is working or might work” (24), and so they subsequently receive the lowest rank in the hierarchy of the ways a new field constructs meaning and knowledge for its members. Twenty years later, however, the scholarship of teaching and learning has created a new place for pedagogy. The creation and ten-year success of Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture arguably provides the strongest testament to this perspective. Published by Duke University Press and winner of the 2001 Best New Journal by the Council of Editors of Learned Journals, Pedagogy is a national refereed journal devoted exclusively to pedagogical research and teaching implications in the field of English, as coeditors Jen Holberg and Marcy Taylor explain in the first issue:

What you hold in your hands is something new: a discipline-wide, mainstream research journal devoted to teaching English at the college and university level. [It] seeks to create a new way of talking about teaching by fusing theoretical approaches and practical realities. As a journal dealing exclusively with pedagogical issues, it is intended as a forum for critical reflection and as a site for spirited debate from a multiplicity of positions and perspectives. It strives to reverse the long-standing marginalization of teaching and the scholarship produced around it and instead to assert the centrality of teaching to our work as scholars and professionals . . . The time is ripe for this kind of journal. (1)

Likewise, the time was right for the SIG. A closer examination of the 2006 lineup of presentations and, in turn, the discussion of the three common themes suggests that the SIG presentations both individually and collectively respond to the kinds of robust and theoretically based questions addressed in position and policy statements of NCTE and the CCC, including the “NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing,” NCTE’s “21st Century Literacies Curriculum and Assessment Framework,” the “CCCC Statement on the Multiple Uses of Writing,” and the “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing,” co-developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, NCTE, and the National Writing Project. These policy and position statements are theoretically and pedagogically consistent and, together, provide a coherent vision of successful transition between high school and college writing as well as improved communication between secondary and postsecondary writing teachers, communication that is perhaps even more essential given the recent creation of the “Common Core State Standards” for K–12 education, which seek
to achieve “college and career readiness” for all high school graduates. These statements all advocate for rhetorically based process approaches to writing instruction that include opportunities for student collaboration, multimedia production, and cross-disciplinary integration. Similar conversations about K-12 to college transitions and preferred approaches to writing instruction have been ubiquitous throughout the life of the SIG.

These questions and the kinds of answers that SIG presentations provide are inherently linked to larger research and policy efforts, and they are far more complex and central to the field than simply “what works” in the classroom. The position and policy statements of NCTE and CCCC are the foundation for strategic initiatives, professional development, publishing, and professional conferences and hence influence the teaching and learning of English language arts around the United States. Groups such as our SIG advance such ideas, putting them into practice by encouraging critical dialogue. By meeting annually as front-line teachers, scholars, and administrators of writing teacher education, the SIG provides a place for theory to be discussed as practice and then disseminated throughout a wider community of researchers and practitioners.

**National Partnerships: Building and Sustaining NCTE Connections**

Tremmel concludes his book’s introduction by questioning why first-year composition program administrators and English education faculty have not formed partnerships to better position themselves nationally and to create a forum for their mutual benefit. The SIG responded to Tremmel’s challenge by asking a new question: Why limit such a partnership to solely first-year composition and English education faculty? Why not extend the invitation to any interested NCTE member? As such, the SIG reaches out from CCCC to all English language arts teachers and scholars interested in new writing teachers and invites them into the ongoing conversation. One example of this commitment to continued, broader collaboration was the creation of the Commission on Writing Teacher Education of the Conference on English Education (CEE), currently co-chaired by Jonathan Bush and Kristin Turner. The mission statement of this commission is as follows:

We seek to bring attention to the professional development of writing teachers at elementary, middle, secondary, and college levels, with particular emphasis on bringing together writing teacher educators from the English education community with those from college composition. Specifically, we will
- make recommendations about best practices in preparing new teachers of English language arts to teach writing, including concepts, practices, pedagogies, and resources

- work towards establishing stronger connections between CEE and CCCC in terms of the common work of teacher development

- raise the profile of writing teacher education throughout NCTE.

The existence of both the SIG and the commission, each existing in one of NCTE’s conferences, is evidence of the collaborative, integrative nature of those of us working in both groups. While the SIG and the commission may have slightly different foci, their overall goal is the same: bringing together writing teachers from the secondary and postsecondary worlds to improve writing instruction K–16. Just as the SIG serves as the conduit for writing teacher education into the composition community, the CEE Commission on Writing Teacher Education does the same within English education. Interestingly, many people share allegiances to both communities and organizations. Together, these two groups bring together the two primary branches of writing teacher education and provide a disciplinary home for scholars at both the NCTE Annual Convention and the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

The “Bridge” Effect: Building Connections across Disciplines and Developmental Levels

An important contribution of this SIG to English studies, and to teacher education, has been its ability to coalesce a group of widely varied scholars and teachers around a specific issue and then make use of the different approaches, opinions, and conceptual understandings of each discipline and institutional context to discuss and advance understanding of that issue. The SIG has created bridges by which scholars and teachers can interact and collaborate on topics in ways that wouldn’t have occurred otherwise. English educators, composition scholars, professional writers, and high school, middle school, and elementary teachers have all played important roles in the SIG over the years. Since members are not constrained by academic or institutional boundaries, issues of interest become the common bond. Participants interact with others who have the same interests, but perhaps widely differing backgrounds.

There are multiple examples of how this interaction has occurred—when English educators, composition scholars, literature specialists, NWP site directors, and others have found common cause, resulting in projects, presentations,
publications, and programmatic collaborations. Many such collaborations have resulted in strong presentations at CCCC, NCTE, and elsewhere. Here we examine one such case of useful collaboration initiated in the SIG that not only culminated in discussion and better understanding of mutual roles, but also included a “roundtable review,” published in Pedagogy, that explored connections between college composition and elementary teaching.

At first glance, the work of elementary teachers and that of college composition scholars has little in common. The case for making connections between high school and college writing has been made, but what does writing in elementary school have to do with college composition? Following the 2004 SIG, two participants devised a project bringing together a group of scholars and teachers from widely varying contexts seeking common ground across developmental levels. They recruited the group, consisting of a writing program administrator, a professional writing faculty member who also taught writing teacher education courses, an English educator, and an elementary school teacher. In keeping with the roundtable review practice, they all independently read and responded to a single text, in this case Katie Wood Ray’s *The Writing Workshop: Working through the Hard Parts (and They’re All Hard Parts)*, a pedagogical text written primarily for teachers at the elementary and middle school levels. The group’s task was to see if the text would have meaning for the other levels as well and, if it did, to provide a model for the type of collaboration that could actually occur across developmental levels. Essentially, this group used the roundtable venue provided by Pedagogy to test the SIG’s informal conversations across disciplinary and developmental boundaries by projecting them into the real world of writing research and teaching. Could all the cross talk result in real disciplinary change and improved K–16 writing instruction?

The result—an article entitled “Finding Connections, Seeking Reciprocity: Toward an Inclusive Community of Writing Teachers—Kindergarten to College and Beyond”—was interesting and exciting. As Jonathan Bush, SIG representative to the group, notes in the article:

Scholars and practitioners in each realm are not as different as they are first led to believe by their varying contexts and day-to-day responsibilities. We can and should develop cross-developmental conversations about teaching writing.
Elementary teachers have much to teach college composition scholars about the ways to build a classroom of shared learning. Likewise, college composition specialists can enrich the teaching of elementary, middle, and high school teachers via their active knowledge of theory and other elements of composition studies. (340)

Bush concludes:

this small experiment shows that a widely varied group of scholars, all committed to the teaching of writing at various developmental levels, can find connections and meaning in the work of an elementary teacher. I hope that others will follow our lead. Great things can happen when cross-developmental connections are made for those on all ends of the spectrum. (341)

More notable, however, are the comments of some of the participants, including W. Douglas Baker, an English educator, National Writing Project site director, and former high school teacher, who finds value in how Ray’s text both prepares his pre-certification teachers for the classroom and provides his practicing NWP teachers with support. But he also finds significant connections within the text to college composition:

At the university level, many students are still striving to learn how to write deliberately and purposefully to enrich their lives and to view writing as more than a pragmatic action that "maintains their lives" (Ray, 24). The epiphanies or transformative experiences that occur during the discovery process lead the students toward conceptual change in how they view writing and writing instruction, which is necessary if they are to offer to their students the writing workshop opportunities described by Ray. (350)

Likewise, Jennifer Morrison, a WPA and a composition and rhetoric scholar, uses the text to make connections but also to problematize the relationships between and within developmental levels. After confessing her prior lack of knowledge of the text and the author, she continues:

This essay is my contribution to a movement I believe is valuable: generating connections between English education and composition studies. We can generate these connections by reading each other’s influential texts and talking about them with each other. These connections are oddly absent, to the detriment of K–12 and postsecondary teachers and our students. For example, my work preparing part-time instructors to teach college composition at Niagara University closely matches the work I do when teaching English-education students, but the two fields I must draw from for expertise to do that work use similar but different languages, which rarely reference each other. (353)
The article includes similar responses from the other participants, including elementary teacher Patricia Bills, who credits the text with connecting her with the common understanding of writing as an act of inquiry at all levels, and rhetoric and writing scholar Tom Moriarty, who states, in response to the text:

“What on earth could elementary school teachers of writing have in common with college teachers of writing?” I wonder. The answer, it turns out, is quite a bit. Both Ray and I share a commitment to writing as a process, and both of us agree that students learn best when they have the opportunity to become fully invested in their own projects. Ray writes that the process she has in mind is not a linear, neat, easy to condense into a worksheet kind of process, but a messy, uncertain, chaotic process that each student must live (or, in Ray’s words, “do”) in order to develop as a writer. The focus of the writing workshop, then, must be on “writers who use writing to do powerful things in the world in which they live” (5). (358)

The SIG created the initial conversations, which offered the opportunity, which led to the building of the group, which resulted in better understanding of the commonalities in teaching writing at all levels—not only within this particular group of writers and respondents, but also in the wider academic community. Other equally powerful connections have been made as result of the SIG’s work, and multiple collaborative enterprises (i.e., research projects, cross-disciplinary conversations, and productive pedagogical connections) have resulted among previously isolated writing scholars, teachers, and teacher educators.

**Where to Next? Challenges for the SIG**

The continuing challenge for the SIG is in many ways what it always has been: to foster and encourage communication and collaboration among stakeholders in the worlds of English education, primarily committed to the education of secondary school teachers of writing, and composition studies, with an emphasis on postsecondary writing instruction. This brings us to some recommendations and goals for the future of the SIG, as NCTE moves into its second century of existence:

- Increase membership in the CCCC SIG, particularly among graduate students and young faculty in both disciplines;
- Support cross-disciplinary research between English educators and compositionists;
- Support team or collaborative teaching between English educators and compositionists;
Facilitate exchange programs between high school and college writing faculty whenever possible; and

Share position statements and policy documents encouraging collaborations with university administrators who are able to facilitate such interdisciplinary connections.

As this list of goals shows, the work of the CCCC SIG is not in calling for a new discipline. Instead, it focuses the attention of university teachers and scholars on disciplinary connections between compositionists and English educators, providing forums in which they can work collaboratively on scholarly projects and informing research and scholarship on the teaching of writing and the education of writing teachers.

**Composition–English Education Connections SIG: Ten Years Later**

This issue of *CCC* commemorating the centennial of the National Council of Teachers of English seems an appropriate forum to reflect on our decade of work with the CCCC SIG on Composition–English Education Connections. As NCTE prepares to mark its hundred-year anniversary, we celebrate the work the SIG has done and continues to do, sharing knowledge about the teaching and learning of writing among scholars and teachers from multiple disciplines and developmental levels. We also celebrate how the SIG has fostered research partnerships, teaching mentorships, and even friendships through the years, although the chairs or presenters may not have formally planned these relationships. The SIG is a space for scholarly discussions and practical sharings, but it is also a place where people with common goals and visions of the future come together to receive and provide support, encouragement, and perhaps even much needed boosts of confidence, energy, or excitement, which can lag at home amid less collaborative environments.

However, let’s not romanticize our similarities; English educators and compositionists do not always agree, nor do they have to, about the goals and means of teaching writing or writing teachers. After all, they focus on different populations of student writers, and some writing pedagogies must be implemented only when developmentally appropriate. We believe that what both groups must do is continue to communicate, research, debate, share, and eventually enact the resulting better-informed practices in their local contexts and classrooms.
means of teaching writing or writing teachers. After all, they focus on different populations of student writers, and some writing pedagogies must be implemented only when developmentally appropriate. We believe that what both groups must do is continue to communicate, research, debate, share, and eventually enact the resulting better-informed practices in their local contexts and classrooms. The CCCC SIG provides a space for such critical conversations to build and grow.

Works Cited


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