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Teachers are nonetheless required to assess students' writing ability through timed or standardized writing tests, often about topics they know little about, without time for research, planning, or revision, or without any familiarity with the discourse communities that write about these topics. The end result is that students are taught the opposite of what we know to be true about writing.

This is a journal devoted to the cross-pollination of ideas between high school and college writing teachers, and the editors have kindly asked me to introduce the inaugural issue. In thinking about what to say, I have found myself revisiting my own experiences with first-year college writers and my conversations with high school teachers. Those experiences and conversations tend to center around the difficulty of writing in new contexts, and the difficulty of teaching students to write—and teaching them knowledge about writing—that will be flexibly useful in new and different contexts. These difficulties have been the focus of nearly all of my research for the past ten plus years (see, for example, Downs and Wardle, Wardle and Roozen, and Wardle "Creative Repurposing," "What is Transfer?" and "Understanding Transfer"), which should make writing this introduction easier. Yet, as any writing teacher knows, these are thorny and complicated topics to address. There is a lot to say—and a lot of misunderstanding about—the matters of knowledge transfer and teaching for such transfer. And sometimes the distance between high school and college teaching feels too great to bridge. So what can I say here that might provide a useful starting point for the conversations this journal hopes to engender? I thought I might start with these questions: What are some of the things that make it hard for students to transfer and usefully engage what they know about writing from high school to college? And what can we do to ease that transition?

When my own students have trouble as beginning college writers, it is often because they are acting from conceptions of writing that simply don't work—that are, in effect, misconceptions about writing. For example, they act out of a belief that "good writing is good writing no matter what" or that "there are certain formulas or rules for writing that always work." They don't state these beliefs explicitly, of course, but we can see those beliefs at work in their behavior. For example, they attempt to put a thesis statement at the end of the

first paragraph, whether that is appropriate or not, or they ask repeatedly how many pages or how many words an assignment should be, or they attempt to write five paragraphs even when they have more (or less) they need to say about the topic at hand. They are often startled to learn that, in fact, what counts as "good writing" depends a great deal on the context, the purpose, the audience, the genre. That there is no one set of rules about writing that will always ensure them success.

Why do so many students come to college with these conceptions about writing? From what I am told by high school teachers, and from what I read in the news and see in legislatures, I think the answer is that students have been implicitly (or explicitly) taught these conceptions because teachers are so often forced to design assignments and curricula that actually undermine students' ability to learn accurate and useful conceptions about writing. For example, we know that good writing depends not just on form but also on content knowledge and context. Form and content in writing are inseparable, as we can see, for example, in research articles in different fields: there, format is tied to the values and norms of each discipline, the literature cited requires the author to know what is current in that discipline, and the citation style and verb tenses reflect disciplinary values (for example, APA highlights year because current work is valued, while MLA highlights the author because the person is more important than the date of publication; sciences tend to use passive voice to demonstrate objectivity) (see Hyland). Teachers are nonetheless required to assess students' writing ability through timed or standardized writing tests, often about topics they know little about, without time for research, planning, or revision, or without any familiarity with the discourse communities that write about these topics. The end result is that students are taught the opposite of what we know to be true about writing. The rules governing what high school teachers must teach, and how they must teach it, seem to become more stringent every year. The desire of governmental officials to legislate and moderate something they know little to nothing about results in our inability to act out of our own research-based knowledge about what writing is, how writing works, and how to effectively teach writing so that students can effectively use what they know across widely varied contexts.

In an ideal world, faculty at all levels who teach writing should be able to consider what research says, and to act from it in flexible ways appropriate to the needs of the students in front of them. In other words, writing faculty must be able to act out of what Meyer and Land call "threshold concepts"—concepts that are critical for epistemological participation in communities of practice—critical for seeing and understanding the work and knowledge of the community, and for participating in that work. These are concepts that research and practice have demonstrated to be credible, and which are understood by nearly every practicing member of that discipline. These are concepts that must be understood by learners and newcomers who want to learn more; in fact, the threshold concepts must be learned if the learner wants to move forward in understanding and practice in that area. Yet threshold concepts are difficult to

learn—"troublesome," Meyer and Land call them—and often conflict with common knowledge about a topic. This last point, that threshold concepts about a particular area of study are often misunderstood by those outside that field, goes a long way toward explaining why stakeholders so often impose misguided rules and procedures that writing teachers (and others) must implement. These stakeholders aren't necessarily acting out of malice or for nefarious purposes, but they are acting out of deep misconceptions about what writing is and how people learn to write. Their misconceptions, then, force teachers to act in ways that deeply confuse students. While teachers might say, for example, that good writing is rhetorical and context-dependent, they may still be forced to give timed writing tests and grade them using "objective" rubrics. Even when they are lucky enough not to have to give such tests, students are still evaluated based on such writing when they take the SAT and ACT.

Misconceptions about writing are widespread in our culture. Consider some of the threshold concepts about writing that scholars in Writing Studies recently identified for a forthcoming book project that Linda Adler-Kassner and I edited:

- Writing is a knowledge-making activity.
- Writing expresses and shares meaning that is also constructed and reconstructed by the readers.
- Writing mediates activity.
- Failure can be an important part of writing development.□

Each of these threshold concepts, and many of the others identified in the book, are easily accepted by most writing faculty, but widely misunderstood by those who do not study, teach, or think about writing for a living. Writing is commonly understood as simply a means of recording already-existing thoughts, or as a means of sharing exactly what one means as precisely as possible with someone else who must simply read it to comprehend what the writer was communicating. Writing for school settings at all levels is often not seen as mediating any activities except evaluation, and is not seen as a powerful tool that can accomplish work in the world. And the assessment mechanisms and the focus on achieving scores and punishing teachers whose students don't achieve those scores leave no room for the reality that learning is messy and difficult, and that failure can be an important part of learning.

My point, then, is that people's misconceptions about writing have powerful and negative consequences for us and for our students. When legislators and test-creators and board members mandate our practices based on their misconceptions about writing, instead of allowing us to create practices that emerge from research-based threshold concepts about writing, we all suffer. Because colleges and universities have so far been less impacted by these mandates than high schools, students tend to be exposed to the misconceptions in high school practices, and then find themselves deeply confused and

disoriented when their college teachers point out that there is no one set of rules, that failure is ok, that they should write to learn, and that no matter how clear they try to be, readers construct their own meanings. The students are even more confused if college teachers don't explicitly point these things out but simply expect students to know them, and mark them down when they don't.

We could live in a different kind of world. We could live in a world where expert writing faculty at all levels consciously use research-based threshold concepts about writing to inform their classroom practices. In other words, we could live in a world where writing teachers can act as experts, out of what their field has learned over the last fifty years. This would not mean we weren't accountable. To the contrary, it would mean that we would be held accountable for teaching transferable, flexible knowledge about writing (heuristics and conceptions about writing that work across situations, rather than rigid rules; see Rose) that acted directly out of the research of the field, and that we were accountable for keeping up with that research and making sure that our practices kept up with it. It would mean that we were responsible for designing assessments that also emerged from the research about writing assessment, and that we would share those assessment results with our stakeholders. It would mean that we were responsible and accountable, but that as experts, we would create the rules of the game.

What is keeping us from living in that world? One major impediment seems to be that very few people outside the field of Writing Studies know it exists, understand that writing is something that can be studied, or believe that there is research-based knowledge about writing. In other words, we have a serious communication and credibility gap. The first threshold concept in the forthcoming book with Linda Adler-Kassner is this: writing is an activity and a subject of study. And this central threshold concept is one that we must help stakeholders understand. If they do not understand that writing is not just something you do but also something we study, they cannot be made to understand that there are research-based principles about writing upon which writing instruction should be based.

To be able to teach successfully out of the research-based knowledge about writing, we have to become better advocates for our own research and be better able to fully explain our research to stakeholders, those who make laws and curricula and rules for our teaching.

How would we go about doing this? One answer is age-old: solidarity. High school and college writing teachers must find ways to bridge the gaps between us and get together to act in solidarity. College faculty cannot wish and assume that the misguided rules that so govern the lives of high school teachers won't soon come knocking on our doors—or haven't already been knocking on our doors and inviting themselves into our classrooms. But even if we were lucky enough to find ways to avoid those mandates, we are still impacted by them when students come to us from high school. Can we start by finding simple ways to get together? Could we, perhaps, call high school or college writing teachers we know and suggest getting together one Saturday morning a

month to read some research, determine which research-based findings we want to act out of but which are contraindicated by current legislative mandates, and then start thinking of ways to get out the message? Perhaps we could work together to write "briefs" or "talking points" about research findings and best practices to help guide how we talk to colleagues and stakeholders about what we do or what we want to do. We could use those briefs to write letters to the editor.

Maybe we want to be more radical in how we share our message. I recently taught a class called Rhetoric and Civic Engagement for undergraduates, and in that class we talked about ways to get our messages across when we wanted to promote change. One resource we used to help think about how to do this was Explore Beautiful Trouble, "an international network of artist-activist trainers whose mission is to make grassroots movements more creative and more effective" (beautifultrouble.org). I encouraged the students in that class to think outside the box about strategies for conveying their messages for their civic engagement campaigns, and their campaigns included human banners to raise awareness about gun laws on Florida college campuses, games in the quad to help students understand the perils of second hand smoke, and even a photo campaign in the spirit of Humans of New York (humansofnewyork.com) to humanize and change perceptions about the homeless in downtown Orlando. A pair of students was frustrated with lawmakers' view of education as rigid and test-driven. In response, they created an innovative print campaign of posters with the tagline, "Your Child is More Than a Test Score." Each poster illustrated some creative aspect of education along with a child engaging in that activity (playing music, drawing, and so on). Explore Beautiful Trouble suggests many other strategies and tactics for getting messages across, and I see no reason why we, trained writers and rhetors, can't use them to share our own messages about what writing is and how it should be taught effectively. In fact, inviting our students to join us as we create and implement these campaigns—students who have suffered through the misguided mandates created by stakeholders who misunderstand how writing works—can further bolster our efforts. I'd like to challenge readers to create such campaigns, along with their students, and share them in future issues of *crosspol*.

So, in sum: why are transitions hard for writers? There are many reasons, including the simple but powerful one that we are never finished learning how to write, because good writing depends on context. But there are things we can do to ease the transitions, and one of them is work to ensure that teachers at all levels have agency to teach out of their own expertise and the research of their field, and have the support they need to build and practice that expertise, in order to ensure that students are being taught accurate conceptions about writing that will serve them well across varied contexts. To do that, we must find ways to bridge the gaps that keep us, high school and college writing teachers, apart. Together we must find ways to share and agree on what we know about writing, and educate our stakeholders about that knowledge in

persuasive ways. Together, if we can find the power and authority to teach from what we know, we can find ways to ease the transitions that students will encounter. We cannot make transitions easy, because learning and change are always hard. But we can work together to ensure that the transitions are hard in productive and meaningful ways.

This last point, that threshold concepts about a particular area of study are often misunderstood by those outside that field, goes a long way toward explaining why stakeholders so often impose misguided rules and procedures that writing teachers (and others) must implement. These stakeholders aren't necessarily acting out of malice or for nefarious purposes, but they are acting out of deep misconceptions about what writing is and how people learn to write.
