

PRESERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY COMPOSITION IN  
FLUX: IMPLEMENTING PRINCIPLES OF WRITING ACROSS SITES OF  
LEARNING

by

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Preservice English Teachers and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Composition in Flux: Implementing  
Principles of Writing Across Sites of Learning

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## **DEDICATION**

For Miles, my best motivation and constant companion during the writing phase of this dissertation. It wouldn't have been the same without you reminding me every day that I was on a deadline to finish this project. The work I do is for your generation, to make sure you and your teachers are always learning, as the ways we write and communicate change so rapidly. Your future is bright, and I look forward to discovering this world again as it is illuminated through your eyes. Thank you for making me a PhD mama.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **PRESERVICE TEACHERS AND 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY WRITING IN FLUX: IMPLEMENTING PRINCIPLES OF WRITING ACROSS SITES OF LEARNING**

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This study considers how English educators can catalyze learning within secondary English education programs to help preservice teachers define and re-examine what counts as writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to apply this knowledge in their future school contexts. In it, I explore how preservice teachers develop, articulate, and enact conceptual frameworks of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and teaching as they transition from university courses into secondary English classrooms. My research offers critical perspectives to English educators about how they can support preservice teachers in developing reflective mindsets and theoretical knowledge that will enable them to enact digital and multimodal writing within a range of contexts in lasting, evolving, and rhetorically transformative—not just technical and transactional—ways.

The dissertation comprises three article-length manuscripts which explore common themes of learning transfer, metacognition, and reflective practice to support preservice teachers in developing and implementing knowledge about 21<sup>st</sup> century

writing principles in context. The research explores preservice teacher learning across a range of sites and through methodologies including an analysis of preservice teachers in an English methods class (Chapter 2), a collective case study of four student teachers (Chapter 3), and a single case study of one participant in her first teaching site (Chapter 4). Central to my approach was situating participants as co-learners and co-researchers, acknowledging the study itself as an intervention worthy of investigation.

Taken together, the three chapters point to limited metacognitive interventions as a tool for preservice teachers to name what they know and reflect on their experiences, leading them to arrive at nuanced and adaptable understandings of and confidence in implementing 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and teaching practices. I offer suggestions to English educators about how to integrate structures that will help preservice teachers become both flexible and deliberate in enacting, advancing, and advocating for relevant and evolving 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In a 2004 address to college composition instructors, Kathleen Blake Yancey declared of the kinds of writing that have emerged and are emerging in academic, social, and public spaces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: “New composition may require a new site for learning for all of us” (p. 320). This challenge applies to English educators as well as the preservice teachers we teach; Yancey’s charge is that, as we identify and engage with what she calls “new composition,” there emerges a new kind of exigency—and a new site—for us to revisit our long-held beliefs about the nature and scope of writing. This study considers what “sites” of learning, particularly in English education programs, are relevant spaces for learning, defining, and re-examining what counts as writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and what that means for school-based writing pedagogy. My research explores how preservice English teachers develop frameworks for understanding, practicing, and teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing through coursework and student teaching. Through these teaching and learning contexts, I inquire, along with the preservice teachers themselves, how teacher education experiences can help them develop and enact future-oriented conceptions and values as they move between university coursework and school-based teaching. Ultimately, the study not only engages preservice teachers as co-researchers, but it also positions them as advocates for the pedagogies that reflect future-oriented mindsets about writing instruction.

While English educators are not directly positioned to address the infrastructural and institutional challenges preservice teachers will face when they enter the field, this study points to ways we can support and prepare them to anticipate, evaluate, and acknowledge the ways that these learning ecologies influence and shape how they teach and how their students learn. DeVoss, Cushman and Grabill (2005) advocated for what they call an “infrastructural approach” that sheds light on the patterns that affect the way teachers teach writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When teachers—and by extension, their students—engage in writing without awareness of new media affordances, they “will fail to anticipate and actively participate in the emergence of such infrastructures, thereby limiting—rhetorically, technically, institutionally—what is possible for our students to write and learn” (DeVoss et al., 2005, p. 37). Therefore, in an effort to help our future teachers be active participants in the ongoing construction of knowledge and practices of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, it is important that we help them assume roles as agents of change.

This study explores how English educators can activate preservice teachers’ metacognition and reflection-on-practice across sites of learning to help them develop mindsets about 21<sup>st</sup> century written texts and genres, related writing processes, and relevant approaches to writing instruction that are nuanced, flexible, and evolving. As the next generation of English teachers becomes ready to enact—and advocate for—pedagogies that reflect new possibilities and expand the range of students’ writing experiences, we can begin to evolve school-based writing instruction to match the writing that will be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## Literature Review

Across the fields of composition, literacy, and education, scholars recognize that digital technologies, multimodal texts, and collaborative learning environments invite new kinds of, purposes of, and strategies for writing and teaching writing in academic spaces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Grabill & Hicks, 2005; New London Group, 1996; Palmeri, 2012; Shipka, 2005; Turner & Hicks, 2012)<sup>1</sup>. Yet research also shows that, among preservice and practicing English teachers, including those who were mostly or even completely educated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century themselves and those who actively engage in digital and multimodal literacies in their own lives, beliefs about how and what kinds of texts students should write in and for school remain mostly limited to academic genres and text and print modes (Caprino, 2015; DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Hundley & Holbrook, 2013; Katić, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Pasternak, 2007; Wierszewski, 2013). This study situates itself at the juncture of these two realities: that writing is quickly evolving, but that teachers' mindsets and practices are slow to change.

For nearly two decades, researchers have studied the disconnect between evolving theories of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the practices enacted within writing classrooms

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars of writing, technology, and education have used terms such as *multiliteracies*, *multimodal* and *multimedia composition*, *visual literacy*, *digital literacy*, *media literacy*, *digital rhetoric*, and *techno-literacies* in defining and expanding theories of literacy and the accompanying digital and social practices and pedagogies. While many of these terms overlap and are sometimes even used interchangeably with each other, they each have their own histories, theories, and related practices. At the risk of oversimplifying the nuances between terms or ignoring how they respond to and contend with one another, I have chosen the term *21<sup>st</sup> century writing* because of its prevalence in discussions related to literacy education and practices, and because it includes aspects of visual and digital literacies and multimodal composition.

at all academic levels. Scholars have explored a range of likely influences contributing to this theory-practice divide, including standardized tests, narrowing curricula, and institutional pressures that focus on technology implementation but not new contexts and rhetorical purposes for writing (Braun, 2013; Brooke, 2013, and others). As an English educator, I am most interested in understanding how preservice teacher education can position prospective English teachers to be deliberate in considering and enacting flexible writing pedagogies as they transition from the university setting into classroom teaching contexts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is from this lens that I frame my study across four connected threads of research in composition and teacher education.

First, I explore the ways composition scholars situate 21<sup>st</sup> century writing within a long trajectory of writing evolutions, pointing to specific characteristics that call for teachers and writers to evolve their conceptions of what counts as writing, particularly in formal learning environments. Next, I consider what the literature in teacher education tells us about preservice teachers' identities and beliefs in flux, including related implications for teacher education. I then examine what we know about teacher development across sites of learning, particularly in relation to teacher identity and transfer theory. Finally, I address what the literature suggests about teacher conceptions and values as important indicators of preservice teachers' likelihood to transfer and evolve knowledge from one setting to another.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing in Flux**

What counts as writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, specifically writing in and for academic contexts, continues to evolve and be contested both by researchers and

practitioners of writing. While there is no simple or single definition for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, multimodal, sociocultural, and critical theories point to several features that shape the evolving contexts and unique possibilities afforded by conception of writing in flux. The following are some of the features I draw from the literature in conceiving my working definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing.

21<sup>st</sup> century writing is *digital* (Braun, 2013; Mirra, Morrell, & Filipiak, 2018; Turner & Hicks, 2012). Perhaps among the clearest indicators of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing are digital tools, which are nearly ubiquitous as users compose on smartphones and computers, publish their compositions on Twitter and YouTube, interact with other writers in real time on shared online documents, and work with information in a variety of formats that can be saved to the cloud or shared instantly. Some of the subsequent features described may be made more visible by access to digital composition, though digital composition is not a prerequisite for all forms of and approaches to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing.

21<sup>st</sup> century writing is *participatory* when it reflects learner-driven, rather than teacher-driven interests and engages all participants in various and reciprocal roles (Callahan & King, 2011; Jenkins, 2009). When writers engage in digital spaces or self-selected communities of practice, for example, they may participate as creators, designers, remixers, or publishers. Participatory writing lowers the barriers to artistic expression, civic engagement, and public discourse; it may look like virtual games, collaborative composing, or online discussion threads.

21<sup>st</sup> century writing is *distributed* when composers produce content and make meaning from an “asset perspective” (Carrington & Robinson, 2009), wherein expertise is de-centered among all participants. Writers come together around shared activities, interests, and goals in “affinity spaces” (Howard, 2014) which allow for egalitarian and practice-based learning. Distributed writing may look like social learning, where writers draw on their knowledge about genre (e.g., memes) or language (e.g., slang), and where these forms of writing gain traction in public—and even academic—spaces.

21<sup>st</sup> century writing is *flexible*; as writers respond to changing technology, compositional modes, genres, and delivery systems, they explore constant evolutions and possibilities (Clark, 2010). Moore, et al. (2016), in a study of college writers, found that students compose individually and with friends, family, classmates and colleagues; they compose on their cell phones, on Facebook, on word processing systems, and with pen and paper. We cannot conceptualize 21<sup>st</sup> century writing without, as Clark (2010) stated, “the notion of flux” (p. 28).

21<sup>st</sup> century writing is *multimodal* when it takes into account all available resources, including images, color, movement, and sound to achieve the intended rhetorical and communicative purposes (New London Group, 1996). Although as 21<sup>st</sup> century writers we interact regularly with multimodality in digital forms—we click on hyperlinks and read news articles with embedded videos, we take photos and then upload them as filtered images to share on Instagram with captions and hashtags—Shipka (2011) was careful to remind us that, even in a digital age, not all multimodal writing must be

digitally-mediated. Multimodal composition can also look like a scrapbook, a music video, or an infographic.

21<sup>st</sup> century writing is *public* (Ito et al., 2013; Lenhart & Madden, 2005) when writers compose for real audiences to whom they publish their writing and elicit authentic responses. As writers consider the public communities with whom they engage on social networking sites, online gaming platforms, and photo sharing collaboratives, for example, they can become more critical and rhetorically dexterous as their writing begins to take shape and influence the world around them.

From the features identified above, we see the ways that conceptions of writing, particularly in academic settings, are in flux: teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century means more than introducing digital tools into the writing classroom such as students submitting essays via Blackboard; it means seeing and using the digital tools as meaningful opportunities to expand writers' awareness of sociocultural and rhetorical choices, such as students composing multimodal blog posts for real audiences or writing collaboratively using Google Docs. A commitment to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing compels writing pedagogies that are democratic and inclusive (Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006), in which writing integrates emergent genres, multiple modes, diverse audiences, and authentic purposes.

However, not all scholars agree that this shift toward "New Literacies" (New London Group, 1996) or the "digital turn" (Mills, 2015) essentially changes our longstanding notions of what composition is or does. Indeed, these scholars believe a renewed attention to multimodal texts and related 21<sup>st</sup> century influences around digital

technologies, genres, audiences, and purposes reaffirms what we have long known and learned about meaningful writing and effective writing instruction (Ball & Charlton, 2015; Gitelman & Pingree, 2004; Ong, 1986; Palmeri, 2012). Whether these understandings are completely new or a part of a long history of writing evolutions, if they require the boundaries of writing to expand—particularly in academic spaces—then we need to evaluate what values and beliefs preservice teachers bring with them, and how their experiences in teacher education programs help them develop pedagogies that eventually enrich student writers’ experiences, skills, practices, and mindsets around composing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Preservice Teachers in Flux**

Preservice teachers, during their teacher education programs and into their early years in the profession, are in a tremendous state of transition. They bring with them their experiences as learners and writers as they transition from methods courses into student teaching. Research on preservice teachers in general points to the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) as a key factor in constructing teachers’ assumptions and beliefs about teaching; indeed, studies have shown that teachers’ own experiences as students have a significant influence on their future teaching practices, sometimes even more than their teacher education programs do (Barnes & Smagorinsky, 2016). Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel (2012) found that the mediums and genres writing teachers use in their classrooms explicitly or implicitly teach students to value those same mediums. This observation is particularly relevant for preservice teachers: those who have had models of

writing with digital and multimodal literacies in school, for example, will be more likely to replicate the use of these tools, genres, and practices in their own writing classrooms.

However, we cannot assume that the new generation of preservice teachers brings with it the kinds of progressive pedagogies that reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century writing theories. Recent studies report a lack of exposure to and confidence in writing with digital technologies and in multimodal genres in school settings and for academic purposes. Hundley and Holbrook (2013), for example, found that preservice teachers reported feeling insecure using different media and genres due to lack of experience and exposure in their own schooling experiences. Still, despite the gap between their formal writing education and their out-of-school writing practices, the upcoming generation of English teachers may be more open to more progressive conceptions of writing pedagogies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even if they haven't yet developed the knowledge or strategies to do implement such conceptions. In their research with preservice English teachers, Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) found that, while new and early-career teachers may not always successfully enact progressive pedagogies, they are more likely to seek to emulate idealistic and progressive notions of teaching than to replicate conservative traditions.

Not only do new teachers' backgrounds as learners affect their future teaching practices, so do their past experiences and personal theories developed as writers. Teachers' writerly identities inform their expectations and assumptions of how writing and learning will take shape in their classrooms (Alsup, 2005; Cremin & Locke, 2016). Since Burnett's (2009) assertion that little research up to that point had explored how preservice teachers' digital literacy practices influenced their beliefs about literacy

education, there have been many studies that have explored preservice teachers as digital writers—both in and out of school—and how these identities play out in their teaching beliefs and practices. Conclusions from these studies remind us that: (1) not all preservice teachers, including digital natives (Prensky, 2001), are aware of their multimodal practices, even if they are active composers in social and digital platforms (Schieble, 2010); (2) even proficient digital and/or multimodal writers need to shift their teaching mindsets to adopt pedagogies that acknowledge the multimodal nature of all texts (Blady, 2013; Boche, 2014; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Kew, Given, & Brass, 2011); and (3) having practice with writing in new modes, especially when paired with meaningful reflection, can positively affect teachers’ perceptions about themselves as writers and the role of digital and multimodal texts in their writing pedagogies (Gachago, Cronje, Ivala, Condry, & Chigona, 2014; Howard, 2014).

In order to provide a model from which new teachers can draw as they develop their own values and conceptions around teaching writing, English educators should thoughtfully ground the writing and learning experiences in their methods courses in ways that challenge preservice teachers to reflect on and develop contemporary and evolving theories and practices to bring into their future classrooms. This study draws from existing research to propose interventions, both in English methods and student teaching contexts, that prompt preservice teachers to reflect on their past identities as writers and learners to proactively shape their conceptions about writing teaching and learning moving forward. The particular interventions—focused on both fostering 21<sup>st</sup> century writing experiences and prompting metacognitive reflection-on-practice—draw



upon and extend research on how preservice teachers learn across sites of learning as well as how they transfer their knowledge from one context to another.

### **Teacher Development Across Sites of Learning**

Gaps in preservice teachers' 21<sup>st</sup> century writing experiences as students have compelled English educators to consider how to integrate multimodal and digital composition assignments as part of methods courses. Studies suggest that embedding transformative learning experiences into preservice methods courses can have an impact on students' attitudes and beliefs about the importance of learning and writing with new literacies in academic spaces (Bishop, 2009; Howard, 2014; Hundley & Holbrook, 2013). What we still do not know, however, is how preservice teachers' experiences in methods courses, where they are engaging primarily as writers and learners, set them up to transfer into classroom contexts, where they are engaging primarily as teachers.

Learning in teacher education programs takes place across various institutional sites, including university-based methods courses and field experiences in secondary schools, usually culminating in an immersive student teaching experience. One premise of teacher education is that the concepts and practices that teachers learn in one site will be applied in a new setting, not only just in student teaching but in future teaching contexts throughout their teaching careers. Moreover, although we know that mindsets and pedagogies do not seamlessly transfer between sites of learning, research in teacher preparation and professional development still often evaluates teachers within one particular site or within one particular moment in time along the learning continuum rather than documenting how their understandings, beliefs, and values shift and evolve as

they test them out in various contexts. This is problematic, as it assumes that beliefs and practices will transfer between sites, though we can't be sure that they always do.

Many studies examine, for example, what preservice teachers know and believe about digital and multimodal writing in the beginning and throughout a teacher education program (Ng, 2012; Turner & Hicks, 2012; Wake & Whittingham, 2013). Some studies focus on how preservice teachers' knowledge and beliefs change as they experience new literacies as students and writers in their teacher education methods courses (Gachago et al., 2014; Howard, 2014; Hundley & Holbrook, 2013). Others examine how school-based observations and student teaching experiences engage preservice teachers in thinking about and implementing the kinds of writing and literacies—and the associated teaching practices—that matter in the 21<sup>st</sup> century writing classroom (Bailey & Van Harken, 2014; Burnett, 2009; Katić, 2008).

By keeping their research limited to a single site within preservice teachers' trajectories, these studies presume that the practices or beliefs teachers enact in one site will transfer to the next; this is a problematic assumption, as we know that different contexts compel different actions and reactions. Particularly since new teachers enter teaching contexts as novices and with limited power, it is not likely that they will seamlessly transfer their transformative beliefs about writing into institutions and settings that may be set up to resist change. This study addresses these research challenges by following preservice teachers across sites of learning—from methods courses into student teaching and eventually into their first full-time teaching contexts—in order to more fully explore the way their beliefs about writing adapt and evolve as they move through sites.

## **Evolutions of Teacher Conceptions and Values**

Because of the ways 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and preservice teachers are both in flux, and taking into account possibilities for preservice teachers' development across various sites of learning, it is important for English educators to help preservice teachers develop an open, responsive, and flexible stance to writing and teaching with new literacies from the very beginning of their teaching careers. Literacy research acknowledges the importance of teachers' emerging and enacted knowledge and beliefs on their classroom practice and professional evolution. Keefe and Copland (2011) argued, "The way educators define literacy shapes their classroom instruction and the literacy opportunities offered to students" (p. 92). This is particularly true when we explore how teachers make use of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing technologies in their classrooms. It is easy to become distracted by what is *visible* in learning environments—the digital tools, for example—and thus draw unfounded conclusions about what is *invisible*—the values, beliefs, and practices that shape learning and writing experiences. Burnett (2009) challenged researchers to go beyond "logging the kinds of texts produced or consumed" in literacy classrooms, but instead to investigate "the values, priorities, purposes, and feelings associated with these texts, and the places, spaces, relationships, interactions, and processes which characterize their use" (p. 116). For this reason, this study was designed to identify and understand preservice teachers' core beliefs, recognizing that knowing how they understand and value frameworks of learning and writing ultimately shapes what they enact in their classrooms.

Attention to mindset as a foundation of teacher development around 21<sup>st</sup> century writing is reflected in Lankshear and Knobel's (2008) landmark piece that highlighted two different mindsets teachers have toward new literacies, and how these mindsets influence their practices. Grabill and Hicks (2005) likewise encouraged teachers to shift from a technical mindset to one that takes into account the inherent rhetorical, cognitive, and social choices writers make. Hundley and Holbrook (2013) and DePalma and Alexander (2015) both concluded that the preservice teachers in their studies compartmentalized the kinds of writing that belong in school and the kinds of writing that exist elsewhere, and that this mindset influenced their views on what writing should be taught in schools, and how. Carrington and Robinson (2009) highlighted the ways in which practicing teachers' perceptions and fears about emerging technologies in the writing classroom impede their ability to implement transformative and progressive 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching practices. Boche (2014), in a study of first year teachers, underscored the continuing importance of knowing how and what teachers believe, claiming that teaching within new multimodal and digital writing contexts requires not just the presence of technology in the writing classroom, but teachers' evolving beliefs and values about writing in the classroom.

Yet teachers may not be aware of the beliefs and values that shape their pedagogical choices, nor can we as English educators make conclusions about the beliefs and values our preservice teachers have simply by watching them or evaluating their practice. It is from this assumption, then, that this study recognizes the usefulness of researching not only teachers' practices, but more importantly, making explicit the

principles and values upon which their practices are based. This is true as we trace their evolution through contexts and identities, and is important particularly to English educators who are looking for ways to activate change and help teachers develop the kinds of mindsets that will enable them to engage in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in rhetorically and pedagogically transformative—not just technical and transactional—ways.

Knowing how new teacher writers think about composition and pedagogy helps us better construct their experiences and support their transitions moving from theory into practice and across contexts by making explicit teachers' experiences, beliefs, stated and enacted values, across their sites of learning and professional practice.

### **Reflection, Metacognition, and Teaching for Transfer**

As English educators consider how to help future teachers develop understandings of and navigate how institutions, identities, and mindsets influence their writing teaching practices, it becomes our mission to teach them in ways that will facilitate thoughtful engagement with and adaptation to future learning and teaching contexts as well as evolving notions of writing throughout their teaching careers. Katić (2008) called this “transformative learning:” as contexts and demands of education, specifically literacy education, continue to change, teachers must be prepared to respond in dynamic and flexible ways. Developing these kinds of lasting mindsets (which scholars often name “habits of mind” or “dispositions”) means considering the ways mindsets are applied in different contexts, and how they evolve over time and between settings.

Education scholars agree that reflection—making sense of past learning and teaching experiences in order to construct new possibilities—is an important part of the

process of preparing teachers for new contexts and developing open stances toward new theories and methods of writing and teaching (Dewey, 1904/1964; Shulman, 1987; Smagorinsky, Shelton, & Moore, 2015). Reflection is often integrated into field experiences, wherein preservice teachers are guided to notice how instruction impacted student learning, how contextual factors impacted the teachers' actions, and how current practices might adapt and evolve to future realities or better integrate learning theories (Zeichner, 1981). Teacher education programs are grounded in reflection—both reflection-in-practice and reflection-on-practice (Schon, 1984)—and they work to help teachers become “reflective practitioners” (Rubin, 1989), develop “pedagogical intelligence” (Rubin, 1989), and “reflect on discourses that underpin classroom activity” (Burnett, 2009, p. 127). Untested, unquestioned, and limiting assumptions and beliefs pose challenges to writing teachers in crossing a threshold into 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy instruction. Indeed, as preservice teachers transition from being writers and students of writing to being teachers of writing, invisible assumptions about writing and pedagogy may stifle their progress. Thus, engaging preservice teachers in reflection on practice, especially as they move from university classrooms to teaching placements, has been one way teacher educators have hoped to disrupt the replication of and entrenchment of traditional mindsets and practices.

Recent scholarship on transfer theory in composition studies offers a useful construct for exploring how to go beyond *reflection*—or to use it more purposefully, perhaps—toward *metacognition* that prompts preservice teachers to: (1) identify the values they bring into their teaching practice as well as (2) put voice to those practices in

ways that help them define their own commitments and values (Beaufort, 2007; Donahue, 2012; Robertson, Taczak, & Yancey, 2012). The *Elon Statement on Writing Transfer* (2013) identifies “metacognitive awareness” as a central enabling practice for writing transfer, including the recommendation to “explicitly model transfer-focused thinking and the application of metacognitive awareness as a conscious and explicit part of a process of learning” (p. 5). Metacognition, according to Nowacek (2011), is likely to facilitate complex integration of theories, practices, and contexts, and could even situate preservice teachers as advocates who may redefine institutional or disciplinary norms.

Nowacek’s notion of “agents of integration” extends Salomon and Perkins’s (1989) conception that transfer requires far more than the application of discrete skills—that it is, instead, an act of “mindful abstraction” that involves “conscious adaptation” of concepts across different situations. This is relevant to questions about how teachers’ learning and beliefs transfer between situated identities as writers, learners, and teachers, and across and between institutional contexts. Nowacek’s (2011) re-framing of transfer defines it as an “act of recontextualization” in which students move their learning back and forth across different contexts within the same period of time, thus becoming “agents” of integration, working to not only make sense of their own abstracted and enacted knowledge, but also to convey those connections more effectively to others.

Because of the multiple identities and contexts teachers navigate during in their teacher education programs and in their early careers, borrowing from transfer theory, particularly Nowacek’s take on simultaneous transfer, helps English educators consider how preservice teachers construct knowledge and transfer it from one setting to another.

Ultimately, if teachers cannot name what they do and why, they will not be able to cross important writing and teaching thresholds; rather, they will find themselves replicating the same practices and beliefs with which they entered the profession.

In light of and informed by the literature reviewed above, I designed this study to go beyond examining one particular intervention at the university level, but rather, to investigate preservice teachers' learning across sites. This approach will extend the research others have done, adding to it a perspective of situatedness across a range of settings, and investigating the ways preservice teachers move between and are influenced by learning and teaching settings as they begin to develop their own working conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. This study will contribute to the field's understanding about how preservice teachers' experiences in different sites complicate, challenge, and inform their emerging notions of the role of digital and multimodal composition in a writing classroom and, ultimately, how their teaching evolves to reflect those beliefs.

### **Research Questions**

The primary research question guiding this study asks: How do preservice English teachers' conceptions and values of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and writing instruction develop and evolve as they move between and across sites of writing, learning, and teaching?

Further, the study explores three related secondary research questions:

1. Questions about learning *transfer*: How do preservice English teachers' conceptions and values about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and writing instruction develop and change as they move between and across various sites of learning? What factors or experiences cause these conceptions and values to evolve, and how so?



2. Questions about *metacognition*: What kinds of experiences challenge preservice English teachers to develop and revise their own conceptions of school-based writing instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? To what extent does preservice English teachers' ability to name what they know contribute to the choices they make in teaching contexts?
3. Questions about *interventions* by English educators: What effects can limited metacognitive intervention have on participants' conceptions and values of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and writing instruction as they transfer between and among sites of learning and identities as writers, teachers, and learners?

### **Methods**

To best determine how preservice teachers' conceptions and values of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing developed and evolved as they shifted between sites of writing, learning, and teaching within the context of the English education program at George Mason University, I designed a qualitative collective case study that began by gathering and analyzing data from one cohort of English education graduate students during the English Teaching Methods I course I co-taught in Fall 2016. I then followed a subset of four preservice teachers into their semester-long student teaching internships in their respective secondary schools in Fall 2017. Because my research questions required understanding how participants experienced writing, learning, and teaching in particular contexts and how they developed and shifted their understandings and values as they moved between sites of learning, my project lent itself well to the thick description and context-based conclusions made possible by a qualitative collective case study approach.

## **Case Study as Methodology**

Research in literacy, composition, and teacher education has long drawn upon case studies as a way to describe complex phenomena and understand how learners develop in particular contexts (Barone, 2011). While some studies have been designed to identify patterns and draw large-scale conclusions about the nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and writing practices through multi-institutional surveys of student writers (e.g., Moore et al., 2016) and teachers (Anderson et al., 2006; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011), the majority of research studies in this area, like this one, are qualitative in nature and demand particular attention to the contextual complexities of the sites where learning and teaching take place. Yin (2013) describes case studies as being most relevant “when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). Outside of the methods course in which I co-taught and during which I collected my first set of data for this study, there is little about preservice teachers’ learning environments or future teaching environments that I as a researcher (or they as teachers) can control. Rather than using an experimental design that would require me to extract phenomena from their contexts, I designed this study to focus on how the contexts themselves contributed to teachers’ development of knowledge and beliefs. The questions I asked demanded the kind of study that allowed me to capitalize on this context and richly describe these experiences through thick description and qualitative means.

The primary limitation of case study research is the inability to draw generalizable conclusions outside of the bounded contexts within which the research takes place.

Research of this nature results in descriptive, rather than inductive, conclusions. Despite this, case study research has been recognized as significant, robust, and useful within the wider research body when researchers: (1) purposefully use multiple cases to demonstrate patterns and consistencies across contexts; (2) collect and report on longitudinal data to describe a phenomenon as it develops over time; and (3) integrate multiple types of data (e.g., interviews, observations, and/or artifacts) to discover “a converging line of inquiry” (Yin, 1994, p. 92) from which to draw conclusions. My study is designed to honor each of these aspects of high-quality case study research: I followed a subset of four preservice teachers over a two-year period from their methods course into their very different student teaching internship contexts, interviewing them at multiple points along that trajectory. Therefore, I have been able to collect a wide range of data (including reflective surveys, course writing assignments, lesson plans, teaching artifacts, and interviews) from which to draw conclusions about patterns across their collective experiences as well as describe unique aspects of their individual experiences.

Rather than aiming for directly generalizable claims, I instead draw on a rich set of qualitative data to develop, complicate, and contribute to existing and emerging theories related to helping preservice teachers develop useful theories and practices around teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a context-based collective case study, this project was designed to help English educators consider ways they might modify approaches to university-based coursework and/or school-based field work to enable their preservice teachers to effectively enact 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies their own future teaching contexts.

## **Research Subjects and Participant Selection**

The subjects of my study included a cohort of 18 preservice teachers in George Mason University's master's degree and teacher licensure program in Secondary English Education. The first phase of the study included all 18 of the graduate students enrolled in the English Teaching Methods I course I co-taught in the fall semester of 2016. This study was approved by the GMU Institutional Review Board, and all 18 students gave me permission to use their coursework, pre- and post-semester surveys, written reflections, and instructor field notes as data for an exploratory phase of the research project grounded in methods-course based pedagogical interventions (featured in Chapter 2).

A subset of four of these preservice teachers became the focus of the second round of the study (featured in Chapter 3). These participants were selected via a recruitment email that was sent in the summer of 2017 to all 11 members of the original cohort who were on track to complete their student teaching during the fall semester of 2017. Because there were so many demographic and contextual factors at play, there was no way for me to accurately identify what might be a "representative sample" of the original 18-student cohort, nor was it my intention to select the case study participants to be representative of the larger group. However, the four participants who responded to my request indicating that they would be interested in continuing the study into their student teaching semesters did reflect a range of ages, professional backgrounds, and student teaching placements that I felt to be useful in drawing relevant connections across a range of preservice teachers' experiences. The data collected from artifacts and

interviews with all four of these case study participants over the course of their student teaching semester informs the findings reported in Chapter 3.

Finally, while conducting interviews for the second phase of the research, I discovered one participant who seemed particularly effective at not only enacting 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in her own classroom, but also advocating for multimodal writing practices with her students and among veteran colleagues in her department. Because I was curious about how and why this particular preservice teacher assumed an agentic stance so early in her career—wondering if her confidence stemmed at all from the interventions I had implemented during the first two phases of the research project—I decided to make her the focus of a more in-depth unique case study (Yin, 2013). My close examination of the longitudinal data collected from this subject during the methods course and her student teaching semester is the focus of Chapter 4.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected across two semesters: during Fall 2016, I collected data from the full cohort of preservice English teachers enrolled in the English Teaching Methods I course. This data were made up primarily of the students' written course reflections, including pre- and post-semester surveys asking them to reflect on what counts as writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see Appendix A for survey protocols). Additional data used to supplement and contextualize their responses included selected students' course assignments and instructor field notes from class sessions. These data sources are explained in further detail in Chapter 2.

The second set of data were gathered during Fall 2017 through a series of five interviews with each of the four case study participants before, during, and after their student teaching semesters. The semi-structured interviews followed a version of a stimulated recall interview (Calderhead, 1981; Henderson & Tallman, 2006; Peterson & Clark, 1978): each interview was paired with and based on an artifact representing the participant at a single point within their teacher preparation program. In each case, the artifact was a writing- or teaching-related product the participant herself created in her role as writer, learner, and/or teacher within a particular site of learning within the English education program (see Table 1 for descriptions of and contexts for each artifact).

**Table 1.** Interview Artifacts

<b>Interview</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Timeline</b>	Aug 2017	Aug/Sept 2017	Sept/Oct 2017	Nov/Dec 2017	Jan 2018
<b>Site of Learning</b>	Methods 1 Course (University)	Methods 1 & Methods 2 Courses (University)	Early Student Teaching: Observations (School)	Student Teaching: Instruction (School)	Post Student Teaching: Reflections
<b>Artifact</b>	“Perspectives on Writing Pecha Kucha” Digital Remix Assignment	Unit and Lesson Plans (culminating assignments for Methods II course)	Classroom Tour Video and Diagram	Unit and/or Lesson Plans and teaching materials	Responses to previous interview questions
<b>Primary Identity in Focus</b>	Writer	Learner	Learner / Teacher	Teacher / Learner	Writer / Teacher

The artifacts were intended to position the participants' responses within a moment in time—and within a site of learning—along their writing/learning/teaching trajectories. The artifacts stood as object representations of the concepts and values we discussed during the interviews and supported my efforts to triangulate and verify the data to draw accurate conclusions based on evidence rather than my own or a participant's speculation (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were structured to help participants begin from a concrete example from which to draw conclusions about what they believed and valued at a point in time, focusing primarily on one identity (writer, learner, and teacher) and one context (university methods courses, secondary school classroom) at a time. Table 1 summarizes the set of interviews, defining the sites of learning, artifacts, and primary identities in focus.

Each interview (see Appendix B for interview protocols) included two components: artifact-based questions and reflection questions. Questions were designed to look back to past sites of learning and project forward to future sites as well, inviting participants to make retrospective and prospective connections between sites of learning and their roles as writers, learners, and teachers. I intentionally engaged the participants in this study as co-constructors of meaning through the interview process, trying to counteract imbalances of power through a collaborative interviewing approach (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Restaino, 2012). Central to the design of the interview protocol was a built-in opportunity for member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Thomas, 2017), wherein participants would revisit their developing responses to the central question—"What are the features and experiences that characterize writing in the

21<sup>st</sup> century?”—during each interview. Including the participants in validating their responses in this way is important for two reasons: (1) it avoids misattributions or misinterpretations of what participants’ values are, and (2) it acts as the key metacognitive intervention to facilitate participants’ awareness of and naming of their own values, which invites the “mindful abstraction” and “conscious adaptation” that Salomon and Perkins’ (1989) claim is necessary for effective transfer between situated sites of learning.

### **Data Analysis**

I designed my data analysis for this study using an inductive approach influenced by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The premise of this approach is that the interview data presented patterns that I was able to form into codes, concepts, categories, and themes from which I was then able to draw conclusions and emergent theories. Rather than approach the data with a preconceived set of categories that was likely to reflect my own biases or assumptions rather than the participants’ own conceptions and values, it was my goal to conduct data analysis through constant comparative approach that visited and revisited the data throughout the process to allow the data direct my conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Built into the process of analyzing data was the opportunity to check participants’ interpretations of the artifact data, to include the participants in the process of theory development, and to use each new set of interview data to respond to and return to the emergent codes and theories that I developed. This process of testing emerging theories—of verifying relationships between concepts—throughout the data collection and analysis process is central to a grounded theory



approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Because the nature of the data analysis for each component of this study varied so widely, I will explain the specifics of each approach in the individual chapters themselves.

### **My Role as Researcher**

I acknowledge that my role as a past and current instructor in the secondary education program in which the research participants were involved was likely to influence both the set of participants willing to participate as well as their interview responses. There is a precedent in research in teacher education that researchers cross these instructor-mentor-researcher boundaries as they work with incoming teachers to the field in these various roles and contexts. As such, when considering research analysis and reporting findings in subsequent chapters, I acknowledge my role and my participation as an instructor, a researcher, and thus, a co-constructor of knowledge and meaning throughout the research process.

In designing this study, I recognized the ways in which the process itself—interviewing participants explicitly about their beliefs and values around 21<sup>st</sup> century writing—was likely to influence their interview responses and call their attention to writing instruction during their student teaching semester. In these ways, the research process itself informed the conclusions of the study. To address this, I intentionally made the role of the intervention one of my central research questions and an underlying component of each chapter of this study rather than considering it a research limitation.

### **The Study as Intervention**

To acknowledge that this research that takes place in a teaching context, and to honor my own dual roles as teacher and researcher in the English education setting, I designed this study not only as an investigation, but also as an intervention. This allowed me to explore how structured opportunities for metacognition and reflection on practice—like the methods course surveys and interviews—supported preservice teachers in developing and enacting flexible yet enduring conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction. My findings show that these approaches informed participants’ transitions into the classroom: the combination of experiencing classroom realities and then reflecting on specific incidents and teaching constraints directed the preservice teachers to develop more complex ways of thinking about 21<sup>st</sup> century theory and pedagogy from the outset of their teaching careers. Because the interviews prompted them to direct their attention beyond just their *actions* in the classroom, focusing them instead toward the developing *beliefs and values* that undergirded those actions, the preservice teachers began to enact the kinds of reflective practices that helped them understand and honor their own teaching values.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation comprises three article-length manuscripts, two of which (Chapters 3 and 4) have been submitted to academic journals, and one of which (Chapter 2) has been published as a chapter in an edited scholarly book. While each chapter reports the findings of one particular subset of the larger study, they work together around the common themes and research approaches outlined in this introduction. They also

represent my own journey as a researcher and a teacher in exploring the central questions that tie them all together. From broad analysis of a whole class of preservice English teachers (Chapter 2) to a more focused analysis of a sub-sample of four participants during student teaching (Chapter 3) to a case study of one participant across sites and over time (Chapter 4), I approach my inquiry from a range of perspectives.

Chapter 2, “Writing in and for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Crossing Digital and Multimodal Thresholds in ELA Methods Courses,” situates my overall research study of preservice teachers’ conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing within the context of the first site of learning and opportunity for intervention for preservice teacher education: the English Teaching Methods course. The chapter analyzes how course modifications intended to raise students’ awareness about digital and multimodal writing also challenged their learning and revealed tensions in the early phases of their English teacher education. It draws upon Adler-Kassner and Wardle’s (2015) notion of “threshold concepts” to suggest ways that methods instructors can help preservice teachers become more explicit about what 21<sup>st</sup> century writing looks like in their writing and teaching lives. The chapter concludes that developing a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset is important for preservice teachers because it will enable them to enter their future teaching contexts with more nuanced understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies. English educators can help preservice teachers adopt this mindset by helping them interrogate familiar practices, move toward a parallel pedagogy, transcend surface approaches, and advocate for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices.

Chapter 3, “Preservice English Teachers’ Evolving Conceptions of Digital and Multimodal Writing,” begins with an exploration of how teachers move from methods

courses into student teaching in ways that catalyze their own theory-building around 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies. In this chapter, I follow four preservice teachers through their student teaching internships to discover how they conceived of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, what tensions were raised, and how teaching challenges throughout the semester shifted their conceptions. This chapter draws upon data from 20 interviews with the four participants to report that preservice teachers in the study all conceptualized 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as digital, multimodal, and student-driven. The data extends prior knowledge by suggesting that limited metacognitive interventions paired with their teaching experiences prompted the preservice teachers to conceptualize and articulate complex understandings of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, taking into account both rhetorical and sociocultural implications and possibilities. The chapter concludes that metacognition gives new teachers opportunities to name what they know and may lead them to better awareness and thus alignment of beliefs with practices.

Finally, in Chapter 4, “Fostering Preservice Teacher Agency in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing Instruction,” I apply Nowacek’s (2011) notion of “agents of integration” to English teacher education as a way to examine how one preservice teacher transferred her understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing between contexts as a way to assume agency in her earliest teaching site. By examining and reconstructing her developing discourses around her own identity, beliefs, and teaching contexts, the single case study participant was able to use her knowledge to implement writing instruction in transformative ways in her own classroom and also advocate for these practices with her colleagues. Findings indicate that regular interviews during student teaching prompted the preservice teacher to

construct narratives about herself, her beliefs, and her teaching context in ways that catalyzed her agency to enact 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies: in planning for instruction, framing learning with her students, and negotiating with her colleagues.

Taken together, the three articles included in this dissertation investigate how various contexts shape and redefine participants' understanding of and engagement with 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and writing pedagogy. It is my hope that, with a much richer sense of how preservice teachers experience and develop their sets of beliefs and value systems in the formative years of learning to teach and then practicing teaching in real contexts, we will be able to understand how to foster and invite meaningful reflection on practice and beliefs in ways that establish core values that will carry forth into their careers.

The results of this study are intended to support English educators integrate the kinds of experiences— both at the university and in field placements—that will help preservice teachers identify what they know about writing pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and will challenge their conceptions in productive ways. If we hope to prepare the next generation of English teachers to push boundaries and extend learning experiences for their students, to be responsive to the changing conditions of writing in the coming decades, it is essential to begin by asking them to reconsider what should constitute writing in academic spaces and how those definitions will evolve throughout their careers. Only when English educators prompt preservice teachers to reflect on their experiences and practices and to ground their practice in considered beliefs rather than entrenched habits will sustainable change become likely. As English educators situate preservice teachers to enter the field ready to anticipate barriers to new writing

pedagogies and empowered to enact agency to implement these practices despite resistance, they invite new ways of furthering our understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and teaching, which will surely remain in flux through the next 80 years and beyond.

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## **CHAPTER 2: WRITING IN AND FOR THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY: CROSSING DIGITAL AND MULTIMODAL THRESHOLDS IN ELA METHODS COURSES<sup>2</sup>**

“What kinds of writing are important for students to value and have fluency with in their English classes?” This question, posed to preservice teachers during the first week of their first graduate-level English Language Arts (ELA) teaching methods course, generated a set of responses reflecting beginning preservice teachers’ conceptions and values of writing pedagogy. The responses raised concerns about the extent to which preservice teachers’ notions of what counts as writing—or what might count—in their future classrooms reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches. Furthermore, the responses prompted the course instructors to further examine how their ELA methods course challenged and expanded preservice teachers’ mindsets to prepare them to teach writing in a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom. Both the design of the course and the resulting investigation of its impact on preservice teachers’ mindsets set the stage for this study.

This chapter explores how the ELA methods course, designed, in part, to integrate digital and multimodal writing experiences and reflection for preservice teachers, succeeded and struggled to lay a foundation for the next generation of English teachers to

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<sup>2</sup> A version of this chapter was published as a chapter in H. Hallman, K. Pastore-Capuana, & D. Pasternak (Eds.), *Using tension as a resource: New visions in teaching the English language arts methods class*. Rowman and Littlefield (2019).



develop a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset around writing and writing instruction. How did the course help preservice teachers develop “threshold concepts” (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015) related to their understandings of digital and multimodal writing, for example, in ways that could lead them to enact pedagogies in their future classrooms that would honor that knowledge? Based on preservice teachers’ writing and reflections from the course as well as the instructors’ observations, the chapter offers four considerations likely to support preservice teachers in crossing these thresholds ready to teach writing in and for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Data was collected from one semester of an ELA methods course, the first subject-specific course taken by preservice teachers in secondary English education enrolled in the graduate teacher licensure and Master’s of Education program at Eastern Southern University<sup>3</sup>, a large, public university located in the Eastern United States. The students in the program—and in this course, specifically—reflected a broad range of academic backgrounds, professional work experiences, and ages. Some had recently completed their undergraduate degrees, while others had returned to graduate school after stretches of time devoted to schooling, careers, and family.

Despite their varied backgrounds, the preservice teachers’ responses to the question about the kinds of writing experiences students should have in English class were fairly consistent and not altogether surprising. Susan wrote, for example, “Students should be able to write well-crafted responses, essays, and letters.” Kaitlin focused on narrative, descriptive, and persuasive modes. Carlos discussed grammar, sentence

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<sup>3</sup> The name of the institution and all names of pre-service teachers in this chapter are pseudonyms.

structure, and form. None of the preservice teachers in the class explicitly mentioned digital genres, visual modes, writing with technology, public audiences, or collaboration—many of the aspects that characterize writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—as being important aspects of writing instruction. Instead, across a range of ages and professional and academic experiences, the preservice teachers’ initial responses reflected the kinds of text-based academic genres, modes, and writing experiences that secondary school English courses privilege as influenced by national and state curricular standards and the tests that measure them (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Graham, Capizzi, Harris, Hebert, & Morphy, 2014)

Not until they responded to further questions explicitly asking about writing in personal and professional contexts and about the role of technology in writing did any of the preservice teachers name writing features, experiences, or processes specific to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing such as writing in digital or visual genres or for online publication to public audiences. What was lacking in the preservice teachers’ initial responses prompted the two instructors to reconsider their assumptions about how 21<sup>st</sup> century preservice teachers bring their experiences as writers into their conceptions about teaching writing in and for school.

The preservice teachers’ responses to the exercise asking them to name what matters in writing instruction raise two important questions for English educators thinking about preparing the next generation of English teachers: What do we know about the way incoming teachers to the profession conceive of formal writing instruction? How should

that understanding frame the way we approach teaching ELA methods courses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

English educators can design their methods courses to prepare preservice teachers to become facilitators who encourage—or gatekeepers who limit—writing pedagogies that truly embody the affordances and possibilities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All teachers fall somewhere along the spectrum between integrating or disregarding new approaches to writing pedagogy, and their stances are likely to shift depending on context (Braun, 2013; Johnson, 2016; Mills, 2015), so prompting preservice teachers to consider their stance and how it informs their teaching while nudging them toward a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset is critical to influencing their future choices as writing teachers. One way for English educators to update entrenched academic patterns is to integrate opportunities for preservice teachers to both practice writing in 21<sup>st</sup> century genres and mediums and also reflect on how such practices shift their conceptions of teaching and advocating for 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies. Doing so enables English educators to take deliberate steps to help preservice teachers develop the kinds of conceptions and values they bring with them as they prepare to cross the threshold into becoming a 21<sup>st</sup> century English teacher.

### **Preservice Teachers and Beliefs about Classroom Writing Instruction**

Many writing teachers already embrace new methods and approaches to teaching writing (Danielle Nicole DeVoss & Hicks, 2010; Hicks & Turner, 2013); however, current research still shows that when it comes to digital and multimodal writing, old mindsets, old content, and old pedagogies still persist (Caprino, 2015; Hicks, Young, Kajder, & Hunt, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008), particularly when it comes to

classroom practices. In studies of secondary school writing instruction across the United States, Applebee and Langer (2011) and Graham, et al. (2014) found, for example, that digital technology is most often used for typing and editing print-based essays, and that writing assignments are mostly designed to be read and evaluated by the teacher. These approaches to classroom writing instruction do not integrate the expanded rhetorical and technological features made possible by the kinds of texts students and teachers read and engage with outside of formal school contexts, including texts that include hyperlinks, interactive components, images and video, and are written for feedback from public and global audiences.

Particularly in light of institutional traditions and curricular structures that keep boundaries around writing instruction fairly limited, expanding the notion of what kinds of writing are valued in formal writing instruction at school is a challenge for preservice teachers who are just entering the field and expected to integrate well into pre-existing teaching contexts. But the contexts themselves are not the only barrier to extending boundaries of school-based writing instruction; preservice teachers' own conceptions about writing and writing pedagogy are also worth investigating. Nearly twenty years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it might be tempting to assume both that the upcoming generation of 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers are already proficient digital and multimodal writers, and also that they will know how to enact writing pedagogies to reflect these proficiencies. However, English educators must be careful not to make these assumptions.

Even preservice English teachers for whom digital and multimodal writing are a part of their writing lives are likely to replicate traditional approaches to writing

instruction. Current research calls attention to the ways that even so-called digital natives (Prensky, 2001) are often unaware of the influence of digital technologies and multimodality on their own writing practices, even when they are active composers in social and digital platforms (Boche, 2014; Howard, 2014; Kew et al., 2011; Schieble, 2010). Hundley and Holbrook (2013), for example, in a three-year study of 65 preservice teacher candidates, found that among those who claimed to be digital writers outside of school, many of them “(pedagogically) left their own digital practices at the schoolhouse door” (p. 506). These preservice teachers compartmentalized writing that belongs in school, distinguishing it from the kinds of writing they believed mattered elsewhere. A mindset that separated formal academic writing from public or personal contexts played a part in limiting these teachers’ views on what writing should be taught in schools, and how. Without even being aware of this mindset or its implications, preservice teachers become more likely, then, to replicate approaches to teaching writing that may not fully integrate the affordances and patterns of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mindset for Teaching Writing**

What would a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset for teaching writing entail? Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century includes composing with technology and using digital platforms, of course. But it need not be limited to technological and/or digital forms; 21<sup>st</sup> century writing also features the ways different modes—text, image, video, sound—interact in any medium. In *Literacy Theories for the Digital Age*, Mills (2015) discussed how digital text production, collaborative writing, multimodality, and virtual communities change the way writers think about and experience writing. Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be public,

collaborative, and responsive, shifting students' roles from passive consumers to critical composers of the kinds of texts they interact with daily. To make possible writing pedagogies that reflect these ways of thinking, preservice teachers must fully understand the transformative sociocultural and rhetorical principles and possibilities of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing.

The New London Group (1996) proposed that a fundamental purpose of education—particularly writing education—is for all students to “benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life” (p. 60). A conception of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing would consider the kinds of full participation in which student writers might engage—as creators, designers, remixers, publishers—in public and digital spaces with self-selected communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) and participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2009). Creating these environments in a classroom context might prioritize time for “unstructured experimentation with new media, rather than emphasizing direct instruction from authority figures” (Mills, 2015, pp. 30–31). To extend and honor the literacy experiences students bring with them from their out-of-school lives, a 21<sup>st</sup> century writing approach would draw upon distributed expertise in the classroom using an “asset perspective” (Carrington & Robinson, 2009) that reflects the kinds of collaboration and participation made possible by global and networked public writing environments.

In addition to some of the sociocultural considerations around writing communities and writers' experiences and expertise, 21<sup>st</sup> century writing is often associated with multimodal and digital writing processes and products. Drawing upon the

New London Group's (1996) concept of "available design," any composition process should take into account all available resources, including various semiotic systems (e.g. film, photography, gesture). A 21<sup>st</sup> century writing mindset would be particularly mindful of affordances and constraints of new digital and visual options for achieving the writer's intended rhetorical and communicative purposes. For example, 21<sup>st</sup> century writing often engages multimodality in digital forms toward a public audience: we click on hyperlinks and read news articles with embedded videos, we take photos and upload them as filtered images to Instagram and pair them with captions and hashtags, we assess websites' credibility by their design and layout. As access to digital tools has increased in private and school lives, these kinds of multimodal and digital texts become the most visible kinds of writing people think of as specific to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, not all scholars agree that a shift toward "New Literacies" (New London Group, 1996) or the "digital turn" (Mills, 2015) essentially changes our longstanding notions of what composition is or does. Indeed, many argue that attention to multimodal texts and digital technologies, genres, audiences, and purposes is central to what writing teachers have always known about meaningful writing and effective writing instruction (C. E. Ball & Charlton, 2015; Gitelman & Pingree, 2004; Ong, 1986; Palmeri, 2012). Shipka (2011) is careful to remind us that, even in a digital age, not all multimodal writing must be digitally-mediated. In fact, her work with her composition students invites them to evaluate *all* possible modes and mediums of representation, empowering students with the responsibility "to determine the purposes of their work and how best to

achieve them” (p. 87) from the widest array of resources. These scholars believe that multimodal literacy is not new, but that our attention to it is.

Whether we consider writing that is participatory, public, multimodal, and digital to be a new phenomenon or an extension of longstanding writing conceptions, we know that formal writing learning environments are often set up to resist a wider view of what counts as writing. As writing continues to evolve in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even proficient and self-aware digital and multimodal writers need to continuously expand their teaching mindsets to adopt pedagogies that acknowledge shifts in genres, modes, media, and tools of writing. This is particularly true as preservice teachers prepare to teach writing in formal academic settings, where attention to 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches to writing often take a backseat to standardized curriculum and assessments as well as the familiar writing practices of their own schooling experiences. There are many reasons for incongruities between personal writing lives and formal teaching practices; one likely factor is the way that the institutions within which students, including preservice teachers, learn to write reinforce dichotomies between writing for school purposes and writing for personal or public purposes. A 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset blurs the boundaries between writing across purposes.

When preservice teachers enter the profession without recognizing the ways such false conceptual dichotomies influence their own assumptions and practices, they can unknowingly play into replicating the pattern. Disrupting this pattern becomes the charge of English educators working to help preservice teachers enter the field ready to practice



expanded writing pedagogies and engage with the institutions and traditions that may resist them.

### **Threshold Concepts and Writing Pedagogy Foundations**

Composition theorists Adler-Kassner and Wardle's (2015) idea of "threshold concepts" poses a useful theoretical framework for considering how English educators might engage with preservice teachers to understand what shifting toward a 21<sup>st</sup> century writing teaching mindset might look like; it is, therefore, the lens through which this study was examined. Adler-Kassner and Wardle highlight how making knowledge about writing explicit is a first step to changing teaching practices. Naming theories and principles is an important step; however, transcending a threshold also requires that practitioners work with these concepts "in their fullness" (Anson, 2015). Though digital and multimodal writing may be *happening* in methods classes (for example, students may compose in Google Drive or create PowerPoint presentations or submit writing via Blackboard), unless it is, in Anson's words, "fully articulated, active" (p. 216) and plentifully explained, these multimodal happenings may be simply that—happenings—and not transformative experiences likely to frame future writing pedagogies.

As preservice teachers cross their own professional thresholds from writers and students of writing to teachers of writing, their personal theories, grown from their experiences and the "apprenticeship of observation," shape their expectations for writing and learning in their classrooms (Lortie, 1975; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014). Thus, helping preservice teachers uncover deeply-held and often unexamined beliefs about writing and challenging habituated practices must be a

key goal of teaching methods courses. Ultimately, if teachers cannot name what they do and why, they will not be able to cross important writing and teaching thresholds; rather, they will find themselves replicating the same practices and beliefs with which they entered the profession. Because of the ever-shifting nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and because of stubborn institutional practices, prompting preservice teachers to evaluate their current conceptions and envision new possibilities is important to helping them shift their paradigms about writing pedagogy toward a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset.

### **English Teaching Methods I Course**

Because the teacher licensure and Master's of Education program at Eastern Southern University does not include a requirement for students to take a course dedicated to 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning theories (though some students do take an elective course on educational technology), these theories and perspectives must be integrated into the program's core courses, particularly the subject-area teaching methods courses. In order to more explicitly address implications of teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the English Teaching Methods I instructors modified core learning and writing experiences of this course to cultivate opportunities for preservice teachers to practice new forms of digital and multimodal writing, reflect on their evolving beliefs about writing, and articulate their goals and strategies for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century composition in their future classrooms.

Recognizing the ways teachers' own writing experiences shape their teaching beliefs and practices, the course provided preservice teachers many low-stakes opportunities to compose as 21<sup>st</sup> century writers. Table 2 outlines the core course

activities, featuring their digital, multimodal, and collaborative components. These activities ranged from informal, end-of-class writing reflections in a range of multimodal genres (e.g., memes, infographics, blogs) to digital peer collaboration on an extended multi-genre research project to a literacy autobiography and student interview synthesized and remixed from poster to narrative to digital video.

**Table 2.** English Teaching Methods Course Assignments

<b>Major Course Assignment</b>	<b>Digital, Multimodal, and/or Collaborative Writing Component</b>
Demonstration Lesson and Digital Teaching Tool	Students chose unfamiliar digital platforms appropriate for presenting information and generating/guiding class discussion; in groups, students demonstrated use of the platform to discuss course readings. They also provided a one-page overview of the digital platform with ideas for how they and their peers could use it in future classrooms.
Remixed Literacy Autobiography	Students composed using their choice of digital product that combined images, text, and voice/video recording to tell their own literacy autobiography alongside that of an adolescent they interviewed for the project. The project took place in three phases: first, visual; second, text; and third, a digital multimedia presentation including a range of text, image, audio, and video.
Multi-genre Research Project	Students selected genres through which they depicted their chosen research topics; digital genres were optional, though all students were required to conduct a digital peer review (via Google Docs, Skype, FaceTime, etc.) and complete a reflection on their experiences.
Daily Genre Study Write-Outs	Students wrote low-stakes end-of-class reflections on class readings and discussion topics in a variety of new and familiar “real world” genres, including digital and multimodal genres such as infographics, memes, tweets, and Google Form surveys.
Lesson Plan and Analysis	Students selected lesson plan topics, learning activities, and assessments that related to their multi-genre research projects. Digital, multimodal, and/or collaborative writing components were not a requirement of this assignment, though many students included them.

In addition to the major course assignments listed in Table 2—which might simply have become more writing “happenings”—regular reflective responses and in-class activities invited students to interrogate their own assumptions about teaching writing from a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective. Students completed open-ended surveys at the beginning and end of the course to articulate their beliefs about writing instruction and examine how their views changed throughout the course. Class discussions about these topics and individual writing conferences also provided ongoing reflection and intervention opportunities. The intention was to encourage preservice teachers to consider the kinds of texts—visual, multimodal, digital—and the kinds of writing experiences—public, collaborative, and responsive—that that could count as writing in a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom, to make explicit the ways that their own experiences shape these conceptions, and to prepare them to articulate their stances in new contexts.

### **Considerations for Developing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mindset**

Preservice teachers’ reflective responses on the pre- and post-course surveys suggested that their conceptions of school-based writing pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century evolved over the course of the semester. Students at the beginning of the course named only traditional academic modes (e.g., expressive, expository, persuasive) and genres (e.g., research paper, personal narrative, poetry) as important to writing instruction, but in the post-course surveys, nearly every student’s response also identified multimodal, multimedia, digital, public, and/or collaborative writing experiences as important.

Students at the end of the course were also more likely to describe writing tasks and experiences within their rhetorical contexts: they acknowledged professional or

public audiences beyond the classroom teacher (e.g., readers of workplace correspondence, social media, or blogs) and emphasized the importance of flexible and context-based, rather than teacher-driven, forms of writing. On the whole, their responses reflected a much more varied and flexible approach to school writing assignments than at the beginning of the semester. This attention to 21<sup>st</sup> century concepts in their frameworks about writing instruction were a likely result of explicit attention to practicing and reflecting upon these kinds of writing in the course learning activities.

Based upon their experiences and reflections, it could be logical to conclude that the course had, indeed, transformed the preservice teachers' conceptions toward a more comprehensive view of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps it did. However, a more important question persisted about if and how these conceptions would sustain beyond the methods course itself: Would the preservice teachers apply their knowledge to enact 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies in their classrooms? Would they successfully advocate for these practices and push back against curricular norms and traditions that reflected a more limiting view? Were there ways in which the methods course had—or could have—given them the framework and experiences to truly cross the threshold toward 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogy in practice?

Reflecting on both the successes and the challenges of the course, particularly the moments when disconnects emerged and tensions arose, four important considerations emerge for how English teaching methods courses might more intentionally support preservice teachers develop conceptions about writing that would help them enact 21<sup>st</sup> century mindsets as they cross a threshold from learning in university courses to teaching

in secondary school ELA classrooms. Results from this study suggest that developing a sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> mindset about writing requires the following four key moves: interrogating familiar practices, moving toward an integrated pedagogy, transcending surface approaches, and advocating for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices.

### **Interrogating Familiar Practices**

One challenge arose in the course when the preservice teachers strained against the notion that 21<sup>st</sup> century writing could be valid and valued in academic spaces. This assumption, often implicit, became most evident when they shifted from thinking of themselves as writers to thinking of themselves as teachers of writing. For example, for a first draft of her writing-based lesson plan, Kaitlin designed a teacher-delivered PowerPoint presentation on the “hamburger method” of writing a five-paragraph essay, including directions on crafting an introduction, a thesis statement, three supporting reasons with evidence, and a conclusion. In her lesson, students would take notes on the presentation then compose a structured writing assignment.

Despite the course instructors’ intention to problematize such standardized, decontextualized, and inauthentic approaches to writing in the methods course, Kaitlin’s lesson plan draft reflected a troubling disconnect: when she imagined herself in a teaching role, she reverted to familiar forms and familiar pedagogies. In a writing conference, her course asked her to explain where the idea for the PowerPoint presentation came from. Kaitlin noted that it mirrored how she had learned to write in high school. Her response to this external interrogation pointed to how deeply ingrained

her own schooling experiences were and how profoundly they influenced her view of academic writing instruction.

The instructor conference prompted a discussion about what other ways of learning and what new forms of writing could be more relevant in accomplishing the learning goals Kaitlin had set for her students. As she began to internalize the interrogation, she considered how the multimodal literacy autobiography she had composed earlier in the course—particularly the remixing process she used to compose it in visual, textual, digital, and multimodal layers—could be a new model for what teaching writing could look like. Kaitlin’s revised lesson plan included gestures toward her developing 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset: instead of writing for a teacher audience in a predetermined essay form, students would write for a public audience and consider the form best suited for that. Her end-of-semester reflection also indicated her evolving thinking about writing genres as well as her uptake of the practice of interrogating her own assumptions. She wrote, “I didn’t consider that things such as tweets, memes, and statuses could be considered as ‘writing.’ This opens up . . . the way our students engage with texts.”

Indeed, “opening up” Kaitlin’s way of thinking about teaching writing was a necessary intervention to shifting her mindset. By the end of the course, she began to articulate a broader concept of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing options, recognizing more explicitly how choices about genre and audience inform how she would approach designing writing tasks for students and engaging with them as writers. No longer was her model of writing instruction limited to the structures that had been ingrained in her as a student, but instead

it included options such as digital texts (tweets) and visual texts (memes) written for public audiences. When preservice teachers' commitments to writing pedagogies draw only upon what they remember from their own writing classes, they are likely to exclude the kinds of texts that more fully represent 21<sup>st</sup> century genres, forms, and purposes. English educators may counteract these tendencies in ELA methods courses by offering preservice teachers the kinds of learning and writing experiences that reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies, giving them new models for formal classroom writing. Exploring how and if expanded 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices are valid in academic spaces is a first step to supporting preservice teachers in reframing—and perhaps expanding—their own internalized beliefs.

### **Moving Toward an Integrated Pedagogy**

Introducing expanded ways of thinking about writing can have the unintended consequence of creating a false dichotomy that pits so-called “new” and “old” writing against each other. This is made more challenging because commonly-used terms like “21<sup>st</sup> century writing” and “New Literacies” themselves imply a break from something old and a replacement with something new. In order to challenge limited—and limiting—views of writing based on false binaries, methods instructors need to help preservice teachers recognize the ways digital and multimodal writing are already constitutive components of composition writ large. A perception that the writing most relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is somehow wholly different from or at odds with so-called “traditional writing” may lead teachers to falsely believe that they must choose one or the other, that



teaching web-based writing, for example, comes at the expense of teaching the argument essay.

Palmeri (2012) eschewed “the common tendency to position new technologies as *either* inherently beneficial *or* inherently detrimental for the teaching of writing” arguing that we must instead focus on “the complex and multivalent effects of technologies within particular literacy education contexts” (p. 11). Indeed, crossing the threshold into 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction means understanding how a wider view of composition requires a complex understanding of the choices writers make and the ways in which they respond to authentic exigencies using the fullest range of semiotic resources available to them.

Turner and Hicks (2012) explained that a binary mindset is particularly troublesome for preservice teachers who are developing their teaching frameworks: when they “[see] digital writing as additional, rather than as an essential component of holistic instruction,” it causes them “to draw on a time/cost framework to defend their views that multimodal writing could not, and perhaps should not, be incorporated into their teaching” (p. 70). Conceptions about writing based on this kind of binary mindset can be exacerbated in practice, as time constraints and institutional pressures reiterate such a time/cost framework.

The methods course featured here draws on an approach Leander (2009) called “parallel pedagogy,” in which print and digital compositions exist side by side—sometimes within the same writing assignment and sometimes across the curriculum as a whole. In his conception of this kind of pedagogy, Leander pointed to ways that

instructors design curricula and assignments that help writers explore new rhetorical situations, write for new and public audiences, imagine and create new kinds of products, and re-envision the purposes and objectives of their work using the broadest range of semiotic and communicative affordances available, technological or not. Palmeri (2012) likewise recommended that writing teachers encourage writers to “to discover—to choose—the modalities that best help them convey what they want to communicate” (p. 37), giving them agency rather than limitations in their choices about genre or mode. In what may be more aptly characterized as an integrative, rather than parallel, pedagogy, all writing experiences encourage consideration of any combination of rhetorical and technological considerations, and thus are always essentially 21<sup>st</sup> century in nature.

The first assignment of the methods course, a remixed literacy autobiography, is an example of how integrated pedagogy could look in a writing classroom. The assignment was designed to focus writers’ attention on writing across a range of modes. It required the preservice teachers to evaluate the affordances and possibilities of a range of compositional modes: text, image, sound, and video. First, the preservice teachers composed written reflections of their own past writing experiences. They adapted these reflections into visual representations to share in peer groups. Then, they conducted interviews with youth about their literacy lives, and finally, they remixed their written reflections, visual interpretations, and interview audio recordings into a digital, multimodal product integrating all of the components of the process.

Tensions arose at various points along the way as the preservice teachers wondered if their compositions “looked right,” struggled to use new digital tools, and

worried about how their final products would be assessed. When Rachel brought in her visual draft—a children’s book that she had written and illustrated, rather than the standalone posters that most of her peers brought—she started to hide it, wondering if she had done the assignment wrong. Rachel’s choice to take a risk and opt for a different visual representation than her peers, but one that best conveyed her own story, opened the way for a critical conversation about visual genres and rhetorical possibilities of various approaches.

Rachel’s final multimodal video product did not end up using the storyline approach that her earlier visual draft did, but her understanding of how various kinds of writing interact evoked a more conscious mindset about writing that included the kinds of genres that taken on visual and digital forms. In her reflection, Rachel wrote that multimodal remixing “transforms the material and texts provided to students in a new way. This transformation offers a new perspective, therefore offering a unique understanding of the content.” Another preservice teacher, Dan, wrote his reflection, “playing with modes and media can help destabilize approaches and make [students] reconsider how they go about certain tasks” to create “more meaningful applications.” The destabilization of preconceived approaches that Dan described creating with his students reflects not only how he himself experienced using different modes and media in composing this course assignment, but ultimately how this realization extended to how he envisioned his students making similar leaps in their thinking about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing possibilities. Drawing on his own experience to consider how his shifting mindset would

influence how he teaches his own students is a promising indicator of his developing threshold-crossing beliefs.

Rather than valuing written over visual or digital over print, working toward an integrated pedagogy means combining both “old” and “new” kinds of writing throughout the writing curriculum in meaningful ways while being explicit about those decisions. The redesigned methods course described in this chapter modeled integrated pedagogy across the range of writing tasks and experiences the preservice teachers encountered. Just as importantly, the conversations held alongside these writing experiences made explicit the integrated pedagogy framework to avoid theorizing digital and multimodal writing as essentially different from, replacements for, or worse, threats to traditional school-based writing. Prompting preservice teachers like Rachel and Dan to explicitly name the ways their experiences as multimodal writers extended to how they thought about themselves as future writing teachers sets them up to develop and name threshold concepts around integrated pedagogy to influence their future teaching decisions.

### **Transcending Surface Approaches**

A related challenge to integrating new writing experiences with preservice teachers is the tendency to subordinate writing’s rhetorical and contextual purposes to focus on the digital or technological medium through which it is mediated. It is accepted that literacy and technology have shaped and will continually shape one another (New London Group, 1996; Ong, 1986) but the way writers or teachers approach the digital aspects of writing may belie that understanding.

Some teachers may believe that their writing instruction reflects a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach when they collect student writing via Google Classroom rather than in print copy, for example. They may think that assigning a visual component to a research paper fulfills the expectations of multimodal literacy. However, in these examples, the genres, audiences, and modes of writing do not fully engage the rhetorical contexts or semiotic affordances of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing; they simply use digital technology and images to replicate existing practices. Integrating multimodal and digital texts to the writing curriculum in meaningful ways demands teachers who value both the technical requirements and the rhetorical possibilities of digital and visual literacies (Brooke, 2013; Grabill & Hicks, 2005)

For the “Story of Injustice” assignment, an original narrative that would anchor the preservice teachers’ multi-genre lesson plans, preservice teachers were encouraged to write using the genres or mediums that best represented their stories. Still, most of the preservice teachers’ first drafts were text-only. In a writing conference with Leila about how she might revise her story about a Middle-Eastern girl facing Islamophobia at school, a discussion ensued about how visual modes might change the way a reader might experience the story. Leila surprised even herself when she decided that, while she did not consider herself an artist, she wanted to compose the next version of her story as a graphic novel. It was a risk worth taking, in her mind, as she realized how a visual representation of the main character might elicit more connection and empathy through the reader’s interpretation of the story.

Leila's drawing skills may have dissuaded her from composing with pictures, but prioritizing the rhetorical thinking behind such choices encouraged her to see beyond the possibilities of a text-only version of her story. Leila's experience composing a graphic novel influenced her end-of-course lesson plan design, in which she planned for her future students to read and evaluate the graphic novel *Persepolis*, considering why the story was told in visual form and how the images conveyed the meaning. They would then compose their own graphic novels.

It is important to remember that the mere existence of digital or multimodal composition in methods courses does not serve as evidence of transformed and threshold-crossing teaching practices (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006). Brooke (2013) challenged teachers to avoid an "instrumentalist attitude" that just moving writing into digital spaces will change the way writers compose. Similarly, Grabill and Hicks (2005) encouraged teachers to extend beyond this "fundamental" or "simple" use of technology in the composition classroom to think about *how* these technologies—and any range of modalities—could be used to help writers reframe and rethink what and why they write.

Without considering why or how digital or multimodal writing is included in a methods course and making those reasons explicit to preservice teachers, English educators will miss an opportunity to help them cross the 21<sup>st</sup> century threshold. In the case of this methods course, the instructors were intentional about including the 21<sup>st</sup> century writing components into preservice teachers' writing tasks and experiences; however, it's possible that being more open and explicit about these choices during the course itself would have resulted in more preservice teachers opting for non-text-based

versions of their Stories of Injustice. In Leila's case, an individual conference with her course instructor offered an opportunity to discuss how her story's form could best meet its purpose, leading to a conversation about the role of multimodal texts in writing learning. While for her, this conversation and this writing experience led to multimodal and digital composition considerations in her final lesson plan assignment, many of her peers did not have this opportunity for reflection to prompt them to take similar risks.

### **Advocating for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing Practices**

Finally, as preservice teachers prepare to enter their full-time teaching contexts when they leave the university, they must be prepared to become advocates for the threshold-crossing practices and values they are developing. This means helping them learn to assess infrastructures and institutional expectations, anticipate barriers, identify allies, and take appropriate risks. It is one thing for preservice teachers to practice 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in a university course, but successfully implementing these teaching practices with students requires them to know how and why these practices matter.

To simulate the experience of anticipating opposition and naming and defending 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies, one course session included a structured debate in which preservice teachers assumed the roles of various stakeholders: teacher colleagues, students, parents, and administrators. They discussed how these stakeholders might question or support digital or multimodal writing approaches, and they prepared rationales to address the anticipated concerns using theory- and practice-based language they had learned and practiced so far in the course.

When the classroom debate raised the aforementioned tensions between perceived “old” and “new” literacies in schools, many of the preservice teachers used words like “motivating,” “engaging,” “fun,” and “creative” as they practiced explaining to potential skeptics their reasons for integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in their hypothetical classrooms. For example, in response to an imagined administrator who expressed concerns about student performance on standardized tests, Fiona said, “At the end of the day, don’t we want our students to be super engaged and super excited about learning? If we can do that by adding in different kinds of activities and projects where they can collaborate, what more do you need?” Of course, it is important to consider what kinds of texts and learning activities will engage students. However, framing a teaching rationale in these terms alone raises concern as it carries the risk of sidelining the inherent and necessary rhetorical view of digital and multimodal writing. These kinds of responses may deprioritize attention and commitment to newer ways of teaching writing in contrast to the so-called “real” stuff of the traditional writing classroom: grammar, thesis statements, and other concepts likely to appear on high-stakes exams.

Preservice teachers need to be able to articulate rhetorical, cognitive, and methodological reasons for integrating multiple modes in any writing task. For example, they might highlight the sophisticated writing decisions student writers make as they consider intertextuality when composing a radio documentary (Callahan, 2002) or about public audiences when they publish fan fiction online (Black, 2009). For these kinds of nontraditional texts to gain traction in institutional settings, they must be connected to the existing language describing writing goals that are valued by the institution and curricular



standards by which students—and teachers—are measured. The preservice teachers' participation in the simulated debate revealed that they were still learning to articulate their understanding in ways that would persuade possible future critics. This reflective practice opportunity was an important start.

When teachers ground their pedagogical choices within their knowledge of writing and learning theories, they become powerful in claiming the authority to teach in these ways. When preservice teachers are provided with support to recognize their biases and assumptions, develop integrated theories of learning and writing, and articulate their rationale to various audiences, they will become empowered with tools that prepare them more fully to both understand and implement 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in their future teaching contexts.

### **Further Considerations**

For preservice teachers, engaging with key threshold concepts related to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction means reflecting on and reconfiguring their beliefs and experiences as writers. They need help to become aware of and articulate the social, cognitive, and communicative possibilities made available through new literacies. They must be willing and empowered to challenge existing (often, powerful and imposing) institutions and structures that resist such changes. When English educators ask preservice teachers to shift their paradigms and to pioneer writing instruction in contexts that may be set up to resist these changes, we ask them to develop experiences and enact pedagogies that represent threshold-crossing beliefs about writing.

Teaching this redesigned methods course prompted further questions as to how and to what extent methods courses position preservice teachers to be open to new ways of thinking, writing, and teaching as new genres emerge, as digital technologies change, and as they prepare to move within and between institutions. What would it look like to integrate the four considerations outlined above as a more explicit part of an English methods curriculum, rather than having them surface only as responsive interventions to the misconceptions and tensions that arose? What happens with these realizations once the preservice teachers enter their own classrooms? How might preservice teachers engage with these threshold concepts as they evolve throughout their teaching careers and as 21<sup>st</sup> century writing continues to evolve?

Although English methods instructors are limited to mapping how preservice teachers' beliefs develop within the contexts of the courses they teach, they know that the real test comes when preservice teachers go into classrooms and find their voices in enacting these principles. Johnson's (2016) recent study of 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and writing calls for examining in-service teachers' transitions between university-based learning and classroom teaching more closely in context. This chapter echoes Johnson's call, extending it to include the transitions preservice teachers make as well. Further research examining how teachers' mindsets—particularly their perceptions and actions concerning 21<sup>st</sup> century writing—develop and shift as they move between different sites of teaching and learning will help English educators understand how and to what extent teachers' enacted practices reflect their learning experiences as preservice teachers in English methods courses.

Ultimately, the lessons learned from this English methods course reiterate Graban et al.'s (2013) admonition that it is not the job of English methods instructors to “enculturate preservice teachers to a particular style of teaching (or writing)” (p. 48), but rather to help them develop habits of mind and a theoretical and experiential foundation that will inform their choices in the classroom. Focusing on 21<sup>st</sup> century writing—particularly the rhetorical and social power of 21<sup>st</sup> century genres and approaches—is especially important to the preparation of future English teachers because of the central role these literacies already play in teachers’ and students’ lives, and because of the increasingly dominant presence of digital technologies in schools and expectations of their use in classroom instruction. If preservice teachers do not adopt threshold concepts of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing that to engage these technologies and associated new literacies in transformative ways, it is likely they will continue to replicate the limited and superficial considerations of these pedagogies currently taking place in schools. To expand boundaries of writing instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, methods courses must themselves feature emerging and evolving notions of writing in ways that will best support preservice teachers in likewise embracing and enacting principles as they move into their future roles as teachers.

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## **CHAPTER 3: PRESERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' EVOLVING CONCEPTIONS OF DIGITAL AND MULTIMODAL WRITING<sup>4</sup>**

### **Abstract**

This study used metacognitive interventions throughout four secondary English preservice teachers' (PSTs) semester-long student teaching internships to examine how critical teaching moments shaped their evolving conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. The chapter first describes the participants' collective definitions of features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in the ELA classroom, focusing specifically on how they understood and complicated digital and multimodal composition. It then examines two case studies that demonstrate how PSTs' teaching experiences destabilized, challenged, and contradicted their emerging definitions. Findings suggest that English educators may engage PSTs in conceptualizing nuanced and flexible 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies as they construct field experiences as reflective spaces for learning-through-practice. These interventions will support the next generation of secondary ELA teachers as they redefine how teachers, scholars, and English educators imagine and enact writing instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>4</sup> A version of this chapter was submitted as a journal article to *English Education*.

## **Introduction**

English teaching practices and curricula over the past 20 years have responded to shifts in digital technologies, multimodal composition, and new literacies in ways that have expanded the field's conception of school-based writing and composition pedagogy. These shifts are partly in response to increasing technological availability in classrooms that opens the way for new channels and media for composing and distributing ideas (DeVoss et al., 2005; Kress, 2003; New London Group, 1996; Wysocki, 2004). Central to these discussions have been the ways digital technologies expand the landscape of writing processes and products and how rhetorical and sociocultural theories frame these evolutions (Cope & Kalantzis, 1999; Freire, 1986; Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000; Giroux, 1988; Lankshear, 1993; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995). Current research makes clear that new literacies, including digital and multimodal writing, are integral to the field's conception of the 21<sup>st</sup> century English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, not only in English teaching practice but also in English teacher preparation (Caughlan et al., 2017; Pasternak et al., 2016; Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006; Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). Yet, while learning technologies are popular in the current landscape of educational priorities, teachers have been slower in developing strategies for using digital technology to advance more nuanced and rhetorical understandings of writing and writing instruction.

Scholars in English education have expressed concern about the extent to which preservice and in-service ELA teachers make sense of and integrate 21<sup>st</sup> century writing approaches in their instructional practices. Research identifies gaps between what the

field professes to know and believe about digital and multimodal writing and the practices, values, and beliefs that are enacted in ELA classrooms (Callahan & King, 2011; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; New London Group, 1996; Turner & Hicks, 2012). Some of the challenges researchers have identified include teachers adopting surface approaches to using digital technology in ways that do not substantively evolve writing instruction or students' writing experiences (Applebee & Langer, 2013; Pasternak, Caughlan, Hall, Renzi, & Rush, 2017); sustaining traditional genres and writing approaches at the expense of the kinds of public and multimodal texts students engage with beyond school (Carrington & Robinson, 2009; Kist & Pytash, 2015); and perceiving digital and multimodal writing as a threat to traditional school-based writing (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Leander, 2009; Turner & Hicks, 2012).

Despite what many may assume about how younger teachers entering the profession—who may be considered “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001)—bring these new literacies into the classroom, the research indicates that even the incoming generation of new English teachers are unlikely to transfer their own 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy practices into their classroom teaching (Hundley & Holbrook, 2013). This may be due, in part, to the relatively limited focus on writing pedagogy in most secondary English teacher preparation programs (Caughlan et al., 2017; Smagorinsky, 2010) and the resulting limited opportunities for preservice teachers to develop conceptual frameworks of writing to guide their instruction (Morgan & Pytash, 2014).

In response to these challenges, English teacher preparation programs continue to explore how best to align methods coursework and field experiences to the field's current

understanding of theories and practices around digital literacies, new media literacies, and multimodal writing (Caughlan et al., 2017). Because theories related to 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy and writing pedagogy are constantly in motion (Clark, 2011; Mills, 2015), it is important that teachers develop an open, responsive, and flexible stance to writing and teaching writing. Preservice teachers don't usually transfer rich enough writing knowledge from past experiences to their teaching practices; any presumption that they make such connections does not fully acknowledge this inherent notion of flux and evolution.

Given the challenges of defining 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and the challenges of preparing new teachers for a future yet to be defined, it is critical to understand how best to help preservice teachers not only comprehend the complexities and nuances of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, but also be prepared to implement 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices in transformative and flexible ways. This is particularly important during preservice teachers' transition from their roles as students taking university courses to becoming teachers of writing in secondary English classrooms.

This chapter describes how four preservice teachers conceptualized 21<sup>st</sup> century writing throughout their student teaching internships and how critical teaching moments shaped these conceptions. In their efforts to define 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, the preservice teachers discussed ways that their teaching experiences destabilized, challenged, and contradicted these emerging definitions. Paired with structured reflection, these teaching experiences resulted in the preservice teachers' conceptions of writing becoming more nuanced and reflective of the evolution of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing itself, and helped them

address the “wobble” that all new teachers experience when theories and expectations do not neatly align with teaching realities (Fecho, Graham, & Hudson-Ross, 2005). Their experiences suggest that English educators may engage preservice teachers in conceptualizing 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, not only by modifying or implementing new coursework, but by constructing and supporting field experiences as reflective spaces for learning-through-practice and honoring the teachers’ knowledge generated in these contexts. Indeed, when English educators support teachers’ own in-process reflective practices, they can empower preservice teachers in ways that are not possible in the context of university-based methods courses. Finally, digital and multimodal composition, partly because of their own constant evolution and inherent flux, function as a relevant and timely exigency for helping new teachers establish flexible frameworks to support their conceptual, rhetorical, and pedagogical transitions from university students to becoming reflective and evolving classroom teachers.

## **Literature Review**

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing Frameworks in Flux**

Scholars have pointed to the ways that meaningful integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing requires teachers who engage not only the technical requirements of but also the discipline-specific rhetorical possibilities afforded by digital and multimodal literacies (Brooke, 2013; Grabill & Hicks, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Shipka, 2005). When English educators consider digital technology—the precise hardware and software—as the predominant exigence for reframing literacies, they lose focus on preparing English teachers to respond to multimodal texts, emergent genres, and new approaches to writing.

Attending to the genres and social constructions of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies can be particularly challenging for teachers of writing as they are constantly changing; as such, teachers may choose to focus on the technology rather than the rhetoric (Clark, 2010; Mills, 2015). Because digital technologies and multimodal genres are so quickly evolving and because institutions and curricula try to keep up but do so unevenly, it is important to activate preservice teachers' awareness about the evolution of their theories and rhetorical practices to augment their awareness of changes to tools and software.

Digital and multimodal literacies, also known as New Literacies or 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies, play an important role in advancing critical discussions and literacy research in theory, scholarship, and practice. Because new forms of writing, such as blogs, social media, websites, and video essays, may look different from the kinds of print-based texts that ELA teachers have traditionally considered when thinking about composition, they prompt us to reconsider what writing is and what kinds of writing have a place in academic settings. Even though writing has always been multimodal (Ball & Charlton, 2015), technologies that help writers juxtapose visual, audio, and textual features raise questions and make visible new rhetorical choices related to multimodal aspects of composition that before went unnoticed (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Hundley & Holbrook, 2013; Shipka, 2011). It is also important to note, as Palmeri (2012) and others have warned, that neither writing practices nor pedagogies will shift simply with the introduction of technological or digital tools. Instead, only when ELA teachers learn to view 21<sup>st</sup> century writing opportunities through rhetorical and sociocultural lenses will they invite a more critical and flexible way of thinking about and teaching writing. This is

particularly important as we consider how writing genres and practices of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are constantly in flux and will evolve throughout a teacher's career; helping preservice teachers conceptualize the rhetorical roots of new kinds of writing will prepare them to notice and respond to inevitable evolutions.

### **Evolutions of Teacher Knowledge and Beliefs**

Scholarship in literacy teacher education considers mindset as a foundation of teacher development, acknowledging the impact of prior knowledge and beliefs on teachers' classroom practices and professional evolution (Keefe & Copeland, 2011; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). Research about teacher beliefs demonstrates that the knowledge and experiences teachers bring with them as writers and learners significantly shape their practices and are replicated in their classroom pedagogies, particularly when those assumptions remain unchallenged and/or unexamined (Burnett, 2009; Lortie, 1975; Morgan & Pytash, 2014; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014).

Recent studies have focused specifically on preservice and practicing ELA teachers' perceptions about digital technology in classrooms and their related beliefs about teaching writing, finding that even teachers new to the profession who might be likely to embrace a wider view of literacy are still likely to compartmentalize the writing that belongs in school and the writing that exists elsewhere in students' and in their own lives (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Hundley & Holbrook, 2013). When teachers bring to the classroom limited understanding or fears about emerging technologies, they are less able to successfully implement transformative and progressive 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching practices (Carrington & Robinson, 2009). Effective teaching within new digital contexts

and 21<sup>st</sup> century frameworks requires not only the presence of technology but, as importantly, change in teachers' conceptions and beliefs about rhetorical affordances of these tools. For English educators to shift preservice teachers from a technical mindset, such as one focusing on the digital tools themselves, to one that focuses on the rhetorical, cognitive, and social choices writers make when presented with new composing affordances, they must first guide preservice teachers to make explicit the knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing they bring with them (Grabill & Hicks, 2005). Therefore, English educators are unlikely to draw meaningful conclusions about what preservice teachers understand and believe simply by focusing on their teaching practices—what is *visible* in the classroom—without also understanding the values, beliefs, and conceptions that shape these practices around learning and writing—what is *invisible* (Boche, 2014; Burnett, 2009).

As English educators support preservice teachers in navigating the transitions from student to teacher, it is imperative to know how the concepts and theories we try to instill throughout teacher preparation play out in practice, to identify the challenges, sticking points, and barriers to implementing 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies in context. Ultimately, because new teachers will need to facilitate the shift toward rhetorically- and socioculturally-based writing pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to prepare students effectively, it is important to discover what kinds of experiences will help teachers make this shift. Studying teacher conceptions is a helpful way to understand what is being taken up by new teachers in practice, receive valuable feedback on what kinds of theoretical understandings transfer into classroom pedagogies, and ultimately, rethink



how preservice teachers engage with these theories throughout their teacher education.

Once we know more, English educators will be able to implement what we find out from attending to these conceptions in order to better support preservice teachers who will shape the future of writing pedagogies.

### **Student Teaching as a Transitional Site of Learning**

Student teaching is, for most preservice teachers, their first full-time teaching experience and thus a critical point along their trajectory toward developing and implementing the beliefs that will inform their teaching practices. It is also a complicated and complicating space for preservice teachers as they step into a new identity and role, respond and adapt to a new context, and attend to competing demands imposed upon them both by the university and the school.

In their first real site of teaching, new teachers of writing occupy a “middle space” where they are still both learning about and teaching writing at the same time (Restaino, 2012). Thus, writing teacher educators argue, initial teaching sites are fertile ground for emerging teachers to develop their own inquiry-based conceptual frameworks for what writing is, what writing counts, and what writing experiences are most valid (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Morgan & Pytash, 2014). Because preservice teachers are newcomers both to teaching and to the literacy theories that underscore their classroom practices, student teaching can be a space for them to consider and reflect on how theories and teaching practices inform each other. Their first teaching site is thus a rich context from which to study the ways that preservice teachers construct and complicate

their understandings of composition theory and pedagogy while they navigate dual roles of learner and teacher (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Zeichner, 2010; Hesse, 1993).

Many studies in English education have addressed the learning gains made by preservice teachers about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing during university courses (Hofer & Grandgenett, 2012; Howard, 2014; Hundley & Holbrook, 2013; Katić, 2008; Wake & Whittingham, 2013). However, without the experiential learning that context-based teaching provides, the theories taught within university courses are unlikely to have a significant effect on teachers' actual practices (Vygotsky, 1987; Smagorinsky, 2011; Morgan & Pytash, 2014). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) and Zeichner (2010) challenge the notion that practitioner and academic discourses should be considered separate or competing; they instead advocate for blending field-based learning with scholarly learning in ways that honor teaching contexts as valid spaces for not only applying, but also developing, critiquing, and extending the field's knowledge about both pedagogy and disciplinary frameworks. Further, as Pasternak, et al. (2018) concluded in their recent study of English education programs in the United States, understanding more about how teachers and schools are addressing ELA with technology is necessary to both English educators and preservice teachers interested in how digital tools were being applied in writing instruction in secondary schools. Understanding how teaching contexts and realities align with and respond to evolving trends in writing makes these connections between field experiences and university learning even more important as we continue into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Situating Reflection as Learning

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) provide a useful frame for knowledge that is “acquired through experience and through considered and deliberative reflection about or inquiry into experience” (p. 262): they indicate that this kind of practice-based reflection is at the root of developing teachers who not only *apply* theory to practice or *gain* practical knowledge in the short term, but who actually *act* as knowledge-makers who can respond and adapt to how they understand these principles in action. One of the key dispositions that teacher educators aim to instill in preservice teachers, particularly during field experiences and student teaching, is that of metacognition and reflective practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Pasternak, 2018). Indeed, in their study of ELA methods courses, Caughlan et al. (2017) reported that English educators cite reflection as one of four key purposes of preservice field work, yet how this reflection happens and what it means can vary widely in practice and by program.

Scholars in digital and multimodal composition have likewise made clear that reflective practice is essential to helping 21<sup>st</sup> century writers become more cognizant about the rhetorical and design choices they make as writers (Reiss & Young, 2013; Taczak, 2015; Yancey, 1998). It is not surprising, then, that metacognitive reflection would be an important component of helping writing teachers capture meaningful moments and solidify key understandings as a way to develop and deepen their understandings of both theories and practices related specifically to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices and pedagogies.

As we take into consideration the literature relating to evolutions in writing theories and how, where, and when teachers learn most effectively, it becomes clear that preparing English teachers for the future of teaching writing requires that English educators thoughtfully extend teacher preparation learning into teaching sites to help preservice teachers grapple with and respond to changing realities of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Methods**

### **Research Questions and Overview**

This research study was designed to learn about how preservice teachers' conceptual frameworks of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing are informed by student teaching experiences and to draw upon student teaching as catalyst for this knowledge-making with the goal of enhancing the field's understanding about the next generation of English teachers take up the teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. The study explores two questions: (1) how did preservice teachers conceptualize 21<sup>st</sup> century writing during their internships, and (2) in what ways did their teaching experiences challenge and/or shift their conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and writing instruction?

To answer these questions, I interviewed four preservice English teachers at five points before, during, and after their four-month student teaching internships at the culmination of their graduate-level English education program. Having co-taught all four participants in an English Teaching Methods I course that included a limited focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogy (a description of the course goals, assignments, and outcomes can be found in Jensen, 2019) one year prior to their internships, I had a relationship with

the participants that allowed me to position myself as a mentor as well as a researcher. I designed the study to honor them as co-researchers and co-learners, recognizing that in this “middle space” (Restaino, 2012) we could all make discoveries that would serve each other. I deliberately constructed the interviews themselves as interventions likely to influence participant responses and evolutions throughout the semester; I address this influence later in the chapter as I report and discuss the findings and identify implications for future research.

### **Participants**

The four preservice teachers in this study were all members of one cohort of graduate students in a master’s degree and teaching licensure program in English education at a research university in the eastern United States. The participants represented a range of ages, academic and professional backgrounds, and student teaching placement sites that allowed me to explore both how individual preservice teachers operated within particular teaching contexts as well as how a range of preservice teachers responded across a range of sites.

Margot<sup>5</sup> was a 29-year-old white woman who had returned to the university for her master’s degree in English education after a six-year career in public relations after completing her undergraduate degree in English. In her writing for the methods course and in her interviews, Margot regularly referenced her experiences in the corporate world and what she understood to be her shift from school-based to real-world writing as influences for the values she held about what kind of writing was most important for

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<sup>5</sup> All names of participants and schools are pseudonyms chosen either by the participant or the researcher.

students to learn. Margot secured a full-time, paid, on-the-job internship teaching International Baccalaureate (IB) English 12 and English 11 at Franklin High School, a socioeconomically, linguistically, and ethnically diverse public school; this meant that she would be taking the reins as the teacher of record for five sections of these courses from the first day of the school year, with another teacher in her department serving as her mentor teacher. Franklin High School was one of the district's pilot sites where each student received a school-issued laptop. As such, administration prioritized digitally-mediated learning and expected teachers to integrate technology into their teaching.

Callie was a white woman, 25 years old when she began the English education program, two years after finishing a bachelor's degree in communication studies. Her methods course assignments reflected her vision that writing was most valuable when used as a creative outlet and a means of connecting with others and self-expression, but she also often acknowledged what she considered to be a parallel—and sometimes competing—priority for teaching writing: preparing students for future careers and academic settings. Callie's student teaching internship situated her at Campbell Middle School teaching sixth grade English. Campbell is a small, affluent, and resource-rich public school, much like the schools in the area that Callie herself attended. Part of Callie's internship included collaborating with her mentor teacher and another sixth grade ELA teacher to design a curriculum within the guidelines of the newly-updated IB Middle Years Program (MYP). Campbell also provided school-issued laptops to students, which they used extensively during their classes, but left at school at the end of the school day.

Janine, a 48-year-old white woman, had returned to graduate school 14 years after having completed her undergraduate degree in marketing, having taken time off to raise her two children, the oldest of whom entered high school at the same time Janine began student teaching at a middle school in the same district. In interviews and in her writing throughout the program, Janine often referenced her experiences as a mother of two adolescents as informing her beliefs and values about writing as a way to connect, find humor, share stories, and honor writers' identities in classrooms, social spaces, and within families. Janine's student teaching internship was at Skyview, a public middle school, which she described as overcrowded and socioeconomically diverse. Many of the students in her honors and general education English 7 courses, and particularly those in a remedial academic writing course, were English language learners. Janine's students had limited access to computers, as one laptop cart was shared between all four classrooms in the pod of mobile classrooms where she taught.

Leila was an Iranian-American woman who was 28 years old when she began the English education program, three years after completing her undergraduate degree in American literature. Her approach to assignments in the methods course reflected her own stated core values around writing and writing instruction: that it can be both vulnerable and empowering. Leila expressed the importance of writing as a way for writers to make sense of their experiences and to communicate with others in professional, academic, and social settings. She believed that integrating writing into every class session while being sensitive about writers' vulnerabilities and fears about sharing their writing were important values to take with her into her teaching experience.

Leila taught AP Literature and team-taught English 11 at the most urban of the four participants' student teaching sites: Millcreek High School, one of the professional development (PDS) high schools that partners with the university's secondary education program. Every student at Millcreek was issued a Chromebook, although Leila noted that teachers in the school varied in how often they used the laptops for in-class instruction.

### **Data Collection**

I collected data through a series of five stimulated recall interviews (Calderhead, 1981) with each of the four participants over the course of their student teaching internships, framed as opportunities for the participants to characterize their own experiences. Using artifacts from various phases of their teacher education program (e.g., methods course assignments, student teaching unit and lesson plans) as the stimuli, I asked participants to consider their developing frameworks of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as related to the artifact and their classroom experiences, and to reflect on how teaching prompted them to explore these conceptions in new ways. Table 3 depicts the interview timeline and the artifacts used to anchor our dialogues.

Interviews included both artifact-based questions and reflection questions. A set of questions revisited in each interview asked participants to (1) define the features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and (2) identify the features and experiences they considered most and least important to the ELA writing curriculum. Returning to these questions in each interview allowed participants to review their previous responses and to track the ways their conceptual frameworks evolved throughout the semester in response to their teaching experiences.



**Table 3.** Participant Interview Timeline and Artifacts

Interview	1	2	3	4	5
Timeline	Aug 2017	Aug/Sep 2017	Sep/Oct 2017	Nov/Dec 2017	Jan 2018
Artifact	“Perspectives on Writing” remix video	Unit and lesson plans	Classroom tour video	Unit Plan and related teaching materials	Previous interview responses
Artifact Source	Methods I, Fall 2016	Methods II, Spring 2017	Student teaching, Fall 2017	Student teaching, Fall 2017	Interviews, Fall 2017

### Data Analysis

I coded the interview data using an inductive approach influenced by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) in that I identified common themes derived from participants’ responses rather than using a preconceived set of categories to discover patterns from which I drew conclusions. While I approached data collection and analysis with some intentional framing around digital literacy and multimodal composition theories as well as current research in teacher education outlined earlier in this chapter, I included the participants as co-researchers as an attempt to mitigate my own researcher bias and to honor their interpretations of their responses. I used member checks and constant comparison (Saldaña, 2016) during the interview process to review and check my interpretations of participants’ conceptual frameworks as they emerged.

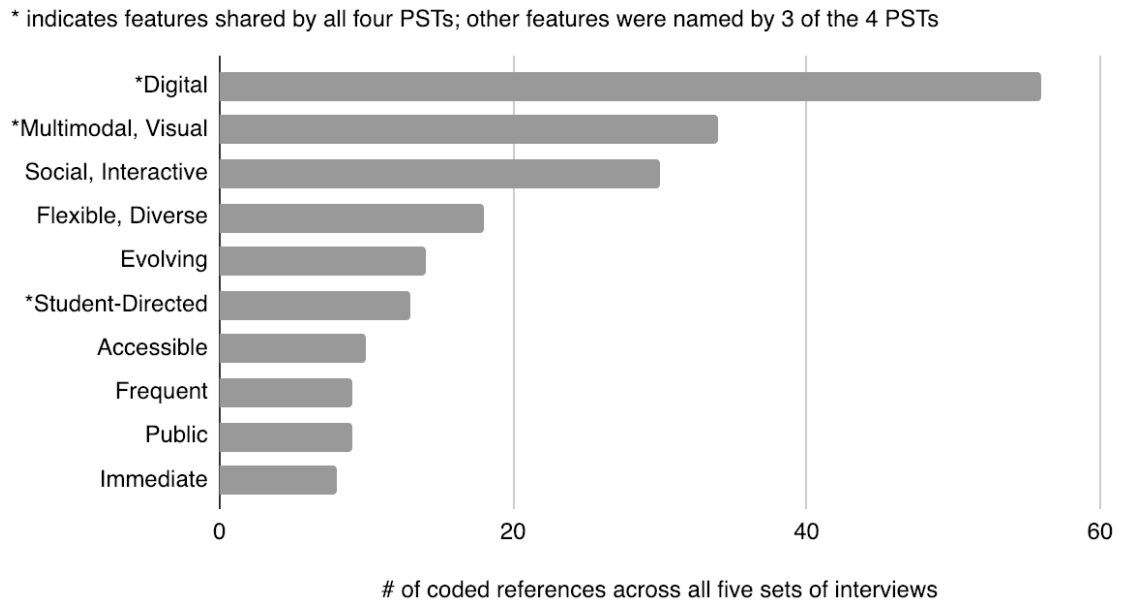
The findings in this chapter are based on content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of transcripts of two interview questions that most directly asked participants to define the features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in each of the five interviews. I

derived the codes from recurring themes in participant responses, categorizing ideas at the sentence level when participants introduced a new idea or example. In a secondary analysis of the coded data, I subdivided certain categories in order to capture the difference between participants' explicit (named) acknowledgement of a particular feature versus an indirect (implied) reference to the same feature. For example, Leila's response, "[I'm] thinking about how [students] are always sharing digitally these days, regardless of what they're sharing," was coded as Digital Named. By contrast, Callie's response, "We're writing in 140 characters on Twitter and people are Snapchatting and using writing for social media a lot" was coded as Digital Implied because she did not use the word "digital" but mentioned a form of writing that implied that a digital device (e.g., smartphone, computer) or program for online publishing (e.g., Twitter, Google Docs) was required for composition. Coding at this level allowed me to analyze for the nuances of participants' awareness of the features they described. A complete version of the code book including all 10 parent codes and the related subcodes, can be found in Appendix C.

## **Findings**

The interviews with preservice teachers indicated that, by the end of their internships, their evolving definitions of writing aligned with the field's theoretical understandings, and that these definitions were complicated by and responsive to teaching tensions. Ultimately, when the participants experienced teaching challenges alongside opportunities for guided reflection on these experiences, they focused on rhetorical and situated, rather than technical, considerations of writing and writing instruction. When the preservice teachers situated their understandings of 21<sup>st</sup> century

writing within their teaching experiences, they were less likely to talk about the tools of composition and more likely to reflect on how their teaching approaches facilitated or hindered meaningful approaches to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. In later interview, participants began to recognize tensions or gaps inherent in their initial definitions, and they were more likely to talk about the disciplinary and pedagogical implications of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing processes and texts. Over the course of their internship semester, when asked directly to describe features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, all four participants named three common features: they all viewed 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as digital, multimodal, and student-directed. Figure 1 shows these features in context of the full set of characteristics participants identified.



**Figure 1:** PST Conceptions of 21st Century Writing Features

It is not surprising that digital and multimodal were the two primary descriptors of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing considering the prevalence of these terms by composition theorists and education practitioners in describing the ways writing has evolved in recent decades. When we think about the prevalence of online writing and increased access to digital technology in schools, digital and multimodal features of writing are, in many cases, the most tangible and visible ways that writing has changed in recent decades. The third common descriptor participants used, that writing is student-directed, points to the sociocultural learning theories and terminology (“student-centered learning,” for example) prevalent in education and teacher preparation, reframing these notions to consider how students might be particularly well positioned to share their expertise with peers and teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century writing classroom.

Other conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing shared by some of the participants across the set of interviews reflect their developing, if uneven, awareness of a range of rhetorical and sociocultural implications of writing features and writing processes. Their descriptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as social, interactive, flexible, diverse, evolving, accessible, public, frequent, and immediate (see Appendix C for full descriptions of these codes with examples of participant comments) demonstrate the ways that the preservice teachers, even without an explicit focus on multimodal and New Literacies theories in their teacher preparation program, began to recognize the ways that 21<sup>st</sup> century writing goes beyond the digital and multimodal spaces where writing happens, to acknowledge the less visible implications of process, audience, genre, and form. While these findings seem to reinforce participants’ development of emerging complex theoretical

understandings during student teaching, this chapter is limited to examining how their conceptions of digital and multimodal writing, the two dominant descriptors, emerged and evolved from their student teaching experiences and guided reflections.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing as Digital**

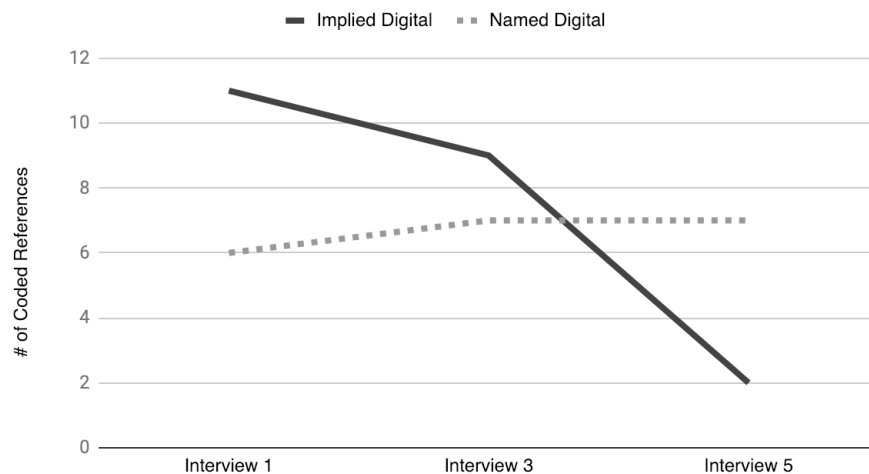
Discussions of composing in digital spaces and using digital technologies predominated preservice teachers' descriptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing throughout their internships. However, their attention to digital writing and the way they talked about it shifted over the course of the semester in ways that suggested that they focused less on the digital tools themselves and became more aware of how these tools influenced students' learning and writing experiences.

Early in the semester, preservice teacher descriptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing centered on its digital nature, including writing using digital devices, on digital platforms, with digital technologies, and using digital processes. In the pre-semester interview, direct and implied references to digital writing comprised 30% of the overall coded descriptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, far surpassing the next most frequently mentioned characteristics (social/interactive: 17%, multimodal: 10%, and public: 10%). When giving examples of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, participants primarily referenced their own and students' out-of-school writing habits, including tweeting, posting on Facebook, and texting their friends. This points to the ways that their conceptions at least began with models of digital writing typically seen outside of, rather than within, school settings. This is not altogether surprising, considering research that suggests many teachers view

adolescents' digital writing practices (e.g., texting, social media) as irrelevant to or even detrimental to academic writing (Leander, 2009; Turner & Hicks, 2012).

However, it is notable that, while the preservice teachers offered many examples of digital writing in their early interviews, they were less likely to explicitly acknowledge or name “digital” as itself a feature of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. That is, while their frameworks for conceptualizing 21<sup>st</sup> century writing included the understanding that writing happens in digital spaces, this core element of their framework was infrequently acknowledged directly, at least early in the semester. During Callie’s first interview, for example, she stopped to reiterate that when she talked about “writing,” she was “referring to typing, so texting, using an iPad, using a laptop.” During the mid-semester interview with Margot, I was surprised to notice that, despite so much of her commentary being about the writing her students were doing on computers and in digital genres and forms, she had never explicitly named “digital” as a feature on her developing list of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing characteristics. When I asked her why she thought that might be, her response was illuminating; she said, “I guess I just thought that. . . when we’re talking about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, the fact that it’s digital was a given. It’s hard for me to think of writing now that’s not digital.” In Callie’s and Margot’s cases, their initial assumptions that all 21<sup>st</sup> century writing is digital seemed to overshadow their awareness about the ways their approach to writing instruction using digital tools and devices impacted students’ writing experiences. While from the beginning, digital writing was integral to how preservice teachers talked about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, they were initially more likely to acknowledge

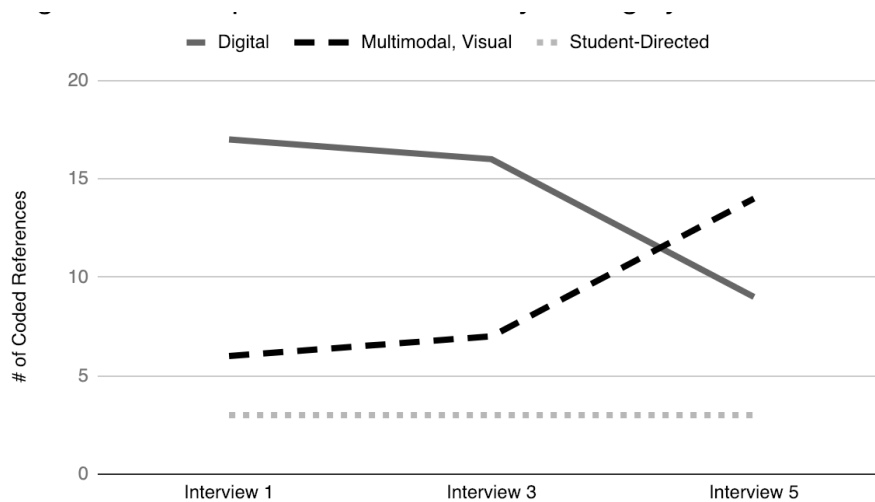
the tools themselves than the ways writing in digital spaces changed or challenged their conceptual frameworks for what writing does or how students experience writing.



**Figure 2:** Implied vs. Named Digital Features by Interview

Throughout the semester, however, participants began to express more complicated views about the relationship between digital writing and its place within their overall conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. As Figure 2 shows, by the final interview, the participants were collectively more likely to directly name than imply “digital” as a feature of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, suggesting they had developed a greater awareness of digital writing as a feature worth naming rather than as an assumed feature or requirement of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. Interestingly, however, as Figure 3 shows, this shift also accompanied an overall decrease in references to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as digital relative to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as multimodal. In fact, by the end of the semester, all four participants ultimately called into question their earlier assumptions that all 21<sup>st</sup> century

writing is inherently digital or that writing in digital spaces necessarily represents what they believed to be most relevant to or important about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. Becoming more aware of the digital nature of writing accompanied a decrease in their belief that writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be digital.



**Figure 3:** Conceptions of 21st Century Writing by Interview

For example, when asked how she might revise her own working definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing at the final interview, Callie said,

There's one thing. . . that I kind of dropped. I think maybe it evolved more that 21<sup>st</sup> century writing isn't—just because it's on a Word document or because you can put it onto slides, just because it's digital doesn't mean it's 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. I remember kind of getting to that point. Like, what's the difference of me writing out this outline and then typing it out in Google Docs? Other than maybe I could type it faster.



Leila had a similar realization: “Originally I thought it was necessary [for 21<sup>st</sup> century writers] to be doing things digitally, like maybe some sort of social media. . . I do want to incorporate that more, but I don’t think it’s a necessity as much.” By the end of their internships, participants acknowledged that 21<sup>st</sup> century writing isn’t directly correlated with tools and may not even always take place in digital environments. They also began to consider the less visible implications of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing: how students make decisions about genre and form or how students interact with and respond to each other’s writing. This rhetorically- and socioculturally-aware approach to teaching writing often still included digital technologies (e.g., online peer review, digital presentations), but participants also began to favor non-digital writing (e.g. using post-it notes to respond to each other’s work, composing graphic novels with hand-drawn images) as a means to effective writing instruction.

### **Critical Teaching Moment: Callie**

Callie’s critical reflection of a challenge she encountered during a writing unit she taught with her sixth grade English students is an apt illustration of how her student teaching experiences complicated her initial beliefs about the role of digital technologies and led to more nuanced understandings of writing and teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Throughout a unit on narrative writing in which one of the learning goals was for students to explore genre and form by composing a narrative story in a creative genre of their choice, Callie thoughtfully considered how students would use their school-issued laptops to give and receive feedback on their drafts. She integrated digital peer review, color coding activities, and online writer reflection forms to guide her students’ progress

throughout the writing process. In light of this attention to digital composing processes, she was surprised that the majority of her students submitted text-only manuscripts of stories rather than the audiobooks, graphic novels, children's picture books, and Google Slides she had expected when she assigned the writing task. Even after extending the deadline and revisiting the range of possible forms their stories could take, she reported that "50% [of the students] still just came in with a printed Google Doc and they were like, 'This is my chapter book.'" Callie found that her digital approach to teaching writing had been helpful in the writing process, but it did not produce a final product that looked much different than what she would have considered a traditional academic narrative writing assignment.

Surprised that her students did not intuitively transition from the text-based drafts they had been composing on Google Docs into the kinds of digital and multimodal genres she was hoping they would produce as their final products, Callie came to an important conclusion about the danger in assuming that students already know how to make decisions about text forms and structures just because they are working on a familiar digital device. When asked in her final interview about how this critical experience would inform her future teaching approaches, she said she wanted to continue giving students "choice and chances to write in new forms," but that she realized a part of that includes helping them "explore things digitally that they're not used to." She concluded that helping students discover how to approach new writing tasks is more important than the devices or tools they use: "There's a lot of value in closing their laptops. Closing screens. Writing in their journals can only help inform how they'll be writing digitally."

Recognizing the important role of digital technology in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing while at the same time developing clearer understandings of the affordances and limitations of digital technologies to the teaching of writing was an essential area of growth for Callie. Along with the other preservice teachers in this study, her end-of-semester reflections highlighted the ways that her conceptual framework of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing became more nuanced and more conscientious of how students make sense of rhetorical choices when composing—digitally or otherwise—and how her teaching could more directly address those kinds of complex writerly decisions.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing as Multimodal**

In addition to seeing 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as digital, all of the participants in the study also conceptualized it as multimodal. From the first interview when they talked about their own experiences composing in a multimodal format as part of their first assignment for their first English teaching methods course to their final interview when they reflected on the writing-based units they taught while student teaching, they all talked about the ways that alphabetic text, image, video, and sound, for example, interact in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. They cited examples such as digital videos, Power Point presentations, Snapchat, memes, and graphic novels.

Some of the participants used terminology such as “visual literacy” and “multimodality” to describe the ways that 21<sup>st</sup> century texts integrate multiple modes. Others described the multimodal features of these kinds of texts more indirectly, while still acknowledging how multiple modes change a text’s communicative potential; for example, Janine noted that creating a Power Point presentation “isn’t just about having an

illustration. It is about being able to communicate more at the same time.” Callie reflected on an assignment she designed as part of a unit plan for her English Teaching Methods II course in which she would have students compile a playlist of songs whose themes connect to the themes of the literary text they were reading in class: “they’re creating something new from what already exists. I wish there was a word for that. They’re creating a new experience or a new piece of media from two very different types, right, a book and a song.” Even when they did not all start out with the language to describe multimodal composition, all of the preservice teachers expressed that they valued writing experiences that transcended alphabetic text only. These conceptions and values showed up not only in how they defined features of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing when asked directly in their interview responses but also as they referenced the writing experiences they designed for their students.

The preservice teachers had varied levels of and approaches to integrating multimodality in their writing instruction. Leila discussed using “pictures as a lead-in to writing” as part of her strategy for student journal responses at the beginning of class. Using a collaborative digital composition platform called Nearpod, for example, she would post a question about a character in a literary text and then ask students to post a gif in response before beginning to write their journal entry. In this example, she talked about how she wanted students to find images to precede writing as part of a collaborative brainstorming strategy. Other approaches, such as Callie’s encouragement for her students to include illustrations their narrative stories, focused on ways that images can amplify text in the publication and/or presentation phase. Participants’

discussions about integrating image, sound, or video alongside text in the composing process often implied a belief or assumption that their students were already accustomed to multimodal texts: the participants often talked about how their students were already thinking and communicating multimodally, whether by text messaging with emojis or watching and creating videos on their mobile devices or posting memes on social media. For them, students' prior knowledge was an entry point for their writing instruction that aimed to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century texts.

Whereas some of the participants believed that students had an inherent awareness of and ability to compose in multimodal texts, Margot began her internship with a particularly astute awareness about the importance of her role in helping her students become more conscious of how writers make multimodal choices when composing visual texts. She said:

Being intentional with words is something that hopefully students learn since they begin to start writing in elementary school, but I think students aren't taught as much about visual literacy. . . Maybe students aren't taught to think about the way that visuals communicate something, and so I think that when a [writing] assessment becomes visual, or at least partly visual, then [the visual aspect] needs to be focused on more.

She explained that her belief that students need to become more aware of their visual choices as writers of 21<sup>st</sup> century texts was one of the main motivators behind the unit she designed and taught during her internship semester in which students first read a graphic novel, *March* by John Lewis, after which they composed a personal narrative in graphic

novel format. “As we were studying Lewis’s novel and the illustrative power in his choices, we talked about the choices that they would make in their own writing as well,” Margot explained. Rather than thinking of the visual aspect of their product as ancillary to the alphabetic text, she challenged her students to consider how they could use body positioning, facial expressions, use of color, movement across panels, and other features of graphic novels to foreground visual meaning as they wrote their own stories.

Integrating instruction that would focus students’ thinking on these decisions rather than assuming they already knew how to compose in visual formats, Margot guided her students through creating pre-writing storyboards, receiving peer and teacher feedback, and writing reflectively about their own compositional choices as part of the writing unit.

Margot’s teaching approach and her metacognitive reflections on why and how she designed classroom experiences that would push students beyond a surface-level approach to multimodal writing indicated her familiarity with and integration of rhetorical elements of multimodality in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. The other English 11 teachers on her teaching team, all new to teaching English 11 but not all new to teaching, were eager to adopt Margot’s new approach to the longstanding text-based personal narrative assignment; they asked her to share her lesson plans and assignment guidelines for the graphic novel assignment, which she did, describing her de facto role as a leader on her teaching team as both validating and intimidating.

### **Critical Teaching Challenge: Margot**

Despite these affirmations of her approach, Margot faced a critical incident when she discovered that, as a first-year teacher in the department, her own values and

priorities about writing did not align with the established traditions and values of some more senior colleagues. In a department meeting discussion about the guidelines for the digital portfolios that all students were to create and transfer with them from one grade to the next, Margot asked about including her students' major writing assignment of the quarter—their graphic novel narratives—in the portfolio. She was told that only text-based assignments would be included. Regarding the conflict between her perception of what should count as writing in 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms and some of her colleagues' commitment to what she calls “traditional” writing, Margot explained:

If you think of a traditional English classroom, you think of, just, essays. So I think of a literary analysis essay or a research essay or the [state standardized test] essay that's persuasive. . . . For example, our students have to create writing portfolios digitally, but the way they're set up is [that] the only writing they can put in there is traditional writing, like, essentially, all essays. So [my students' graphic novels] can't be reflected in the portfolios. But I still think it's writing. And if you did a multi-genre project, you wouldn't put that in the portfolio even though that has a major writing component. So I guess my department sees traditional writing as completely text.

Challenged by some of her colleagues' traditional approaches to teaching writing, Margot did not waver in her resolve to remain committed to her own conceptions and beliefs about teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even when it meant her students' work could not be reflected in their writing portfolios. Ultimately, she decided there were no real consequences to herself or students for having fewer items in their portfolios, so she

would continue assigning a broad range of writing assignments throughout the year, including “traditional” essays as well as multimodal and digital compositions that would not ultimately find their place in the students’ portfolios.

Reflecting on this tension in more than one interview, Margot said she realized the importance of knowing why she is teaching the way she is, that the interviews helped her ground her teaching in the conceptions of writing and teaching writing she most valued. Her belief that multimodal texts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century broadened and would continue to broaden the field’s view of what counts as writing helped her remain committed to her approach: “When we’re talking about infographics or memes, those types of things are broadening what we consider writing and broadening genre.” Despite the pushback from department policies that might have discouraged her application of this belief that 21<sup>st</sup> century writing broadens students’ exposure to writing in a wider range of genres, Margot persisted in teaching her English class in a way that reflected and honored her values. Given the opportunity to model and defend these choices not only to her colleagues, but in reflective discussions throughout her internship, helped solidify Margot’s commitment to and deepened her understanding of this aspect of writing.

### **Interviews as Intervention: Metacognition at Critical Junctures**

In both Callie’s and Margot’s cases, situational experiences prompted by students’ and colleagues’ responses to the writing tasks they designed and facilitated challenged their beliefs about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and their approaches to implementing these pedagogies in their writing instruction. Facing these kinds of contradictions and tensions is something all student teachers experience; for the participants in this study,



however, the opportunity to reflect on these moments through the lens of their own conceptions and values gave them space to reconsider and articulate their own beliefs about and commitments to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and instruction in their classrooms. When Callie's expectations about how students would respond to a particular assignment were not met and when department policies cast doubt on the validity of Margot's approach to writing instruction, the interviews gave them space for metacognitive reflection about these challenges as well as a platform to consider possible strategies or responses to use in future scenarios. In their final interviews, the preservice teachers pointed to the ways these teaching moments, paired with guided reflection, became critical junctures that helped them wrestle with complex, fundamental, and discipline-based conceptions of writing and prompted them to ask questions that would guide their further inquiry.

When asked how our interviews influenced her conception of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and how she would approach future writing instruction light of her teaching experience, Callie said:

[Reflecting on this experience has] helped me to realize that just because it's on the computer doesn't mean that it's digital writing. Maybe digital writing or writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has those certain features, like, immediate feedback. Just because [students are] typing on a Word document, it's not that different from what they would be hand writing or writing on a worksheet. What I've really taken is exploring the whole remixing of genres and opening to all the different genres in the world and making them accessible in a classroom. How do we take one thing that we already know, like a book report, that's been taught for a

million years in schools, and how can we use digital technology to change it into something more? Like, a story. What type of digital forms do stories take?

Her reflection demonstrates a new awareness and mirrors ideas scholars and theorists of digital writing and new literacies also consider: she grappled with concerns about how and to what extent writing is mediated through digital technology, how genres take on new characteristics as they move from print to digital modes, and how traditional school-based genres like book reports might be reimaged to reflect more relevant or meaningful writing products. Asking herself the question, “What type of digital forms do stories take?” shows how her reflection provoked her to think beyond the tension itself and into future considerations for writing instruction.

Margot noted that the interviews helped solidify her own values about teaching while guiding her thinking about how to position herself within the constraints imposed not only by her department but also by what she termed “the current education system,” two pressure points that she felt keenly aware of and susceptible to as a new teacher. She said:

What these conversations do for me the most is help remind me what my values are and get me to set aside time to just think about my values. . . . Sometimes what I think is important gets in the way of what the system thinks is important. I also think these discussions have helped me to refine how I view 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, and having a better understanding of that helps me to make sure that I’m incorporating what I think is important for my students’ futures now. . . . There are so many constraints with the current education system and I yield to those

constraints sometimes, but figuring out ways I can get around them, these conversations help me think about that and empower me. . . to think about how I can push the envelope as safely as possible.

Guided metacognitive reflection provided the preservice teachers tools to make sense of tensions and constraints in ways that ultimately led to, in Callie's case, recognition of a more complex and rhetorically-situated understanding of digital writing, and in Margot's case, thoughtful consideration of how to name and advocate for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices as a first-year teacher. These kinds of realizations are important ways to both catalyze student teaching experiences as productive opportunities for learning as well as future-oriented guided inquiry.

### **Discussion**

The reflections of these four preservice English teachers during their student teaching experiences suggest that, despite the challenges and pushback they may face in the classroom, the next generation of secondary English teachers can contribute meaningfully to evolving conceptions of digital and multimodal writing in ways that expand how teachers, scholars, and English educators imagine and enact ELA writing instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is not to suggest that a series of five guided reflections over the course of one semester of student teaching will eliminate concerns about troublesome practices and limiting beliefs such as using surface approaches to teach writing using technology, assigning only text-based essay assignments without considering multimodal genres, or viewing students' out-of-school literacy practices as irrelevant or even dangerous to their academic progress. However, what these findings do

indicate is that with even a minimal amount of framing around 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy theories, preservice teachers can develop nuanced, rhetorically-driven, and socioculturally-aware approaches to digital and multimodal writing. Furthermore, these supported interventions, especially in the student teaching environment, can help turn these conceptions into well-reflected-on practices, wherein preservice teachers not only consider, but also enact, writing pedagogies in the secondary ELA classroom in more meaningful ways. Inviting student teachers into practice-based reflections that ask them to conceptualize writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, identify challenges, and imagine solutions are key ways to facilitate their practice-based learning.

The preservice teachers' experiences described in this chapter point to three ways that English educators can foster the kind of learning throughout teacher education programs likely to accomplish these goals. First, we need to design learning frameworks throughout teacher education that recognize the ways that 21<sup>st</sup> century writing is in flux, that it looks different for preservice teachers in the present than it did for them when they were students, and that it will look different in the future than it does now. Second, we need to honor field experiences, including student teaching, as knowledge-making spaces, recognizing that the knowledge preservice teachers build in the field may be as—or more—useful as the theories we introduce within the bounded contexts of university-based English teaching methods courses. Finally, we need to develop meaningful and regular opportunities for preservice teachers in the field to reflect on their practices in ways that help them construct and revisit useful and nuanced conceptual frameworks that will support and sustain their long-term professional growth.

## **Writing is Always in Flux**

The ways Margot, Callie, Janine, and Leila's conceptual frameworks of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing evolved over the course of their student teaching semesters reinforce the argument that theories about literacy and writing can be at once stable and also destabilized, especially in the context of teaching experiences. Indeed, as Kress (2003), Mills (2015) and other scholars of New Literacies and digital composition have argued, flexibility in response to changing technology, compositional modes, genres, and delivery systems is at the heart of this notion of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies. For teachers, the conditions for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing are often contingent upon institutional structures such as limited access to technology, as it was for Janine, upon students' readiness to bring their digital and multimodal knowledge into the classroom, as it was for Callie, or upon colleagues' willingness to see new approaches to multimodal composition as valid, as it was for Margot. To respond to these complicating conditions, preservice teachers must develop critical engagement and rhetorical flexibility to explore unfamiliar and evolving territories of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing.

Understanding the conceptions and beliefs related to digital and multimodal writing with which preservice teachers enter the field, as well as the changing conditions that prompt them to modify their views in response to classroom challenges and institutional demands, is key to English educators' approach to introducing and framing 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in preservice teacher education. Because writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in flux and because teachers are called upon to respond to these changing conditions, it is

important that we not send them into the field with a fixed definition of these literacies—either in theory or in practice.

### **Field Experiences are Knowledge-making Spaces**

The experiences of these four participants also suggest that constructing preservice teachers' initial teaching experiences as knowledge-making spaces is key to their flexibility as teachers and to our ongoing learning about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in practice in the ELA classroom. While introducing theories and conceptions related to digital literacies, multimodal composition, and their related rhetorical and sociocultural underpinnings in university-based methods courses may provide a useful beginning to helping preservice teachers develop conceptions and beliefs of their own, it is in their teaching experiences that the learning will be tested and enhanced.

In fact, findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that, even without significant previous exposure to theoretical backgrounds in digital literacy or multimodal theory, preservice teachers engaged in classroom teaching were able to give language to their teaching experiences and observations in ways that allowed them to arrive at nuanced, context-based, and evolving frameworks for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and learning. This was particularly important given the varied curricular and technological expectations and limitations of each participant's different teaching context. The exercise of naming the features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing while simultaneously planning for instruction within given curricular frameworks, responding to institutional expectations about using digital technology, learning from and about students' own literacies, and negotiating with mentor teachers and colleagues about what aspects of teaching are most

important fostered a rich learning environment for the preservice teachers that prompted them to consider 21<sup>st</sup> century writing from multiple and complex perspectives. As their teaching experiences posed challenges and raised questions—and as the interviews provided opportunities for directed reflection—their conceptions of and beliefs about digital and multimodal writing in ELA classrooms became both more concrete and more nuanced. Revisiting their conceptions over the course of multiple interviews, the preservice teachers came to acknowledge the complexity of the process of developing, prodding, reconsidering, and problematizing conceptual frameworks—all within the context of real teaching scenarios.

It is important to recognize the preservice teachers' learning in teaching sites as useful not only to their own development as teachers, but also to English educators who rely on field-based knowledge to adapt teacher preparation programs and methods coursework to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning environments where their preservice teachers teach. Pasternak et al. (2018) indicated in their recent study of English education programs in the United States that English educators reported a wide variety of availability and use of technology in the K-12 settings where their preservice teachers observed and taught, but they also cautioned that English educators needed to know more about how technology was used for ELA writing instruction in practice. To this end, preservice teachers and English educators need to work together to both map the realities of current teaching contexts and co-construct approaches to addressing those realities. Situating field experiences and student teaching as spaces for continued learning

and knowledge-making opens avenues for more effective evolution of and integration of university-based and classroom-based pedagogies and practices.

### **Meaningful Reflection Leads to Professional Growth**

Results from this study also indicate that reflection on practice is a useful and effective way to activate new teachers' knowledge and to connect their learning to the experiences they have in the classroom. Margot and Callie specifically pointed to reflection through the ongoing interviews as the intervention that helped them make sense of contradictions and challenges in their teaching, as well as a tool that gave them courage to honor their values despite those challenges. Callie expressed how guided reflection impacted her teaching:

I'm sure lots of people in student teaching had the same kind of thoughts that I had. But maybe they didn't have a way to go back and measure out those thoughts. We have our reflections from last semester which we could look back at and see they how we've changed our views. I think it made me rethink a lot of things.

This is not surprising, given what we know both about the tensions that 21<sup>st</sup> century writing theories have presented to the fields of literacy and composition pedagogy, as well as what we know about how tension provides key moments for learning for new teachers. These participants' experiences developing as reflective practitioners echo Dunn et al.'s (2018) conclusion that "tension points could serve as entry points" for teacher educators to open dialogue with preservice teachers about challenges they face during field experiences, "thus bridging conversations about beliefs with practice without



simplifying or reducing down the real choices teachers face in classroom” (p. 53).

Exploring tensions that arise is especially important to acknowledging the flux specific to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and the corresponding transitions from students’ past experiences as students, writers, learners. Using reflection to create opportunities for them to evaluate the assumptions behind their habits and patterns helps them begin to define their own set of core values and principles as teachers.

Likewise, we need to prepare preservice teachers to face the standardizing pressures that create and replicate power standards and structures. Which stories and experiences are thereby valued? Which are not? Giroux’s (1988) notion of radical pedagogy demands that teachers continue to learn and test and question their assumptions, that they “learn to renew a form of self-knowledge” (p. 73), which doesn’t occur only in the preservice teacher education, but throughout their ongoing careers. It is thus important that reflection opportunities become more than thinking backward about what happened, but also about naming choices and giving voice to rationale toward planning for future scenarios. Preservice teachers need both formal and informal opportunities to reflect on their experiences in ways that help them develop and complicate their own understanding of theory with respect to the future of writing instruction.

### **Conclusion**

As students become teachers, we need to prioritize helping them construct and embrace flexible and adaptive conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing rather than sending them into the field with monolithic and sometimes entrenched beliefs and practices.

Perhaps there are lessons here to be learned about how we frame 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies overall in teacher preparation courses, but more importantly, we can learn from the way participants in this study tell a different version of that story. Even without a course to instruct them explicitly in 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies, even with minimal focus on concepts related to digital and multimodal writing in one of their teaching methods courses, and even without being given the language or a predetermined framework of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, all four participants arrived at complex and nuanced understandings of these principles through discussion and reflection on their practice. Their understandings about writing evolved and deepened, their insights about valid academic genres and effective teaching processes emerged, and they embraced knowledge-through-practice engagement of the changes inherent in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and teaching.

Ultimately, in order for the next generation of English teachers to advance the pedagogies and practices of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing even in the face of tensions and challenges, they need to construct and embrace flexible and adaptive conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. Beyond understanding key concepts about writing, they ultimately need to feel empowered and ready to advocate for the practice of these concepts in writing classrooms. Just as the notions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing are still in motion, so too are the teachers who are newly undergoing their transition from being students to being teachers; it is, therefore, important to support them by providing them the kinds of ongoing discussion of strategies and opportunities for reflective approaches that help them make sense of new contexts while learning about the underlying principles and possibilities of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and teaching. Developing complex understandings of rhetorical

purposes for writing may begin with minimal intervention that encourages preservice teachers to use their internships as a laboratory for these developing theories and pedagogical commitments on what Smagorinsky, Cook, and Johnson (2003) call the “twisting path of concept development in learning to teach.”

Because 21<sup>st</sup> century writing demands a new way of theorizing, experiencing, and teaching composition in the ELA classroom, it can prompt preservice teachers to grapple with these contradictions in ways that nudge them toward using digital and multimodal writing in meaningful and thoughtful ways. Moreover, it provides an effective lens through which English educators can reflect on their own beliefs and practices about how and where to support preservice teachers’ learning, how that learning is co-constructed, and what kinds of interventions are likely to foster meaningful results in classroom practices. Ultimately, when both preservice teachers and English educators alike embrace flux, they can work together more easily to navigate the continued challenges and opportunities of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, instruction, and English teacher preparation toward the future.

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## **CHAPTER 4: FOSTERING PRESERVICE TEACHER AGENCY IN 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY WRITING INSTRUCTION<sup>6</sup>**

### **Abstract**

This chapter recommends that English educators prepare preservice teachers (PSTs) to think and act agentively in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction by prompting them to examine and (re)construct discourses around identity, beliefs, and teaching contexts. It explores metacognitive interventions that supported one PST assume agency in order to implement 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies that challenged institutional and curricular norms. A case study design was used to explore how one PST enacted agency during student teaching. Data were collected from teaching artifacts and five stimulated recall interviews that prompted metacognition over a four-month internship semester. Emerging themes were analyzed using content analysis.

Findings indicate that regular interviews during student teaching prompted the PST to construct narratives about herself, her beliefs, and her teaching context in ways that catalyzed her agency to enact 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies: in planning for instruction, framing learning with her students, and negotiating with her colleagues. Metacognitive intervention provided frameworks for her to both “see” and “sell”

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<sup>6</sup> A version of this chapter was submitted as a journal article to *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*.

(Nowacek, 2011) possibilities for implementing writing instruction, which led to her claiming agency in her first teaching context. While most existing literature on teacher agency focuses on practicing teachers, this chapter focuses on activating agency during teacher preparation. It draws upon theories of regulative discourse (Mills, 2015), transfer (Nowacek, 2011), and metacognition (Schon, 1984) as constructs for agency to identify ways English educators can prepare PSTs to become agents for change.

**Keywords:** Teacher agency, Teacher education, English teaching, English language arts, Metacognition, Writing pedagogy

## Introduction to the Educational Issue

Even two decades into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, academic writing instruction is often narrowly defined and implemented in many English language arts (ELA) curricula and classrooms in limiting, standardized, and traditional ways. Pedagogical innovations around teaching writing in digital, multimodal, collaborative, and public contexts, for example, are still met with resistance or skepticism by some practicing teachers, despite the ways these 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches to writing have been validated and valorized by composition, education, and literacy scholars (Grabill and Hicks, 2005; Kress, 2003; Sheppard, 2009). Carrington and Robinson (2009) used alarming language to describe some teachers' reactions to using new digital technologies in the writing classroom, claiming that "in many classrooms these devices and the texts produced with them are still perceived to be *irrelevant* and *even dangerous*" (p. 2, emphasis added). In light of these limiting perspectives and contexts, how can preservice English teachers (PSTs) be prepared to enter the field and act agentively to transform writing instruction to better represent 21<sup>st</sup> century realities?

Even for seasoned teachers, assuming agency to push back on entrenched traditions and structures in writing teaching is a challenge. New teachers especially face particular challenges, including negotiating new identities with students and colleagues, hoping to enact inspired teaching, and navigating pressures of standardized curricula, testing, and teacher evaluation. For them, resisting expectations that do not align with their emerging values is even more daunting and high-stakes. For these reasons, it is not surprising that PSTs imitate the writing assignments, teaching strategies, and assessment

practices they witness in their field experiences and that are deemed appropriate by the powerful influences of school culture, colleagues, standards-based curricula, and skills-based testing. Entrenched patterns of writing pedagogy and new teachers' perceived lack of agency in how and what they teach may be two reasons that the teaching of writing does not yet fully acknowledge many of the features of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy.

Preparing prospective teachers to become advocates for the practices that are emphasized in their university curriculum but not actualized in secondary ELA classrooms requires them to engage their agency in complex ways. An ecological approach to teacher agency points to the ways that agency is not a gift bestowed upon or earned by teachers, but something teachers claim through their critical response to complicated situations (Biesta and Tedder, 2007; Charteris and Smardon, 2015; Priestley, *et al.*, 2012). Claiming agency, therefore, may include assessing institutional climates and expectations, anticipating barriers, identifying allies and support structures, and taking appropriate curricular risks. How can English educators prepare PSTs to claim agency, even from the earliest stages of their teaching careers?

This chapter recommends that English educators prepare PSTs to think and act agentively in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction by prompting them to examine and (re)construct discourses around identity, beliefs, and teaching contexts in ways that lead to agentive moves of “seeing” and “selling” (Nowacek, 2011) their instructional choices. It draws upon on a case study of one PST who, through interview-based metacognitive intervention, reflected on her experiences and developed narratives that helped her assume agency within her first teaching context. Findings point to ways that English

educators can catalyze discourse through metacognition to activate PST agency, positioning new teachers in the field as change agents in reframing the teaching of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century despite stubborn norms and infrastructures.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing: Challenges to Implementation**

Writing has shifted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, partly in response digital technologies, emerging genres, and lower barriers to global communication (Braun, 2013; Carrington & Robinson, 2009; Clark, 2010). Teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing means more than introducing digital tools into the classroom such as submitting essays via Blackboard; it means seeing and using the digital tools as meaningful opportunities to expand writers' awareness of sociocultural and rhetorical choices, such as composing multimodal blog posts or writing collaboratively using Google Docs (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 1996). A commitment to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing compels pedagogies that are democratic and participatory (Callahan and King, 2011; Swenson, *et al.*, 2006), in which writing integrates emergent genres, multiple modes, diverse audiences, and authentic purposes.

For ELA teachers, adopting flexible and evolving pedagogies that reflect the realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing often requires challenging longstanding approaches to writing instruction and assessment that have been ossified in ELA curricula, standardized tests, and pedagogical tradition. Despite the prevalence of learning technologies in schools, limiting mindsets about writing instruction prevail and are systematized in policies, standards, curricula, and practices that do not reflect the pedagogical paradigm



shift required 21<sup>st</sup> century writing (Mills, 2015). These enduring norms often constrain teachers' choices in the classroom.

Against the backdrop of inflexible institutional and curricular norms, teachers struggle to authentically integrate 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in their classrooms (Carrington and Robinson, 2009; Sheppard, 2009). For PSTs, there emerge contradictions between the writing pedagogies they observe in their field experiences and the theories and beliefs related to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing they learn about in their teaching methods courses (Hundley and Holbrook, 2013; Pasternak, 2007). Furthermore, the influence of PSTs' own experiences in school frames their pedagogical choices, sometimes in limiting ways (Barnes and Smagorinsky, 2016; Burnett, 2009; Lortie, 1975).

It is a daunting endeavor, then, particularly for new teachers just entering the field, to challenge pervasive school-based writing genres (e.g., five-paragraph essays), contexts (e.g., students writing for teachers who assess and assign a grade), and practices (e.g., students writing timed essays to prove their knowledge on a topic). New teachers' agency in implementing these changes is further constrained when they do not yet have the experience or understanding to envision effective 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction in academic settings, let alone the positioning, confidence, or strategies for enacting or proposing new approaches in their teaching contexts.

English educators can push PSTs to exercise multimodal and digital theories in their classroom-based writing instruction by examining with them the discourses, contexts, and strategies that will shape their ability to enact these pedagogies in practice. The following sections highlight the ways theories of regulative discourse, transfer, and

narratives of identity, beliefs, and context provide useful frameworks to facilitating this shift toward teacher agency.

### **Regulative Discourse as a Constraint to Teacher Agency**

Institutional norms and discourses of power inform teachers' pedagogical decisions and may constrain their perception of their agency (Freire, 1986; Giroux, 1988). These narratives emerge from teachers' school experiences, theories learned in teacher education, disciplinary ideologies, standardized curricula and policies, and institutional norms, among other factors. Despite the range of influences that shape teachers' decisions, the dominant discourse will be most powerful in shaping pedagogies and influencing agency. Burnett (2009), for example, found that secondary English PSTs enacted new media writing, but only as "refracted through the discourses they encountered," leading them to use digital literacies "in ways that fitted with the dominant modes of teacher-directed and objective-driven learning" (p. 127). Although the teachers seemed to arrive to the classroom with tools and commitments for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, institutional narratives diminished their perceived ability to implement these pedagogies in practice. Mills (2015) refers to these dominant influences as "regulative discourses," or the set of powerful narratives that regulate teachers' actions, whether acknowledged or not.

Biesta *et al.* (2015) suggest that when teachers are constrained by locally-bound and limiting external discourses, "the dominant beliefs of the institution cannot be experienced as choices but appear as inevitable" (p. 638). When teachers do not perceive any room for making choices but believe that regulative discourses dictate and limit their

options, they are not able to perceive or act with agency. Teachers may counter regulative discourses by engaging with the discourses of wider professional and disciplinary communities “to provide a horizon against which such beliefs can be evaluated” (Biesta, *et al.*, 2015, p. 638). Fostering agentic mindsets within teachers, then, requires not only identifying the regulative discourses of their teaching contexts, but helping teachers learn to problematize and challenge them.

### **Transfer Theory as a Construct for Teacher Agency**

A related, yet so far unexplored, way to think about teacher agency is through the lens of transfer theory, which explores how learners adapt and apply knowledge and processes between different contexts. Salomon and Perkins (1989) conceive of transfer as an act of “mindful abstraction” that involves “conscious adaptation” of concepts across different situations rather than simply applying a set of discrete theories or skills learned in one context, like an English teaching methods course, to a new context, like a secondary school classroom setting. Nowacek (2011) frames transfer as an “act of recontextualization” in which learners move their learning back and forth across different contexts within the same period of time, thus becoming “agents of integration.” Learners enact agency not only by making clear their own abstracted knowledge, but also by making adjustments to enact ideas, beliefs, and behaviors in new ways across contexts. Metacognitive awareness enables them to convey what their ideas and beliefs are, and how they transfer into behavior and choices.

Because of the multiple identities and contexts through which PSTs navigate their teacher education programs and early teaching careers, Nowacek’s model of examining

simultaneous transfer within and between sites is a useful approach to understanding how PSTs make sense of their learning, prepare for current and future teaching situations, and enact agency in new teaching contexts. Nowacek argues that individuals inevitably face “complex and often unconscious negotiations” (p. 22) as they make transitions between contexts. Those who do not recognize the discourses that shape these contexts, who are unable to articulate a meta-awareness of contradictions, find themselves caught in what Engeström (2014) calls a double bind. Their agency will be constrained because of their view that discourses and contradictions are natural and inviolable, rather than constructs that can be acted upon and within. Becoming aware of the underlying discourses and inevitable conflicts between contexts is, therefore, key to activating agency: “agents of transformation” recognize contradictions as discursive constructs within which they consciously orient themselves (Nowacek, 2011).

Helping PSTs see options within contradictions and find room for agency in new and unfamiliar contexts is essential. This is particularly important as PSTs engage during field experiences and internships as both students and teachers in both university and school contexts. Prompting PSTs to notice and reconstruct discourses—considering both university classrooms and field experiences as “pliable discursive spaces” (Nowacek, 2011, p. 81)—may help them consider and be more likely to claim agency within these spaces.

### **Discourses as a Catalyst for Teacher Agency**

Discourse theories related to transfer and recontextualization illustrate how frameworks of teacher agency are linked to narratives around teacher identity, teaching

beliefs, and teaching contexts. These discourses catalyze teachers to see and enact agency in their practices.

**Narratives of Teacher Identity.** Agency and identity coexist in dynamic tension. Teachers' identities are multiple, complex, dynamic, evolving, and (re)constructed over time as reflections of social, cultural, political, and historical influences (Britzman, 2003; Rodgers and Scott, 2008). Their efforts to, as Britzman (2003) says, "author a professional identity" go beyond internal negotiation; teachers "struggle for voice" when they engage with students, colleagues, and the public. Positioning theory likewise points to the ways teachers' identities orient them and their decisions within various contexts (Davies and Harré, 1998; Kayi-Aydar, 2015).

Identity narratives are fluid contexts for change: transitions or evolutions between and among various identities are neither chronological nor discrete. PSTs are likely to identify during the student teaching semester concurrently as both student *and* teacher, for example, or during coursework as both writer *and* learner (Burnett, 2009), which challenges their perception of their agency. Awareness of identity narratives is a key factor in activating teachers' agency; as Duff (2012) argues: "a sense of agency enables people to imagine, take up, and perform new roles or identities and to take concrete actions in pursuit of their goals" (p. 15). Understanding how their co-existing identities intersect with beliefs helps prepare PSTs to find space to claim agency.

**Narratives of Teacher Belief.** Teachers' various roles and emerging identities play into development of their beliefs about what matters in writing instruction (Cremin and Baker, 2010; Cremin and Locke, 2016), a second narrative strand that influences

teachers' agency. Biesta *et al.* (2015) and Priestley *et al.* (2012) raise the importance of teacher beliefs as discursive resources from which teachers claim agency (or do not). This practice requires metacognitive awareness and a willingness to challenge long-held assumptions. When teachers ground their pedagogical choices within their knowledge of writing and learning theories, they become more powerful in claiming authority and agency in teaching. Helping PSTs become conscious of their belief narratives includes prompting them to recognize their assumptions, develop integrated theories of learning and writing, and articulate their rationale to various audiences. By examining their beliefs in ways that will enable them to communicate them to students, colleagues, mentors, administrators, and other stakeholders, teachers begin to claim space for agency.

**Narratives of Contextual Supports and Constraints.** A third narrative strand relates to how teachers make sense of enabling and constraining influences within teaching contexts. External constraints and institutional pressures that PSTs will face include contexts that resist evolving notions of 21<sup>st</sup> writing (Braun, 2013; Cervetti, *et al.*, 2006; Mills, 2015) or focus on implementing technology without supporting transformative pedagogies to teaching writing (Flanagan and Shoffner, 2013; Hofer and Grandgenett, 2012; Wake and Whittingham, 2013). These institutional narratives pose challenges to PSTs who might otherwise feel prepared for and inclined toward teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. It is, therefore, incumbent upon PSTs to recognize the ways that contextual narratives exert pressure “to either enable or disable teachers from acting in a critical and transformative way” (Giroux, 1988, p. 68).

An ecological approach to teacher agency highlights the importance of working within the institutional frameworks that support or undermine teachers' efforts to enact their beliefs (Biesta and Tedder, 2007; Braun, 2013). Preparing teachers to act within institutional ecologies includes anticipating and assessing affordances and resistances. Crossing institutional borders often poses conflicts, so it is important for PSTs to “anticipate and actively participate in the emergence of such infrastructures” (DeVoss *et al.*, 2005, p. 37) where possible.

### **Activating Discourses for Teacher Agency: Seeing and Selling**

Helping PSTs assume agency in light of these layered narratives of identity, belief, and context requires that they are prepared to go beyond *awareness* of the narratives they bring to teaching; it requires that they also *activate* these discourses to serve outward-facing changes in their own, their students', their colleagues', and/or even their schools' actions related to teaching and learning. Nowacek's (2011) argument that transfer is “a rhetorical act [that] involves seeing and selling” (p. 35) provides a useful insight into how English educators can help PSTs approach agency through metacognition and action. Helping PSTs learn to both “see” their options for action and then strategically “sell” these narratives and choices to various audiences is key to activating their agency and empowering their instructional choices.

**Metacognition as “Seeing.”** Reflection—making sense of past learning experiences and becoming metacognitively aware of present choices (Taczak, 2015)—is an important part of this process of preparing teachers for new contexts and developing open stances toward new theories and methods of writing and teaching. Engaging PSTs

in metacognition and reflection on their beliefs and practices has been one way teacher educators have already worked to disrupt the replication of and entrenchment of traditional mindsets and practices (Rubin, 1989; Schon, 1984). However, agency requires more than just “seeing” or being tuned into narratives that constrain or support teachers’ choices in the classroom.

**Taking Action as “Selling.”** Often, teacher educators adopt the notion that teachers need to “apply” their knowledge of content pedagogy and learning theories in classroom settings; yet Nowacek (2011) problematizes this assumption, claiming that agentive transfer exceeds “mere application; it is also an act of reconstruction” (p. 25). Reconstructing narratives and norms requires teachers to recognize themselves as meaning makers able to activate change using rhetorical tools. Cervetti *et al.* (2006) suggest that teachers can either “confront the conventional wisdom (by replacing existing practices with those from a multiple literacies perspective) or they can infiltrate it (by carefully infusing selected multiple literacies not the official curriculum)” (p. 384). Either of these options is a valid way for teachers to claim agency, depending on context. Both require teachers to “sell” their beliefs and practices to enact change in agentive ways.

## **Methods**

### **Research Question and Overview**

This case study of one secondary English student teacher used metacognitive interviews to understand how English educators might support PSTs transcend limiting norms, beliefs, and curricula around the teaching of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its central question asked: how did narratives of identity, beliefs, and teaching contexts constructed



through metacognitive discourse contribute to the PST's agency in enacting 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogy?

To answer this question, I interviewed one PST, Margot<sup>7</sup>, at five points before, during, and after her four-month internship semester to facilitate metacognitive dialogue about how her identities and beliefs about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing interacted with her teaching context and led to pedagogical choices in the classroom and agency in her new role as teacher.

### **Participant and Teaching Context**

Margot, a 30-year old white woman, was entering her final semester as a graduate student in the English teacher preparation licensure and master's program at a public research university in the eastern United States when she agreed to participate in this study. Having been a graduate student co-instructor in Margot's English Teaching Methods I course one year prior to her internship, I was positioned as a mentor rather than as a researcher. During the research semester, I also taught Margot's weekly internship seminar course, which, like the interviews, centered on practicing reflection, evaluating contexts, and articulating teaching rationale. Her participation in the study was not implicated in her grade or standing in the one-credit seminar course or the internship itself. While there may have been an unintended benefit of our weekly seminar meetings in that they reinforced a reflective and strategic approach to teacher action and agency, I did not collect or assess data from seminar for the purposes of this study.

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<sup>7</sup> Names of the participant and her school are pseudonyms chosen by the researcher.

Unlike most of her peers who completed student teaching under the traditional model, Margot secured an on-the-job internship. This meant that, rather than being placed by the university in an English teacher's classroom for one semester, she was hired directly by a school as the full-time, paid instructor of record for the full academic year, during which she would complete the university requirements for her teaching license in the first of two semesters. Margot's positioning as a full-time teacher intern blended her identities as student and teacher in ways likely to expose her to institutional tensions as well as give her opportunities for agency that student teachers operating within another teacher's classroom may either be protected from or not fully privy to. For these reasons, I selected her to be the case study participant through which I could explore how new teachers engage agentively in new teaching contexts.

Margot was hired to teach International Baccalaureate (IB) English Literature II, English 12, and English 11 at Franklin High School, a socioeconomically, linguistically, and ethnically diverse public high school just outside of a major metropolitan city. As the full-time instructor, she created syllabi, designed assignments, and assessed student work for all five of the classes she taught. She was expected to prepare her 11th grade students for end-of-year state reading and writing tests and her IB students for end-of-course written and oral exams. She was expected to comply with departmental and grade-level guidelines and common assessments and participate in weekly professional learning community (PLCs) meetings for both English 11 and English 12 teachers. Despite administrative pressure to improve students' test scores schoolwide, Margot noted that she experienced unexpected autonomy to make curricular choices (e.g., selecting

literature for IB English and developing new units for English 11). Franklin was a pilot one-to-one school, so Margot and her students were all issued laptops and encouraged to integrate digital technology into in-class learning and out-of-school assignments.

### **Data Collection**

I collected data before, during, and after Margot's internship semester through an iterative series of five stimulated recall interviews (Calderhead, 1981). Questions in each interview drew on artifacts from Margot's two English teaching methods courses and student teaching (a multimodal literacy autobiography, a unit plan, a classroom tour video, teaching materials developed and implemented during student teaching) to promote reflective and critical thinking. In each interview, I prompted Margot to first describe the artifact and then use it to (re)frame her understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. All five interviews included variations of the following questions:

1. What features and experiences define 21<sup>st</sup> century writing? Which of these do you think are most important and least important to the writing curriculum—and why?
2. What support do you believe exists for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing at your teaching site? What constraints or challenges have you noticed or experienced?
3. Is there anything from this interview or a previous interview that may influence or shape how you are thinking about and planning for your own teaching experience?

The data collection process also functioned as a metacognitive intervention to prompt Margot to identify how her experiences and beliefs transferred as she transitioned into new contexts.

### **Data Analysis**

I coded the interview data based on predetermined categories developed from the theoretical propositions (Yin, 2013) outlined in my literature review. Drawing on Nowacek's (2011) rhetorical action framework of "seeing" and "selling" and research on narratives around teacher agency (Biesta *et al.*, 2015; Braun, 2013; Britzman, 2003; Priestley *et al.*, 2012), I read through the interview transcripts and artifacts and coded them for three central narratives related to how the participant "saw" (1) her own identity, (2) her beliefs about writing, and (3) supports and constraints of her teaching context. A secondary analysis of these categories led me to identify threads through which Margot constructed her discourses in ways that connected to her agency. These three central narrative categories and emergent threads, compiled from repeated appearances in the full data set of five interviews, are depicted in Table 4.

Next, I analyzed Margot's interviews and teaching artifacts to discover when and how she engaged these metacognitive narratives to generate agency—in Nowacek's terms, ways she talked about "selling" her commitments to teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. Through this analysis, three key audiences for "selling" emerged from the data: (1) herself, (2) her students, and (3) her colleagues. I used her descriptions of interactions with these three audiences to theorize ways that teachers enact agency as they negotiate strategically in various settings.

**Table 4.** “Seeing”: Narrative Categories and Emergent Threads from Interview and Artifact Data

	<b>Category 1: Identities</b>	<b>Category 2: Beliefs about Writing</b>	<b>Category 3: Teaching Context</b>	
			<b>Supports</b>	<b>Constraints</b>
<b>Emergent Threads</b>	K-12 student writer Professional writer Graduate student writer Preservice teacher Novice teacher	Writers evolve Writing evolves Writing is multimodal Writing is collaborative and process-oriented Writing is for self-expression Students’ future writing contexts should inform writing instruction	Openness to new ideas Access to technology Teacher autonomy	Fixed department rules and expectations Colleagues with “traditional” teaching processes and values Testing Data Teacher accountability Time limitations

Finally, I analyzed Margot’s responses to the final reflection question in each of the five interviews to explore how—and to what extent—she considered the interviews to be activators of her agency as a teacher. From this last layer of analysis emerged the findings that speak most directly to English educators looking for ways to foster agentive mindsets with PSTs.

## Findings

### Narratives as “Seeing:” Avenues to Agency

During the interviews, Margot constructed narratives about herself and her teaching context in ways that made it possible for her to “see” opportunities for agency in teaching with 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies during her internship. Making explicit the narratives of identity, narratives of teaching beliefs regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, and

narratives of support and constraints within her teaching context became an important first step toward Margot assuming agency as a new teacher.

**Narratives of Identity.** Margot drew upon four identity narratives—K-12 student writer, professional writer, graduate student writer, and preservice teacher—as she navigated her way into a new identity as novice high school English teacher. Recalling her own writing education as “limiting and one-dimensional,” Margot said she could not remember learning to write anything in school besides essays, which offered her “little choice and lots of guidelines.” As a K-12 student writer, she identified herself as “extrinsically motivated” and a “proficient writer who could follow rubrics.” These experiences contrasted, however, with the “passionate and flexible writer” she became in her career after graduating from college: as a publicist working for a marketing firm, she viewed herself as a motivated writer as she learned to “pull inspiration from literally everywhere, not just novels and five paragraph essays.” In this role she relished writing press releases and social media posts for public audiences, but she also recognized important links between persuasive academic writing and the writing skills her career required. Because of this, as she noted in interviews 1 and 2, she entered teaching hoping to expose students to a varied curriculum that included writing for public audiences and composing in nontraditional genres alongside teaching persuasion and argument writing.

As a master’s student and preservice teacher in the English teacher education program, Margot noticed overlaps between her identities as graduate student writer and teacher: recalling the challenge to compose a multimodal literacy autobiography during her methods course (see Jensen, 2019 for details about the methods course’s writing-

based curriculum), she noted that composing using text, image, and audio “forced [her] to exercise. . . skills that [she’s] less comfortable with.” This reinforced her commitment to providing diverse writing experiences for her own future students. Because Margot began the teacher education program after a marketing career and three years working in admissions at an independent PK-12 school, she perceived her journey to teaching as less “traditional.” She saw herself as more prepared than some of her peers to engage with students and colleagues with confidence and leadership. Still, as she moved into a full-time teaching role, she recognized her position as a novice teacher made it, in her words, “scary” to voice viewpoints that challenged those of veteran teachers.

**Narratives of Belief about 21<sup>st</sup> Century Writing Instruction.** From the initial pre-semester interview, Margot acknowledged the ways that her past “experiences have shaped [her] and have led to [her] philosophies on writing.” Over the course of the semester, Margot consistently drew upon six central belief narratives about writing that ultimately shaped her commitments to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction. She believed (1) writing evolves; (2) writers evolve; (3) writing is multimodal and visual; (4) writing is collaborative and process-oriented; (5) writing is for self-expression, and (6) students’ future writing contexts should inform writing instruction. Margot’s beliefs about writing instruction centered on both the evolving nature of writing—“Social media has changed writing and the way language evolved linguistically”—and of writers—“Everyone is a writer. Figuring out who you are as a writer is lifelong, and [writers are] going to change as [writing] changes.” Margot was also clear that students’ exposure to digital media and literacies outside of school contexts did not mean they would be proficient multimodal or

digital writers in academic or professional spaces. This belief led to her commitment to designing instruction that would help student writers “become thoughtful with their choices, both visually and with text.”

Making explicit her beliefs led Margot to define principles that would guide her choices in designing writing instruction. For example, her belief that writing is collaborative and process-oriented led her to design a “workshop-style classroom environment.” Her commitment to preparing students for future writing contexts and writing identities led her to embed writing for public and academic audiences, “trying new approaches that move outside of traditional essays.”

**Narratives of Contextual Supports and Constraints.** The interviews prompted Margot to consider how her teaching context both enabled and constrained her ability to enact her beliefs and identities in a classroom setting. Across the semester, Margot acknowledged three ways that her context allowed her the resources and freedom to implement 21<sup>st</sup> century writing: (1) her English 11 team comprised teachers who were open to new ideas, (2) she and her students had access to digital technology, and (3) she had autonomy to make choices about her courses and curriculum outside of limited department and team mandates (e.g., common assessments and required core texts). Margot cited these affordances when she talked about her successes in enacting change in the writing curriculum, particularly in the English 11 course.

However, despite the freedom Margot perceived her teaching context afforded her, much of the discussion in her interviews highlighted the challenges she faced, particularly as a new teacher, in working against what she viewed as external, systemic



pressures. These pressures included: (1) certain fixed department rules and expectations, (2) some colleagues with stubbornly “traditional” teaching beliefs, (3) expectations to prepare students for standardized tests, (4) an institutional focus on data collection, (5) concerns around teacher accountability, and (6) time constraints. More than other narratives that emerged from the interviews, Margot’s constructs of the contextual constraints and pressures she needed to work against required her to process her experiences, reactions from colleagues, and challenges she had not expected.

These constraints, in many ways, opposed the ways Margot’s identity and belief narratives constructed how she had hoped to teach. She worried, for example, about how to remain “loyal to [her] ideals in a system where you still have to prepare students for the [standardized writing test]” or how to reconcile her beliefs when they “don’t necessarily align with the practicality of working in a large school system that’s so data-driven.” When one English teacher proposed students compose multi-genre research projects as a final assessment, Margot witnessed another colleague say, dismissively, “Well, whatever you end up doing, I guess that’s the trendy thing to do now.” Margot worried that her own proposed innovations in teaching writing might be likewise perceived negatively by the colleagues she was working to develop rapport with. She also worried about being judged on her students’ standardized test performance, “especially as a first-year teacher with no record.” Margot’s narratives around her teaching context reflected her awareness of the contextual challenges that impeded her agency in enacting her beliefs and values around 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction. She used this awareness to know where she would—and would not—likely be able to initiate and enact change.

## Rhetorical Framing as “Selling:” Agency in Action

Beyond the internal (re)construction of identity, belief, and context narratives elucidated above, Margot made the important agentive step of transitioning metacognition into action by “selling” her writing pedagogy to create changes and align her practices with her beliefs. Margot acted as an “agent of integration” by articulating her decisions with a range of audiences: she negotiated with herself as she planned her courses, with her students as she framed their learning experiences, and with her colleagues as she advocated for more relevant 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction despite norms and traditions that otherwise resisted change.

**Selling to Self.** Extending what she was able to “see” and name as her core beliefs about teaching writing, Margot’s first—and safest—audience for “selling” these beliefs, particularly those about diversifying classroom writing instruction to include multimodal genres and public audiences, was herself. When she discovered that the English 12 team had mandated a multiple-choice test to assess students’ comprehension of the epic poem, *Beowulf*, Margot resisted the assessment as an irrelevant evaluation of students’ learning. When she discovered other English 12 teachers were subverting the team’s expectation by recording the test as a quiz grade or allowing students to use their notes to take the test, Margot did the same. She articulated her rationale for this choice alongside her frustration with the expectation by saying, “I am going to give [the students] what they need to make sure they can be successful so I can check the box, but it’s like, why are we even doing this if all the teachers are finding shortcuts around this invalid and inauthentic assessment?” As the English 12 team was composed of colleagues who may not have

responded well to a public critique, Margot chose to quietly adapt her course to both meet their demands while staying true to her own values in an act of subversive agency.

With regard to her decisions about how to meet the expectation that she prepare 11th graders for the end-of-course state standardized writing test while still honoring her commitment to expose students to a variety of meaningful 21<sup>st</sup> century writing experiences, Margot articulated her approach to writing instruction as “a way to diversify the types of writing assessments I'm implementing. . . . It reflects my value of balance in what we're teaching. After [the graphic novel personal narrative], we wrote a research paper.” Transferring her named beliefs about writing into concrete pedagogical choices was an important act of agency. Rather than accepting the curricular decisions of her colleagues, even when those expectations were presented as mandates, Margot asserted loyalty to her own teaching beliefs by finding room to quietly and privately subvert expectations that did not align with her values.

**Selling to Students.** A second—and slightly more public—audience to whom Margot articulated her agentive curricular decisions was her students, particularly in response to tensions between external expectations and her own commitments to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction. At the end of the internship semester, Margot reflected on her decision to publicly explain to her students her choices about the ways she diversified writing instruction in her classes. She said:

I don't know if it's unprofessional of me or not, but as I've talked about this with my 11th graders, I have said, “I don't bull, you're in [remediation for the state writing test] and you need to pass and I'm going to help you pass and you're

going to do really well on it.” I kind of joke with them about it; I say, “I’m going to teach you this way to write so that you can pass and then be done with it. But I don’t think you should write this way. Everything else in this class is going to be more authentic and relevant for you.”

Because, in her words, Margot felt “embarrassed to teach formulaic writing” despite her worry that it might be the only way to help students pass the test, she chose to use her agency to make public to her students the conflict she was experiencing. By reframing the purpose of the standardized test preparation as a requirement that she and they were both held accountable for, she carved out room to articulate to her students her belief that a variety of writing tasks was more relevant and consistent with the writing she deemed important. By sharing with her students her apprehension that they adopt a single narrative of what kinds of writing matter, Margot claimed agency to be authentic with her students and to honor her own values.

**Selling to Colleagues.** Finally, in agentic acts of “selling” that might be considered the most public and most likely to promote lasting institutional change, Margot negotiated with her colleagues to make space for the kinds of visual, multimodal, and public writing assignments that better fit her conception of a 21<sup>st</sup> century writing curriculum. In the first instance, Margot approached the lead of her English 11 team, her mentor teacher and a colleague she knew to be open to new ideas, to propose piloting a graphic novel composition assignment with her classes as a variation of the required personal narrative all 11th graders were to compose. Because the mandated personal narrative writing task was scheduled to follow the class’s study of John Lewis’s graphic

novel memoir *March*, Margot believed that having the students compose in the same multimodal form as the book they read would provide a rich opportunity for them to think critically as composers about how visual and textual elements interact in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. The lead teacher agreed to this proposed change, and Margot was surprised when the rest of the teachers on the team were excited to try the new assignment in their classes as well. Because of her willingness to approach her colleagues about this idea, Margot found herself as a first-year teacher leading a team of other experienced teachers in developing a unit wherein students would compose their own personal narratives in graphic novel form.

A second opportunity to advocate publicly for this change presented itself at a department meeting later in the semester when the English teachers were discussing the student writing that would be included in their digital portfolios. When Margot asked about how or if her 11th grade students' graphic novel narratives—the compositions they had worked nearly an entire quarter to complete—would be included in the writing portfolios, she was told no. The portfolios were only for, as Margot reported, “traditional essays.” While somewhat frustrated that her students' multigenre and multimodal work would not be included in their portfolios, Margot made the choice not to challenge the decision further or advocate strongly for making possible multimodal or non-essay portfolio artifacts. In the end, as she weighed the pros and cons of advocating more strongly in this moment, she said, “I don't think [the department is] going to do anything with these portfolios, so I don't really care.”

As a judgment call based on her evaluation of contextual narratives around the likelihood that she or her students would face negative consequences for the decision to not include the graphic novels in their portfolios, this case of conscious inaction is as important an indicator of Margot's agency as if she had chosen to publicly challenge the policy. Negotiating her agency in this setting meant space for Margot to propose without pushing her approach in an environment that might not be open to or ready for it. Burnett and Marchant (2011) describe critical pedagogy dialogues that lead to a range of responses including "resistance, emancipation, or reclaiming power" (p. 43); Margot's agency in this case was not an act of resistance, but a reclamation of power and autonomy to teach in her classroom in ways that were not overseen or mandated by her colleagues. Because the portfolio decision was a disappointment, but not ultimately a threat to her or her students' agency, it was a battle Margot ultimately deemed not worth fighting.

### **Metacognition as Catalyst: Moving toward Teacher Agency**

It is possible to see Margot's individual story—the particular identities and experiences she brought with her and the specific teaching context that made possible her acts of teacher agency—as uniquely prequalifying her to act agentively in ways that other PSTs may not. For this reason, I examined the study itself, asking how the metacognitive interventions—the interviews—created space for dialogue that led to her using these narratives toward action. My hope was to provide a useful framework to extend these findings beyond the single case study, to offer findings likely to apply to other PSTs with different experiences and different backgrounds.

According to Margot, the interviews facilitated metacognition that ultimately led her to activate her agency during her internship. In her words, the series of interviews “made me reflect on how I want to continue going about being true to myself and push the envelope a little bit in terms of what has existed in my school and what I want to be able to do or what I want to exist.” She identified several ways the interviews enabled her to “push the envelope” and envision a new reality despite limitations and constraints: the interviews (1) centered her on her own values; (2) refined how she viewed 21<sup>st</sup> century writing; (3) helped her think carefully about how to plan for and incorporate her values in the classroom; and (4) allowed her to productively air her frustrations.

Ultimately, as she found herself negotiating for agency to enact 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction in contexts that did not always support her beliefs and values, Margot noted that the interviews prompted her to see and sell her choices in context: “There are so many constraints with the current education system and I yield to those constraints sometimes, but. . . these conversations help me [figure out ways I can get around them] and empower me to, like I said before, push the envelope as safely as possible.” Catalyzing agency may be accomplished, as Margot indicates, when English educators prompt PSTs to think metacognitively about their experiences and opportunities to more confidently name, enact, and defend their choices.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Margot’s case study highlights the importance of activating agency through both “seeing” narratives of identity, beliefs, and contexts and “selling” pedagogical choices in rhetorically savvy ways. It also posits that teacher agency can include both public action,

such as Margot's proposed integration of a graphic novel writing unit to the English 11 curriculum, as well as strategic inaction, such as her decision not to challenge the department's narrow guidelines around students' portfolio submissions. Teachers claim agency in a range of ways, including deliberate decision making in their own planning, through dialogue with their students, as well as with more public audiences, such as colleagues, administrators, and even parents. Margot's case study suggests that an explicit focus on constructing discourses through metacognition is likely to help PSTs navigate constraints and negotiate for agency.

Many English education programs facilitate opportunities for PSTs to reflect on their past learning and writing experiences, develop beliefs related to relevant learning theories, and even assess institutional dynamics and expectations. In these ways, "seeing" discourses of identity, beliefs, and contexts are already integral to methods courses, fieldwork, and student teaching. However, Margot's case study points to ways that English educators should consider a greater focus on the agency-enabling act of preparing PSTs to "sell" their beliefs and values, particularly in challenging contextual settings. Key questions English educators may ask PSTs to activate their agentic metacognition include: What choices are you making in your curriculum? What values or beliefs are you drawing on to arrive at those choices? How might stakeholders in your institutional context respond to the choices you are making? How might you articulate your choices most convincingly or effectively to these stakeholders?

English educators cannot predetermine the identities or beliefs PSTs bring to English education programs, nor the institutional demands of the teaching contexts where



they go when they leave the university. However, they can cue PSTs to think and act agentively in key ways, including making internal and external negotiations more conscious through both seeing and selling, reframing application of theory to practice as reconstruction of narratives, and prompting PSTs to imagine possibilities that do not already exist in their teaching contexts. These ways of thinking may be activated by articulating teaching rationale to make explicit the pedagogical choices they make as they design units and lesson plans, for example. As PSTs enter unfamiliar teaching contexts, it is likewise important for them to strategically assess institutional priorities and expectations to find agentive spaces and then to take strategic action.

It will be as new ELA teachers activate and engage 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies that academic writing instruction will shift to more closely reflect the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. English educators must do more than introduce theories to influence PSTs beliefs, but must engage them in action. Identifying and continually reconstructing narratives around identities, beliefs, and contexts is the cornerstone to developing agency that will evolve throughout a teaching career. In this way, “seeing” and “selling” 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies in agentive ways requires an openness to change and a willingness to consider and reconsider deeply-held beliefs about writing and teaching. English educators can sow the seeds for these adaptive mindsets from the earliest stages of PSTs’ teaching careers as they implement metacognitive reflection in ways that lead to identifying and claiming agency, or, as Margot put it, “pushing the envelope as safely as possible.”

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## **CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION**

Sitting in a coffee shop in my neighborhood, I pull out my laptop, boot it up, and log into Google Classroom. It's September 2018, the start of a new academic year, and I'm checking in to respond to questions posed and teaching materials uploaded for feedback by Margot, Janine, Callie, and Leila, the preservice teachers featured in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation. It's been two years since we all met in the English Teaching Methods I course I co-taught as a doctoral student and just over a year since we had our first interviews during the initial weeks of their student teaching internships. Over the past year, there's been a lot of movement as all four then-preservice teachers completed their internships, earned their teaching licenses, and eventually secured full-time jobs as middle- and high-school English teachers, most of them teaching at new schools and in different grade levels than in their student teaching placements.

The data collection phase of my dissertation research had concluded with the end of their internships, yet the four case study participants asked if there was a way for us to stay connected as a group. They wanted to learn about how the other participants—colleagues and friends from their English teaching program cohort and fellow new teachers—navigated their particular and various institutional contexts. They were eager to compare their own emerging conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and pedagogy and to learn from their peers. They hoped to continue investigating the lines of inquiry we had

begun during their internships, eager to draw on the collective knowledge and experience of the group as they began their official teaching careers in four different schools.

Voluntarily, the now first-year teachers and I agreed to stay connected in what we named our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teacher Learning Community (TLC), where we'd meet virtually and in person throughout the school year to further our conversations about 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction, to offer feedback on lessons, writing assignments, and assessments, and to problem solve challenges they encountered as they navigated early-career teaching transitions.

I share the narrative of how these four teachers and I came to extend what began as a dissertation project into an ongoing professional learning community—even though it is outside of the scope of my original research design—because the participants' engagement encapsulates the findings and future possibilities of this study that are most promising and valuable to researchers and practitioners of English education. I conclude this project by first reflecting on the findings that emerged from the three-part study, offering ways my research answers key questions in the field. I then examine future directions for research and practice in English education, making recommendations that will further the field's knowledge about preparing teachers for future-oriented writing and teaching. Finally, I return to the case study participants themselves, considering our next steps for exploring relevant inquiries within the broader project of defining and teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## **Looking Back: Key Findings and Implications from this Research Study**

Each of the preceding chapters details how preservice teachers—including the four case study participants highlighted here and in Chapters 3 and 4—grappled with and implemented their developing understandings of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in the contexts of various sites of learning within the English teaching program. Taken as a whole, the project reveals a set of findings that shape how English educators can catalyze the transfer and evolution of preservice teachers' learning across contexts. By drawing their attention to the inherent flux of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing while prompting them to reflect on their writer, learner, and teacher identities, English educators can poise preservice teachers to enter an evolving field prepared to influence future pedagogies.

First, preservice teachers can develop a complex and nuanced understanding of writing principles when we engage them writers, learners, and teachers throughout every phase of their teacher preparation. Efforts to develop these understandings must go beyond single-site interventions such as modifying methods course assignments or adding a new course to a program of study. The research study tracks metacognitive interventions across methods courses and into student teaching to examine how preservice teachers develop and change conceptions within these sites. Chapter 2 argues, for example, that preservice teachers need authentic opportunities to practice 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in methods courses—including composing digital and/or multimodal texts that they may not have considered before to be valid in academic spaces. Along with practicing as writers and teachers, preservice teachers will be more likely to succeed

when they interrogate their assumptions about how and what they learned how to write in formal school settings as well as why they design learning experiences the way they do.

Preservice teachers need to practice making transitions between learning and teaching early and often in their programs by articulating rhetorical, cognitive, and sociocultural rationales for integrating writing experiences into their future classrooms. As they move from the university into secondary classrooms, they need to continue to position themselves as learners, recognizing the important learning that can only emerge from examining teaching tensions in context. Chapter 4 highlights how preservice teachers can develop robust and responsive frameworks for writing theories and pedagogy during their field experiences through relatively limited intervention. English educators can support preservice teachers through these transitions by designing experiences that engage them as writers, learners, and teachers throughout their programs and by prioritizing metacognition in every role and in every site.

Second, when preservice teachers become reflective practitioners throughout their teacher preparation—most importantly, within their first teaching experiences—they become clearer about what they know and what they’re learning and thus better able to ground their practice within these core principles. Preservice teachers need both formal and informal opportunities to reflect meaningfully on their experiences to help them develop and complicate theories related to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction. As Callie said in Chapter 3, the conversations we had throughout her internship reminded her of her values and prompted her to consider how best to honor those values despite conflicting demands and the overwhelming day-to-day of managing so many teacher tasks. When

she viewed her teaching through the lens of our shared inquiry, she was able to see new possibilities and reframe disappointments. When teachers develop a reflective disposition from the beginning of their teaching lives, and have that disposition supported across sites of learning, they are willing to adapt within their own contexts to make changes. For example, Leila made an adaptation as a writer in the methods class described in Chapter 2 when she decided to compose her own Story of Injustice as a graphic novel; later, during her internship described in Chapter 3, she revised her students' writing warm-ups to include 21<sup>st</sup> century genres like memes, despite narrowly-defined departmental expectations for formal writing instruction. English educators can help preservice teachers develop inquiry-based reflective practice during methods coursework and practice it throughout their field experiences through the kinds of limited metacognitive interventions described in this study.

Third, in addition to understanding how their own identities shape their beliefs about teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and developing reflective practice as a tool for navigating their teaching transitions, preservice teachers can implement and advocate for improved writing instruction when they know how to assess new teaching contexts and act agentively within them. When teachers ground their pedagogical choices within their knowledge of writing and learning theories, they claim authority to teach in informed and purposeful ways. Particularly as teachers move between contexts—from university methods courses into student teaching, from student teaching into their first teaching site, and eventually into other new teaching contexts throughout their careers—they must be prepared to assess and work within institutional structures, staying true to their values

while responding to changing dynamics in the field. In Chapter 4, I explore how Margot practiced *seeing* opportunities to evolve writing instruction in her classroom toward multimodal genres, as well as how she, in her words, “push[ed] the envelope as safely as possible” by *selling* those ideas to herself, her colleagues, and her students. When preservice teachers have developed a core set of teaching values and can position themselves agentively within a teaching site, they can extend what they know to how they practice, and eventually, to how they advocate for these practices in their schools. English educators can build preservice teachers’ agentive capacity by helping them practice articulating their beliefs and practices in safe and public ways—to their colleagues, their students, and themselves.

Finally, because writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in flux and because teachers are called upon to respond to these changing conditions, it is important for English educators to ground preservice teachers’ practice with writing theories and writing pedagogies within a perspective of flux and transition. Teaching writing principles with an understanding of their situatedness means adapting flexible and evolving practices of writing instruction in methods courses; it also requires learning from preservice teachers about the kinds of writing genres, processes, and experiences they and their students value both in and out of the classroom. Just as we expect of new teachers entering the field, English educators need to orient our own practices from a place of transition, acknowledging the changing conditions and growing range of communicative possibilities in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing. When we prepare preservice English teachers to consider themselves practitioners of and advocates for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, we help

position them to redefine how future students, teachers, scholars, and English educators imagine and enact writing instruction in the 21st century. We also position ourselves as learners about how expectations and practices within the field change the experiences our preservice teachers are having.

Ultimately, if we want students to learn differently, to access a wider range of writing possibilities in their school-based writing instruction, and to be prepared for a writing future that is still unfolding, we need to make sure the preservice teachers we work with understand the evolving nature inherent in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing possibilities and practices. In order to be resilient and effective writing teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the next generation of teachers needs to be deliberately flexible, to be able to construct and revisit nuanced conceptual frameworks that will sustain their long-term professional growth. Indeed, English educators should embrace 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction as a relevant and timely exigency for helping new teachers establish flexible frameworks and future-oriented practices generally, because comprehending the flux and evolution inherent in conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing will help teachers more broadly prepare to continue learning and changing their teaching practices accordingly.

### **Looking Forward: New Directions for Future Practice and Research**

How can English educators cultivate teaching practices and research that will develop preservice teachers' beliefs about and effective implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in the English classroom? This study's findings tell us that even minimal interventions with preservice teachers during their teacher preparation programs can support them in developing and enacting knowledge that transfers beyond the university

classroom into real-world teaching contexts. These interventions can take place in methods courses and in field experiences, and they should engage preservice teachers as reflective practitioners and co-constructors of knowledge.

English educators should integrate regular metacognitive exercises alongside preservice teachers' writing assignments and lesson plan designs during methods courses. Such reflections might ask preservice teachers to consider how their past, present, and future writing experiences or teaching beliefs inform their compositional or pedagogical choices: "How does the lesson plan you designed reflect your own past writing experiences? Which of your current beliefs about writing does this unit represent? How might you imagine this writing task might evolve to represent the future possibilities of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?" By helping preservice teachers establish a regular pattern of interrogating their own writing and lesson planning to name the principles and values underlying their choices, English educators can help position them as purposeful, metacognitive, reflective practitioners. This practice will also help attune future teachers to evolving possibilities in changing contexts for writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

An extension of this metacognitive intervention would be to prompt preservice teachers to articulate their rationale for teaching choices to real or imagined audiences of administrators, teacher colleagues, parents, and/or students. Anticipating future scenarios in which they might ask for support or justify a teaching decision will help preservice teachers see the rhetorical potential they have when they claim and enact agency as teachers. Instilling metacognitive and transfer-focused practices from the beginning of teacher preparation will not only help preservice teachers make meaning in their current

roles as writers and learners, but it will also help them anticipate transferring their knowledge into new contexts and roles.

Beyond methods courses, English educators should use field experiences as continued learning spaces by reinforcing practices of metacognition and reflection-on-practice related to teaching writing. Interventions in these settings might include engaging mentor teachers or university supervisors to help preservice teachers track how their own theoretical frameworks develop and evolve based on their teaching experiences. Like I did during my interviews with participants during student teaching, mentors or supervisors can ask guiding questions that will help preservice teachers connect specific teaching scenarios or challenges to relevant theories they already know or are developing. Helping preservice teachers define principles of teaching writing—and determine how their commitments show up in their planning and instruction—can be a natural extension of the reflective practice and professional development these mentors are already offering to preservice teachers. Another possibility would be to establish communities of practice among preservice teacher peers—in an internship seminar or in an online forum, for example—in which teachers in the same early phase of their professional careers help each other investigate and develop relevant frameworks of theory and practice together.

Focusing on 21<sup>st</sup> century writing—particularly the rhetorical and social power of emerging genres and approaches—is crucial to the preparation of future English teachers because of the central role these literacies already play in teachers’ and students’ lives, and because of the increasingly dominant presence of digital technologies in schools and

expectations for their use in classrooms. Just as this study situates new teachers at the center of these future inquiries, so also should English educators recognize that the preservice teachers with whom we work should be at the center of developing complex and mutable understandings of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, in general, and its role in the secondary English classroom, in particular. Working together alongside the next generation of English teachers, we will best be able to both imagine and influence future teaching practices.

As English educators consider future research, this study reiterates the value of partnering with preservice teachers, studying *with* them rather than studying *about* them. In this research project, at least, this methodological approach seems to have set all four teachers up for lasting investment in the inquiries we raised together. This is especially important because of the ways preservice teachers' encounters with 21<sup>st</sup> century writing will continue to change during their future teaching careers, and the significant role practicing teachers will have on continuing to influence the field's knowledge about how writing and teaching will continue to change. Their ability to articulate and envision these changes, to breathe life into curricula and practices at the schools where they now and will eventually teach, is an important way for them to help move the field along in its conceptions of and implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies.

From the perspective of writing studies researchers, situating research on shifting conceptions and practices around 21<sup>st</sup> century writing should look to preservice teachers' beliefs, practices, and experiences because of the ways these new teachers (both those studying to teach secondary English as well as graduate students preparing to teach



college composition) bring fresh perspectives to long-held traditions and institutionally-embedded teaching practices. As the findings from this research study show, learning from upcoming and new English teachers about their conceptions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing genres, writing processes, and writing pedagogies may provide helpful contexts and constructs for our field's evolving understanding of the future of writing instruction. As theories are enacted through practice, particularly the practice of those most likely to interrogate and evolve their notions, the praxis of preservice and early-career teachers becomes an important site of study for writing research. These sites also give a glimpse of what the next generation of writing instruction is likely to entail.

One important question for future research that emerges from a contextualized case study like the one I have described is how might those who prepare future English teachers offer inquiry-based interventions more broadly? Is it possible to scale up interventions to support a greater number of preservice teachers? These questions are fertile ground for continued research, particularly about how English educators can catalyze a range of participants in supervised teaching settings, such as mentor teachers, university supervisors, peers, and the teacher candidates themselves to engage in reflection that would lead to similar outcomes, preparing preservice teachers to inquire into and articulate their emerging beliefs and knowledge. What would it look like to integrate questions interrogating preservice teachers' experiences and beliefs into existing structures for reflection-on-practice, as outlined above? How, and to what extent, are questions related to 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and learning particularly relevant departure points for such inquiries? How might preservice teachers engage with and foster

threshold concepts related to evolving writing pedagogies—and how might their learning inform the field about new directions and future possibilities?

### **Looking Beyond: Further Inquiries and Next Steps**

I find it promising that the four participants with whom I worked so closely over the past two years want to continue exploring the lines of inquiry we began together as they continue into their next teaching transitions. By choosing to form a community dedicated to ongoing investigation and introspection into 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices in the secondary English classroom, these teachers are drawing on the foundation we set as co-constructors of knowledge through metacognitive practice. I am eager to see the ways their insights and questions prompt them to construct approaches to writing instruction that will serve future teachers and future students of writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The next phase of this longitudinal research study will push beyond the parameters of the teacher preparation program into how early career teachers transfer and extend their learning into initial classroom experiences. It is connected to my original inquiry about how English teachers—new teachers, in particular—develop mindsets that prepare them to navigate changing realities and possibilities in teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing, and it extends this inquiry into how teachers implement and/or evolve these mindsets in new contexts during their early careers. I am curious about how, and to what extent, these new teachers find confidence to advocate for 21<sup>st</sup> century writing instruction in their local schools, in wider professional settings, and even in public discourses around literacy education. It is my hope that they will become leaders for change, but it will

require extending this case study's timeline and breadth to see how lasting and impactful the findings reported here are as teachers progress in their careers.

In many ways, these teachers' first transitions after completing the teacher preparation program represent the flux that so many preservice and early-career teachers experience. Callie moved to a new state, where she is teaching middle school again after finishing a short-term high-school English position last spring at the same school where Margot teaches. Leila accepted a full-time position teaching advanced English at a suburban high school that is demographically and academically very different from the urban school where she student taught. After teaching at a range of middle and high schools in the area, Janine secured a full-time teaching job mid-year at the middle school where her two children are students. Only Margot remains teaching at the same school where she completed her on-the-job teaching internship last fall. All four continue to navigate the pressures of being new teachers while also establishing professional identities and managing the tensions that come with situating themselves in new settings.

These teachers' interest in continuing our inquiry and reflective work together represents a desire for continuity in the face of so much change, a connection to their teacher preparation roots as they transition away from the university and into their first professional teaching sites. As I log into our shared Google Classroom, I am eager to discover the questions they bring to their newest teaching experiences because their questions help me learn about how the teachers' transitions continue to position them and the greater field of writing pedagogy in flux. I share here some of the questions they pose as examples of the new directions this research may explore.

Margot asks, “Where and how can we assess students in ways that are more reflective of 21<sup>st</sup> century practices, specifically multimodal writing?” It is her objective to make her assessment goals more concrete as a way to formalize the multimodal writing experiences she established the year prior with her 11<sup>th</sup> graders and advocated for with her teaching team. She is also curious about how schools can build professional learning communities where new teachers feel comfortable advocating for their ideas, including 21<sup>st</sup> century writing practices.

Drawing on her experiences at two schools where high test scores are a clear administrative priority, Leila wonders, “How can new teachers provide meaningful writing opportunities for students while adhering to state and school standards?” She highlights the importance of new teachers creating goals for themselves and finding the language to articulate these goals so they can be more intentional in implementing the pedagogies that represent their values. She hopes that the TLC will support her as she develops confidence in advocating for authentic and diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century writing experiences for her students in the coming year.

Janine inquires, “How can teachers build 21<sup>st</sup> century practices into their classrooms with or without technology?” As the only case study participant teaching in a school without school-issued laptops for each student, she wants to explore how some of the teaching innovations she experimented with during student teaching reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century writing principles although they did not take place in digital spaces. Finally, Callie asks, “What practices can we put in place in the classroom to help students step outside of their academic comfort zones?” Her question explores how students respond

when teachers push boundaries of academic writing; she is curious about how teachers can set up environments conducive to productive risk-taking for student writers.

As I consider how the group looks back on lessons learned and questions raised as they bring new questions to this next phase of their teaching careers, the inquiries each of the participants pose to the group—questions they will explore throughout this next academic year—represent the promise of collaborating with teachers for this kind of research. In response to flux inherent in these teachers' emerging professional identities and situations, this group offers a sense of continuity and grounding in the principles they've worked hard to develop as well as a space for continued evolution in finding new ways to respond to new challenges and changing contexts and possibilities related to teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Further reaches of this research project will allow me to explore questions about how teachers' mindsets and conceptions about writing develop and evolve as they transition into the field. These questions are valuable for English educators who want to set preservice teachers up to be grounded in their commitments to writing theories while remaining flexible and adaptive to future possibilities about how writing will change throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Questions I hope to explore include: How does investing in developing complex and nuanced conceptions of writing and writing pedagogies during preservice teachers' transitional stage—particularly during student teaching—set them up to begin their careers as reflective practitioners and change agents? What happens when teachers enter the classroom with clear conceptions of relevant writing theories and are prepared to engage with and contribute to the field? How will new teachers transfer and

adapt their knowledge as they face their next teaching sites or solve their next teaching problems? Finally, how do teachers' mindsets—particularly their perceptions concerning 21<sup>st</sup> century writing—develop and shift as they move between different sites of teaching and learning and as writing continues to evolve?

My hope is that our related inquiries will establish a lasting community of practice—and a model which can be replicated elsewhere—through which new teachers will engage meaningfully in metacognitive reflective practice as a way to transfer and extend their learning at each step of the way. In order to understand if this is possible, I will need to ask of the research process itself: what structures are necessary to develop and sustain a community of practice like the one we have established? How might English educators create conditions for teachers to establish their own communities that can be self-regulated and require minimal, if any, ongoing institutional support? What are the benefits and challenges to new teachers of participating in cross-institutional collaboration? What might be possible venues and opportunities for new teachers to share what they're learning with the field?

### **Final Thoughts**

The context-rich genesis of the questions these teachers bring to their work and the relevance of their questions to ongoing investigations of teaching and learning in the field of English education are exciting and promising. I know that these teachers' questions will guide not only our conversations with each other but also our next steps as a field. Just as working with them during their methods courses and through their student teaching experiences helped us all consider and reconsider the principles and practices of

21<sup>st</sup> century writing, our ongoing inquiry will capture the changes inherent in their continued practices. It is my hope that continuing the conversation with this group of bright and engaged new teachers during the first years of their careers will give them support in orienting to new settings while still holding on to the values they defined and adjusting their practices to reflect new contexts.

Ultimately, extending the fundamental grounding concept that this study confirms—that when teachers articulate their knowledge, they become more ready to enact their commitments in their teaching practices as well as argue from that knowledge to change the field—suggests that offering opportunities for teachers to investigate and name what they know about teaching is a promising way to cultivate and honor the realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing and teaching in flux. I am eager to learn more from Margot, Callie, Leila, and Janine and other teachers like them as we explore together the new frontiers of writing and the future promise of writing instruction in the coming decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **APPENDIX A: METHODS COURSE SURVEYS**

### **Beginning of Semester Reflective Survey: What Counts as Writing in the Secondary English Classroom?<sup>8</sup>**

#### **About You**

1. To help us identify your responses at the end of the semester, please provide your G number here.
2. Please choose a pseudonym by which you prefer to be referenced if your coursework and/or reflective responses are included in research publications and/or presentations.

#### **Writing in Grades 6-12**

3. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with.

#### **Writing for Different Purposes**

4. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with specifically in the context of their SCHOLARLY lives.
5. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with specifically in the context of their current and/or future PROFESSIONAL lives.
6. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with specifically in the context of their PERSONAL lives.
7. Describe the role TECHNOLOGY plays in the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with.

#### **Your Future Teaching Experience**

8. As a future teacher, what kinds of writing do you expect to include in your grades 6-12 English Language Arts curriculum? Why?
9. What factors do you expect to influence the kinds of writing you will teach?

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<sup>8</sup> Survey administered after first class session via Google Forms survey tool



**Reflections on Yourself as a Writer**

10. How would you describe your own experience as a writer with the kinds of writing you think are important for your future students to know how to do?
11. In which areas do you consider yourself strong or proficient as a writer?
12. In which areas do you consider yourself weak or developing as a writer?
13. In what ways do you hope this course will help you develop as a writer so you can be best prepared to work with your future students?

**OPTIONAL.** Is there anything else this survey brought up for you that you'd like to say or ask?

**End of Semester Reflective Survey:  
What Counts as Writing in the Secondary English Classroom?<sup>9</sup>**

**About You**

1. To help us identify your responses, please type your G number here.
2. If you remember the pseudonym you chose on the first survey, please type it again here. If you forgot, you may type "I forgot."

**Writing in Grades 6-12**

3. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with.

**Writing for Different Purposes**

4. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with specifically in the context of their **SCHOLARLY** lives.
5. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with specifically in the context of their current and/or future **PROFESSIONAL** lives.
6. Describe the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with specifically in the context of their **PERSONAL** lives.
7. Describe the role **TECHNOLOGY** plays in the kinds of writing you think are important for students in grades 6-12 to value and have fluency with.

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<sup>9</sup> Survey administered after last class session via Google Forms survey tool

**Your Future Teaching Experience**

8. As a future teacher, what kinds of writing do you expect to include in your grades 6-12 English Language Arts curriculum? Why?
9. What factors do you expect to influence the kinds of writing you will teach?

**Reflections on Yourself as a Writer**

10. How would you describe your own experience as a writer, specifically in this course, with the kinds of writing you think are important for your future students to know how to do?
11. In which areas has this course and its related assignments addressed areas in which you consider yourself strong or proficient as a writer?
12. In which areas has this course and its related assignments addressed areas in which you consider yourself weak or developing as a writer?
13. In what ways has (or has not) this course helped you develop as a writer so you can be best prepared to work with your future students?
14. How, if at all, have the writing and teaching and learning activities throughout this course changed your conception of what counts (or what might/should count) as writing in an academic setting? Have you come to new conclusions, and if so, why?

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS**

### **INTERVIEW 1: Perspectives on Writing**

**Timeframe:** August 2017 (Prior to internship start)

*Interviewer:* Let's begin by taking a look at the artifacts related to your "Perspectives on Writing: Pecha Kucha" project, the first assignment you did in the English Teaching Methods I class of your teacher preparation program. [Together, interviewer and participant will watch the participant's video and look over the written/visual drafts the participant brought, if any.]

#### **Artifact-Based Questions: Composing Process**

*Interviewer:* For these questions, I want to focus on the steps you went through in the process of planning, drafting, discussing, creating, and sharing the different versions of your Perspectives on Writing project. Think about yourself as a writer for these questions.

- 1) Tell me about your process for composing this product. Describe the steps you took to compose the drafts, including those that were required (visual poster and digital video) and any other products you created or experiences you had as part of your own composition process.
  - a) Which part(s) of the composing process for this assignment did you find useful or constructive and why?
  - b) Which part(s) were challenging and why?
  - c) Did you take any risks while composing this product? Why or why not?
  - d) If so, what were the risks and why did you take them? If not, were there any risks you might have taken, but didn't? Why did you perceive them to be risks? Either way, what was the outcome?
- 2) To what extent do you believe the digital and multimodal aspects of this assignment influenced your thinking and/or reflection? How would your experience have been different if you had been asked to compose a traditional written response instead?
- 3) How valuable students' experiences in the writing curriculum of an English class would you consider composing using multiple modes and digital platforms?

Very Valuable  
Valuable

Valuable

Somewhat Valuable

Not

- 4) Imagine yourself working on a collaborative team with another teacher who believes that multimodal or digital composition is [choose Very Valuable or Not Valuable - whichever is the *opposite* end of respondent's answer]. What reasons or rationale might you give to this teacher to support your own belief?

### **Artifact-Based Questions: Assignment Content**

*Interviewer:* For the next set of questions, I'd like to focus on the content of your work. Remember, the questions the assignment asked you to think about, both for yourself and for the young writer you interviewed, were: [give a copy of the questions to the participant to look over] a) How did you learn to write and who and what influenced your relationship to writing, in and out of school? b) What do you believe are the purposes of writing, in and out of school? c) What supported your ability to write and your interest in writing, in and out of school? d) What impeded your ability to write and your interest in writing, in and out of school?

- 5) Can you identify concepts or principles of writing from this piece that you think represent your core values or priorities as a writer? What about as a teacher of writing?
- a) Have your core values or priorities about writing changed or evolved since you composed this project nearly a year ago?
  - b) Are there experiences or beliefs about writing or teaching writing that you would now consider core values or priorities that may not have been conveyed through your project, but that you would like to add?
- 6) To what extent do you think this artifact (both in its content and delivery) reflects processes, products, or experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing? What kinds of factors from your experiences as a writer, student, and/or teacher do you think might have influenced this?

### **Reflections: Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom**

*Interviewer:* For the last set of questions, please feel free to think about and draw upon your "Perspectives on Writing: Pecha Kucha" assignment as well as the full range of your writing experiences, as well as what you have experienced throughout your teacher preparation program coursework, fieldwork, and/or teaching experience so far.

- 7) What features do you think define or characterize writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

- 8) What kinds of writing experiences do you think are most important for writers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to have?
- 9) What role do you believe these features and experiences [rename some of the features participant identified in Questions #9 and #10] have in writing curriculum of the secondary English classroom?
  - a) Which 21<sup>st</sup> century features and experiences do you think are most important and least important to your future writing curriculum—and why?
- 10) You are about to start your internship in teaching English in the secondary schools. Is there anything we talked about in our interview today that caught your attention or made you think differently about teaching and learning in this new context?
- 11) Is there anything else you would like to say about topics related to this interview that we didn't get a chance to cover?

## **INTERVIEW 2: Preparing for Teaching Writing**

**Timeframe:** August/September 2017 (Prior to or just at the beginning of internship)

*Interviewer:* Let's begin by taking a look at the unit plans you designed as two of your major assignments in the English Teaching Methods I and/or Methods II classes of your teacher preparation program. [Together, interviewer and participant will look over the copies of the unit plans.]

### **Artifact-Based Questions: Methods I and II Teaching Unit Plans**

*Interviewer:* For these questions, I want to focus on the choices you made around the teaching of writing in both of the units and in the lesson plans that you designed. I know that neither unit plan asked for you to explicitly focus on writing or include a major writing assessment, so don't worry if writing wasn't your focus when designing this particular unit. Keeping in mind, though, that teaching English in the secondary schools weaves together reading, writing, listening, and oral communications skills, lessons, and assignments, let's examine what kinds of writing opportunities and experiences exist in your lessons as you designed them.

- 1) Let's start by identifying any writing or composition tasks, exercises, or activities you included in your unit plans. Can you highlight or flag them in the document?
- 2) Looking at the tasks, exercises, and activities you flagged in your unit plans, tell me what you notice about how student writing features in your units overall.
  - a) Overall, what kinds of writing experiences have you designed?
  - b) For what kinds of audiences and purposes did you plan for students to write?
  - c) In what kinds of genres did you plan for student to write?
  - d) What forms of digital technology, if any, did you include, related to writing?
- 3) Can you identify concepts or principles of writing from your teaching materials and plans that you would define as core values or priorities for you teacher of writing?
  - a) Have your core values and priorities about writing changed or evolved since you completed this assignment a semester or more ago? How?
  - b) Are there core values and/or priorities about writing that you would now consider important that may not have been conveyed through your project?
  - c) How might you imagine these values or priorities might show up either as revised versions of these units or in other units you have yet to design?
- 4) Did you take any risks in designing the writing experiences, tasks, or assessments for your unit? Why or why not?
  - a) If so, what were the risks and why did you take them? If not, were there any risks you might have taken, but didn't?

- b) Why did you perceive them to be risks?
  - c) Either way, what was the outcome?
- 5) Imagine yourself defending this assignment, task, or assessment to another teacher, parent, or student who does not believe the writing experience you have designed is valuable. What reasons or rationale might you give to support your instructional choices?

**Reflections: Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom**

*Interviewer:* For the last set of questions, please feel free to think about and draw upon the unit plans you designed for your Methods I and Methods II courses, as well as the full range of your experiences in the secondary English classroom: as a student yourself, as an observer, as a teacher, etc.

- 6) In our previous interview, you defined what you would consider features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as [name features described in Question #9 and #10 of first interview]. Is there anything you would like to change or add to this description at this point?
- 7) To what extent do you think your teaching materials and lesson plans reflect processes, products, and/or experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing? What factors may have influenced your thinking about how or whether to include these aspects of writing in your unit design?
- 8) Which 21<sup>st</sup> century features and experiences do you think are most important and least important to the writing curriculum—and why?
- 9) You are about to start [or have just started] your internship in teaching English in the secondary schools. Is there anything we talked about in our interview today that caught your attention or made you think differently about teaching and learning in this context?
- 10) Is there anything else you would like to say about topics related to this interview that we didn't get a chance to cover?

**INTERVIEW 3: Classroom and School Environment**  
**Timeframe:** September/October 2017 (Month one/two of internship)

*Interviewer:* Let's begin by talking about your internship environment: your school, your classroom, your students, and your mentor teacher. We will also take a look at the classroom tour video you made and the diagram you drew of your classroom.

**Artifact-Based Questions: Classroom Tour Video and Diagram**

- 1) Tell me about the school you are working in this semester.
  - a) What do you know about its size, its demographics, its student body?
  - b) What have you learned or observed so far about the institutional and instructional priorities among school administrators?
  - c) Teachers in your department?
  - d) Your mentor teacher?
- 2) Tell me about your specific teaching placement.
  - a) What classes will you be teaching, and how many of each?
  - b) Will you be working with any special populations of students (students with disabilities, English language learners, AP/IB students, Dual Enrollment, etc.)?
- 3) How is the curriculum developed for the courses you will be teaching? (For example, do grade-level or subject-level teams collaborate on units, lessons, assessments? Are there any curriculum maps, pacing guides, textbooks, lesson materials, or common assessments that you will be expected to use?)
  - a) As a student teacher, how do you expect you will work within the curricular structures in place and with other teachers to develop and implement lesson plans and assessments this semester?
- 4) Let's take a look at your classroom. [Together, interviewer and participant will view the classroom tour video and look over the classroom diagram.]
  - a) Tell me about what aspects of the classroom design, layout, and resource allocation align with your values and priorities as a writing teacher.
  - b) What would you change if you could?
  - c) What would you keep?
- 5) What kind of access do students and teachers have to technology in the classroom? In the school? At home? What role does technology play in the learning and teaching environment?



**Reflections: Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom**

*Interviewer:* For the last set of questions, please feel free to think about and draw upon the full range of your experiences in the school where you have been placed for your internship, including any experiences prior to this semester through field experiences, observing your mentor teacher and other teachers within or outside of your department, etc.

- 6) From what you have observed so far, how, if at all, does your mentor teacher (or other teachers you've observed) use technology for and/or with the teaching of writing? What have you observed about how students use technology in their school-based writing processes and products? Can you give any examples?
- 7) In our previous interviews, you defined what you would consider features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as [name features described in Question #9 and #10 of first interview and modified in the subsequent interview]. Is there anything you would like to change or add to this description at this point?
- 8) What aspects of the school environment, resources, curriculum, and/or values support the teaching and learning of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies in the classes you will be teaching? What constraints or challenges have you observed or do you anticipate?
- 9) You have now been in the internship site for [number of weeks]. Is there anything we talked about in our interview today that caught your attention about teaching and learning in this context? Is there anything from a previous interview that may have influenced or shaped how you are thinking about and planning for your own teaching experience?
- 10) Is there anything else you would like to say about topics related to this interview that we didn't get a chance to cover?

## **INTERVIEW 4: Teaching Writing in Context**

**Timeframe:** November/December 2017 (Month three/four of internship)

*Interviewer:* Let's begin by taking a look at the writing-based unit plan and/or lesson plan(s) you brought with you that you recently taught in your internship placement classroom. [Together, interviewer and participant will look over the copies of the unit and/or lesson plans.]

### **Artifact-Based Questions: Internship Unit and/or Lesson Plan(s)**

*Interviewer:* For these questions, I want to focus on the choices you made around the teaching of writing in the lessons and/or unit you brought with you today. It's okay if the writing component of your teaching figures as a subset of a larger thematic or literature-based unit. We will also have a chance to discuss and reflect on your experience teaching the lessons or unit you planned.

- 1) Let's start by talking about the writing- or composition-focused task, exercise, activity, or unit you selected from your student teaching experience to talk about today. Tell me about the writing experience you designed for your students.
  - a) What were the learning goals you set out for the students? Can you point to one or two examples in your assignment directions, assessment criteria, and/or other materials you brought to identify how you communicated these learning goals?
  - b) What did you ask students to do?
  - c) How did you guide their experience?
  - d) For what kinds of audiences and purposes and in what kinds of genres did you plan for student to write?
  - e) What forms of digital technology, if any, were included in the process?
- 2) Can you identify concepts or principles of writing from these teaching materials and plans that you would define as core values or priorities for you teacher of writing?
  - a) If so, what values and priorities they demonstrate—and how?
  - b) If not, what values and priorities do you have that might not be represented in the lesson, activity, or assignment we are looking at today—and why not?
  - c) How might you imagine these values or priorities might show up either as revised versions of these units or in other units you have yet to design?
- 3) Did you take any risks in designing or enacting one of the writing-based lessons, activities, or assignment in this teaching unit? Why or why not?
  - a) If so, what were the risks and why did you take them? If not, were there any risks you might have taken, but didn't?
  - b) Why did you perceive them to be risks?

- c) Either way, what was the outcome?
- 4) Did you have an experience justifying or defending this assignment, task, or assessment to another teacher, parent, or student who did not believe the writing experience you designed was valuable?
  - a) If so, with what features or experiences of the assignment, task, or assessment did they have an issue?
  - b) What reasons or rationale did you give (or might you now give) to support your instructional choices? Do you still agree with your response?

### **Reflections: Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom**

*Interviewer:* For the last set of questions, please feel free to think about and draw upon the full range of your experience this semester in your student teaching role.

- 5) In our previous interviews, you defined what you would consider features and experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing as [name features described in Questions #9 and #10 first interview and modified in subsequent interviews]. Is there anything you would like to change or add at this point?
- 6) To what extent does the writing instruction and composition opportunities in your lesson materials reflect or include processes, products, or influences of digital, multimodal, or other 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies? What factors may have influenced your thinking about how or if to include these aspects of writing?
- 7) Based on your experiences planning for and teaching writing this semester in a secondary English classroom, what support do you believe exists for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century writing in secondary schools? What constraints or challenges have you noticed or experienced?
- 8) Is there anything you would change about the ways you and your students engage with digital technologies and/or multimodal composition in writing instruction in your teaching contexts? If so, what would you change and why? If not, why?
- 9) What, if anything, have you learned from teaching in your internship that may have shifted your thinking about what kinds of writing experiences should happen in schools? What do you think has influenced your thinking on these topics?
- 10) Do you believe that your core values and priorities about teaching writing have shifted in any way during your student teaching experience? How so? Why?

- 11) You are now coming to the end of your internship experience. Is there anything we talked about in our interview today that caught your attention about teaching and learning in this context or in future teaching contexts? Is there anything from a previous interview that may have influenced or shaped how you are thinking about and planning for your own teaching experience?
- 12) Is there anything else you would like to say about topics related to this interview that we didn't get a chance to cover?

**INTERVIEW 5: Final Reflections on Teaching Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
**Timeframe:** January 2018 (Post-internship)

*Interviewer:* In this interview, we will return to some of your responses from previous interviews to do some final reflections on how you have developed as a learner, a writer, and a teacher throughout this experience. Feel free to draw from any of your experiences to help us make connections as we discuss. The format of this interview will be a little bit more open-ended than past interview.

**Artifact-Based Questions: Responses to Earlier Interview Questions**

*Interviewer:* For these questions, we are going to look back at some of your responses to earlier interview questions as the texts upon which we will start our discussion.

[Interviewer will have selected a small subset of questions and responses from previous interviews to return to, based upon emerging themes and evolving lines of inquiry. She will hand the participant a copy of the questions and responses. They will read them together and choose from the following set of questions to use as discussion about them.]

- 1) What kinds of themes emerge from your responses to these questions?
- 2) What surprises you?
- 3) What concerns you?
- 4) Where, if at all, did you see growth or evolution in your own developing conception of writing pedagogy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- 5) What questions still remain for you? What key ideas still nag at you?

**Reflections: Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom**

- 6) Reviewing your past definitions of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing features and experiences, what elements would you borrow/adapt/remove for your most current way of describing this concept? In other words, what is your most current way of explaining what 21<sup>st</sup> century writers need to know and be able to do?
- 7) Which features or experiences of 21<sup>st</sup> century composition would you consider most important to the writing curriculum in secondary English classrooms? Which would you consider less important to the writing curriculum? Why?
- 8) Based on your experiences in your internship, and as you imagine your future teaching contexts, what kinds of constraints do you believe exist for meaningful 21<sup>st</sup> century writing experiences in secondary English classrooms?
  - a) How do you imagine yourself responding to these challenges or constraints?
  - b) What kinds of resources or supports do you imagine you might draw upon?

- 9) What kinds of experiences throughout your teacher preparation program—coursework, field experiences, student teaching, writing—were most influential in helping you develop and enact your conception of 21<sup>st</sup> century writing? Why?
- 10) Describe the ways in which you envision 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies taking place in your own future classroom. What does it look like? What writing experiences will your students have? What writing experiences will you have?
- 11) Is there anything else you would like to say about topics related to this interview that we didn't get a chance to cover?

## APPENDIX C: CODEBOOK FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Code Labels	Definitions	Examples
<b>Accessible</b>	References the ease or accessibility of composing (e.g., typing vs. handwriting) and/or publishing writing (e.g., on blogs, listservs, Twitter). May include references to lowering or minimizing barriers to entry for writers or writing.	<p><i>Composing</i>: “They liked to write on the computer, which was really helpful, because they seemed to find it tedious to write. . . . I didn’t know if it was the outlining process, or just the ability to be able to type, which is much more comfortable for them, so, I guess that’s it.” (Janine)</p> <p><i>Publishing</i>: “There is more of an opportunity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to share your writing if you’re just an average person.” (Margot)</p>
<b>Digital</b>	<p><b>Implied</b>: Mentions a writing process or product that implies or assumes that a digital technology device or software is required or has been used. This can include digital genres or practices that require digital access.</p> <p><b>Named</b>: Directly mentions “digital” or “technology” where there is an explicit recognition of the presence of digital technology devices, software, and/or processes for writing.</p>	<p><i>Implied</i>: “You know, we’re writing in 140 characters on Twitter and people are Snapchatting and using writing for social media a lot.” (Callie)</p> <p><i>Named</i>: “Because [I’m] thinking about how they are always sharing digitally these days, regardless of what they’re sharing.” (Leila)</p>
<b>Evolving</b>	References to writing changing over time, including how writers, theories, and/or institutions	“As history has progressed, writing has become more diverse in terms of what’s considered ‘good writing.’” (Margot)

	expand their notions of what “counts” as writing.	
<b>Flexible/ Diverse</b>	References writing in a diverse range of genres, structures, media, modes, etc. (not diversity of content), including diversity in writers’ experiences, for example writing for various purposes and/or audiences or practicing writing using various platforms. Includes references to flexibility in writers’ choices across a range of options.	“I do think the variety of genres is incredibly important. Just because it helps them think differently for each genre. It’s always good to give them different ways of thinking . . . And that kind of goes along with the many modes and texts.” (Leila)
<b>Frequent</b>	References the frequency with which writers produce writing. May also include references to shorter length of texts and/or writers’ attention spans.	“[Writing] is in little bits, I guess, more than long, drawn-out missives, where you sit down and you pen a letter. It’s more instantaneous. But people do write all day long, back and forth. Messaging.” (Janine)
<b>Immediate</b>	References the immediacy of writing, publishing, sharing, and/or receiving responses to writing. Includes notions of urgency and instantaneousness.	“There’s this urgency and this overstimulation in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century of images and words and writing.” (Callie)
<b>Multimodal</b>	<p><b>Implied:</b> Mentions a writing process or product that implies or assumes that the composition requires or uses includes more than one mode (e.g., audio, image, video, text, etc.).</p> <p><b>Named:</b> Directly mentions “multimodal” or includes an explicit recognition of the presence of multimodal components of writing processes or products (including “visual” and/or “audio,” for example).</p>	<p><i>Implied:</i> “Like, video essays, I’m thinking, or composing a video where you’re answering a question or something. So thinking of that as writing, not just the actual typing.” (Janine)</p> <p><i>Named:</i> “I noticed that one major theme [. . .] is the concept of visual literacy and visuals interacting with text and words.” (Margot)</p>



<b>Public</b>	Mentions writing for, publishing to, or presenting to a public audience (e.g., beyond classmates and/or the teacher). Response must go beyond general mention of “audience” to explicitly acknowledge writing for or with awareness of a wider public audience.	“Just knowing that their writing is going to be read on a more public stage. . . . will hopefully, make them realize that their words matter more. And will hopefully help them be more active in it.” (Leila)
<b>Social/ Interactive</b>	References writers collaborating to draft, revise, compose, provide or receive feedback, and/or considering the reaction they might invoke a from an imagined or real audience (different from a more general concept of writing as “public” because of the response generated from the audience itself)	<p><i>Collaboration:</i> “I have gotten better at giving them more opportunities to write and collaborate and become more comfortable sharing their writing with one another which I think is a key component.” (Leila)</p> <p><i>Imagined Audience:</i> “I personally see interactive as thinking about the audience, thinking about the response . . . . We talked about how digital writing is put out there for an audience and for people to react.” (Callie)</p>
<b>Student-Directed</b>	References student writers’ choices in (1) self-expression in the content of their writing and/or (2) use of prior knowledge about writing processes (including digital tools and platforms) to make choices during the writing process.	<p><i>Students’ self-expression:</i> “Just giving them a lot of ways to express themselves I think is important.” (Leila)</p> <p><i>Engaging students’ prior knowledge:</i> “I think that would be really meaningful to them to like make a video, because that’s probably something they’ve done.” (Janine)</p>

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Amber Nicole Jensen has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Education from Brigham Young University and a Master of Education degree in Education Policy and Management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies in Writing and Rhetoric at George Mason University, Amber was a high school teacher at Edison High School, where she founded the Edison Writing Center, a peer-led writing tutoring center, and designed the curriculum for Advanced Composition, an elective, credit-bearing tutor-training course. She is the co-founder of the Capital Area Peer Tutoring Association (CAPTA), now the Secondary School Writing Centers Association (SSWCA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the professionalization of high school writing centers. She has also been co-director of the Northern Virginia Writing Project (NVWP) and a Graduate Research Assistant for the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning at George Mason University.

Amber's current research interests in English teacher education include advocacy and public engagement among preservice and early-career teachers and innovation in 21<sup>st</sup> century writing pedagogies.