

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The theme of this issue of *JTW* is students as authoritative meaning makers. This theme emerged because all of these thought-provoking articles focus on constructing learning experiences in which students have authority and responsibility. A conscious shift in pedagogies and assessments to student-centered, not teacher-centered, activities place students at the center of their own learning.

Both Janis Haswell and Kathryn Flannery insist on students' right to greater awareness of their own ways of knowing that extend beyond the texts they encounter. Janis Haswell asserts that "The composition classroom is a moral universe." She concludes that students can "carve out their own lessons from a serious and compelling subject, a subject complex enough to lend itself to strenuous inquiry." Haswell writes about a composition classroom that focuses on Holocaust research and on assignments that help students expand their own "moral rulers."

Kathryn Flannery explores another way of knowing, not as much moral as bodily. Accepting Suzan-Lori Parks's statement that "Language is a physical act," Flannery contends that "Bringing theatre explicitly into the classroom has the potential not only to make available for critical analysis the roles scripted through conventional pedagogical practice, but more broadly to make visible the multiple, overlapping, sometimes conflicting roles socially available to us in the everyday." Performance adds to writing and reading "another and important way of knowing, another way of making sense, another mode through which students develop critical literacy."

Roger Ochse and Ruth Mirtz explore the ways in which students make sense of their writing experiences. Ochse has found that class letters, written by students and teachers, "can help along a collaborative process, paralleling essay assignments in a series of progressively challenging engagements that advance the writer's 'authority' from the private narrative to the semi-public arena of exposition and argument." Mirtz encourages us to consider the value of identifying and analyzing in collaborative writing groups both direct and indirect talk as contributing to students'

developing sense of themselves as writers. She advocates teaching about “the nature of indirect talk in group dynamics”: giving a few specific instructions to peer groups, interpreting indirect talk for groups when needed, and supplying tasks to reveal peer group member roles. Letter writing and indirect talk are identified as contributors to students’ development as persons and as writers.

Patricia Fox and Ellen Gardiner and Bonnie Hain have clearly developed as teachers of writing, partly through reflection on their own assessment practices. Fox sets out to “examine the relationship between storytelling and assessment as they are represented in student writing portfolios.” Along with student stories, Fox reveals her own series of epiphanies in concluding that in portfolios “we hear stories of growth and discovery, told by narrators who know, who look back on effort and achievement and forward to new learning.” Gardiner and Hain interrogate both traditional evaluation by grades and more contemporary assessment and evaluation by portfolios. What begins as a lament about a regression from portfolios to grades turns into a critique of grading of all kinds. Advocating a cultural studies approach to grades, the authors conclude that “dialogue about shared standards and grading must continue and evolve, in the offices of faculty and administrators, in scholarly publications, and, particularly, with students in our classrooms.” At the American Association for Higher Education, where I am currently working on the Campus Program of the Carnegie Teaching Academy, we are focusing on the scholarship of teaching. We seek to foster conditions for teacher/scholars to teach well and to add to the scholarship of teaching through reflection and analysis—peer reviewed and critiqued. The teacher/scholar authors in this issue demonstrate their careful attention to the design, implementation, and results of their curricular and pedagogical decisions through the most important result of all, student development and learning. Although their work has been refereed to appear in this publication, I know that they would appreciate your peer review as well. Please respond to these scholars, who, as you do, care profoundly about their students.

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