

PROLOGUE

The JOURNAL OF TEACHING WRITING provides a publishing outlet for teachers and instructors of the language arts, specifically writing. But more importantly, the JOURNAL is meant as another way to meet the same goal that motivated the formation of the Indiana Teachers of Writing a little over a year ago: to bring into positive perspective the teaching of writing throughout the curriculum, from kindergarten to college.

For far too long we have laid at each other's doorstep the problems that our students have with writing. Often resenting that he must teach writing in the first place, the college instructor bemoans the lack of preparedness of his composition students and blames the secondary school teacher, ignoring the fact that colleges had trained the high school teacher in the first place. That high school teacher, frustrated by over-populated English classes, rigid curricular demands, and student distaste for writing, often cannot find time to teach the ambiguous "basics" of writing, basics which, some contend, should have been "gotten" in the lower grades. And my wife, for instance, a second-grade teacher, is suspicious of lack of parental involvement in the learning and writing process of young children. And I, a parent, like to blame television for interference in my somewhat obsessive nurturing of my daughter's not-so-precocious prose. And so the cycle of blame continues to make good copy for journalists and to provide impetus for angry chatter by school boards, deans, parents, and us teachers, especially around SAT times and shortly after the first composition deadline each semester.

Within the paradigm of teaching the writing process, "audience" assumes much importance. We teachers of composition take much time in convincing our students that writers must write for someone, that the very message conveyed must be in form and content appropriate for their readership. But sometimes I think that we violate what we preach. We often are not concerned enough about our live audience in the writing classroom: the students themselves. We teach writing frequently as if our students have had no previous training in composition, and, if by chance we do acknowledge that they have and are better for it, we take joy

in undermining those maxims they hold so dear. And so the student bounces from one writing class to another, often confused, unsure whom to believe, angry about inconsistency of approach.

We seem overly concerned about getting the student ready for his next writing course, but we don't always understand, or try to understand, the curriculum from which the student comes to us. Consequently, Elaine Maimon says in her *JOURNAL* article, such "fragmentation affects our curriculum as well as our interpersonal relations, and as a result students may learn all the wrong things." We also tend to share our best ideas with those colleagues at the same curriculum level simply because we are with those persons most often. Even if the college instructor, let's say, reads *LANGUAGE ARTS* or the elementary teacher invests in a subscription to *COLLEGE ENGLISH*, even if we all go to the NCTE annually, there still is not much opportunity to share our writing theories with representatives of other segments of the curriculum.

The elementary school teacher has much to say to me as a teacher of writing, as do middle and high school teachers. Recently I have become very interested in early language acquisition as it relates to my college writers. Instead of enjoying Friday afternoon drinking beer and eating pizza with some of my colleagues, I have enjoyed visitations to a second grade class. I try to participate in and suggest writing activities, but mostly I observe, cheerlead, and admire the young students as they ferociously attempt to create and compose. I learn, and what I learn makes me a better writing instructor at IUPUI.

During the ITW Spring seminar, Nancy Sommers distributed papers written by students throughout the curriculum. Each of us had to mark the compositions — not stories — and make comments pertinent to that particular student-writer. At first defensive murmurs filled the room. What does a college instructor have to say to an elementary student? Can a middle-school teacher effectively evaluate a college essay? Does the fifth-grader know the *HARBRACE* editing symbols?

The exercise, of course, worked well despite all the trepidation. And each participant quickly realized that even though substance, teacher expectations, and evaluative phraseology fluctuated from grade to grade, the principles of the writing process were about the same, regardless of the

writer's age. The message was clear: fragmentation of writing curriculum is not inevitable. We simply need to talk to each other and view the teaching of writing less myopically. And I hope the readers use the JOURNAL in just this way.

This issue of the JOURNAL is both culmination and inauguration. It represents one of the first tangible steps in realizing the full aspirations of the founding members of the Indiana Teachers of Writing, organized in 1981. To mention by name all those who have had a hand in the establishment of the JOURNAL OF TEACHING WRITING is impossible. I gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement of various members of the ITW and from others within my own university and community. The contributions of the following, however, were particularly helpful — in some cases, crucial — and they deserve special recognition: Elizabeth Todd, administrative assistant to the Editor; Joseph Trimmer, Director of the Writing Program at Ball State University; Beverley Pitts, Chairperson of Communications at Anderson College; Noel H. Duerden, Director of Publications/Information Services at IUPUI; Max Adamson, Graphic Design Supervisor; members of the Board of Editors, named elsewhere; the IUPUI School of Liberal Arts; Department of English Chairman Edwin Casebeer; Acting Dean of Liberal Arts James R. East; Executive Dean Edward C. Moore; and Paul J. Nagy, Associate Dean of Faculties.

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