TEACHERS OR SCHOLARS? A BETTER BALANCE: HIGH SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

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Professor Chadwick closes her office door and sits down at her computer to finish an article on the penultimate moment in Tennyson's "Ulysses." A scholar in Victorian poetry, Professor Chadwick especially enjoys Tennyson and has published and presented numerous papers on Tennyson's work and influence on English literature. Chadwick knows her tenure and stature in the department are largely based on these publications. She does occasionally teach a class in first-year English but prefers seminars in which she can explicate Victorian poetry for her graduate students. Her real passion is scholarship.

Paul Steadson enthusiastically greets his class of high school juniors. For the past fifteen years he's taught the classics from *Great Expectations* to *The Great Gatsby*. Paul works with one hundred and twenty students per day during five teaching periods which involve four separate preparations. When he isn't instructing, Paul grades papers or monitors study hall. He hasn't been back to the university since he received his undergraduate degree, but he does love to teach.

INTRODUCTION

Professor Chadwick and Paul Steadson may be extremes, but sometimes truth exists in the extremes. Some college professors concern themselves with more than scholarship; some high school teachers concern themselves with more than teaching. But if truth does exist in the extremes, it might be that more scholarship than teaching occurs in the university, and more teaching than scholarship occurs in the high school. So much more in each case that a chasm of negativism grows between colleges and public schools, a chasm that needs to be bridged.

How many times do we hear from high school teachers at inservice programs that university experts need to come down from their ivory tower? Or from college professors that first-year students can't write and high school teachers are to blame?

Again, these criticisms may be partly justified. The "experts" from the university may never have taught in the public schools, and though their advice is well-grounded in scholarship, it lacks the experiential base necessary to make it practical. And many high school students do graduate without achieving minimal levels of literacy.

Part of the problem can be attributed to our educational institutions themselves—the long traditions, ingrained attitudes, and allotments of time. If any place values theoretical knowledge, then surely it's the university. Pressure for such scholarship and publication has long been taken for granted.

And if any place values practical knowledge, then surely it's the secondary school. For years high schools have emphasized "useful" knowledge for post-secondary life—whether it be skills necessary to function in the workplace or skills necessary to function at the university.

But if nothing changes, this chasm between university and secondary school, between teaching and scholarship, will widen. Now is the time for teacher-scholars. The hyphen which bridges the two words is no accident; it could be "scholar-teachers" just as well. No slash to segregate the two or capitalization to subordinate one to the other. Instead teachers who engage in meaningful scholarship and scholars who practice meaningful teaching.

HISTORY

Attaining such a balance should be the goal of college-high school collaborations, and, indeed, collaborative efforts between universities and secondary schools seem to be proliferating, especially in the area of rhetoric and composition. Yet collaborative projects are not new, and their history has not always been smooth.

Lucy Schultz, Chet Laine, and Mary Savage briefly trace the history of this collaboration in their provocative essay "Intervention Among School and College Writing Teachers: Toward Recognizing and Remaking Old Patterns" (*College Composition and Communication*, May, 1988). What they discovered was a hierarchical structure, what Donald McQuade calls the "fallacy of simple location" (147): the college teachers passing down truth, wisdom, and lists to secondary teachers, telling them just what to do in order to get their students ready for the real work of college. Collaborative committees were routinely chaired by college faculty who set the agenda and authored the reports. Recommendations to secondary teachers often included the use of drills in grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling. Unfortunately, along with the passing down of recommendations also went the passing down of blame, with professors pointing to the faults, failings, and culpability of high schools. Secondary teachers retaliated with charges of intellectual snobbery, paternalism and arrogance. In fact, so blatant was this kind of fault-finding Schultz, Laine, and Savage tell us, that in a 1956 Council Letter, Jerome Archer billed an NCTE session entitled "Constructive Criticism of High School and College Teaching of English" as a "frank and friendly panel in which high school and college teachers will tell each other what is wrong with each other" (142). And in looking back to 1911, James Berlin reminds us that the National Council of Teachers of English was established by school teachers as a protest against the domination colleges held over their curriculum with prerequisites such as the Harvard Book List (*Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 33).

DESCRIPTION

To avoid this hierarchical structure and to establish an equal collaboration, the Ohio Writing Project (OWP) and Miami Univer-

sity's Department of English instituted the Teacher-Scholar program in 1987. The program, mutually supported by the high school and the university, brings secondary teachers to Miami for one year to teach, to study rhetoric and composition theory, and to conduct their own research projects. To qualify, teachers must have attended the OWP's summer and advanced institutes and must demonstrate a commitment to professional growth.

Once chosen, teacher-scholars are granted a year's leave of absence from their school districts and, upon returning to the district, conduct inservices with area schools. The program is based on a collaborative model of teachers helping teachers. To offer its support of teacher-scholars, the university provides funding for salary, for travel to a national convention such as NCTE or the CCCC, and for graduate level course credit.

Teacher-scholars are invited to interact with others in a variety of ways: with graduate students in courses where they situate themselves within the context of rhetorical traditions, with faculty as committee participants and conference speakers, and with first year composition students as their instructors.

EXPERIENCES

As participants in the teacher-scholar program, the three of us experienced a balance between scholarship and teaching unlike any we'd known in our undergraduate training or years of high school teaching. While assigned two classes of first-year English each semester, we also enrolled in courses in composition and rhetoric. In addition we had time to pursue research projects, something most difficult when teaching five to seven classes per day. We had adequate time to prepare for our teaching assignments and to practice more meaningful evaluation than is possible when serving over a hundred students. And we had the time to write and publish articles and present our findings to colleagues.

D.J. and Diane's work with prompts and holistic evaluation led to successful lobbying for writing samples rather than multiple-choice usage questions on future state proficiency exams. John's pilot study about the effects of collaborative composing on individual writing processes led to further research with high school students' collaborative writing.

We also broadened our theoretical base with further study in ancient and modern rhetoric: Aristotelian models, Burke's pen-

tad, and Moffett's universe of discourse. We practiced teacher-scholarship in our own classrooms experimenting with peer groups and the social nature of writing, reading works by Anne Ruggles Gere and Karen Burke LeFevre in conjunction with our own research.

Having more time and more autonomy in our classrooms, we found the university to be a supportive place to conduct this research and to design reading and writing courses. Without the emphasis on Advanced Placement reading lists of the classics and without the fear of censorship, we chose a greater variety of reading selections. For example, John assigned *Not Fade Away* by Jim Dodge for his classroom study rather than the more traditional Hemingway or Faulkner novels assigned by other instructors. We also encouraged students to experiment with organizational patterns beyond the five-paragraph essay. Some students wrote about their own experiences from a first person point of view for the first time since elementary school.

We realized that our previous experiences of teaching high school Advanced Placement/college preparatory programs had mistakenly placed an emphasis on the quantity of material covered rather than the quality of student work. This "myth of coverage" suggests to high school English teachers that their programs should assign more classics to read and more in-class writings to prepare students for the university. As teacher-scholars, we realized that it is more important to design courses that allow students the time to read carefully and to revise what they have written. Our university students had time to read stories twice. They were given two or more weeks to write and revise their papers. The result was that students wrote better compositions and responded with more detail to their reading selections. Providing time in the course for students to develop their opinions and to improve their writing also allowed us more time for evaluating their compositions.

In high school the frantic pace of a normal day compounded by the number of students we taught forced us to grade whenever and wherever: standing in the cafeteria during lunch duty or scribbling hastily between classes. However, with substantial periods of uninterrupted time, we responded more thoroughly and even experimented with alternative forms of evaluation.

No longer satisfied with the one way flow of red ink that traditionally accompanies evaluation, we incorporated opportunities for multi-purpose responses into every assignment. Students from dif-

ferent sections traded and commented on each other's literature response journals; they met in workshop groups before every major paper; they submitted memos with each paper in which they reflected upon their own writing techniques and processes for that particular assignment.

With the luxury of a semester in which to generate grades, we opted for portfolio assessment. Students submitted papers on their due dates, and we returned these papers with audio-taped responses but without letter grades. Students then had the chance to revise as much or as little as they chose and to turn in their portfolios at the end of the semester. During the course of the term, we compared our own grading standards with other English instructors and professors in holistic evaluation sessions. By the end of the semester, students' papers more accurately reflected their abilities, and our assessment of their writing was more informed: we saw each paper at least twice and had evaluated numerous papers from colleagues' classes.

We were able to bring back some of these methods to our high school classrooms, although our taped responses might now include clicking ditto machines in the background instead of the relative quiet of a university office. Other options such as portfolio assessment have proven to be the square peg we're struggling to fit into the round hole of nine-week prescribed curriculum chunks. But we're braver. We're confident that classroom research offers important benefits to our students as learners and to ourselves as professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our experiences as teacher-scholars have translated directly into classroom practice and now suggest further research. Though our country claims to be interested in educational excellence, educators, administrators, and politicians may have overlooked one of the most vital aspects of the classroom—what teachers are learning. Inherent in our educational system is an unspoken suspicion that teachers are not doing enough: that without mandates, PPO's, and other imposed controls, teachers will not fulfill their responsibilities. For over-scheduled, over-burdened teachers, such demands do not make them better educators. If we want more effective teaching in our classrooms, then we must consider ways to allow the time and the incentives for important research to take

place. When teachers are allowed the opportunity to observe, restructure, experiment, and revise methods they have implemented, then they can better assess what is working and not working in the classroom. It is time to debunk the myth that teachers are not capable of scholarship and admit that it is the educational system itself that inhibits this kind of professional growth.

We have been fortunate enough to have been a part of teaching communities at both the university and secondary levels. We see how universities and secondary schools need one another to balance their focus on scholarship and teaching. We also propose the following for all of us in education to consider:

1. That school districts allocate monies for professional materials that apprise teachers of important research taking place in their subject areas, and provide monies for teacher training and graduate study.
2. That school districts offer incentives for classroom research. For example, a school district could invite teachers to submit proposals for research projects and, upon selecting the best proposals, provide financial or other types of support for such projects.
3. That teachers take a more active role in their professional growth by collaborating more with other teachers and by practicing classroom research.
4. That secondary administrators offer support to teachers who want to conduct research by assigning fewer teaching responsibilities and by encouraging teachers to share their findings.
5. That teacher education programs include courses that train potential teachers in informal and formal research methods.
6. That university English departments include courses in rhetorical theory and practice as part of the requirement for English majors.
7. That universities acknowledge and support research in the teaching of composition as an area of scholarship and institute meaningful collaboration between universities and secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

For this kind of meaningful teacher-scholarship to flourish, teachers will need time. Not time just to relax with a coke during a "free" period, but structured time. Time to share thoughts about Donald Murray's discussion of academic voice in *Write to Learn*. Time to write collaborative proposals for county inservice programs. Time to ask ourselves the kinds of important questions about our practices which lead to significant research. Focused time.

All of us need to be teacher-scholars. We need to practice teacher-research in our own classrooms and share the results of that research with other teachers. We owe that to ourselves, our students, and our profession. We see efforts such as Miami's Teacher-Scholar program as positive indications that working toward a more meaningful balance between teaching and scholarship is a worthwhile and welcome trend. But more change is needed. Universities will have to value teaching and the research which leads to effective instruction. Secondary schools will have to value scholarship and its relationship to sound teaching. While Professor Chadwick and Paul Steadson may never change, future student-teachers and graduate instructors can change. By practicing meaningful teacher-scholarship in their own undergraduate training and classrooms, the next generation of teachers and scholars will earn the name teacher-scholars.

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