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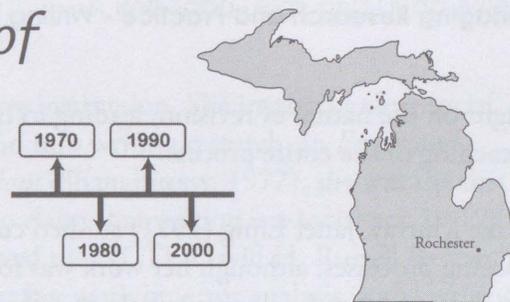
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Writing Influences: A Timeline of Teaching Writing as a Process

by S. Rebecca Leigh and Linda Ayres

Recently, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) celebrated its centennial anniversary. Like many teachers of writing, we found ourselves reflecting on the century-long accomplishments of the organization. For many educators, membership in NCTE and other literacy organizations has made growth in teaching writing possible. But we wondered: Do teachers really know why teaching process in writing is important? We wondered even further: Do teachers know the evolution of teaching writing as a process and the thoughtful teachers and researchers upon whose shoulders they stand as they guide students in their classrooms today? We think the answers to these questions are important, as they enable teachers to provide more informed instruction in this crucial area of the language arts.

As NCTE has embarked upon its second century of leadership in teaching and researching the language arts, we can look back upon many decades of research in writing (Newkirk, 2003; Squire, 2003). We found it helpful to construct a timeline (see Tables 1-4) to illustrate the progress that has occurred in the field. The timeline is organized into four decades: the 1970s; 1980s; 1990s; and the 2000s. We began with the seventies because this is where we saw the beginnings of impactful change in the teaching of writing (Farnan & Dahl, 2003). Guided by our own practice and informed by scholars whose work has made an impact on our own teaching of writing, these sections present a selected historical overview of scholars and their groundbreaking research to illuminate where we have been, where we are going, and the implications for practice in writing. Given the present and ongoing climate of teacher accountability, educational policy, and funding, it seems timely to point out the research that informs our practices as teachers of writing. The standardized tenor of our times has pushed many teachers to drop certain



practices in favor of others. In the Final Thoughts section of this article, we hope to illuminate the implications of those decisions.

Writing in The 1970s

The decade of the 1970s was characterized by a broad reevaluation of paradigms and practice in the field of reading and language arts. A handful of innovative thinkers from linguistics, developmental psychology, early childhood, and secondary English composition stepped boldly out of the existing paradigm of writing instruction to forge a new understanding of literacy learning. They were heavily influenced by the western publication of Lev Vygotsky's *Thought and Language* (1986), which introduced the concepts of social constructivism and the influence of language in the process of learning. These teachers, professors, and researchers left their indelible marks on our perception of language arts, self-expression, language learning in general, and on writing instruction in particular.

We afford Donald Murray (1968) first mention here as the mentor of the writing movement. His work as a professional writer and college writing professor at the University of New Hampshire provided the inspiration for his landmark book, *A Writer Teaches Writing* (1968). A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and poet, Murray devoted his life to teaching and mentoring writers of all measure in his classes, workshops, institutes, and writers' groups. Writing from the perspective of a writer, which later became an important characteristic of the writing movement, Murray elevated the process itself to a higher level by stressing the importance of the writer's ongoing thoughts during the act of writing. His 1978 article, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," cast a new

light on the nature of revision, leading to improved teaching of the entire process.

Like Murray, Janet Emig (1971) studied composing processes, although her work was focused at the secondary level, particularly twelfth-grade English students. Her groundbreaking dissertation study is widely considered to be the start of the modern writing movement (Newkirk, 2003). This work was important for two major reasons: 1) it gave new depth to the case study method; and 2) it pioneered the "think aloud" protocol as a means of studying how writers compose (Emig, 1971). Emig's use of the case study method laid the groundwork for a radically divergent path of inquiry into the composition arena to take hold; it ushered in the study of the process of writing. Through these means and data gathering methods, Emig began to describe the actual process of writing that would later be refined by subsequent researchers and come to define best practice in writing instruction during the new century.

Carol Chomsky studied young children's writing, which led her to write two key books about writing: *Reading, Writing, and Phonology* (1970) and *Write First, Read Later* (1971). Being a linguist herself, Chomsky's work was closely aligned to Charles Read's as they both observed young, pre-reading children's ability to write prior to having any formal reading instruction. She was a proponent of allowing children to experiment with writing, making use of their developing understandings of sound-symbol relationships as they attempted to transfer their thoughts to paper. She contended that by encouraging children to write their own text, before being instructed with prepared text, their own motivation to read would be greater. She received the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award in 1971 for *The Acquisition of Syntax in Children 5 to 10*, which dealt with studies on children's acquisition of syntax.

Charles Read studied preschool children's informal writing patterns, which he published in his 1971

dissertation, *Pre-school Children's Knowledge of English Phonology*, and later in *Children's Categorization of Speech Sounds* (1975). This research gave way to the study of invented spelling and suggested that the desire to write is a powerful motivator in communicating ideas. Read's research was also a considerable departure from the prevailing instructional practice at the time, which held that children needed to learn to read before learning to write (Chall, 1967).

Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* (1973) sharply criticized the need for a linear strategy of outlining as a pre-writing requirement. Instead, he thought writers actually developed their thoughts as they wrote; therefore, they should approach the drafting stage of their writing in a freer, more fluid manner. He advocated for free writing in the initial stages. He suggested that writers should push forward from the start of their writing, using sentences and leaving all editing until later. To help writers achieve this ability, he promoted 10-minute "free writes." Elbow thought that through free writing, writers' natural voices were better able to emerge and ideas could crystallize.

Donald Graves studied children's writing processes by watching them write. Often referred to as the father of the process approach to writing instruction, his dissertation, *Children's Writing: Research Hypotheses Based on an Examination of the Writing Processes of Seven-Year-Old-Children* (1973), shed light on the way young children approach writing. Graves' work revealed that our need for self-expression in writing is natural. He also introduced the writer's workshop approach to writing, which emphasizes the writing process (i.e. prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), writing for authentic purposes, and choice of topic. His research merged classic with practical research, as he made use of observational data, interviews, and audio/video tapes from classroom writing workshops. Graves' work had a profound effect on the way instruction of writing was conceived and implemented in the classroom.

Marie Clay's *What Did I Write?* (1975) provided further evidence of children's ability to express their thoughts in writing before fully developing the ability to read. Clay posited that children's early writings were reflections of their developing grasps of literacy: in other words, their sense of directionality, graphic representation, and concepts about print. Specifically, she identified six principles (Recurring, Directional, Generating, Inventory, Contrastive, and Abbreviation) that helped explain children's early attempts to write and draw. In 1979, Clay received the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award for her work. Notably, Clay's early work on children's writing provided a solid foundation for her groundbreaking Reading Recovery program that would have profound effect on our understanding of reading development, intervention, and professional development.

Mina Shaughnessy, while teaching at City College of New York in 1977, revolutionized writing instruction by researching the "logic and history" of students' errors—not worksheet exercises in prescriptive grammar—as an essential prerequisite

to effective instruction. She inserted a clear social dimension into writing research. In *Errors and Expectations* (Shaughnessy, 1977), she was the first scholar to claim that writing is a social act. In 1978 she received the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award for her work on error analysis in the writing of college students.

In *Children's Writing and Language Growth*, Ronald Cramer (1978) linked writing with thinking and noted the particular role of revision in the process of clarifying thought. He also emphasized the importance of oral language in written language learning, endorsing the Language Experience Approach (LEA) as a unique bridge between the two. With LEA, the child's "recorded story mirrors the child's *talk* and introduces him or her to the concept of authorship" (Cramer, 1978, p. 42). A strong proponent of modeling as best practice in writing instruction, Cramer's classroom research highlighted the need for teachers to provide a respectful and approving audience for young writers, thereby creating a trusting environment in which children's skills could develop.

Table 1. Seminal Texts on Writing: The 1970s

Author	Year	Title of Publication
Donald Murray	1968	<i>A Writer Teaches Writing</i>
Janet Emig	1971	<i>The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders</i>
Carol Chomsky	1970	<i>Reading, Writing, and Phonology</i>
	1971	<i>Write First, Read Later</i>
Charles Read	1971	<i>Pre-school Children's Knowledge of English Phonology</i>
Peter Elbow	1973	<i>Writing Without Teachers</i>
Donald Graves	1973	<i>Children's Writing: Research Hypotheses Based on an Examination of the Writing Processes of Seven-Year-Old-Children</i>
	1978	<i>Balance the Basics: Let Them Write</i>
Marie Clay	1975	<i>What Did I Write?</i>
Charles Read	1975	<i>Children's Categorization of Speech Sounds in English.</i>
Mina Shaughnessy	1977	<i>Errors and Expectations</i>
Donald Murray	1978	<i>Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery</i>
Ronald L. Cramer	1978	<i>Children's Writing and Language Growth</i>

Writing in The 1980s

Writing instruction in the 1980s built on the momentum gathered from the groundwork of the 1970s. As before, the voices of writing proponents came from universities, elementary and secondary classrooms, and professional development institutes such as the National Writing Project, with its origins at University of California Berkeley, and the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University in New York. These institutes created an environment where university professors of writing and classroom teachers of writing worked as partners in a setting of mutual regard. Still a powerful force in today's professional development arena, writing institutes provided a breeding ground for excellence in writing. As the 1980s evolved, countless practitioners added the richness of experience to the literature on writing instruction.

At Carnegie Mellon University, John Hayes and Linda Flower took their research in a deeper direction to develop a cognitive model of writing processes, published in *Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes* (1980). Their work identified components and organization of long-term memory, planning, reviewing, and translating thought into text. This laid the groundwork for sophisticated and rigorous empirical research in literary departments of English.

Arthur Applebee, Distinguished Professor of Education at State University of New York, Albany, has long been a proponent of stronger writing instruction at the secondary levels. His large-scale study of high school students' writing, *Writing in the Secondary School: English and the Content Areas* (1981), called for writing instruction to occur in content area classrooms, where written reports, essays, and term papers are commonly assigned. Applebee has authored numerous articles and books on English Language Arts and his work as advisor to the National Assessment of Educational Progress afford him wide renown. He received the David H. Russell Research Award for *Curriculum*

as Conversation: Transforming Traditions of Teaching and Learning (1996).

In a longitudinal case study, Glenda Bissex (1980) made meticulous study of her son's literacy development from infancy through early adolescence. The resulting publication, *Gnys at Work: A Child Learns to Write and Read* (Bissex, 1980), described with fascinating detail the development of her young son's developing language and literacy understandings. Bissex's study gives support to the work of Read and Chomsky, offering an unprecedented amount of case study data gathered from years of closely detailed observations.

Expanding his doctoral work and later research from the 1970s, Donald Graves continued to study elementary children's writing, working in classrooms with teachers and children at the Atkinson Academy in New Hampshire. His book, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (1983), clarified and expanded the writing workshop approach that was becoming so important in the educational community. With the publication and wide reading of this book, Graves launched the writing process movement in schools, becoming a powerful influence to teachers in classrooms across the country. He conceived of the writing workshop process as a fluid one, where students move through stages at their own pace. Put another way, not all students revise, for example, on the same day. In his *Writing Conference Principles*, Graves (1994) argued for forty minutes of writing practice day, four days a week. Perhaps more importantly, he encouraged students to ask themselves, "How can I make this better?" which was a departure from more traditional approaches to the revision process that asked instead, "What is wrong with my writing?" Graves received the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award in 1982 for *Balance the Basics: Let Them Write* (1978).

In the early 1980s, Shirley Brice Heath (1983) studied children learning and using language in the home and at school from two ethnically diverse

communities. This research was landmark because it emphasized the relevance of cultural differences in understanding children's language development. Specifically, it identified language as power with respect to those in the schools and workplace, and thus how communication problems may arise for children whose own language differs from that of the school. Heath received the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award in 1985 for her work in understanding language patterns in Appalachian communities.

Jerome Harste, Carolyn Burke, and Virginia Woodward (1984) examined children's ways in becoming literate. They studied children ages three to six years old, and discovered that young children took on new perspectives in their learning when they explored: a range of expressions of language, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing; and a range of communication systems, such as language, art, math, music, and drama. They argued that it is adult insistence for convention that gets in the way of recognizing and understanding children's encounters with literacy. In 1987, they received the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award for their work.

Lucy Calkins (1986) introduced the mini lesson to the writer's workshop. The mini lesson focuses on an element of writer's craft to support students in their writing. Calkins also coined conferring with writers as the heart of the workshop. She helped define how the teacher in the workshop setting functions as a facilitator and writer model for students, serving as the expert in the expert/novice relationship. As teacher/coach, she provided writing instruction in non-traditional ways: 1) individual conferences with students about their writing; 2) group or all-class conferences; 3) structured mini-lessons based upon students' need(s); 4) modeling of writing behavior; and 5) scaffolding of instructional support illustrating Vygotsky's philosophy "what the child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow" (1986, p. 188). As Founding Director of the Teachers College

Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University's Teachers College, Calkins has provided professional development to thousands of educators in the last 25 years.

From a middle school teacher's perspective, Nancie Atwell's *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents* (1987) added a credible voice to the discussion of writing instruction, as did Tom Romano in *Clearing the Way: Working with Teenage Writers* (1987). Both were practicing classroom teachers when they wrote their books, which added a rich dimension to their words. The writing they shared from their students was an inspiration to teachers of every grade level, as was the advice they gave on the implementation of writers' workshop, which included routines and tools to support both teachers and students. Both contributors to writing institutes, they continued to breathe life into writing instruction for teachers and students alike. Importantly, in the mid-1980s, Atwell's students were already interacting in a reading/writing workshop with a fully integrated literacy curriculum. In 1990, she received the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award for her work.

Anne Haas Dyson's (1988) research with young children illuminated children as natural boundary crossers of communication systems who, in the company of their peers, can negotiate meaning in unique and powerful ways. Her work was significant to the field because it emphasized writing development as a complex social process that involves the use of signs to make and construct meaning in authentic ways.

In the late 1980s, an investigation of visual and verbal connections in literacy began to take hold, first with Dyson, and later Ruth Hubbard (1989) with her dissertation in book form, *Authors of Pictures, Draughtsmen of Words*. In it she gave thanks to Donald Graves, who served on her dissertation committee, and to Donald Murray, who encouraged her questions about the relationship between words and images. In this book, Hubbard expanded

our understanding of literacy as reading and writing and the visual. She identified the complementary processes of writing and drawing and noted that idea-generation “may take form in images, movement, or inner speech” (Hubbard, 1989, p. 3). In so

doing, she extended the discussion that Harste et al. had started with *Language Stories and Literacy Lessons* (1984) by looking more closely at the symbolic strategies of six-year-old children in their literacy development.

Table 2. Seminal Texts on Writing: The 1980s

Author	Year	Title of Publication
John Hayes & Linda Flower	1980	<i>Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes</i>
Arthur Applebee	1981	<i>Writing in the Secondary School: English and the Content Areas</i>
Glenda Bissex	1980	<i>Gnys At Wrk: A Child Learns to Write and Read</i>
Donald Graves	1983	<i>Writing Teachers and Children at Work</i>
Shirley Brice Heath	1983	<i>Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms</i>
Jerome Harste, Carolyn Burke & Virginia Woodward	1984	<i>Language Stories and Literacy Lessons</i>
Lucy Calkins	1986	<i>The Art of Teaching Writing</i>
Nancie Atwell	1987	<i>In The Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents</i>
Tom Romano	1987	<i>Clearing the Way: Working with Teenage Writers</i>
Anne Haas Dyson	1988	<i>Drawing, Talking, and Writing: Rethinking Writing Development</i>
Ruth Hubbard	1989	<i>Authors of Pictures, Draughtsmen of Words</i>

Writing in the 1990s

Writing instruction in the 1990s continued to build on the talents and knowledge amassed from the two preceding decades. Writing was attracting a greater research emphasis, could boast a more mature professional development environment, and had weathered two rounds of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1984 and 1988. By the 1990s, writing instruction had grown into its own. The reality of high stakes testing in writing necessarily prompted a more urgent demand for effective writing instruction that could be easily implemented by teachers in all classrooms.

The students of writing in the 1970s and 1980s became the leaders of writing in the 1990s, providing the field an entrée to discussions about integration

of reading, literature, writing, writing in content areas, non-fiction writing, and revision. Importantly, scholars in the 1990s connected insights between writing and other forms of expression, and conducted groundbreaking research examining the sociocultural effects of writing development.

In her book, *Lasting Impressions: Weaving Literature into the Writing Workshop*, Shelley Harwayne (1992), co-director of the Teachers College Writing Project and founding principal of the Manhattan New School, showed classroom teachers how to bring literature into the classroom in powerful and lasting ways. Specifically, she advocated for literature as a pathway toward understanding students’ lived experiences and literary histories, discovering writing topics worth exploring, building a community of writers, and inspiring lifelong readers.

Barry Lane, founder of the *Discover Writing Company*, which has provided professional development to teachers of writing for over twenty years, introduced revision to teachers as one part of a discovery process in *After The End: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision* (1993). In so doing, he elevated this aspect of the writing process from the more common corrective approach that has turned many students off from writing. Revision, he argued, is a constant inventive search that involves asking questions and being open and flexible to what is possible in writing (e.g., meanings, structures, etc.).

While the writer's workshop model in the 1970s and 1980s got students writing, Ralph Fletcher's *What a Writer Needs* (1993) gave teachers practical strategies for showing students how to improve their written craft through chapters written in a conversational style on the importance of detail in writing, use of time, voice, character, and beginnings and endings. Fletcher (1996; 1999; 2000) also gave children practical strategies for living a writer's life. In this series, Fletcher talked to children writer-to-writer and helped demystify what writing is by offering advice and personal experience.

While Fletcher was acknowledging the need to give teachers and children practical strategies for writing, Dyson (1993) continued to acknowledge the need to examine the social influences on children's writing. In a two-year ethnographic study of children in kindergarten through third grade, her groundbreaking research investigated the social world of children and illuminated how cultural, historical, political, economic, and functional contexts influence form in writing. In 1994, Dyson was awarded the NCTE David H. Russell Research Award for *Social Worlds of Children: Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School* (1993), a study of the social lives and literacy learning of urban school children.

Influenced by Dyson, Debbie Rowe investigated the socio-psychological strategies that three- and four-year-old children use in their exploration of

multiple communication systems in the social world of the classroom. Her resulting work, *Preschoolers As Authors: Literacy Learning in the Social World of the Classroom* (Rowe, 1994), emphasized the relationship between, and the need for, authentic conversation and demonstration of literacy events.

Building upon the work of Nancie Atwell and Tom Romano with middle school writers, Linda Rief's *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts with Adolescents* (1991) was a further refinement of the adolescent writers' workshop as illustrated through her work with eighth graders. Using vivid examples from her students' written work, Rief's organizational and procedural advice to teachers carried the credibility that can only come from the words of a classroom teacher. Importantly, Rief (1991) viewed language as *just one* way for students to respond to their world, to "show what they know" (p. 149). Striving to provide choices for her students, and encouraging them to discover their voices as they explored their unique multi-literacies, Rief clearly championed diversity, urging students to "say things in ways they have no words for" (1991, p. 164). This concept gained momentum with others during the decade.

The artist/writer workshop model (Ernst, 1994), influenced by the workshop approach to writing (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983), and built upon the ideas of Ruth Hubbard (1989), emerged in the 1990s as a model to help children develop power of expression in their writing by using visual details in illustration as support for vivid thinking and descriptive writing. In *Picturing Learning: Artists and Writers in the Classroom*, Karen Ernst (1994) described her journey as an English teacher working as an art educator in a classroom with eighth-grade students.

During this same time, an innovative program titled *Image-Making within the Writing Process* (Olshansky, 1994) emerged where visual imagery is infused in, rather than added to, the writing process. Beth Olshansky, art educator and researcher at the Laboratory for Interactive Learning at the University of New

Hampshire, analyzed the story-making processes of over 400 children in grades one through six and found that the writing process is enriched when the visual, verbal, and kinesthetic modes of communication intersect. With the writer's workshop model in mind, she identified an image/writing-making process—prewriting as image-finding, rehearsal as image-weaving, drafting as image-making, drafting as image-reading, revision as image-reading, preparation for publication as image-matching (Olshansky, 1994). This work, which has won national recognition as an effective literacy program, was important for several reasons. It helped students to: 1) experience different writing genres; 2) vary their writing topics; 3) develop their story ideas; 4) fully express their ideas; and 5) explore craft in writing.

In the early 1990s, the need for effective writing assessment began to arise and the 6 Traits Writing Model began to emerge nationally as a vision that might afford a common language and more objective means of assessing writing. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) was the site of the extensive work, led by Vicki Spandel (1996) and Ruth Culham (2003), among others. While NWREL is largely credited as the pioneer of the traits, it was Paul Diederich (1974) and a team of 50 teachers in the 1960s who first collaborated to identify strong qualities of writing. Inspired by Diederich's work, the NWREL team of 17 teachers in Oregon began to refine those early traits in 1983 to include: ideas; organization; word choice; voice; sentence fluency; and conventions. Later, the 6 Traits Model was modified to 6+1 Traits, which includes presentation, a trait of writing that concerns form and layout (Culham, 2003). Trait writing is popular among teachers of writing for four reasons: 1) they make sense because they represent desirable qualities in writing; 2) they provide teachers a way to organize their instruction; 3) they offer a way to talk about writing; and 4) they provide an effective analytic means of assessing writing.

Marie Clay continued to study the effect of reading on writing and gave the field powerful clarification

on the reading/writing relationship by identifying four main effects in her book *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes* (1998). Writing, as Clay saw it, encourages a student to slow down and notice language, pay attention to structure, and consider how manipulating its forms is a pathway toward figuring out how language works. Lastly, writing promotes reflection and a heightened awareness of language as a communicative tool. Writing practice thus helps students improve as both writers and readers.

Like Dyson, Lisa Delpit also took a sociocultural perspective on literacy and studied children's literacy development through a social, cultural, and linguistic lens. Though both authors wrote prolifically in the 1980s, in *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (1998), Delpit identified how teachers actualize cultural clashes in the classroom when they: 1) misread children's abilities; and 2) rely on curricular practices and/or modes of discipline that clash with norms from outside of the school. She emphasized the importance of teachers' attitude toward pedagogy, as well as their attitudes toward understanding a child and the literate ways of the classroom as the keystone to understanding and supporting children's literacy needs (Delpit, 1998). Delpit challenged teachers to broaden their understandings of literacy to include children's home literacy practices, introducing the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy (1998). Considering culture to be the heart of literacy, Delpit's work addressed what she considered to be the racist, classist, and limiting beliefs that many teachers use to justify their low expectations for children of color.

In the late nineties, Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi (1998) and Katie Wood Ray (1999) showed teachers how to attend to craft in writing by exploring listening as an act of prewriting and reading as an act of understanding how language works. Perhaps more importantly, these authors invited teachers and students to enjoy a sense of wonder and discovery with words. Put another way, they gave teachers permission to fall in love with language with their students.

Table 3. Seminal Texts on Writing: The 1990s

Author	Year	Title of Publication
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory	1990s	<i>Various publications of 6-Traits Writing (later revised to 6+1 Traits Writing)</i>
Linda Rief	1991	<i>Seeking Diversity: Language Arts with Adolescents</i>
Shelley Harwayne	1992	<i>Lasting Impressions: Weaving Literature into the Writing Workshop</i>
Barry Lane	1993	<i>After The End: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision</i>
Ralph Fletcher	1993	<i>What a Writer Needs</i>
Anne Haas Dyson	1993	<i>Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School</i>
Deborah Rowe	1994	<i>Preschoolers As Authors: Literacy Learning in the Social World of the Classroom</i>
Karen Ernst	1994	<i>Picturing Learning: Artists and Writers in the Classroom</i>
Beth Olshansky	1994	<i>Making Writing a Work of Art: Image-Making Within the Writing Process</i>
Vicki Spandel	1996	<i>Creating Writers: Linking Assessment and Writing Instruction</i>
Ralph Fletcher	1996	<i>A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You</i>
Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi	1998	<i>Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8</i>
Marie Clay	1998	<i>By Different Paths to Common Outcomes</i>
Lisa Delpit	1998	<i>Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom</i>
Katie Wood Ray	1999	<i>Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom</i>
Ralph Fletcher	1999	<i>Live Writing: Breathing Life into Your Words</i>
	2000	<i>How Writers Work: Finding a Process That Works for You</i>

Writing in the 2000s

Writing instruction in the 21st Century is in a far different place than it was when we began in the 1970s. Almost 45 years have passed since Donald Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing* (1968) began to tease the intellects of writing teachers at the university and high school levels. The work of Graves, Calkins, and numerous others has lifted writing to a place of importance when curricular issues are discussed. The influence of these and other scholars continues as they inspire other educators and practitioners to develop their voices and add to the field's collective knowledge on writing.

Since the 1990s, the 6 Traits Writing Model has been incorporated into many state standards and

its leaders have written several books during this time. Vicki Spandel's *Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction* (2008) is now in its 6th edition and continues to provide teachers with support on how to incorporate the traits into daily writing instruction. Ruth Culham's *6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide* (2003) is written in multiple editions for primary, intermediate, and secondary levels. Importantly, the contributions of these and other educators who began with NWREL have provided the field with the much needed vocabulary of writing assessment and continue to lead us to a deeper understanding of the writing process.

Thus far in the 21st Century, the field has seen a strengthening in research on the complementary

processes of drawing and writing. Olshansky's (2008) work with children from diverse regions—from remote schools in Alaska to village schools in American Samoa to large urban schools in California—confirms the relevance of making images an integral part of writing instruction, for pictures “speak equally to native speakers of English, to those learning English as a second language, and to those who simply struggle with words in any language” (p. xi). In *The Power of Pictures: Creating Pathways to Literacy through Art*, Olshansky (2008) shows teachers, including the most reluctant, how to put this theory into writing practice. Also during this decade, the *Drawing Children into Reading* program (Halperin, 2007) emerges as a drawing program developed for classroom teachers by Michigan artist Wendy Halperin that emphasizes the connections between drawing and writing.

Ray's (2010) work on illustration study, by contrast, shows teachers how to attend to visual details in picture book illustration so that they can show children how illustrators use dot, line, shape, etc. to express meaning. Ray argues that strong, powerful writing occurs when children are shown how to take what they notice in pictures and envision these ideas as possibilities for their own pictures, which can lead to vivid, descriptive writing.

Viewed this way, illustration study strengthens the writer's workshop model by supporting children's visual abilities and talents.

Lucy Calkins continues to reach classroom teachers with her *Units of Study for Primary Writing* (2007a) and *Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3–5*, (2007b), as well as with her most recent *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing: A Common Core Workshop Curriculum* (2013). Her Teachers College Reading & Writing Project has competitive applications from across the country.

Ralph Fletcher continues to mentor teachers on writing. In *Mentor Author, Mentor Texts: Short Texts, Craft Notes, and Practical Classroom Uses* (2011), Fletcher gives classroom teachers 24 ready-to-use mentor text resources that are short, high-interest texts that include a variety of genres (e.g., picture book, memoir, poetry, essay, etc.), craft notes, and practical classroom applications to reach writers at multiple levels.

Kelly Gallagher (2011), a high school English teacher and former co-director of the South Basin Writing Project at California State University, emphasizes the importance of learning to write

Table 4. Seminal Texts on Writing: The 2000s

Author	Year	Title of Publication
Ruth Culham	2003	<i>6 + 1 Traits of Writing: The Complete Guide</i>
Donald Graves and Penny Kittle	2005	<i>Inside Writing: How to Teach the Details of Craft</i>
Lucy Calkins	2007	<i>Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum (Grades K-2)</i> <i>Units of Study for Teaching Writing, Grades 3-5</i>
Vicki Spandel	2008	<i>Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction (6th Edition)</i>
Beth Olshansky	2008	<i>The Power of Pictures: Creating Pathways to Literacy Through Art</i>
Katie Wood Ray	2010	<i>In Pictures and in Words: Teaching the Qualities of Good Writing Through Illustration Study</i>
Ralph Fletcher	2011	<i>Mentor Author, Mentor Texts: Short Texts, Craft Notes, and Practical Classroom Uses</i>
Kelly Gallagher	2011	<i>Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling and Mentor Texts</i>

for real-world purposes. Gallagher's work with adolescent writers over the last twenty-five years has shown him that "we must move them beyond the narrowly prescribed school writing discourses found in most school districts and stretch them into areas that can be readily applied in the real world" (p. 7). Where some texts on writing well emphasize first showing students how to write, what stands out in Gallagher's book, *Write Like This* (2011), is the premise that writing well first begins with showing students why they should write.

It is fitting to close this section by paying tribute to the man who may be credited as the greatest inspiration of the writing movement: Donald Graves. He was a leading voice in the 1970s and his steady influence remained into the 21st Century before his death in 2010. His contributions to the field of writing instruction are profoundly evident in classrooms of all levels, as teachers across the country strive to implement his vision that children can write authentically if we let them (Graves & Kittle, 2005).

Final Thoughts

Applebee's status-of-writing studies of the 1980s showed us that writing instruction in most classrooms generally consisted of seatwork involving completion and fill-in-the-blank exercises (NWP & Nagin, 2006). Certainly, the landscape of writing instruction has changed and improved over the years. However, Applebee and Langer (2011) have recently cautioned that the changes may not be enough. In their article, *A Snapshot of Writing Instruction in Middle Schools and High Schools* (2011), in which they report on a comparison of two studies on writing instruction (Applebee, 1981; Applebee & Langer, 2009) at the middle and high school level thirty years apart, the authors' findings suggest that while students are indeed writing more, schools unfortunately, "are not providing students with opportunities to use composing as a way to think through the issues, to

show the depth and breadth of their knowledge, or to go beyond what they know in making connections and raising new issues" (p. 16). High school English teacher Kelly Gallagher (2011) raises some frightening questions: "What are the economic and cultural consequences that arise when a nation continues to churn out 70 percent of graduates who do not write well? With so much on the line, why have our schools lost sight of the importance of writing? And most importantly, what can we, as teachers, do about it?" (p. 5).

In an era of high stakes testing, state standards, teacher accountability, educational policy, and funding, it is understandable when teachers feel pressured to modify their writing instruction to the tune of the current sociopolitical tenor. However, what are the implications for such decisions?

Two of the first casualties of a pressurized environment of accountability in writing are choice and authenticity. Graves (1983) argued convincingly that children's engagement in writing stems from the ability to choose topics important to their lives. This is an important mainstay in Graves' caution that children must be allowed to write for authentic purposes (Graves & Kittle, 2005). From choice comes authenticity, giving rise to these convictions: lived experiences matter; thinking about those experiences begets words; and words make a difference to the writer. The adage that *writing is thinking* hinges upon the protection of children's opportunities for authentic writing. It is through authentic writing that the author's words make a difference to the audience, as well. Both choice and authenticity in writing fall by the wayside when a culture of accountability takes over and a narrowing of the writing curriculum occurs as a result, making teachers focus intently upon the items that will be assessed, rather than on writing as inquiry.

A third casualty is the teachers' concept of the nature of writing itself. If we view literacy as inquiry that encompasses expanded forms of expression such as the visual arts, then opportunities to

explore those junctures in the classroom must be afforded. The alternative is to privilege language exclusively, which limits the visual thinking capabilities of many children. In a growing visual culture where the image, rather than the written word, is fast becoming the dominant mode of communication (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), we must value visual and verbal modes of thinking equally.

A fourth concern has to do with the integrity of writing instruction in a readers'/writers' workshop approach. Effective as this approach is, the possibility exists for writing instruction *per se* to be subsumed by the reading aspects of this particular workshop configuration. Responding to literature through writing, a regular component of readers'/writers' workshop provides valuable connections and insights for the reader. However, care must be taken to offer specific instruction in writing as a unique entity, focusing upon its multiple components including, among others: 1) writing for a variety of purposes in a range of text types, 2) developing craft appropriate for a variety of audiences, and 3) effectively employing technology to enhance both collaboration with and distribution of content to others (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

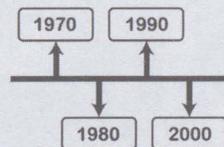
Finally, in our present educational milieu, it is possible for teachers to lose sight of where we have been and what we have learned as a writing community. When that happens, we run the risk of diluting the best practices we have accumulated along the way, such as 1) daily writing in a workshop setting; 2) choice of topics; 3) opportunities for collaboration of students with students and students with teachers; 4) strong emphasis upon revision for clarity; 5) teacher modeling of writing behavior; and 6) valuing visual expression as a co-construct in the writing experience. Indeed, when our perspective is lost, we run the risk of fracturing the philosophy that undergirds our teaching, that which links learning with social interaction via oral language (Vygotsky, 1986).

The scholars described in this article produced research that informs current understandings of best practices in writing instruction. They ignited the flame of social constructivism relative to the written expression of thought, and they painstakingly passed the torch through four decades of effortful study. Our responsibility is to keep the torch alight and to collectively carry it into the classrooms of future decades.

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