

Summer 8-1-2018

## The Importance of Communication

Robin Bowdish

*Bowling Green State University*, [rbowdis@bgsu.edu](mailto:rbowdis@bgsu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ms\\_english](https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ms_english)



Part of the [Educational Methods Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Bowdish, Robin, "The Importance of Communication" (2018). *Master of Arts in English Plan II Graduate Projects*. 25.

[https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ms\\_english/25](https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ms_english/25)

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Arts in English Plan II Graduate Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

# Master of Arts Portfolio

Robin A. Bowdish  
[rbowdis@bgsu.edu](mailto:rbowdis@bgsu.edu)

A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of  
Bowling Green State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English  
with a specialization in English Teaching

August 1, 2018

Ms. Sheri Wells-Jensen, First Reader  
Dr. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

## Table of Contents

Personal Narrative--“The Value of Communication” .....	3
Essay #1	
“1 Only Say This Because I Love You” .....	9
Essay #2 – Pedagogy	
“How Do We Teach Writing in the Most Effective Way?” .....	23
Essay #3 - Research and Analysis	
“Should Collaborative Learning be Used in Public Schools?” .....	28
Essay #4-- Pedagogy	
Teaching Portfolio	
Teaching Philosophy .....	55
Syllabus Sample. ....	57
Teaching Goals. ....	65
CV. ....	66

**Analytical Narrative**

English 6910

Dr. Kimberly Spallinger and Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen

July 30, 2018

**The Value of Communication**

When I thought of where I'd been with my career path and where I wanted to go, the Master of Arts in English with the Specialization in Teaching from Bowling Green State University was my next logical step. While I haven't taught in an actual classroom since 2012, I have always considered helping others to build their knowledge base as one of my passions. I also enjoy continuing to build my knowledge base by learning about the diverse backgrounds of the students and their unique personal journeys. For the past 22 years, I've worked with Tuscarawas County, Ohio schools, agencies, and their staff to develop and implement programs and services to address the needs of the families in our community. I am excited to return to the classroom where I can blend my personal experience with community services with what I've learned about teaching during my courses in this program. My ultimate goal remains to empower people through knowledge; I'm confident I have acquired an array of information about both community and educational resources that will allow me to do so.

For me, grammar has always been a very important part of teaching writing. So it is no surprise that I was very excited to enroll in **ENG 6220 Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing** where I would learn more about best practices for teaching grammar; however, I wasn't prepared for the change in philosophy about the focus on grammar versus the focus on creativity. By the third week of class, I obtained enough evidence through the assignments and the discussions to understand the perceived punitive results of focusing on grammar. After all, writing should be about being creative and thinking about words as a form of art. Harry R.

Noden's *Image Grammar: Teaching Grammar as Part of the Writing Process* expanded my ability to think about writers in terms of artists. His discussions of writing in terms of brush strokes is just fascinating. What a great way to encourage students to be creative by thinking of writing in terms of painting verbal pictures. These theories and teaching methods focusing on creativity rather than grammar have had the most impact on my thoughts about teaching writing. An emphasis on the artistry of writing allows for an encouraging classroom where students just happen to learn grammar. Many of the revisions in my portfolio projects reflect my change in philosophy about stressing grammar.

The commonality of the four projects I've included in my portfolio is their focus on something I think is one of the most important skills for successful students—that is *communication*. Whatever path a student chooses, whether it involves higher education or entering the workforce, the ability to communicate paves the path to success. While communicating can be complicated, being a teacher imparts daily opportunities to facilitate positive ways to communicate. During my time in this program, I've participated in course discussions and projects that strengthen my belief in the value of communication and assisting students in developing those skills.

The first project I've chosen to include in my portfolio is my review of *I Only Say This Because I Love You*, by Deborah Tannen. Effective communication has been an integral part of how I promote collaboration between agency staff and families for the past 22 years, so this book immediately got my attention. I thought I understood communication and its related processes. But this book introduced me to the importance of the metamessage and how it defines our interactions with others. As I read each chapter, the content became even more

personal for me. My oldest son is non-verbal, so communication in our family takes a different twist. We are continuously learning new forms of communication and refining our skills. Author Deborah Tannen put into words so many of my thoughts about communication and how our history with a person helps us anticipate the message. How does this pertain to the classroom? Communicating effectively benefits everyone regardless of his/her career choice. The foundation of my teaching theories include the importance of communication as a basis for collaboration. *I Only Say This Because I Love You* has been essential for me in understanding effective communication. In revising this project, I more distinctly defined the term metamessage. Throughout the paper, I gave examples of metamessages and how they determine our understanding of personal interactions, but I failed to actually define the term. Additionally, I expanded the paper to include a paragraph on communicating with others such as co-workers and others who cross our paths daily. Metamessages are critical to defining our communication strategies, so I wanted to expand my examples to include more than just family.

The second project in my portfolio is a Research Supported Project entitled *How Do We Teach Writing in the Most Effective Way?* and serves as one of my Pedagogy projects. My rationale for this project focused on communication and its importance in the writing process. This project allowed me to incorporate research from the Ohio Department of Education and verified websites with personal experience to explore writing opportunities for students with disabilities including assistive technology. While I've been away from the daily activities of the classroom for an extended period of time, my involvement with the education process has been ongoing—either personally through my three sons or professionally through my involvement

with families and their children. The information in this paper underscores my philosophy that all students can learn, that teachers may need to think outside the box, and that parents are an integral part of the learning team for their children. For this project, I was able to research effective practices for encouraging students to be creative in their writing, incorporate ideas I've learned during this program, and include personal experiences to identify some important strategies for encouraging students with disabilities to appreciate writing. My favorite revision to this paper comes from one of my former classmates who shared that he stressed with his students that he was asking them to revise their papers because they wrote, not because they failed at their first attempt. This change in thinking is a critical step in changing a student's mindset about the writing process. For additional revisions, I defined the term word map as a visual learning tool. I also provided some examples of models of good writing. This is perhaps a bit too subjective, so I wanted to clarify my expectations for the reader. The most important revision to this paper was the inclusion of Constance Weaver's ideas about focusing on the creative process of writing. In her book, *Grammar to Enrich & Enhance Writing*, she discusses the lack of evidence to support the value of focusing on grammar and grammar rules. This book was part of my ENG 6220 course and is partially responsible for my philosophical shift in teaching grammar.

My third project, *Should Collaborative Learning be Used in Public Schools?*, links my philosophy on collaboration with opportunities for incorporating collaborative activities in the classroom. I've chosen this project to represent my Substantive Research and Analysis project. For this project, I researched popular collaborative learning activities that engage students and promote communication. These activities make learning fun and challenge students to develop

their reasoning and problem solving skills by learning to work as part of a team. My research for this project includes survey results from local 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts/Writing teachers and college English/Writing professors to gather data on their use of collaborative learning. This project created a means for me to weave my ideas on the importance of students learning to communicate effectively through collaborative activities with my capacity to collect data and use research to support those results. My revisions for this project focused on the value of learning and understanding the collaborative process and transferring those skills to real life situations. What's not reflected in my research for this project is the number of discussions from the various Discussion Boards where my fellow classmates described the benefits of encouraging student collaboration in their classrooms.

The fourth and final project in my portfolio comprehensively addresses who I am, why I enrolled in the Master of Arts in English with the Specialization in Teaching from Bowling Green State University, and what I anticipate for my future classes. By its nature, this project also represents one of my Pedagogy projects. ***My Teaching Philosophy*** collaborates my belief in acting as the classroom facilitator where students are encouraged to think, communicate, and work as a team. The philosophy described in this document is largely driven by what I've learned through my classes in this program. Thinking of myself as a facilitator is really not that different from what I've done with agencies, schools, and community members over the past 20 plus years. Facilitator generates a vision of someone who actively engages others in the discussion while teacher generates a vision of someone who leads the discussion. The benefits of engaging students in the learning process are overwhelming. I want to be that person. While I will have a consistent plan for each class based on the ***Sample Syllabus***, I will encourage



students to take ownership in the course by involving them in discussions and decisions about appropriate parts of our class goals, which is consistent with acting as the class facilitator. **My *Future Teaching Goals*** included in this project reaffirm my perceived role in the classroom as the facilitator or the coach and my understanding of the need to create structure while remaining flexible. My **CV** highlights my diverse background and the tools I will bring to the classroom upon my return. Revisions to this project were based on peer and professor feedback and were minimal since this was completed during the Spring 2018 semester.

My courses in the Master of Arts in English with the Specialization in Teaching from Bowling Green State University have led me to fully embrace the theory that “You don’t know what you don’t know”! While I’ve learned so much from the various materials in each course, I’ve grown exponentially from the wisdom of my classmates. I want to be that teacher who is passionate about each student and encourages creativity. I appreciate that everyone is so very willing to share their practical experiences and their favorite resources. The discussion boards and the group projects facilitate open dialogue throughout each course in this program. What a great testimonial for the importance of communication in various learning processes. We should never take the value of communicating effectively for granted.

Robin Bowdish  
ENG 6150  
Dr. Sheri Beth Wells-Jensen  
Reading Cycle Project 3:  
11/29/16

### I Only Say This Because I Love You

In *I Only Say This Because I Love You*, Deborah Tannen explores family communication on all levels. She notes the importance of relationships with our parents, our children—teens or adults, and our partners. An important part of this discussion is just how the history in these relationships molds our interpretation of our conversations. The ranking of family members is also a function in the communication process—parent over child; sibling over younger sibling. When seeking to communicate with a family member, we are often seeking a feeling of wellbeing from someone with whom we are familiar, but our conversations don't always end well. Tannen notes that communicating with family members is more than just the message or words we use because of our history. It's a metamessage or how we interpret what we think the communication means. This metamessage includes our history with others, which through that unstated meaning may results in a negative interpretation. As we communicate with our family members, we may need to think about our history, anticipate how our message will be received, and strategize how we can reframe that message for a more positive interpretation.

When I read the title of the first chapter, "I Can't Even Open My Mouth", I bonded immediately with this book! This has become a common phrase used by my mother in describing conversations with my sister and with me. Each example in the book equated to one of my personal experiences. My mother's favorite phrase has become, "Why don't you....." I have been married for 30 years, I have raised three sons (the youngest is in college), and we've

owned our home for 29 years. I very much value and respect my mother's opinion but not when it sounds more like criticism. The final straw was after my son, who was 25 at the time, and I dry walled our living room. As an engineer, he delights in destruction and construction, and I let him talk me into this project. Needless to say, it was my first and will be my last attempt at dry walling! After a lot of challenging work, the walls were done, and the room looked great. When my mom and sister stopped by, I very proudly showed them our project. My mom walked over to the picture window and said, "Well, I certainly hope you plan to do something with this window!" Later that evening, I called my sister to sulk a bit about how mom had hurt my feelings. My sister shared that she mentioned to my mom that her comment was critical, and my mom was shocked by that interpretation. I now may have a better understanding of why we had such vastly different interpretations. My mom felt she was giving advice, while I felt she was criticizing our challenging work by focusing on something other than the walls. The metamessage I received was based on how my mother tends to provide me with alternative ways of doing things rather than praise my accomplishments.

Further in the chapter, Tannen explores another issue my husband and I have recently encountered—our son got married last year. We love his wife dearly, and they are a great couple, but his relationship with us has changed. I work very hard not to be that parent who is critical of how these amazing young adults choose to live their lives, but sometimes it's difficult. My daughter-in-law is an only child who is the center of her parents' universe. Her immediate family is quite small. In contrast, my son has two brothers (his oldest brother has a disability) and a very close relationship with his cousins. The family inequity was very apparent when we saw their wedding guest list—she had 18 family members while my son had 108. From those

limited pieces of information, it's easy to understand the differences in how they view life. She is used to a very structured, organized environment while my son has learned to easily adapt to more chaotic circumstances where we typically operated on Plan B or even Plan C because the original Plan A was disrupted by forces beyond our control. Recognizing my son as a grown adult with his own life and family, which is now somewhat different, will be critical to our future relationship. With Tannen's advice on metamesages and reframing messages, I hope we will avoid the same kinds of conversations that I currently have with my mother.

A perfect example of metamesages and how they aid in communication occurs between my non-verbal son, Kris, and me. Because I act as his interpreter most of the time, we communicate very fluently. Many things he signs to me are tied to something he's just heard or something he remembers from many years ago. Some of our communication efforts are like playing charades, but I have developed the ability to listen to what he's listening to while I continue to do my own thing. When people see us interact, they always ask me if I would write down all the words he signs because they want to communicate with him in the same way I do; however, these same people don't take the time to learn his metamesages.

Another secret fortress of family communication Tannen discusses is the 'secret' and how family members who reveal such secrets align themselves in sometimes hurtful ways. When one sister shares a secret with another sister, and that sister discloses the secret to someone else, the circular bond becomes broken. Sharing her secret with her sister was a way of seeking comfort; however, finding out that secret was shared with someone leads to a feeling of betrayal and perhaps even disrespect. This history becomes part of the metamesage for these siblings' future communications.

I experienced this exact issue a couple of years ago with my husband and mother. My son, Erik, shared with my husband, his brothers, and me that he was planning to propose to his girlfriend when they went on vacation in three months. He wanted to design her rings and asked for my help with this task. My husband asked if I was going to share this great news with my family. I said no because my mom has accidentally shared confidential information in the past, and I wasn't willing to risk her saying something about these engagement plans to Erik's girlfriend. Let's be real—three months is a long time! The following week, Erik called me and questioned why I had told my aunt about his plans. Erik had received a congratulatory e-mail from my cousin in Texas! After a short investigation, I determined my mom was the culprit who talked to my aunt. When I confronted my mom, she very quickly threw my husband under the bus as the person who had told her—and she knew every detail! While I now laugh at this experience, I still feel a certain amount of distrust and consider both my husband and my mom's actions as a bit disrespectful. I am less likely to tell either of them something I don't want others to know.

In addition to very personal communication experiences, metamesages are important throughout our daily communication activities. Think about communicating with co-workers. The successful strategies we develop for daily communication frame a ritualistic interaction between each person we routinely see. Upon entering the work environment, someone says hello. We answer with the same response. Someone else may ask how you are. If you have a limited relationship or history with that person, you will respond that your fine. If you have a history with that person, you may choose to elaborate. Whether we are communicating with

co-workers or the people who cross our paths throughout the course of the day, metamesages provide a foundation for how we say what we say.

In Chapter 9 of *Language It's Structure and Use*, Edward Finegan briefly discusses the encoding and decoding messages. While this terminology is different than the terms message and metamesage used by Tannen in *I Only Say This Because I Love You*, the concept is the same. According to Finegan, "Knowing a language is not simply a matter of knowing how to encode a message and transmit it to someone, who then decodes it to understand what it is we intend to say."<sup>1</sup> This use of encoding/decoding or message/metamesage is explained using the sentence, "I didn't see the stop sign." The police officer will interpret this differently than your friend or your aunt who is riding with you to church. The speaker's relationship with each of these three people will result in three diverse ways of decoding the same sentence; it's the history in each of those relationships that assists the listener with interpreting his/her unique message.

As you've probably concluded by now, I immediately bonded with this book! In some way, I related to each chapter or discussion from beginning to end. Chapter 7 was definitely a favorite. I'm a mom struggling with learning how to communicate with grown children, one who is now sharing his life with his new wife and her family. My baby is almost 22 and will be graduating from college soon. How did that even happen? While my oldest son (who has a disability) still lives with us, he is becoming more independent every day. The way I communicate with each of them continues to evolve with each new phase in their lives, but it's tough! This chapter entitled "I'm Still Your Mother" helped me put all these changes in

---

<sup>1</sup> Finegan, Edward, *Language It's Structure and Use*, Seventh Edition, p. 303

perspective. It's good to know I'm not alone in this journey, and it's also good to be able to frame my current communication experiences with my adult children and to prepare for future communications.

When I finished this book, I immediately gave it to my sister and encouraged her to read it. When she finishes, I will pass it on to my mom. My hope is that they will each see themselves and our conversations in the same passages and examples I did. I can't wait to sit down with them and discuss openly and honestly about our adult child/mother/sibling communications barriers and the metessages that sometimes get in the way of our messages.

### Works Cited

Tannen, Deborah, I Only Say This Because I Love You, Copyright 2001

Finegan, Edward, Language Its Structure and Use, Seventh Edition, Cengage Learning, 2015

Personal Experiences



Robin Bowdish  
Research-Supported Project  
Dr. Lee Nickoson  
ENG 6200  
6/24/2016

### How Do We Teach Writing in the Most Effective Way?

We write to share our thoughts, to communicate, and to let others know about our world. How fortunate we are to be able to write about our experiences! Imagine not having that skill. My son Kris is an amazing story-teller; however, he is sometimes defined by his disability. During his high school years, he learned to write using symbols or he signed his stories to someone who then put the words on paper. But since graduation, he has not had the opportunity to write. His focus has become one of communicating with new and different groups of people. As I thought about a topic for this assignment, my mind went in many directions. How do we encourage students to be confident in their writing skills? I thought of a few of my former students who struggled with writing; I thought about some of the proof-reading I've done for my sons' college English papers; then I remembered how my son Kris loved to write and abruptly realized that we don't provide that opportunity for him. Kris's journey with writing began almost 15 years ago, so I wanted to know what new opportunities exist today. For my Research-Supported Project, I chose to explore evidence-based strategies for teaching writing to students with disabilities, how those can be used in the classroom and at home, and what assessments exist for these options.

#### **Strategies for Teaching Writing**

In *Prevention and Intervention of Writing Difficulties for Students with Learning Disabilities*, Steve Graham, Karen R. Harris, and Lynn Larsen identify six successful principles in developing writing skills. Those are:

1. Providing effective writing instruction

2. Tailoring instruction to meet the individual needs
3. Intervening early
4. Expecting that each child will learn to write
5. Identifying and addressing roadblocks to writing
6. Employing technologies

In reviewing this list, the most important principle is number 4—expecting that each child will learn to write. When that expectation exists, the other five principles can support each learner. This also is a consistent theme throughout any discussion on effective writing instruction for students with disabilities.

To better identify how first through third grade teachers adapt their teaching skills to meet the needs of struggling writers, Graham, Harris, Fink, and MacArthur (2000) conducted a nationwide study. This study used two approaches. The first approach asked teachers to use a Likert scale to indicate how often they employed various approaches with both average and weaker writers. Their responses included focusing on handwriting skills, phonics, punctuation, capitalization, and re-teaching writing skills. The second approach allowed teachers to list their classroom adaptations for weaker writers yielding the following responses: one-on-one assistance; small group instruction; personalized spelling lists; facilitated planning—talking about the story prior to writing, drawing pictures, organizing ideas; revision checklists; and assisting with choosing topics. The most telling part of this survey is this:

- 20% of these teachers reported making no adaptations
- 24% of these teachers reported making one or two adaptations

This survey was taken in 2000, but the results are certainly concerning since they focus on weaker writers. Teaching methods identified in this survey for these struggling students seem to be more punitive than positive—more of the same old same old. I'm reminded of a tutoring session I had many years ago with a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student. When he confided that he didn't understand what he was supposed to change with his writing, I pulled out his English book. His response was, "If I didn't understand it the first time, what makes you think I'm going to understand it now?" The focus should have been on

making writing fun, so he would learn to improve his grammar skills. We have clearly learned so much about engaging young learners and encouraging creativity to make learning fun. According to Constance Weaver in *Grammar to Enrich & Enhance Writing*, there is no evidence to suggest that just teaching students grammar in isolation is effective. In fact, students find learning grammar definitions quite confusing because of the many inconsistencies. These survey results are not indicative of how teachers today address the unique needs of all students, but it's been my experience that many teachers are not supported to customize educational opportunities to meet every student's need.

***Great Kids: Effective Writing Instruction for Students with Learning Problems*** identifies writing as a social and a cognitive process noting that writing provides us with an opportunity to communicate and share our knowledge. While writers who struggle require more support in developing the necessary skills for writing, the goals of writing pedagogy should be the same for all students and are based on the following components:

1. social context for writing
2. writer's knowledge
3. planning
4. text production
5. evaluation and revision
6. self-regulation

Understanding planning, revising, and writing strategies is a key component in the writing process. Struggling writers typically limit their revising to grammar and minor errors, but good writers have learned more complex methods like establishing goals based on their audience, using their knowledge to organize their content, and revising with purpose. Students will be successful writers when there is a balance between providing them with meaningful writing opportunities and teaching them strategies to write effectively. It's no secret that when students write for a specific purpose, it's just more fun!

Students may think of revising as a failure of their initial attempt. They need to understand that all writers revise because they write, not because they fail. Approaching writing in a more creative,

artistic aspect may reduce anxiety students have about failing to write what they're supposed to. Just as with any work of art, the final product is unique—specific to each author. As teachers, it's important to understand this individuality and to strategize on how to help foster and improve those skills in each student.

When it comes to writing skills, students with learning disabilities typically express short, limited ideas. Their handwriting and use of grammar and punctuation make for difficult reading. For these students, revising means correcting grammar and punctuation errors and making their writing legible. With such a focus on these basic skills, writing becomes a chore. Carol Englert and her colleagues developed the **Early Literacy Project** (ELP) for first through fourth graders with special needs. This concept focuses on integrating reading and writing around specific themes. Students are involved in meaningful writing by summarizing what they read, journaling, sharing their personal stories, and writing reports. Teachers support students through discussion and modeling skills with such techniques as word banks, pictures, and planning sheets. If students require more individual guidance, it is available to them. Classrooms where ELP is practiced feature some of the following methods:

- student's written work is on display and there's an abundance of writing and reading material
- daily writing
- students are motivated to write in a safe environment
- student/teacher discussion to define goals/expectations of the student's writing and revising
- writing routine of thinking, reflecting, and revising
- teacher modeling
- collaboration in the writing process
- reading supports writing
- frequent communication with parents about the student's progress

In ***New Horizons for Learning***, Amy Gillespie and Steve Graham define writing as “a multifaceted task that involves the use and coordination of many cognitive processes.” Through their research, they have identified the following effective strategies for teaching writing:

- teachers model writing strategies then encourage students to practice independently
- teach students to summarize what they read
- teach students to collaborate on their writing projects
- set specific goals for students
- encourage students to use a computer for writing assignments
- teach students to use complex sentences in their writing
- encourage students to develop a routine of planning, writing, and reviewing their essays
- establish a clear goal for any written assignment and require students to research their topic
- model prewriting activities
- provide students with models of good writing

When students connect their writing to something meaningful, engaging them in this process is easier.

Examples of good writing could include age appropriate books (read by the student or read by an adult to the student), age appropriate magazine articles, or letters from friends or relatives. Writing and reading opportunities should extend beyond teachers and classroom experiences. Parents have opportunities to support writing as well by encouraging their children to write letters, notes, e-mails, and even shopping lists.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) utilized the research based ***Universal Design for Learning*** (UDL) in determining strategies for diverse learners. UDL, developed in the 1990's, is credited to David H. Rose, Ed.D, of Harvard Graduate School and Center for Applied Special Technology and promotes flexible learning environments that support each student. The UDL framework supports three principles:

1. Multiple Means of Representation
2. Multiple Means of Action and Expression
3. Multiple Means of Engagement

To support this belief that students learn best when they are provided “various ways of acquiring information and knowledge”<sup>2</sup>, ODE encourages teachers to use various resources such as text, video, digital books, audio, data displays, simulations, and concept maps. Based on extensive research that validates the premise that all students can learn, ODE created the Writing Standards (see Attachment 1) rubric, which was implemented in the 2013-2014 school year. These standards outline ODE’s philosophy that “each child can achieve at high levels when provided with instructional supports and accommodations” supporting the notion that each student will learn to write. These standards begin with kindergarteners and provide clear language for ensuring that all students increase their writing skills each year. The Extended Standards further define “write” to include dictation, drawing, and approximated spelling.

### **Grade Level Expectations**

While *Prevention and Intervention of Writing Difficulties for Students with Learning Disabilities*, *Great Kids: Effective Writing Instruction for Students with Learning Problems*, *Early Literacy Project*, *New Horizons for Learning*, and *Universal Design for Learning* discuss writing pedagogy in different terms, the concepts are consistent. Another consistent theme is that all students have the potential to learn effective writing skills. ODE has outlined grade level expectations ensuring that students grow their abilities. Starting in Kindergarten, students should be able identify the topic or title of their book, give their opinion, provide an explanation, and describe an event through drawing, dictating, and/or writing. As students move to the next grade level, the benchmarks increase. These goals for each grade level are very clearly defined to enable teachers to provide the necessary interventions to assist each student in moving to the next level. Strategies for accomplishing each

---

<sup>2</sup> *Universal Design for Learning, Ohio’s Revised Standards and the Model Curricula, What’s the Connection?*, Ohio Department of Education, UDL and Students with Disabilities

benchmark may differ within a classroom, but these goals are certainly achievable for each student. Teachers must engage students by making writing meaningful and by modeling the complex process of planning, writing, and revising. A variety of strategies are available to promote personalized, meaningful approaches to assist each student in accomplishing the grade level goals established by ODE. A summary of these strategies includes creating an environment where students feel safe to express their creativity, establishing clear goals, providing daily writing opportunities that are interesting and purposeful, modeling the writing process, and encouraging collaboration throughout the writing process.

### **Resources**

ODE's philosophy that "each child can achieve at high levels when provided with instructional supports and accommodations" encourages teachers to be creative in personalizing writing instruction for students with disabilities and to explore assistive technology options. Students who have difficulty with writing may benefit from a speech to text software program that allows them to dictate their report for conversion to a written format. Alternate keyboards are available for students who have difficulty typing. These keyboard overlays limit choices, use graphics, group keys. Talking word processors are a great option for students who need that audio output to reinforce their writing. Other assistive technology tools assist struggling writers by aiding with spelling, punctuation, grammar, and organization. The list of tools is expansive and is ever-changing. Perhaps the intervention can even be as low tech as sticky notes. According to Bahr, Nelson, and VanMeter, "technology increases the frequency of assignment completion and contributes to improved motivation."<sup>3</sup> This online resource,

---

<sup>3</sup> *Role of Technology in inclusive classrooms, Tech Tools for Students with Learning Disabilities: Infusion into Inclusive Classrooms*, <http://www.idonline.org/article/6380/?theme=print>

<http://www.greatschools.net/LD/assistive-technology/writing-tools.gs?content=960> , provides some options for classroom use.

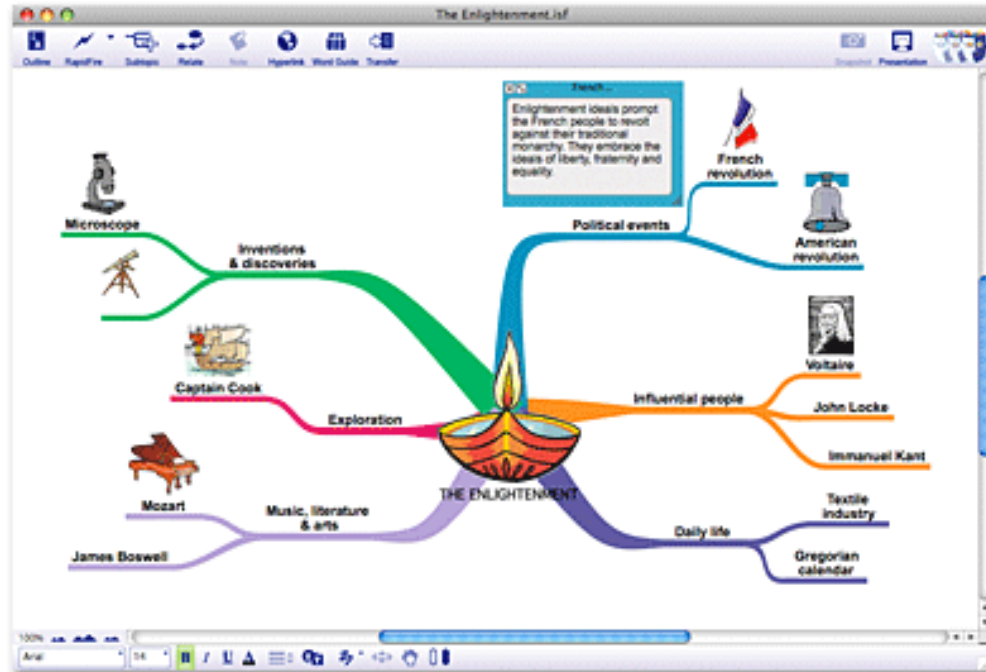
With all of these resources, finding the best match for each student is often tricky and time consuming. Finding effective ways to evaluate students is a critical piece to this puzzle. To assist teachers with this sometimes overwhelming task, ODE utilizes regional State Support Teams (SSTs). Each SST is staffed with experts who are eager to share their knowledge and resources with schools and their teachers. SSTs host professional development trainings on identified topics. They also are willing to suggest resources for families and teachers who contact them. If teachers are searching to the best resource to assist students with their writing, this should be the first contact!

Word Maps are great tools for students who have difficulty with writing. According to [www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word\\_maps](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word_maps), “A **word map** is a visual organizer that promotes vocabulary development. Using a graphic organizer, students think about terms or concepts in several ways. Most **word map** organizers engage students in developing a definition, synonyms, antonyms, and a picture for a given vocabulary **word** or concept”. Many different versions of word maps exist, so teachers have the flexibility to choose what works best for their students. With word mapping, students really have an opportunity to understand a word through questioning. *What are some examples? What is it like? What do I already know about this word?* A resource I would like to highlight comes from the *Inspiration*<sup>4</sup> program, which allows students to create word maps. Here’s an example:

---

<sup>4</sup> Web June 2016. <http://www.inspiration.com/Inspiration>





All of these assistive technology options provide great opportunities for students to achieve their maximum potential. But choosing the right option is certainly a process whereby the interaction between the student, the task, the context, and the technology is thoroughly evaluated.

SchwabLearning.org developed a worksheet (see Attachment B) that guides parents in identifying the assistive technology tools that would most benefit their children.

### **Assessment Strategies**

To effectively teach writing, a teacher must create an environment where students feel safe to be creative, engage students by providing them with meaningful opportunities, and to promote success by modeling the writing process. Peer review or teamwork should be included in writing process.

Classroom assessments for such projects should focus on identifying the writer's strengths and weaknesses then determining opportunities for improvement. Finally, the assessment should be used to report progress with revising the assignment. The most effective method for this kind of assessment is a simple rubric that can be customized to meet each students' needs.

Kris was very fortunate to have had a teacher who truly believed that every student had the capacity to learn. She and her assistant worked tirelessly at individualizing each student's plan. We experienced how a teacher who believes each student can learn will make an impact. However, this is not always the case. I most recently was contacted by a family to assist with advocating for their 3<sup>rd</sup> grade son who had recently been evaluated at Akron Children's Hospital. The evaluation report was very thorough and resulted in a diagnosis of dyslexia. During an initial Individualized Education Program meeting, two of this young man's teachers commented that they felt he was lazy and did not feel modifications were necessary. While I don't have any data to indicate this kind of thing happens often, what I know is that these kinds of negative interactions occur with most of the families who contact me for assistance. What I have also experienced is that many of these teachers are very receptive to implementing new strategies—when those strategies are shared with them. They simply don't have the time to research options.

One of my son's favorite projects was writing what I consider to be the dreaded Christmas card letter. When he was in school, he would use a "Writing with Symbols" program. We copied his message on Christmas themed stationery and included it with our Christmas cards. Kris loved doing this, and friends and family loved receiving it! Some even wrote letters back to Kris. But once he graduated, we no longer had access to this writing program, and the cost of this kind of software prohibited us from purchasing it for home use. In planning for his transition into adulthood, we overlooked something that was so engaging to him. With all of the new resources available through improved technology, Kris and other students with disabilities have opportunities to creative and successful.

One key factor that encourages students with disabilities to become proficient writers is collaboration between school staff, experts in assistive technology, parents, and the student so that appropriate adaptations can be made and trainings specific to that technology occur. Another factor is encouraging students to be creative in their writing. Focus first on ideas then incorporate grammar.

When necessary modifications occur, students embrace the creative process, feel less frustrated, become inspired, and feel like they belong. It's important to always remember that each child can learn, and we as teachers have a responsibility to inspire the passion in each.

## Works Cited

Quenneville, Jane, "Tech Tools for Students with Learning Disabilities: Infusion into Inclusive Classrooms", June 2016. <<http://www.ldonline.org/article/6380/?theme=print>>

GreatSchools Staff. March 9, 2016. web June 2016.  
<<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/writing-instruction-students-with-learning-problems/>>

GreatSchools Staff. May 20, 2015. web June 2016.  
<<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/matching-assistive-technology-tools-to-individual-needs/>>

Isaacson, Stephen. "Simple Ways to Assess the Writing Skills of Students with Disabilities", web June 2016. <<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/simple-ways-assess-writing-skills-students-learning-disabilities>>

Stanberry, Kristen and Raskind, Marshall. "Assistive Technology for Kids with Learning Disabilities: An Overview", web June 2016. <<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/assistive-technology-kids-learning-disabilities-overview>>

Ohio Department of Education. Web June 2016. Pages 18-27  
< [http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Special-Education/Students-with-Disabilities/Students-With-Disabilities-\(1\)/OACS-E-English-Language-Arts.pdf.aspx](http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Special-Education/Students-with-Disabilities/Students-With-Disabilities-(1)/OACS-E-English-Language-Arts.pdf.aspx)>

Ohio Department of Education. Web June 2016.  
<[https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Diverse-Learners/UDL-INTRO\\_MS\\_12-26-2013.pdf.aspx](https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/Diverse-Learners/UDL-INTRO_MS_12-26-2013.pdf.aspx)>

Inspiration Software, Inc. Web June 2016. <<http://www.inspiration.com/Inspiration>  
[http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word\\_maps](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word_maps)>

Weaver, Constance, *Grammar to Enrich & Enhance Writing*, Heinemann, 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, nH 03801-3912, 2008 by Constance Weaver and Jonathan Bush

Robin Bowdish  
English 6040  
Dr. Lee Nickoson  
December 12, 2015

### **Abstract**

This research paper will explore how collaborative approaches to teaching writing are being used in 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in local public schools and in local college classrooms with the intent of supporting the use of collaborative learning early in the educational process. The earlier a solid foundation for learning is created for a student, the more opportunities he/she has to develop these skills, which include critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making.

Through a survey sent to 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts/Writing teachers, I gathered information on how they used collaborative learning in their classroom and if they would consider expanding its use. I chose to survey teachers in the eight surrounding school districts because I have personal/professional relationships with many of them. I thought that combined with the use of the Qualtrics survey instrument through Bowling Green State University would encourage them to complete the survey and provide me with the necessary information for this research paper. While I don't have similar relationships with college professors in the area, I relied on the BGSU connection to encourage them to complete the survey.

I wanted to introduce this research paper with a personal story supported by research. An explanation of different approaches for utilizing collaborative learning in the classroom seemed the logical next step. Identifying benefits of collaborative learning at this point provides the argument teachers may need to consider incorporating one or more of these approaches in their activities. Survey research provides information about what's occurring locally. Research is followed by personal testimonial to highlight successful application. Finally, information on how teachers can successfully implement collaborative learning in their classrooms suggests ways for them to shift their roles to become facilitators.

Robin Bowdish  
 English 6040  
 Dr. Lee Nickoson  
 December 12, 2015

### Research Tool/Research Over

For this project, I wanted to gather information from local teachers as well as obtain information about collaborative approaches to learning. Scholarly articles I used included:

- *Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories* by James A. Berlin
- *Facilitating Collaborative Learning: 20 Things You Should Know* by Mariam Clifford
- *What is Collaborative Learning?* by Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean T. MacGregor
- *New Approaches to Collaborative Learning* by Beverly J. Irby, Karon LeCompte, and Rafael Lara-Alecio

Additionally I used the following training materials:

- *What is collaborative learning and how does it work?*  
<http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cl1CL/moreinfo/MI2A.htm>
- *Cooperative and Collaborative Learning: Concept to Classroom*  
<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/coopcollab/>
- *Collaborative Learning* <http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/>

Using Bowling Green State University's Qualtrics program, I created two surveys: one for 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts/Writing public school teachers and one for English Language Arts/Writing college professors. I wanted to gather information on what was being done locally. I initially considered using Survey Monkey because I have a level of familiarity with this instrument. Dr. Nickoson shared with me that through BGSU, I could access a program entitled Qualtrics. After I explored Qualtrics, I decided to use it. The process for creating surveys in Qualtrics is similar to that of Survey Monkey, so I felt comfortable using it. Since Qualtrics identifies the survey with BGSU, I thought this would encourage teachers/professors to complete it. I also considered the need to keep the survey short so the time commitment on the part of the teachers was minimal.

Information from the scholarly articles supports the effectiveness and benefits of collaborative learning. I used information from the training materials to provide teachers with strategies for implementing collaborative learning in their English Language Arts/Writing classes. The earlier in the educational process that public school teachers recognize the benefits of collaborative learning for their students and choose to

implement this process in their classrooms, the stronger their foundation for success will be. Through this process students will become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and decision makers.

Robin Bowdish  
English 6040  
Dr. Lee Nickoson  
December 12, 2015

## Prospectus

My research paper will explore how collaborative approaches to teaching writing are being used in 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in local public schools and in local college classrooms with the intent of supporting the use of collaborative learning early in the educational process. The earlier a solid foundation for learning is created for a student, the more opportunities he/she has to develop these skills, which include critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making.

The introduction will be based on personal experience. Additionally, this paper will include an explanation of different collaborative approaches as determined by my research along with descriptions of the benefits of collaborative learning for students. Research supporting the use of collaborative approaches to learning will include scholarly articles, training information, and local survey results. Using Bowling Green State University's Qualtrics program, I created two short surveys—one for public school English Language Arts/Writing teachers of students in grades 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> and one for college English Language Arts/Writing teachers. This program will identify the connection with BGSU. The survey will be short to encourage respondents to complete it. The link will be e-mailed to teachers in 8 area public schools and 8 local colleges/universities. Data will be collected and reports created through Qualtrics. Along with the data, I will include testimonial from a public school teacher/curriculum coach, who uses collaborative approaches in her English Language Arts and writing classes. Finally, successful incorporation of collaborative learning in the classroom involves teachers recognizing a shift in their role. Teachers become facilitators who clearly articulate the assignment. Teachers must create teams that they feel will be vibrant and successful; teachers must guide students in the team process by posing questions and assisting in conflict resolution when necessary; and teachers may want to create a rubric as a guide for the assignment.

As a result of the information in this report, public school teachers will develop or increase their awareness of how college professors use collaborative learning in their classrooms. For those who have considered implementing strategies for collaborative learning, this research will provide tools for doing so by allowing them to determine their role. This becomes important for creating a foundation that results in positive outcomes for students that will benefit them throughout their education and well into their careers. I hope this report will challenge teachers to implement/expand their use of collaborative approaches in their language arts/writing classes.



Robin Bowdish  
English 6040  
Dr. Lee Nickoson  
December 12, 2015

## Should Collaborative Learning be Used in Public Schools?

### ***Introduction***

In 1967, a teacher named Mrs. Cooper challenged her sixth grade students to create and publish a school paper. She divided the students into groups, and she became the facilitator. Every student in the class excelled in this project—even those who emphatically claimed to hate English class! While Mrs. Cooper didn't realize this, she was engaging her sixth grade students in collaborative learning. Each group consisted of students with diverse skill sets, but they were working toward a common goal. Under the facilitator's vigilant guidance, students pooled knowledge, took responsibility for learning, and became creative thinkers. This assignment created a solid foundation in Language Arts and writing for these students very early in their educational process.

Mrs. Cooper was clearly before her time in recognizing that a noisy classroom is a classroom where learning is occurring. Her approach to this project provided a social environment for learning writing. Today, this is known as collaborative learning. Students were challenged to engage peers, consider thoughts and ideas of others, and defend their viewpoints. While this sixth grade class created, printed, and marketed school papers, the more important outcomes from this assignment were that sixth grade students learned to think creatively, solve problems, and make team decisions. Sound familiar? These are universal skills that benefit successful students in achieving their

goals as they transition into adulthood. With these positive outcomes, should students in public schools be engaged in this kind of collaborative learning earlier? What exactly is collaborative learning? How can teachers implement this in their language arts and writing classes?

In my current position as the Council Coordinator for Tuscarawas County Family and Children First Council, we focus on the value of collaboration between agencies, schools, and community members. Through team work and the collaborative process, we seek solutions for community problems. While this strays from the topic of implementing collaborative learning in language arts class, it validates the need for students to learn to work collaboratively as part of a team. During one of my course assignments in this program, a few classmates were able to record their classroom sessions with their students. Their interactions with students validated their claims that they acted as classroom facilitators or coaches. Their classes were typically less structured with students actively participating in informal discussions. These classroom discussions were indicative of my committee meetings!

### ***Explanation of Collaborative Learning***

According to Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean T. MacGregor, collaborative learning “is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together.”<sup>5</sup> This approach recognizes the social nature of learning. The role of the teacher becomes one of a facilitator. This is a substantial change in how teachers may perceive themselves. Learning becomes an

---

<sup>5</sup> What is Collaborative Learning? By Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean T. MacGregor, Washing Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education

active process for students as they research new ideas to integrate with what they already know so they can create something new. Students are challenged at some level to develop their reasoning and problem solving skills.

Collaborative learning can be incorporated in the classroom in many different ways. Following are a few ideas for collaborative activities:

- **Stump Your Partner**—the teacher challenges students to think of a question based on the assignment. Each student shares the question with his/her partner, who must answer it. Teachers may also want to consider using these questions on tests.
- **Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share**—the teacher asks a question that requires analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing. Small teams of students share their thoughts. Each team's response is shared with the class. Teams can also be asked evaluate the responses of other teams.
- **Catch-up**—if a teacher is presenting information to the class, he/she may stop during the presentation and ask small groups of students to compare notes and thoughts on the topic. Following their discussions, the class should discuss questions determined by the groups.
- **Fishbowl Debate**—the students form trios, and each student is assigned a distinct role. One student takes a position on the topic, the second student takes the opposite position, and the third student takes notes and decides which teammate presents the most convincing argument. Each group's note taker summarizes the discussions for the entire class.

- **Case Study**—the teacher provides each group of students with a case study to analyze. Following adequate time for discussion, groups are asked to share their thoughts about their case.
- **Team-based Learning**—the teacher assigns students a task then quizzes them to assess what they've learned. Student groups are then formed to review the quiz. Each group is directed to complete the quiz as a group. Both results are used for each students' grade. The teacher can then structure the class lecture around the material with which the students seemed to struggle.
- **Group Problem Solving**—the teacher presents a problem, provides structure for the activity, and allows groups or teams of students to achieve a solution. This strategy is also referred to as inquiry based learning, authentic learning, or discovery learning.

Each of these activities focuses on the learner, places importance on interaction, recognizes the importance of working in groups, and introduces students to structured approaches to solving problems. Teachers may choose to use one or several of these seven techniques in their classroom as a way to engage students in the social construct of learning.

While different studies describe the benefits of collaborative approaches to teaching in different ways (some more specific than others), these benefits can be summarized as follows:

- increased student involvement
- increased capacity for student cooperation and team work
- increased student civic responsibility

In an article he wrote in 1982, *Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories*, James A. Berlin supports this approach of teaching writing as “the most intelligent and most practical alternative available, serving in every way the best interests of our students.”<sup>6</sup> He notes that this New Rhetoric pedagogy that encourages interaction between the writer, language, reality, and audience results in communication that creates community. Students become more actively involved with their teacher, with their peers, and with the subject matter through the social interaction they experience. Teachers fill the role of facilitators. Team members (peers) depend on each other to achieve a common goal. Each group member must be accountable for completing his/her share of the project and participating in establishing group goals. Collaborative learning teaches students to become active participants in their group process. Through this experience, students learn to trust others, to make decisions, to communicate, and to manage conflict. The Global Development Research Center, an independent non-profit think tank, identifies *44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning* (see *Attachment A*).

### **Survey Information**

To determine when language arts/writing teachers begin to implement collaborative approaches to learning, teachers from eight local public schools were surveyed via e-mail. The survey was created using Bowling Green State University’s *Qualtrics*, which allowed me to create and distribute a short survey that was easy for respondents to complete, provided final reports based on the responses, and was

---

<sup>6</sup> Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories by James A. Berlin, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?=-0010-0994%28198212%2944%3A8%3C765%3ACCTMPT%3E2.0CO%3B2-0>, p. 766

validated with the BGSU logo. See *Attachment B* to view the 7 question survey that was sent to 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade language arts/writing teachers from area schools. Teachers who responded represent all grade levels except 11<sup>th</sup>. I chose 4<sup>th</sup> grade as the starting point because according to Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee, children learn to read through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade then they read to learn. 41% of those contacted completed the survey. I wanted to expand this research by including how English/Writing professors at local colleges incorporate collaborative learning in their classes. This seemed appropriate for two reasons:

1. High school students are participating in post-secondary education options through these local colleges
2. When students graduate from high school, many are entering these local colleges

Post-secondary writing students engage in the collaborative approach of learning through peer groups at all stages of the writing process through Group Problem Solving and Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share processes as indicated by the above survey results. These peer response groups help students generate ideas, refine their positions, and examine their arguments. Feedback from their peers helps students become confident in their writing and increases their creativity. Young authors expand their ideas as a result of written and oral feedback from their team. Understanding how college professors are incorporating collaborative learning processes in their classrooms is a vital piece of the puzzle for public school teachers who should be focusing on preparing students for their future opportunities. See *Attachment C* for the

survey sent to college English/Writing professors. Those from 8 local colleges were contacted; 39% from the following colleges responded:

- Belmont College
- Malone
- Stark State
- Ohio University Eastern
- University of Mount Union

Those responding taught Composition, Technical Writing, Academic Writing, Creative Writing, Literature, and Communications. The results from both surveys follow:

**Which of the following collaborative learning approaches have you used with your language arts/writing classes?**

<b>Collaborative Learning Approach</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Colleges</b>
Group Problem Solving	12%	23%
Team Based Learning	6%	0%
Case Study	0%	0%
Fish Bowl Debate	0%	0%
Catch Up	0%	0%
Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share	53%	54%
Stump Your Partner	0%	0%
I don't use any collaborative approach	12%	0%
Other: Jigsaw (schools), Group Essay/Presentation (college)	18%	23%

**As a teacher, do you feel using collaborative approaches to learning in your classroom develops confident learners?**

	Schools	Colleges
<b>Yes</b>	59%	77%
<b>No</b>	0%	0%
<b>Maybe</b>	41%	23%

**Which of the following collaborative learning approaches do you feel is more successful for your students?**

Collaborative Learning Approach	Schools	Colleges
Group Problem Solving	35%	46%
Team Based Learning	0%	0%
Case Study	0%	8%
Fish Bowl Debate	12%	0%
Catch Up	0%	0%
Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share	41%	38%
Stump Your Partner	0%	0%
I don't use any collaborative approach	6%	0%
Other: Varies with each class and group	6%	8%

**If you felt a collaborative approach to learning challenged students to improve their reasoning and problem solving skills, would you consider implementing it in your language arts or writing classes?**

	Schools	Colleges
I already implement collaborative approaches	53%	54%



I would consider increasing the use of collaborative approaches	47%	46%
I will not implement collaborative approaches	0%	0%

### ***Teacher's Viewpoint***

As a follow up to the information provided in the survey, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts teacher and Curriculum Coach elaborated on her use of collaborative learning throughout her teaching career. She acknowledges that she feels her students are more confident when they work in structured groups. She varies the approach based on the assignment and the composition of the class, but she typically uses either a Group Problem Solving or a Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share approach. She embraces her role as a facilitator and enjoys watching her students exercise their critical thinking skills. Her theory is that a noisy classroom is a classroom where students are learning. We also discussed how assignments for her classroom have changed over the years as she's increased collaborative learning approaches. When she began teaching almost 30 years ago, students completed assignments independently. These assignments included reading a chapter independently, completing a worksheet about the material, turning the worksheet in to the teacher, and then getting a grade based on the correct answers. She now has each student read a portion of the assignment aloud to the class. Once the chapter is complete, students are divided into groups to complete a worksheet/assignment. Each group turns in their worksheet then the teacher leads a discussion on the answers. While she acknowledges the need to know a student's individual level of achievement, she notes that students learn from their

peers and develop a confidence through collaborative learning. Based on the above survey, 12% of the public school teachers did not use collaborative learning approaches in their classrooms; however, all teachers surveyed indicated they either already use collaborative learning approaches or would be willing to use some form of collaborative learning in their classroom.

### ***Teachers' Role in the Collaborative Approach to Learning***

To ensure successful implementation of collaborative learning, the teacher must consider his/her role as that of a facilitator. Teachers must identify clear, relevant questions for students prior to the formation of teams. Teachers must assist students in conflict resolution and provide them with techniques for trouble shooting future conflicts. Teachers must help students reflect on their group's progress during the assignment. Teachers must expect success from each team and all students. Finally, teachers should consider creating a rubric to share with each team at the beginning of the assignment. This rubric can then be used to guide the learning process as well as provide guidance for assessing (grading) the project. Collaborative learning projects can be developed to meet the specific needs of each classroom taking into consideration the objective of the assignment and the skill level of the participants. Some teachers may choose to create a more structured environment while others may choose to create a more spontaneous environment based on input from the students/teams. However collaborative learning is implemented in a classroom, the goal remains to shift learning from being teacher centered to being student centered.

Students who engage in collaborative learning improve their ability to work with others, develop an understanding of individual differences, learn to relate to their peers, take ownership of their responsibilities related to the group's activity, and learn to value feedback. So with these numerous benefits to collaborative learning, shouldn't all teachers be compelled to implement this in their classrooms? Even with all the previously mentioned benefits, collaborative learning approaches may be difficult to implement. The assignment must present the opportunity. How can the assignment be structured for group work? Is the teacher able to create a way to grade the assignment? Is it necessary for the teacher to create a Rubric for grading clarification? The chemistry of the students in the class must allow the teacher to create groups that are capable of working together and preserving through conflicts.

How can a teacher assist students in forming great collaborative learning groups? Bowen and Jackson<sup>7</sup> share tips for creating groups that work well:

1. In the beginning, expect to have a positive experience and don't hesitate to work with new people.
2. Focus on making a good impression with your team members, establish team rules, and identify the team process.
3. Focus on constructive criticism, involve all team members in discussions, solve problems—even if it means involving the teacher, review the team's progress at predetermined intervals.
4. Conclude by summarizing what the team has learned and celebrate the team's accomplishments!

---

<sup>7</sup> Bowen, D. D. and Jackson, C. N. (1985-6). "Curing those 'ol 'Omgod-Not-Another-Group—Class' blues" Organizational Behavior Teaching Review

## ***Conclusion***

The arguments are compelling for incorporating collaborative learning early in the education process to build a strong foundation for our students. Learning becomes a social, active process where students are challenged by diverse ideas. If teachers think of themselves as classroom facilitators, promoting and encouraging social interaction within student group discussions becomes natural. Students are encouraged to think critically, to solve problems within their team, and to make team decisions. Since collaborative learning is used at the post-secondary level, shouldn't students receive the foundation for these skills as early in their learning process as possible? Those public school teachers responding to the survey for this project indicated that they either already utilize some form of collaborative learning or would be willing to incorporate collaborative learning processes in their English Language Arts classrooms. These teachers clearly recognize that there are benefits from this interaction between writers, language, reality, and audience. Something else to consider is the ultimate goal of education: to produce young adults who are prepared to be successful in the workforce. Critical thinking, problem solving, and team work are important skills that readily transfer to the workforce. To align the learning process to meet the needs of our youth as they transition into adulthood by incorporating collaborative approaches in learning at the earliest opportunity conceives creative, confident learners who will move readily into the roles of creative, confident employees.

The following attachments are part of this project:

**Attachment A: 44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning**

**Attachment B: Qualtrics Survey Questions for Public School Teachers (grades 4-12)**

**Attachment C: Qualtrics Survey Questions for College Professors**

## Attachment A

### 44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning

1. Develops higher level thinking skills
2. Promotes student-faculty interaction and familiarity
3. Increases student retention
4. Builds self-esteem in students
5. Enhances student satisfaction with the learning experience
6. Promotes a positive attitude toward the subject matter
7. Develops oral communication skills
8. Develops social interaction skills
9. Promotes positive race relations
10. Creates an environment of active, involved, exploratory learning
11. Uses a team approach to problem solving while maintaining individual accountability
12. Encourages diversity understanding
13. Encourages student responsibility for learning
14. Involves students in developing curriculum and class procedures
15. Students explore alternate problem solutions in a safe environment
16. Stimulates critical thinking and helps students clarify ideas through discussion and debate
17. Enhances self-management skills
18. Fits in well with the constructivist approach
19. Establishes an atmosphere of cooperation and helping school-wide
20. Students develop responsibility for each other
21. Builds more positive heterogeneous relationships
22. Encourages alternate student assessment techniques
23. Fosters and develops interpersonal relationships
24. Modelling problem solving techniques by students' peers
25. Students are taught how to criticize ideas, not people
26. Sets high expectations for students and teachers
27. Promotes higher achievement and class attendance
28. Students stay on task more and are less disruptive
29. Greater ability of students to view situations from others' perspectives (development of empathy)
30. Creates a stronger social support system
31. Creates a more positive attitude toward teachers, principals, and other school personnel by students and creates a more positive attitude by teachers toward their students
32. Addresses learning style differences among students
33. Promotes innovation in teaching and classroom techniques
34. Classroom anxiety is significantly reduced
35. Test anxiety is significantly reduced
36. Classroom resembles real life social and employment situations
37. Students practice modeling societal and work related roles
38. CL is synergistic with writing across the curriculum
39. CL activities can be used to personalize large lecture classes

40. Skill building and practice can be enhanced and made less tedious through CL activities in and out of class
41. CL activities promote social and academic relationships well beyond the classroom and individual course
42. CL processes create environments where students can practice building leadership skills
43. CL increases leadership skills of female students
44. In colleges where students commute to school and do not remain on campus to participate in campus like activities, CL creates a community environment within the classroom

Robin Bowdish  
English 6040  
Dr. Lee Nickoson  
Fall 2015

**Attachment B: Collaborative Learning Survey for 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade staff**

Q1 What is your school district?

- Tuscarawas Valley (1)
- Dover (2)
- New Philadelphia (3)
- Claymont (4)
- Strasburg (5)
- Indian Valley (6)
- Newcomerstown (7)
- Conotton Valley (8)
- Other--please identify below (9) \_\_\_\_\_

Q2 What grade do you teach?

- 4th (1)
- 5th (2)
- 6th (3)
- 7th (4)
- 8th (5)
- 9th (6)
- 10th (7)
- 11th (8)
- 12th (9)



Q3 Which of the following collaborative learning approaches have you used with your language arts/writing classes?

- Group Problem Solving: teacher presents a problem, provides structure for the activity, and allows teams of students to achieve a solution. (1)
- Team-based Learning: teacher assigns students a task then quizzes them to assess what they've learned. Teams are then formed to review the quiz. Each team completes the quiz. (2)
- Case Study: teacher provides each team with a case study to analyze. Following discussion, each team shares their thoughts about their case. (3)
- Fishbowl Debate: Students are divided into teams of three. Each student is assigned a role: student 1 takes a position of the topic; student 2 takes the opposite position; student 3 takes notes and decides which student presents the most convincing argument. Student 3 takes notes and summarizes the discussion for the class. (4)
- Catch-Up: teacher stops during class presentation; asks teams of students to compare notes and thoughts on the topic; teams share their questions with the class. (5)
- Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share: teacher poses question; teams of students analyze, evaluate, and synthesize then share with class; teams may evaluate responses of peers. (6)
- Stump Your Partner: teacher challenges student to think of a question based on the assignment; student shares question with partner; teacher may consider using these questions on a quiz. (7)
- I do not use any collaborative approach in my language arts/writing classes. (8)
- Other--please identify below. (9) \_\_\_\_\_

Q4 As a teacher, do you feel using collaborative approaches to learning in your classroom develops confident learners?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (3)

Q5 Which collaborative approach do you feel is more successful for your students?

- Group Problem Solving: teacher presents a problem, provides structure for the activity, and allows teams of students to achieve a solution. (1)
- Team-based Learning: teacher assigns students a task then quizzes them to assess what they've learned. Teams are then formed to review the quiz. Each team completes the quiz. (2)
- Case Study: teacher provides each team with a case study to analyze. Following discussion, each team shares their thoughts about their case. (3)
- Fishbowl Debate: Students are divided into teams of three. Each student is assigned a role: student 1 takes a position of the topic; student 2 takes the opposite position; student 3 takes notes and

decides which student presents the most convincing argument. Student 3 takes notes and summarizes the discussion for the class. (4)

- Catch-Up: teacher stops during class presentation; asks teams of students to compare notes and thoughts on the topic; teams share their questions with the class. (5)
- Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share: teacher poses question; teams of students analyze, evaluate, and synthesize then share with class; teams may evaluate responses of peers. (6)
- Stump Your Partner: teacher challenges student to think of a question based on the assignment; student shares question with partner; teacher may consider using these questions on a quiz. (7)
- I do not use any collaborative approach in my language arts/writing classes. (8)
- Other--please identify below. (9) \_\_\_\_\_

Q6 If you felt a collaborative approach to learning challenged students to improve their reasoning and problem solving skills, would you consider implementing it in your language arts or writing classes?

- I already implement collaborative approaches to learning. (1)
- I would consider increasing how I implement collaborative approaches to learning in my class. (2)
- I will not implement collaborative learning approaches in my class. (3)
- Additional comments: (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q7 Would you like to receive the results of this survey via e-mail?

- Please e-mail me the results. My e-mail is: (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- I do not wish to receive the results. (2)

Robin Bowdish  
English 6040  
Dr. Lee Nickoson  
Fall 2015

**Attachment C: Collaborative Learning Survey for College Staff**

Q1 What is your college?

- Kent State University at Tuscarawas (1)
- Belmont College (2)
- Malone (3)
- Stark State (4)
- Ohio University Eastern (5)
- Walsh (6)
- University of Mount Union (7)
- Franciscan University of Steubenville (8)
- Other--please identify below (9) \_\_\_\_\_

Q2 What class do you teach?

Q3 Which of the following collaborative learning approaches have you used with your language arts/writing classes?

- Group Problem Solving: teacher presents a problem, provides structure for the activity, and allows teams of students to achieve a solution. (1)
- Team-based Learning: teacher assigns students a task then quizzes them to assess what they've learned. Teams are then formed to review the quiz. Each team completes the quiz. (2)
- Case Study: teacher provides each team with a case study to analyze. Following discussion, each team shares their thoughts about their case. (3)
- Fishbowl Debate: Students are divided into teams of three. Each student is assigned a role: student 1 takes a position of the topic; student 2 takes the opposite position; student 3 takes notes and

decides which student presents the most convincing argument. Student 3 takes notes and summarizes the discussion for the class. (4)

- Catch-Up: teacher stops during class presentation; asks teams of students to compare notes and thoughts on the topic; teams share their questions with the class. (5)
- Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share: teacher poses question; teams of students analyze, evaluate, and synthesize then share with class; teams may evaluate responses of peers. (6)
- Stump Your Partner: teacher challenges student to think of a question based on the assignment; student shares question with partner; teacher may consider using these questions on a quiz. (7)
- I do not use any collaborative approach in my language arts/writing classes. (8)
- Other--please identify below. (9) \_\_\_\_\_

Q4 As a teacher, do you feel using collaborative approaches to learning in your classroom develops confident learners?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (3)

Q5 Which collaborative approach do you feel is more successful for your students?

- Group Problem Solving: teacher presents a problem, provides structure for the activity, and allows teams of students to achieve a solution. (1)
- Team-based Learning: teacher assigns students a task then quizzes them to assess what they've learned. Teams are then formed to review the quiz. Each team completes the quiz. (2)
- Case Study: teacher provides each team with a case study to analyze. Following discussion, each team shares their thoughts about their case. (3)
- Fishbowl Debate: Students are divided into teams of three. Each student is assigned a role: student 1 takes a position of the topic; student 2 takes the opposite position; student 3 takes notes and decides which student presents the most convincing argument. Student 3 takes notes and summarizes the discussion for the class. (4)
- Catch-Up: teacher stops during class presentation; asks teams of students to compare notes and thoughts on the topic; teams share their questions with the class. (5)
- Think-pair-share/Write-pair-share: teacher poses question; teams of students analyze, evaluate, and synthesize then share with class; teams may evaluate responses of peers. (6)
- Stump Your Partner: teacher challenges student to think of a question based on the assignment; student shares question with partner; teacher may consider using these questions on a quiz. (7)
- I do not use any collaborative approach in my language arts/writing classes. (8)
- Other--please identify below. (9) \_\_\_\_\_

Q6 If you felt a collaborative approach to learning challenged students to improve their reasoning and problem solving skills, would you consider implementing it in your language arts or writing classes?

- I already implement collaborative approaches to learning. (1)
- I would consider increasing how I implement collaborative approaches to learning in my class. (2)
- I will not implement collaborative learning approaches in my class. (3)
- Additional comments: (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q7 Would you like to receive the results of this survey via e-mail?

- Please e-mail me the results. My e-mail is: (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- I do not wish to receive the results. (2)

Robin Bowdish  
 English 6040  
 Dr. Lee Nickoson  
 Bibliography  
 December 12, 2015

## Bibliography

Facilitating Collaborative Learning: 20 Things You Need to Know:

<http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/facilitating-collaborative-learning-20-things-you-need-to-know-from-the-pros/#ixzz2CiJDUIz>

What is collaborate learning and how does it work?

<http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cl1/CL/moreinfo/MI2A.htm>

20 Collaborative Learning Tips and Strategies:

<http://www.teachthought.com/uncategorized/20-collaborative-learning-tips-and-strategies/>

What is Collaborative Learning? by Barbara Leigh Smith and Jean T. MacGregor

<http://evergreen.edu/facultydevelopment/docs/WhatisCollaborativeLearning.pdf>

New Approaches to Collaborative Learning by Beverly J. Irby, Karon LeCompte, and Rafael Lara-Alecio

[http://www.nea.org/assets/img/PubThoughtAndAction/TAA\\_97Spr\\_06.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/img/PubThoughtAndAction/TAA_97Spr_06.pdf)

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning: Concept to classroom:

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/coopcollab/>

Collaborative Learning: <http://gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/>

Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories by James A. Berlin

Additional info

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/v7n1/gokhale.jte-v7n1.html#Rau&Heyl>

Qualtrics Survey for 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts teachers from:

- Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools
- New Philadelphia City Schools
- Dover City Schools
- Claymont City Schools
- Newcomerstown Exempted Schools
- Strasburg Local Schools
- Indian Valley Local Schools
- Westerville City Schools
- Conotton Valley Local School

Qualtrics Survey for professors from:

- Kent State University at Tuscarawas
- Belmont College
- Malone
- Stark State
- Ohio University Eastern
- Walsh
- University of Mount Union
- Franciscan University of Steubenville

Robin Bowdish  
English 6020  
Dr. Heather Jordan  
April 30, 2018

### **Teaching Philosophy**

I am excited to return to the classroom after more than 20 years of working with various community agencies and schools on many collaborative projects. My past teaching experience includes English Composition, Grammar, and Public Speaking. During my time away from the classroom, I have developed an appreciation for the numerous resources available to assist people in becoming successful and self-sufficient. I have also gained extensive experience in working with diverse students ranging from those with disabilities to those who are gifted. If I could share one important concept I've learned with students, it would be the need to learn to work collaboratively across all systems. My passion is empowering people through knowledge. The foundation of my teaching is based on my knowledge of communications and ways to connect classroom material to practical experience. I envision myself as a facilitator who guides students as they collaborate to complete their required assignments through critical thinking.

My classroom is an encouraging environment where all students are expected to come to class prepared. During the first class of each semester, we discuss and determine classroom rules and etiquette, which allows me to communicate my expectations to the class. Creating an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their opinions and asking questions is a priority for me. I also want students to share with me what they expect to get from the class. Students have clear expectations of their assignments through the course syllabus and supplemental materials relating to specific assignments. Course activities include a combination of individual and collaborative tasks. Each class period begins with a question to gain everyone's attention and ends with a question that encourages students to think about our discussions.

My intent is to consider various teaching methods that are determined by the proficiency and preference of each class. It's been my experience that some students are more receptive to activities that others don't seem to embrace. I want students to consider our classroom as a brave space where all ideas are valued. I would like students to consider their writings as fluid documents that are always in some state of revision. I will strive to help students understand that they "do not revise because they fail; they revise because they write." (Jayson Lozier, Week



12 Discussion Board). I hope to model flexibility in my approach to teaching. I willingly accept constructive feedback from students and may revise assignments as a result

Each semester, I plan to use a consistent outline for every class. We will begin with ten to fifteen minutes of lecture and discussion on assigned reading. Students will then participate in think-pair-share activities relating to their writing assignment and its revision. I will use this time to engage students in individual conferencing/mentoring. Before taking a short break, each group of students will report on their discussion. Class will resume with a short lecture led by students and a discussion period or a collaborative activity focusing on revisions. Following a brief report out period, students will complete a short, two question survey reflecting on the day's classroom discussion. Since group participation is a crucial skill for communicating in the workforce, I incorporate various collaborative activities throughout the semester. These include think-pair-share activities mentioned above, case studies evaluated by groups, peer feedback on assignments, and a group project completed over the course of the semester. The group project is designed to enable students to connect with community resources that will be helpful for them when they enter their career paths.

Students are graded on a variety of assignments with grades being weighted based on their importance. Their values are identified in the course syllabus. While students won't receive a grade for attendance, the short, two question survey at the end of each class is graded. For written and oral presentations, rubrics that are shared and discussed prior to each assignment will be used. Group projects are graded on both individual and collaborative merit. Students are expected to be involved in the evaluation process through peer review. Required assignments are denoted by an \* on the course syllabus. All students are expected to complete the required assignments. Failure to do so results in a final grade of *Incomplete* in the course. *Incomplete* grades will be processed according to college policy.

Teaching students at a community college level requires an understanding of the course materials as well as an appreciation of the skills students need to become valuable members of the workforce. When students leave my classroom, my hope is that in addition to learning about communication they also understand the importance of connecting with others to foster collaboration.

**English 1500 / Response to Literature**  
**Fall 2016**  
**MW 10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Instructor:** Robin Bowdish  
**Office:** 428 East Hall  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 1:00-3:00 p.m. and by appointment  
**Phone:** 330-243-4231  
**Mailbox:** 228 East Hall  
**Email:** [rbowdis@bgsu.edu](mailto:rbowdis@bgsu.edu)

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Random House, copyright 1969, copyright renewed 1997.

Maya Angelou, *Me and Mom and Me*, Random House, copyright 2013.

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, Penguin Group, copyright Amy Tan 1989

Amy Tan, *The Valley of Amazement*, HarperCollins Publishers, copyright 2013

Additional resources on literary analysis and close reading will be provided throughout the term.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES**

In this general education English course, students will use close reading skills to analyze and interpret the autobiographical elements in the first and last novels of two famous female authors. In addition to reading, students will participate in discussions and writing assignments about the novels and their authors.

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- identify how Angelou and Tan use dialogue, characterization, and thematic development to tell their stories
- compare/contrast the style and techniques in the first and last novels for each author
- compare/contrast the style and techniques used by each author
- gain insight into each author's struggles as a female author (Angelou as an African American author and Tan as a Chinese American author)

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Requirements for this class are organized around reading and analyzing four novels by two great female authors. Successful students will come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. To fully understand the texts of all four novels, students will learn close reading, which will allow the reader to become an active participant in understanding the power of the language, syntax, form, and imagery.

Classroom activities will include brief lectures which will reinforce the close reading assignments, discussions on assigned readings, group activities concluding with small group presentations, and a timed writing assignment. Each class will begin with a brief lecture/discussion of the reading assignment relating to the above performance objectives. Through group activities such as think-pair-share, students will analyze each author's use of dialogue, characterization, and thematic development in each of these autobiographies. Students will also identify similarities and differences in each author's style and technique in their first and last novels. I will provide handouts to assist in these evaluations. Students will be required to complete timed writing assignments based on the Performance Objectives of the class.

My teaching philosophy is rooted in creating an encouraging environment where students participate in both individual and collaborative activities. It is my intent to facilitate classroom discussions and activities that encourage students to take ownership during their group discussions. This clearly requires coming to class prepared to discuss the assignment and to support your thoughts.

I reserve the right to revise the syllabus and study schedule to accommodate the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class.

### **Group Facilitation of Classroom Discussions (20%)**

During the semester, each class discussion will be led by an assigned student group. This will require group collaboration and knowledge of the assigned material. I will provide each group with a prompt to begin their planning. If you have questions about this process at any time, please ask me.

### **Timed Writing Assignments (19%)**

Each Wednesday, students will be given the 30 minutes to complete a timed writing assignment to explain their thoughts on the week's assignments. These assignments should be a minimum of 2 double spaced pages. The instructor will provide at least one guidance question based on the group led class discussion.

### **Think-Pair-Share Activities (34%)**

Think-Pair-Share activities will occur during each class and will be based on each group knowing, understanding, and participating in the group led discussions. Students are expected to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the content of each reading assignment. Point values for each student will be determined by my observation as well as feedback from other members of the group.

### **Final Paper (27%)**

Using the above listed Course Objectives, each student will be required to submit a final 7 to 10 page paper at the conclusion of this course. Guidelines for the content of this paper are:

- Compare/contrast Maya Angelou's two novels
- Compare/contrast Amy Tan's two novels
- Compare/contrast both authors' writing in their novels
- Compare/contrast the struggles faced by each author as a result of their race and gender

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

**Group Facilitation of Classroom Discussions:** 30 points for each class led discussion for a total of 150 points

**Timed Writing Assignments:** 10 points each for a total of 140 points

**Think-Pair-Share Activities:** 10 points each for a total of 250 points

**Final Paper:** 200 points

### **Grading Scale:**

A: 100-90%    B: 89-80%    C: 79-70%    D: 69-60%    F: 59% and below

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**Absence:** Only four absences are permitted for the quarter; each absence beyond four will result in a deduction of 5% from the student's final grade. Any absence may jeopardize the final grade through missed discussion, lectures, and in-class assignments; perfect or excellent attendance not only contributes to the grade for in-class work, but also ensures an improved final grade. If absent, students are responsible for obtaining any information missed.

**Make-up Work:** If an excused absence becomes necessary, the student will be permitted to arrange making up missed assignments. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor when he/she returns to class to make these arrangements.

**Classroom/Online Etiquette:** Students should demonstrate respect for the learning environment, including their fellow students, and contribute to an atmosphere conducive to learning. Cell phones should be turned off and put away during class. Texting in class will not be tolerated. If a student finds it necessary to use his/her cell phone for emergency reasons, ask me to make arrangements to leave the classroom to do so.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** It is the policy of this university to provide reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities. If a student has a physical, mental, or learning disability and wishes to request such accommodation, he/she must contact the Access Advisor, Room 115, in Student Services.

**Academic Misconduct:** The responsibility for academic honesty rests with the student. The university expects the student to submit papers, projects, and reports resulting from the student's own efforts. Work submitted in any form should reflect the exclusive effort of the student. It is assumed that cheating on quizzes, tests, or examinations is not practiced by mature learners. Plagiarism will not be tolerated at any time. Submitting another's work as one's own, in part or in whole, is a dishonest practice. A student may not appropriate another person's ideas, whether published or not. Consequences for proven cases of dishonest practices may include: (a) Zero percent being given for the test, examination, report, quiz, paper, project, or any other course requirement on which the cheating has occurred; or (b) Failure for the course in which the offense occurred; or (c) Dismissal from the university. The student shall have the right to present his/her case through the student appeals procedure. Even though the primary responsibility for academic integrity resides with the student, the instructor will endeavor to create a secure learning environment that inhibits cheating. The university encourages honest scholarship.

**Student Concerns:** Students should contact me directly (in person, by e-mail, or by phone) with any questions about class procedures or concerns. Student feedback is essential to the continuing growth of the course. More importantly, each student's welfare is my concern. If you are experiencing difficulties, please contact me immediately. Please don't stop attending class or withdraw from the course before discussing the situation with me.

## COURSE CALENDAR

Students are expected to complete assignments by the due date on the below Course Calendar.

**Required Texts** are listed at the beginning of this syllabus. Additional materials will be made available to students through web links, handouts, or pdf files.

### Week 1

M 8/22 Introductions and class overview

W 8/24

**Text: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings***

Read Chapters 1-5 and be prepared to discuss in class

Discuss autobiographical genre

Identify barriers face by author

### Week 2

M 8/29

Read Chapters 6-15

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 1—to lead class discussion

W 8/31

Read Chapters 16-22 and be prepared to discuss in class

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 2—to lead class discussion

### Week 3

M 9/5

**Labor Day—no class**

W 9/7

Read Chapters 23-36 and be prepared to discuss in class

Complete a timed writing assignment based on the course objectives

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 3—to lead class discussion

### Week 4

M 9/12

**Text: *Mom and Me and Mom***

Read Chapters 1-6 and be prepared to discuss in class

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 4—to lead class discussion

W 9/14

Read Chapters 7-13

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 5—to lead class discussion

### Week 5

M 9/19

Read Chapters 14-22

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 1—to lead class discussion

W 9/21

Read Chapters 23-30

Complete a timed writing assignment based on the course objectives

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 2—to lead class discussion

Week 6

M 9/26

**Text: *The Joy Luck Club***

Read *Feathers from a Thousand Li Away: Introduction and "The Joy Luck Club"* and *Feathers from a Thousand Li Away: "The Red Candle" and "The Moon Lady"*

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 3—to lead class discussion

W 9/28

Read *The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates: Introduction, "Rules of the Game" and "The Voice from the Wall"*

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 4—to lead class discussion

Week 7

M 10/3

Read *The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates: "Half and Half" and "Two Kinds"*

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 5—to lead class discussion

W 10/5

Read *American Translation: Introduction, "Rice Husband" and "Four Directions"*

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 1—to lead class discussion

Week 8

M 10/10

Fall Break—no class

W 10/12

Read *American Translation: "Without Wood" and "Best Quality"*

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 2—to lead class discussion

Week 9

M 10/17

Read *Queen Mother of the Western Skies: Introduction, "Magpies" and "Waiting Between the Trees"*

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 3—to lead class discussion

W 10/19

Read *Queen Mother of the Western Skies: "Double Face" and "A Pair of Tickets"*

Complete a timed writing assignment based on the course objectives

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 4—to lead class discussion

Week 10

M 10/24

**Text: *The Valley of Amazement***

Read Chapters 1-2

Be prepared to discuss in class

Group 5—to lead class discussion

W 10/26

Read Chapters 3-4

Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 1—to lead class discussion

Week 11

M 10/31

Read Chapters 5-6  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 2—to lead class discussion

W 11/2

Read Chapters 7-8  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 3—to lead class discussion

Week 12

M 11/7

Read Chapters 9  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 4—to lead class discussion

W 11/9

Read Chapters 10  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 5—to lead class discussion

Week 13

M 11/14

Read Chapters 11  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 1—to lead class discussion

W 11/16

Read Chapters 12  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 2—to lead class discussion

Week 14

M 11/21

Read Chapters 13  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 3—to lead class discussion

W 11/23

Thanksgiving—no class

Week 15

M 11/28

Read Chapters 14  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 4—to lead class discussion

W 11/30

Read Chapters 15  
Complete a timed writing assignment based on the course objectives  
Be prepared to discuss in class  
Group 5—to lead class discussion



Week 16

M 12/5

Analyze the authors and their novels in a 5-7 page paper which will be due on 12/7

W 12/7

Final paper due

Robin Bowdish  
English 6020  
Dr. Heather Johnson  
Future Teaching Goals  
May 2, 2018

As I reflect on my courses in the MA English—Specialization in Teaching program, all that comes to mind is, “You don’t know what you don’t know!” I am just amazed at what I’ve learned during this journey, and I’m excited to share this newly acquired knowledge with others. As I think back, I must have been a very structured teacher. Maybe I thought this was important because this structure provided me with rationale for grading assignments. I love my English Handbook and wanted my students to develop a similar bond. We referred to it a lot in class! Grammar has always been very important to me—at least that’s what I learned from a very early age! I encouraged students to be creative, but I graded their essays on their grammar usage. I tried to be very clear with students on my expectations for their essays by using rubrics that I shared with them at the beginning of each assignment. I always encouraged questions during our classroom discussions, but only a few students asked.

In many ways, though, I was on the right path. I had the outcomes in my sight, but I didn’t have the strategies to make them work. I created opportunities for students to work collaboratively on assignments that allowed them to explore information relating to their majors. I encouraged peer review, but I never really felt that was successful. I felt like I encouraged students to be open and honest, but I’m not sure they really “got” that. Even though I stressed that everyone in my classroom be treated with respect, I’m not sure everyone felt comfortable enough to put themselves out there.

Armed with an amazing growth mindset, I’m very excited to return to the classroom to create a brave space using the knowledge I’ve gained through my courses at BGSU and through my twenty years of community collaboration. Encouraging students to express their opinions and share their cultures will result in promoting open and honest dialogue. I hope students will think of me as a writing coach who helps them use their writing skills to develop strong voices. I want students to see writing as a process with an increased focus on prewriting and revising. As a writing coach, I want promote a collaborative environment where students rely on their peers for feedback on both their prewriting and revising. I hope students view revising as a way to strengthen their creativity and empower their words.

To successfully incorporate these strategies, I realize that flexibility is the key. While I will continue to create structure for my classroom, I hope to do that more creatively. *The Big List of Class Discussion Strategies* provides creative, fun ways to engage students. I can’t wait to implement some of the *15 Formats for Structuring a Class Discussion* with students. I also want to help the students build collaboration skills as they develop in their “communicative competence” and learn to negotiate the ever-changing rules of language. I’m excited to take my cue from the students to learn what I don’t know.

# Robin A. Bowdish

---

## Education

2015-present Bowling Green State University Bowling Green, OH

- MA in English—Specialization in Teaching
- Expected completion date: December 2018

1979–1987 Ohio University Eastern St. Clairsville, OH

- Completed various Management and Computer Science classes

1974-1978 Ohio State University Columbus, OH

- Bachelor of Arts in English

## Experience

1996–Present Tuscarawas County Family & Children First

### **Council Manager**

- Coordinate daily activities of Council
- Manage financial matters of Council
- Oversee grants including Ohio Children’s Trust Fund and Help Me Grow as well as local grants and funding
- Facilitate and promote the achievement of Council goals
- Coordinate discussions between schools, agencies, and families to devise appropriate educational plans focusing on student success
- Maintain professional expertise to assure competency

1991—1998 Belmont Technical College North Center  
2011—2012

### **Public Speaking and English Instructor**

- Create conducive learning environment for up to 25 students of various ages
- Develop and maintain a positive attitude among all students of various backgrounds
- Assist students in acquiring critical thinking skills and developing creative thought processes
- Evaluate student presentations honestly and objectively
- Courses taught included Developmental English, Paragraph Writing, English 101 (Essay Writing), English 103 (Term Paper), Public Speaking (Speech writing/presenting and group project), Math and English tutoring

1990–1992 W. F. Gammetter Company

### **Contracted Office Work**

- Maintain daily office functions for vacationing employee
- Assist customers in placing and completing orders
- Coordinate communications between staff and customers

1979–1989 R & F Coal Company Lamira Preparation Plant

**Laboratory/Environmental Engineering Technician**

- Perform functions relating to all phases of coal analysis
- Work closely with individuals throughout the company and with customers to satisfy their needs
- Communicate activities to inspectors from various local, state, and federal agencies

**Interests**

Harrison Co. Board of Developmental Disabilities, Tuscarawas County Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention activities, Family Advocacy, water/snow sports, reading, gardening