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Final Master's Portfolio

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A Final Portfolio

# Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green

State University in fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English with a Specialization in Technical and Professional Writing and Rhetoric

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### Olivia Burke

#### Analytical Narrative

### Growth as a Writer

Around my third-year teaching, I knew I wanted to start thinking about pursuing a master's degree as I was finishing up RESA for teaching. I started looking at online programs in English, as that is what I was teaching, as well as what I knew was my desired subject. I came across Bowling Green State University's MA in English with a Specialization in Technical and Professional Writing and Rhetoric. It sounded interesting, so after further research into the program, I decided to apply and try it out. My ultimate goal in choosing this program was after receiving this degree, I would look into more of the publishing side of writing along with looking for better ways to teach my students writing, hence the professional and rhetoric piece of the degree I felt connected to both of these goals. Overall, I have been a part of this program for two years, and within those two years, I have composed pieces in a variety of writing styles and genres that demonstrate my growth and variability as a writer.

Four writing pieces were chosen for this portfolio. They are the following: two substantive research pieces, a literary analysis, and a technical document in the form of a manual. These works were selected for this portfolio because I felt they shared a common theme of showing my ability to write in a variety of different genres and forms to show the depth I have as a writer.

Looking at one of my two substantive research pieces, it was chosen because I felt it showed my ability to apply a writing theory to real-world, classroom application that myself and other teachers who read it could use. My first piece is titled, "Transformative Learning at the

Secondary and College Level." This was my final research paper for a course on reflective writing submitted in ENG 6800: Reflective Writing with Cheryl Hoy. The research takes the transformative learning theory and applies it to the secondary and college level. I do this by providing detailed evidence and data that supports using this learning theory in the classroom. I connected to this theory because I teach at the secondary level, so a theory that helps students connect their in-class writing to real-world writing and application was something I wanted to learn and develop more as a teacher of writing. When thinking about revision and what I needed to do for this piece, I took into consideration not only my original professor's feedback, but also feedback from my peers. The largest changes this piece needed was along the lines of MLA formatting and organization in order to have more clarity and conciseness with my ideas. Also, instead of talking from personal experience as I did in my original. I kept it in the third person point of view in order to keep it more scholarly and applicable for others to use as a guide based on my research rather than a narrative of my experience. When people are reading this piece, their takeaways should be how they can use Mesirow's theory of transformative learning in their secondary or collegiate level classes and the importance of doing so, which I feel I demonstrated through my substantive research within this piece. By composing this piece originally as well as through revision work, it has helped me improve my knowledge and reflection skills as a scholar and a teacher. For example, by doing the research on transformative learning, I was able to learn how I could apply my research to my own classroom. By looking at my piece a second time around through revision, I believe this shows strength as a scholar to be able to take feedback and find room for improvements in my writing. Therefore, this substantive research piece on transformative learning is one example of my strengths and growth as a writer throughout my MA program.

My second piece of substantive research for this portfolio is another example of my growth as a writer. The original piece comes from a professional communication and rhetoric class: ENG 6460: Professional Communication and Rhetoric with Gary Heba, titled, "Accessibility in Technical Communication." The goal of this research was to provide research and guidance on accessibility for users with and without disabilities within technical communication and doing so by looking at usability tests, accessible designs, and ability-based designs. While my first mentioned substantive research paper was focused more on teachers of writing and a theory and methods to use, this research was looking at those in the technical communication field and how to better make their communication pieces more user-friendly for all through multiple strategies. I revised a lot of little usage errors and cut down many of my larger paragraphs into more concise pieces in order to make it more readable for readers. I also added headers in this piece because it is so research heavy, I felt based on various feedback from professors and peers that this was the right path for revision to take. I think my change in organizational style strengthened my paper and will help those reading it better understand my main focus points throughout. Before this revision piece, in my past experience as a scholar and writer, I never used many headings or organized my writing in that way, but I feel thanks to this revision process I have learned the benefits of making larger research pieces more readable by doing so because it gives readers focus points to be paying attention to throughout. Thanks to this program and this process, I have grown in my methods of writing and organizational style, which once again has strengthened my writing skills.

My third piece for this portfolio is no longer substantive research, but is instead a literary analysis piece called, "Sharp Objects: Violence and the Need for Control." This piece originated out of a summer elective class ENG 6800: Gone Girls: Women in the Domestic Thriller with Dr.

Piya Pal-Lapinski that I took my first semester in my MA program. After looking back at this paper for revision, I would say this was the strongest original paper for my portfolio. This may be my strongest piece because in my undergraduate classes, I wrote many literary theory pieces throughout my four years, so this was familiar territory for me to write about. I also think because I thoroughly enjoyed the original novel this paper is based on (*Sharp Objects*), I had more of a passion to write this piece and dissect the novel. In regards to revisions, I fixed usage and parallel errors along with adding headers for each character that I dissected in my analysis. My theory for this piece is focused on the violence several female characters exhibit both to themselves and others and how that reflects their need for control over their lives and others. By doing this piece, it has improved my analytical skills with readings, which can be transferred not only to myself as a writer, but as a teacher as well. When I am able to find methods that work for analyzing readings, such as looking at connections between seemingly different characters and applying theories to said characters, I can help students get better at looking for connections and symbols in their readings to do this with as well.

My final piece chosen for this portfolio is from the class ENG 6400: Technical Communication with Gary Heba. The genre of this piece is a technical document that I made. I put together a manual for any upcoming 7th graders at the middle school where I teach. Therefore, this piece is directly applicable to me as a teacher and for my students. I call this technical document: "7th Grade Survival Guide" because often times going from elementary (6th grade) to middle school can be overwhelming for some students, so my purpose was to provide some reassurance for students and help on items students sometimes need smoother transitions with, such as the new bell schedule and switching classes, organization, and expectations. The manual is broken into modules in order to make it accessible for students to understand and use

their first year in middle school. Thinking about revision with this last piece. I knew I needed to continue to make the wording more middle-school friendly and fix some formatting and images throughout in order to help with the accessibility of this document. I also had to keep in mind that they would be middle school students using this, so short and to the point is better than a lot of information to work through. This piece I probably worked through the most because my ultimate goal is to present this to my school administration as a potential document to give to students. I want it to be the best version, so by using this for my portfolio and revision process, I feel this has helped strengthen it better for students and given me more confidence to take the next step with it as a professional. Finally, one of the biggest concepts learned through technical writing courses is how to make documents and other technical pieces more user-friendly. Formatting techniques and learning and applying accessibility to this document is direct evidence of how I have taken course concepts and applied it to my own career and writing. Therefore, this manual is an example of this component during my time in the technical and professional writing program and demonstrates, as my other three projects have, how I have used the courses taken while in this program to strengthen and grow as a writer on the whole.

Overall, I have grown not only as a writer and scholar, but also as a teacher of writing by being a part of the MA program at BGSU. Each of my chosen pieces for this portfolio signifies my growth and diverse methods of writing. Thus, reflecting back on my time in my program revising each of these pieces, I can take away something from each and apply it to myself as a writer and a teacher. Both my substantive research pieces have provided me with new theories and methods both with writing, and also with presenting documents and other communication items for users in an accessible way. My literary analysis piece provides me with growth in the more critical reading aspect for not only myself, but to transfer to my students as well. Finally,

editing my technical document can be directly applied to my degree in professional and technical writing as it is a cumulative piece that applies the strategies learned in technical communication classes and applying it to a real-world document for students. Taking everything into account, one will see in the following pieces how I have proven my growth and strengths as a diverse writer.

## Olivia Burke

Project 1 (Substantive Research)

#### Transformative Learning at the Secondary and College Level

Often in learning, students wonder what the point of it all is. In the secondary level, inquiries such as "When are we ever going to use this? What is the point?" are often asked. From the standpoint of most college students, they are paying a large amount of money to get an education, so therefore, they are wanting their education and choices of classes to be worthwhile and meaningful. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning offers ways in which the transfer of learning can be initiated both at the secondary and college level. Thus, by exploring transformative learning with the following research, it will demonstrate how students from secondary and college-level can be given the opportunity to make their learning meaningful and applicable in higher areas of learning and in careers moving forward in their life.

Transformative learning dates back to the 1978 with John Mezirow. According to Andrew Kitchenham in his article, "The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory," transformative learning is defined as "a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions" (104). However, there is more to this theory than this basic definition. The theory goes back to Mezirow in 1978 when he looked at transformation of women returning to postsecondary study or workplace after an extended time. The goal of his study was to look at and "identify factors that characteristically impede or facilitate women's progress in the re-entry programs" (Kitchenham 105). The major factors of his theory are critical reflection, or critical self-reflection. Influences on Mezirow's early transformative learning theory include Kuhn's paradigm in 1962, Freire's conscientization in 1970, and Habermas'

domains of learning from 1971 and 1984 (Kitchenham 105). Thus, Mezirow pieced together each of their domains of learning to make his transformative learning theory.

Looking at Kuhn's paradigm's, Mezirow used them as his frame of reference, which has become a model and explained a multitude of unanswered questions about adult learning and created its own group of specialized practitioners. Along with Kuhn, Mezirow also seemed to be influenced by Paulo Freire. Paulo Freire coined the term of the "banking" method of learning. This means that the teacher deposits information to those students whom the teacher deems worthy of receiving gifts of knowledge (Kitchenham 107). With that said, Freire noted that this method can be a problem, as students can become dependent on the teacher. This is where the term conscientization came in. Freire "argued that for education to be empowering, the teacher needs not only to be democratic but also to form a transformative relationship between him or her and the students, students and their learning, and students and society" (Kitchenham 107). Thus, learning does not just take place in the classroom but in all aspects of a learner's life.

Habermas' domains of learning appears to be the final influence on Mezirow and his theory or transformative learning. While his theory was modified and changed over a span of 20 years, his early 1970s work on domains of learning is what was instrumental with Mezirow. In 1981, Mezirow used Habermas' critical theory of adult learning and adult education in order to lead to his perspective on transformation and his theory. To start out, Habermas suggested three of the following domains of learning:

The technical (learning that is rote, specific to task, and clearly governed by rules); the practical (involves social norms (i.e. teachers who understand how to interact in an online chat room would be experiencing practical learning)); and the emancipatory (introspective as the learner is self-reflective and experiences self-knowledge (i.e.

teachers who consider their beliefs on technology infusion within their social systems of learning and schools and come to an understanding of what, when, and why to infuse)) (Kitchenham 109).

Mezirow was influenced by these domains and came up with his description of transformation, as part of his theory of transformative learning: "The Emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings" (Kitchenham 109).

Mezirow developed his original theory based on all these influences and reworked Habermas' three types of learning into instrumental, dialogic, and self-reflective (Kitchenham 109). Within these new types, schemes immerged: within meaning schemes; new meaning schemes, and through meaning transformation. Within meaning, learners work with what they already know including past knowledge or experiences. Looking at new meaning, learners take in information and are able to relate it to existing schemes in order to expand their knowledge. Finally, looking at through meaning transformation, [it] requires becoming aware of specific assumptions (schemata, criteria, rules, or repressions) on which a distorted or incomplete meaning scheme based and, through reorganization or meaning, transforming it (Kitchenham 112). Over a span of many years, Mezirow's transformative learning theory has influenced adult learning, and more recently, has influenced learning and the ways in which one teaches both at the secondary and collegiate level.

In 2015, Michael Christie and colleagues published an article in which they examined how to put the transformative theory from Mezirow into practice. Their goal was the following: Examine] how Mezirow's theory can help adult educators and prospective school teachers understand that social structures and belief systems can influence student learning, that learners make meaning of their experiences in various ways which influence the sort of value systems they develop and that disorienting dilemmas often challenge the validity of one's values and the assumptions that underpin them (Christie et al. 9).

What they found from this research echoed much of which has already been discussed from past scholars. Christie showed that learners can become more aware of the paradigmatic, causal, and prescriptive assumptions they hold and perhaps question whether they are valid or not (21). To conclude, if learners are able to do this, then they will become more adaptable in not only their education but the ever-changing world, and therefore, would be lifelong learners as supported by Mezirow's theory of transformative learning.

Mezirow's theory leads learners in the direction of reflecting more critically in order to promote transfer. Concerning critical reflection, Stephen Brookfield wrote the article, "Critical Reflection as an Adult Learning Process." The focus among this piece is critical reflection being parallel to transformative learning, which both allow us, more so as adults it seems, to question and re-question what we originally thought about ourselves or our cultural or even political views. I see this as making more open-minded reflection among people because they are taking the time to be reflective of what they might have known all their life to now something else that changes or makes them re-think their original lives. Therefore, therapeutically, for learners at all levels, it would be beneficial to reflect more and move into the critical/transformative learning that Brookfield discusses; the teacher and student just need to prioritize time to do this.

Even though the theory of transformative learning has been around for quite some time, researchers are still studying its relevancy and usefulness in all levels of education. Anne Beaufort authored "Reflection: The Metacognition Move Towards Transfer of Learning," in which she discusses the transfer of learning, or lack of, there seemed to be in past first-year writing courses in college, which is why more research and discussions came about as a way to find more ways to get that transfer from courses like these. Writing is becoming such an important skill in a multitude of careers. Beaufort states, as "In today's information-rich environment, writing skill is not only marketable but essential for success in most jobs" (24). She also cites David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon as saying, "Schools are supposed to be stopovers in life, not ends in themselves" (Beaufort 24). What they are saying is that often times skills learned in school are a one-time deal to pass a class, at least in many minds of students, when in reality it is supposed to be used throughout students' lives, thus promoting transfer. Beaufort notes it best when saying, "Transfer of learning should be at the heart of education and thus at the heart of writing studies" (24). One such type of writing is reflection in order to promote transfer from one context to another in learning.

Reflection is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill as it involves critical analysis of writing and then using that analysis to rethink and revise. Kara Taczak and Liane Robertson note several scholars in their piece on reflection and transfer called, "Reiterative Reflection in the Twenty-First Century Writing Classroom: An Integrated Approach to Teaching for Transfer." Taczak and Robertson cite Yancey's theory of reflection to discuss that "reflection, when woven into a curriculum, becomes a 'discipline, a habit of mind/spirit/feeling that informs what we do, always tacitly, sometimes, explicitly, and that making such understanding explicit is good and that when students use reflection, they 'learn to know their work, to like it, to critique it, to revise it, to start

anew' while they also 'invent [writing] identities'" (43). Reflection allows the multi-step process writers should be going through when reflecting; therefore, making them dig deeper and think more about what they are writing and writing about, which then also lends itself to transfer. The authors also cite David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon, like Beaufort, in that "we must help students become more aware of themselves as learners, which has been shown to increase the potential for transfer" (Taczak and Robertson 43). Hence, regardless of level (secondary or college and beyond), students need to be shown their learning explicitly and be able to explicitly demonstrate their knowledge and how they can use the skills in knowledge beyond the class and current curriculum asked of them. Once they can do this, transfer has occurred.

Throughout the article above, the scholars note their goal as "showing a specific type of reflection framework, aimed at the deeper reflection described above we want students to achieve, designed as part of the content for a course that explicitly encourages transfer as its goal (referred to as the Teaching for Transfer or TFT course)" (Taczak and Robertson 44). The TFT course correlates well with transfer learning from the text because the authors' state, "...the TFT students learned to practice reflection as a means of understanding not only what to write or what to revise, but also WHY a revision was a rhetorical choice they were making and HOW they might approach a writing situation appropriately" (Taczak and Robertson 49). This is important and great for transfer because often times, especially at the junior high and high school age, students are always asking or questioning with the phrase "When am I ever going to use this or need this in life?" with regards to subjects or content taught within these subjects. If the model used for TFT is applied, it hits the big why as well as how they can use it not only in their current class, but other classes, future classes, or even future careers because it shows them how to make a revision and why it is necessary in their writing. It is looking beyond grammatical errors and

instead looking at their rhetoric and choices made in their writing. This makes it meaningful to students, and that transfer then is a natural occurrence that is reflected in students' minds. "Looking forward and looking outward," (7) according to Yancey, naturally fits future classes or career application, but then "looking backward and inward" (7) helps students think about how they used to write or learn; then, they use either of those skills currently, or they can reflect on how they can modify past skills to fit the current needs of what is being taught and adjust to them in order to succeed.

Another approach from TFT was how it was taught and how the structure sets students up for success of transfer of learning. First, students are taught three reflective components: reflective theory, reflective assignments, and reflective activities (Taczak and Robertson 45). I like this format because at least for me in undergrad, professors more than likely assumed that we all knew how to be reflective, and I cannot recall explicit teachings of reflection. That isn't to say I was not familiar or had never done reflection, but the only big theorist in education was Dewey, and I do not recall studying any in my English courses, but was told to reflect. Therefore, if the reflective components were taught starting at the secondary level then following in the beginning of an undergrad class, as in the TFT courses, then reflection would be more meaningful because not only would they be reflecting themselves, but students would be connecting it to theories they were taught to help them better understand why reflecting is positive for them in the first place. Learning reflection theories is the first component because it provides background knowledge to the skill they will be doing. Then, they move onto assignments that apply what they learned, and they are actually practicing the key takeaways from the theory as practice for a larger more extensive reflection at the end of the course. This final piece is where they apply the four schemes as a means of encouraging future reflection as a

takeaway from the course. Without the teachings of reflection and practice of reflection, it has the potential to take away relevancy to students and their lives because we as educators cannot just assume students (at any age) know how to reflect, which is why transfer learning and reflection are key components in writing. Students are not currently reflecting or reflecting enough with their writing. They are asked to compose a piece, turn it in, and then that is all that is done with it. They are not told what to do with their feedback because it is assumed they know. All the points above indicate reflection is not occurring, which is why explicitly taught reflection is needed starting at the secondary level.

John Cowan supports the activity of reflective journaling as a way to encourage transfer of learning through a semester or year-long writing skill. In "Noteworthy Matters for Attention in Reflective Journal Writing," Cowan alludes to the theories of Schon, Dewey, and modeling of Yancey (who modeled after Schon). He focuses on reflective journaling and the value in it. Much like other scholars who point to the value of journaling, Cowan points out that often times reflective journaling can appear too vague by students, and it often fails to probe experience within the journaling. However, it is noted the benefit of "reflection in action" and "reflection on action" both Schon and Yancey emphasize. By using the journaling to reflect, it allows reflection to take place "being suddenly conscious at the time of what one is doing and how one is doing it" (Cowan 56). A common outcome is immediate appreciation or learning" (Cowan 56). Journaling with self-questioning can be used, such as asking, "What can I learn from this experience which should make me more effective in situations like this than I have been in the past?" This example allows students to be more in the now of what is taking place in their lives, which then can lead to how can it help in the future, which promotes transfer learning as described by Mezirow because students are using skills and knowledge gained from one place in order to better

themselves in another. Cowan uses Dewey to justify guiding students using self-questioning as they are journaling in order to have more meaningful reflections. It is like having an inner voice speaking to them as they write in order to make their reflections meaningful to students in ways that can promote transfer. Some questions might be: "What else can I do? Why I am so worried about this?" Or, reflection-in-action questioning such as, "What just occurred to me? Can I use that in the future? How?" Students both at the college and secondary levels benefit from this type of reflective self-questioning with journaling as a way to keep them on track with their thoughts and reminding them as to why are they even writing these thoughts down to begin with. Therefore, by using these guided questions along with their normal journaling, it prompts students to dig deeper in their reflections and think more about their choices and thoughts in life and in their future life, therefore, providing an opportunity for basic transfer.

Another approach for transfer has been the use of portfolios in student writing and specifically, ePortfolios. Christina McDonald wrote "Toward Defining a Social Reflective Pedagogy for E-Portfolios," in which she looks at a study done with cadets at the college level who would "self-select demonstrations of their learning to include in the ePortfolio, then respond to a common writing prompt for a reflective essay in which they would make the case that they had achieved the learning outcomes by drawing on artifacts to illustrate their claims" (205). The initial results of this study were disappointing, as they were finding cadets were not making meaningful reflections or connections to other experiences of learning. However, where they found success was when cadets would provide "reflective tags" along with their ePortfolios. McDonald notes, "Prompting cadets to 'tag' the artifacts they posted to their ePortfolios helped them adopt a reflective stance from which they could consider their work and begin to make meaning of their development as learners" (207). In other words, by including the explanation of

the artifacts or pieces of learning, they were able to better connect to their learning and take meaning from it in order to help them use these skills or knowledge in other areas of learning. On the whole, the take away from this experiment and what McDonald is stressing is that the ePortfolio should be looked at as a tool for teaching and learning versus just a mash up of writing or pieces of writing at the end of the year or semester as current Creative Writing classes do.

There is definitely a way to use and incorporate ePortfolios within a curriculum. First, instructors can create a space within these ePortfolios both students and teachers can benefit from, which would be key in order to make these worthwhile to use. Setting stricter guidelines and using the ePortfolios as a space for students to collect their work over a span of time (semester and/or year) would help give students a clearer idea of what they need to have and the type of writing they should be examining. Using the artifacts and reflective tag helped students get more reflection versus not having it. McDonald noted how the reflective questions cadets answered asked them: "what is the artifact, so what, or why was this a meaningful learning experience, and now what do I need to know or do for the learning that lies ahead?" (207). These questions acted as guidelines so students knew what to answer and what type of meaning they should be getting from their writing, so therefore, using reflective questions should be implemented in all writing classes.

With regards to skills, having some front loading of the type of medium used for the ePortfolios would be important because the technology skills should not be something that takes away from the goal of ePortfolios. Also, allowing students to focus on a topic and interests to them for the portfolio is important because it is more meaningful and allows transfer of learning into other classes or potential careers based on using the ePortfolios. For example, as McDonald noted, "First, the ePortfolios had to be disassociated from assessment and promoted instead as a

tool for teaching and learning in other courses beyond those designated as civilizations and cultures courses" (210). In other words, the use of ePortfolios with students should be a learning tool for them to reflect and explore their writing versus just an assessment at the end. What is in the portfolio should be the evidence to back up their learning over the course, not just a pile of work they have no connection to. Thus, the end goal of these ePortfolios should be how can the student use this to help them beyond this class?

Within a creative writing class at the secondary level, the question to answer in regards to McDonald is "How can teachers use the research from this piece on ePortfolios in order to better their students learning and promote transfer?" First, instructors might have students include a portfolio at the end of the year where they have to select their top five best pieces of writing. In their portfolio, they include: the original piece, workshopping/editing pieces, the final/revised piece, and some sentences explaining what they changed and why with the piece. Thinking about the ePortfolio, instructors can have students now compose an ePortfolio, such as through a Google platform. In order to promote transfer and meaning for students when they are done with this class, students can add the reflective tag with their artifact or piece of writing. In order to get students to have meaningful reflections on their artifacts, instructors can take a page from the McDonald study where she discusses that they found that when students have more guidance with the types of reflection to write, they came out more meaningful for students. At the secondary level, students count on teacher scaffolding, give them guiding questions (thinking of Dewey) to answer to encourage them in making meaning from their artifacts within their ePortfolio. McDonald discusses how this promotes reflection on action by stating the following:

Reflection-on-action: the act of writing about a recently completed assignment posted as an artifact to the ePortfolio, answering four reflective questions: what and how did I learn from this assignment; why is this new knowledge significant to me, and what do I need to know or do next and why? (McDonald 213).

By looking at these questions, one can see that it is not just asking students to describe the artifacts, but to think about and answer the what, how, and why of this piece. Thus, transfer of learning takes place from these questions because it makes students dig deeper on what they can take away from their selected pieces for their ePortfolios.

There are other activities and assignments for students beyond reflection that can be applicable both at the secondary level and the college level in order to promote the transfer of learning as part of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. To start out, Bryna Finer conducted a "genre transfer game" with her first-year composition students. Finer was motivated by Dana Driscoll and Jennifer Wells and found that "the value students placed on tasks directly impacted their motivation to transfer; without value, students generally will not engage in mindful abstraction and therefore fail to see situations in which transfer of knowledge could occur" (Finer 315). In other words, students need to see the value in their learning in order to motivate them to engage in transfer. Not only can this be difficult at the college level, but at the secondary level as well. The pedagogy for the activity is based on Mary Macken-Horarik's model involving modeling, joint negotiation of text, and an independent construction of text. First, modeling allows the learner to have an idea of what it is the teacher is looking for in order to give that scaffolding for students to learn before doing it on their own. This model the "I (teacher) do" model of best practice of teaching. Next, joint negotiation of text moves to the "we do" of best practice of teaching and allows the instructor and students together to learn the content together and draw ideas from one another in order to better understand the genre asked. Finally, the independent construction of text focuses on "using processes such as drafting.

conferencing, editing, and publishing" (Finer 317-318). In other words, the "you do" piece of best practice where students then are able or should be able to independently produce work in the form of either rough draft, meeting with peers or the instructor to discuss, modifying the work, and finalizing the work.

Finer followed this model before getting into the transfer genre game. After, she was able to do the game as an end of the semester transfer of learning for students. For example, the board

was divided into three categories: narrative, informative, persuasive. Then, students had to come with and recall the types of activities that came with that genre that they had done throughout the semester. The game kept building and was even put in a competition of teams until it got into the final category: major job/career. Students had to place the types of writing from their original three categories and write down how it applied or could apply to potential careers. Figure 1 from Finer shows the end results of the game and what students came up with for each column and the potential transfer initiated.

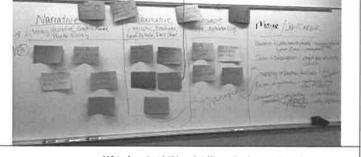


FIGURE 5. White board with "Major/Job/Career" column with student comments.

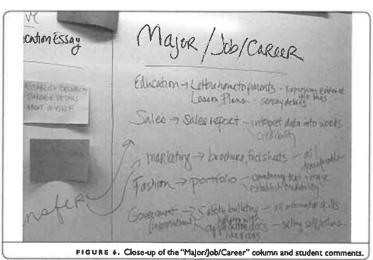


Figure 1- Finer's white board with student notes from the transfer game (Finer 320).

The idea was to acknowledge that within this course there was or could be transfer of learning based on the type of writing that was done throughout the course. This very closely connects to Mezirow's theory of transfer because it is allowing students to use what they have

learned in one course and find ways to connect it to another or even another path of learning or work (hence, the last column). Instead of just discussing it in class, the teacher created a visual with the chart, and then created a competition in order to entice students to think back and want to contribute to the chart in order to help give explicit evidence of potential transfer. This demonstrates the strengths as noted above, but weaknesses the author notes could be time management because she ran out of time to do free writing (reflection) on the activity from students, so it was not as fresh in their mind. The author could have blocked out more time for this piece at the end. Doing the genre game can produce progression if students actually use the genres from this class in the other areas that were noted on the board. It would be beneficial if the instructor who is did this "game" did a follow up with students a semester or two later to see what they have done, if anything at all, with the genres from the class and from the game. The question then that comes up is: this seems simple for college level, as they are most likely in college as a career pathway, but what about the secondary level?

Looking at the activity Finer did with her students, it is adaptable for high school students. Initially Finer started out with three categories on the board as noted: narrative, informative, persuasive. In a high school class, similar categories could be discussed. When looking at the genres, it would not be as extensive as Finer's, but students could place their personal narratives about a significant moment in their lives under the narrative category as well as when they are asked to write quick writes of describing something in their lives. The students would then continue to place their writing within the various column categories until it would be time to look at the last column as added by Finer: major/job/career. For students at the secondary level, this column could also add "future class" as a header and ask students how they could use the knowledge and writing in one class for another. For instance, if under the informative

category students wrote a research report in English class, they could then use those writing skills to write a report for science using the same skills learned, therefore, giving them a moment of transfer. Students could also look not only at classes, but also jobs or careers that Finer notes with her students. Perhaps students need to write a resume or cover letter for a job they are interested out of high school, so therefore, students' writing and use of synonyms for example in English can be used when using a variety of ways to describe skills they possess and tasks they have accomplished. Students could also look at the types of writing and how they could use these skills in other careers. As noted, if students connected a research report to English and science and wanted to go into a research study field, then they have experience with that and even be able to show data analysis in their reports for high school courses. Overall, looking at this game Finer was inspired to create for her students, it allows a clear, laid out image and discussion among students to be able to see that classes one takes (whether at the high school or college level) do matter and that there are skills one can take from these classes and apply them to their future in whatever capacity they so choose.

To conclude, all the activities and writing that researchers noted at the adult and collegiate levels pertain to students at the secondary level as well. Reflective journaling is applicable to secondary and college because students at both these levels have lived through experiences and have learned an amount that allows them to be reflective and critical. It is just a matter of how much guidance the instructor at each level needs to provide for these students. When discussing ePortfolios, portfolios in general have been around for numerous years even at the primary level of collecting work. What is different about ePortfolios and being able to use them at the secondary and college level is that they are more than just a collection of work. The goal is to have the students reflect and demonstrate what they have learned and will learn based

on the what they put within the ePortfolio. Using reflective tags and guiding questions can help students reach the more critical reflection Mezirow notes in his theory. Finally, looking at the genre game from Finer, the figure provided shows a clear matchup of using this at the collegiate level, but making writing from class to another and in future job prospects is just as important at the secondary level. Often at the secondary level, students struggle with figuring out what they want to do in the future, but by doing the genre game and even modifying it to their level, they can allow the transfer of learning for students and guiding them to figure out these uncertainties. In sum, Mezirow's theory of transformative learning is a guide for educators and students at all levels of learning and should be taken into consideration for both instructors planning courses and students learning in them.

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### Olivia Burke

Project II (Substantive Research II)

#### Accessibility in Technical Communication

#### Introduction:

Accessibility in technical communication should be both user-friendly as well as available for all types of users. This includes those with disabilities along with those without. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that when U.S. Federal government agencies develop, procure, or maintain, information and communication technology (ICT) that it is accessible to persons with disabilities. The standards, which have been in place for over 15 years, promote ICT that can be accessed by the public and employees with disabilities. In January 2017, this was revised and is now known as the "Section 508" Refresh. The Americans with Disabilities Act originally published accessibility guidelines in 1991, but those were revisited and redefined in 2010 under the ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010 ADA <u>Standards</u>). In my following research looking for more accessibility in technical communication, both these laws will be explored and considered further in supporting the research. Therefore, in order to provide more accessibility for users with disabilities as well as those without, technical communicators must redefine their mindset from the *dis* in disability to the ability of users. They can do this by looking at usability tests, accessible designs (AD), and ability-based designs.

#### **Usability Examined:**

Before looking at accessibility, the component of usability needs to be defined. Usability, according to Ann Hill Duin, "is the degree to which an intended audience can perform the desired tasks where those tasks are usually performed" (308). In order to "test drive" information for the intended audience, technical communicators must perform usability tests. Usability tests

are a part of the product's design and development process in order to improve the quality of the product as well as accompanying information (Duin 308). Within usability testing, there are two types of evaluations: summative and formative. Summative evaluations mainly include quantitative measures and checks for verification. One common way to do this is testing the product at the beginning and the end of the design process and then measuring the difference between the two tests in order to see how effective revisions were from beginning to end (Duin 309). Formative evaluations on the other hand require "quantitative and qualitative information" to help designers pinpoint parts of the product that require alterations and to help communicators pinpoint documentation problems" (Duin 310). Regardless of which type of evaluation is appropriate for said technical communicator at the time of their testing, it is evident that usability testing should be conducted on products in order to evaluate and make products more accessible for all users. Usability testing allows technical communicators to check and revise information for the different levels of users, whether they have a disability to consider or not. Best stated by Ann Druin, "By performing usability tests, technical communicators not only can help improve a product and its information, but also can affect the future design and development of products within their organizations" (310). In other words, usability tests allow technical communicators to be more proactive versus reactive with products. Rather than wait for a problem to arise, they take that extra step of testing and retesting products in order to make it the best for users. Clearly, usability tests would not only benefit non-disabled users, but those with a disability as well because part of what goes into testing usability is how accessible the product is in the first place.

Thea Van Der Geest argues that user-focused testing is essential to find usability problems of users who are elderly or have disabilities. Van Der Geest notes that often web sites are creating barriers for the elderly as well as those with disabilities at the same time as they are

reducing barriers of access. She makes the assumption in her research that "web sites are made by designers who have no intention to exclude groups of users from using the site. Our studies, however, have proved that good intentions are not enough to create web content that is accessible and also usable for people with various kinds of physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities" (Van Der Geest 23). In other words, it is not on purpose necessarily that these websites or pages are not accessible, but that designers are unaware or not properly trained on how to address these needs, which is where usability testing can be used to help with these issues. First, Van Der Geest notes that web designers need to become acquainted with accessibility guidelines and apply them properly. However, this is not always enough. She then goes on to explain that "Even when the guidelines are applied, a site's ease of use for people with disabilities needs to be confirmed in a usability test with actual users who have disabilities" (Van Der Geest 23). Her article describes how to conduct user-focused tests with test participants who are elderly or who have disabilities.

In many countries, laws or recommendations require the accessibility of web sites and applications that are meant for the general public, created with public funds, or intended to be used in a professional or training context. Most of these laws demand compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). However, expert review of the websites, rather than usability studies with users with disabilities, is the sole method used for determining whether web sites meet the legal accessibility requirements. This means that the WCAG and other accessibility guidelines assume that users with disabilities will access web content either by adapting their browsers (enlarging font size) or by using assistive technologies (a screen reader that "reads out loud" the content of the site and displays the text in Braille). Therefore, when the design principles in the guidelines are ignored, people with disabilities may not be able to access

the content of the website, or they may be able to do so only with great difficulty (Van Der Geest 23). Just because those with disabilities, for example, can get to the website that does not mean they can actually use it or navigate it in an effective way, which is where usability testing discussed by Van Der Geest can be helpful in preventing these setbacks before they even happen. Van Der Geest's piece provides guidelines and hints for conducting usability tests with users with disabilities: physical, sensory, or cognitive limitations that influence their use of web sites and content.

### **Guidelines for Usability:**

The study done by Van Der Geest and her fellow researchers generalized four steps researchers or technical communicators need to put in place before conducting a usability test with those with disabilities. They are the following:

- Decisions you have to make beforehand
- Preparations for the actual test
- The test session
- Reporting the test find (Van Der Geest 24).

In regards to step 1, items to consider before the usability test are first deciding on what test; selecting participants (i.e. if one's site is meant for the general public; sampling or the size of the group of those with or without a disability in this case; defining tasks or what participants need to complete as part of the test (make sure if there are tasks that are specific to a group with a disability that it probably is not necessary for those without to complete it); and measuring task

success as being completed and being completed correctly in order to achieve accurate usability results for research.

Concerning step 2, those who are giving usability testing must consider in terms of preparing for the usability test how to recruit participants; communicating with prospective participants; along with creating different versions of the test materials (i.e. in this case they created three variations of all the test materials that had the same content but different presentation modes depending on the needs of users). Once steps 1 and 2 have been considered and completed, it is then time for those involved in giving the actual test to decide where participants take it and if special locations need to be taken into account (i.e. if a person's home is a better place due to cognitive conditions to consider); set up sessions and make them consistent regardless of where they are taking place; and of course, get consent from those participating.

On the whole, Van Der Geest gives technical communicators these guidelines as a way to help eliminate potential problems that could occur along with allowing more accurate and wellrounded results from these usability tests. She ends her piece by stating, "But we believe that our user-centered usability tests with users who are disabled or elderly have resulted in web sites that at least offer a better experience for all users" (Van Der Geest 29). Ultimately, results are never perfect, and products are never perfect, but it is about the experience for the user; the fewer frustrations that occur, the better users feel about accessing these products.

Along the lines of alleviating frustrations for users, a common accessibility frustration for users has been email applications. A study was conducted in 2012 by Brian Wentz, Harry Hochheiser, and Jonathan Lazar by surveying blind users on the usability of email applications. For example, according to the article, "For blind users, the increased costs of frustration due to

accessibility and usability problems may present a barrier to effective participation in workplace communication" (Hochheiser et. al 327). Unfortunately, more often, blind users are more likely to avoid content if they know in advance that it will cause accessibility problems; they are often forced to explore some sort of "workaround" to complete a particular task (Hochheiser et al. 327). Technical communicators should as part of their job help alleviate these frustrations from users like the blind through usability testing. When this article was published, Section 508 was in the process of being revised in order to provide more technical guidelines. The Section 508 Refresh as of January 2017 now follows the prior advanced notices by restructuring Section 508 around the function of products and services rather than types of products or services because more often than not, modern technology often combines different functionality into one product or service. The point is now to reduce confusion about applicable requirements and remove repetitive standards and guidelines that were previously placed in each section to address the same issues across product types. The functional performance criteria were updated and some additional ones were added (e.g., color perception and limited reach and strength). Functional criteria were also added related to cognitive disabilities ("Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act"). Therefore, what the Refresh now provides is actually guidelines on what the product or service's intended use is versus only what the product is. The idea is to clear up confusion for those that qualify under this newly revised law, making this a step toward usability and accessibility for all types of people, including those categorized with a disability and those without.

Going back to the survey regarding email application, the results show several components that should be considered and explored further in making these applications more accessible and usable for those with disabilities, such as the blind. The survey suggests to

continue research into methods for better search and organization of email (for both blind and sighted users); examine the issues related to email calendaring and contacts; develop creative concepts for reading third-party email attachments so that they can be easily recognized and accessed by blind users; more research in the sonification of email features and the potential benefits it may pose for blind users; evaluate the impact of spam email on individuals with impairments and disabilities; and explore the usability of email interfaces on mobile devices for blind users (Hochheiser et. al 333). Email is such a common workplace and personal tool used by most both individually and collaboratively, so therefore, making these interfaces more usable and accessible is a necessity for technical communicators.

### Accessible Design:

Not only should usability be considered in order to make products more accessible, but accessible design (AD) is another component. In the article, "Promoting Inclusive and Accessible Design in Usability Testing: A Teaching Case with Users Who are Deaf," they note that there is now a more need for industry (this includes technical communicators) to "refocus on more accessible testing practices, situated more decidedly within the social, cultural, and historical contexts of users," and also note, "With assistive technology growing, there is a need for usability practitioners, developers, and students entering industries to help develop these products, services, and spaces" (Hutter and Lawrence 21). A way to do this is through accessible design (AD). AD specifically considers needs of people with disabilities. AD became more well-known after the passing of legislation like the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandated that public facilities and services be fully accessible to people with disabilities. While there are currently no laws that tell private companies that they need to follow ADA, most

organizations find it advisable to adhere to these guidelines (Hutter and Lawrence 22). This is not a new concept for technical communicators. In fact, in a special 2006 issue of *Technical Communication* on accessibility the authors assert the necessity that technical communicators advocate for the accessibility of users with a variety of cognitive, sensory, physical, and motor abilities (Hutter and Lawrence 22). This would mean that technical communicators need to be a part of the discussion and decisions, along with implementing these designs for users of all needs.

Hutter and Lawrence offer "Ten Guidelines for Promoting Inclusive and Accessible Design." Among those guidelines includes: soliciting participation of persons who are deaf in the designing, building, and testing processes; conducting research that better understands the desires, experiences, and behaviors of the population; and knowing and understanding relevant social, cultural, and historical dimensions of the user population (Hutter and Lawrence 27). These few guidelines stated all allude to getting the user involved in the process as they will be doing the usability tests, so in order to get the most accurate results, the tests need to be the most accessible they can be for all types of users with the aforementioned considered. Finally, this not only means the users are a part of the process, but the technical communicators must also be able to scrutinize their own inspirations, actions, and practices toward the people with whom they work.

Those creating the designs for users need to make sure they are doing so in the most accessible, user-friendly way they can. Dave L. Redburn notes, "Design is a creative activity. However, when designers fail to properly understand the full array of human diversity, their work can include barriers that make it difficult or impossible for individuals with disabilities to access, engage, and benefit" (1). Often times, designers can assume that all users are like them

and therefore have the same needs. This according to Edyburn is a term known as "ego design." "Ego design involves a narrow conceptualization of the target user, their background knowledge, skill level, etc." (Edyburn 5). In essence, the designer does not fully take into consideration the vast amount of diverse needs of people and how certain individuals interact with a product. Moving from ego design to accessible design involves technical communicators understanding the special needs of individuals and using that knowledge to add benefits for not only those individuals, but also helpful tools for those without disabilities would find useful. For example, if the text design is taken into consideration for those who are visually impaired when designing a screen, then adding an option to be able to enlarge text will not only benefit this specific group of users and make it more accessible, but it may also allow those who prefer larger text to have that option. Edyburn notes a powerful mantra that should be used in regards to technical design: "Good design for people with disabilities can benefit everyone" (Edyburn 5). Thus, being proactive for all in the design process can benefit more than just those that are classified as disabled.

Along the same lines as Edyburn, Linda Roberts notes that content designers should think about accessibility throughout the design of their web sites. In her piece, "Using an Access-Centered Design to Improve Accessibility: A Primer for Technical Communicators," she discusses design techniques to overcome 10 common barriers to accessible online content. Her research Content developers of these websites should also test their web pages for compliance with the accessibility guidelines and invite people with disabilities to test their pages so they can experience real users navigating their site. Employing these techniques can help content designers deal with accessibility issues before their online information goes live and may help to reduce rework and redesign (Roberts 22). Hence, there is more proof that goes along the same

lines discussed earlier in this research in allowing the usability testing to help guide products as well as getting the users more involved in order to avoid said accessibility issues that could arise.

More and more research is proving that making designs of products or websites more accessible for all users (both categorized as disabled and non-) is beneficial to both groups of users. For example, looking at research done by Schmutz, Sonderegger, and Sauer in their study "Effects of Accessible Website Design on Nondisabled Users: Age and Device as Moderating Factors," they came to several conclusions that would be beneficial for technical communicators to consider. First, this study examined how implementing recommendations from Web accessibility guidelines affects nondisabled people in different age groups using different technical devices. Next, a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  design was employed with website accessibility (high accessibility vs. very low accessibility), age (younger adults vs. older adults), and type of device (laptop vs. tablet) as independent variables. Then, 110 nondisabled participants took part in a usability test, in which performance and satisfaction were measured as dependent variables. The results are the following: higher accessibility increased task completion rate, task completion time and satisfaction ratings of nondisabled users. While user age did not have any effects, users showed faster task completion time under high accessibility when using a tablet rather than a laptop. The findings confirmed previous findings, which showed benefits of accessible websites for nondisabled users (Schmutz et. al). The results of this study indicate that these beneficial effects may now be generalized to a wide age range and across different devices for users. This study of this work connects to my research in that it shows accessible website design (aimed at users with disabilities) leads to benefits for nondisabled users across different ages. These findings provide further encouragement for practitioners to apply WCAG 2.0, further supporting the idea of making designs and products more accessible for all users as it can have a trickle-

down effect. The "worst case" scenario in accessibility designing for disabled users is the design not only aids them, but also those considered non-disabled, so in actuality, is a win for all users and prevents redesign down the road.

#### **Ability-Based Design:**

While accessible design is a large factor for technical communicators to put in place in order to make items accessible for all users, looking at ability-based design is a final factor that needs to be explored in regards to accessibility for users and my research. Jacob Woodblock and Shaun Kane explain ability-based design in their research, "Ability-Based Design: Concepts, Principles, and Examples." Starting with what ability-based design is in the first place, it can be described as "focusing on ability throughout the design process in an effort to create systems that leverage the full range of human potential" (Wobbrock and Kane 9). It has been noted that unfortunately there are still barriers for those users with disabilities. Wobrrock and Kane attribute it partially to that exact word, "disability," particularly, the "dis," "meaning lack of ability" (9-1). Therefore, the approach in the design process for technical communicators needs to be shifted and a couple of questions have to be asked before the design process starts. Rather than asking, "What disability does a person have?" technical communicators should ask, "What can a person do?" (Wobbrock and Kane 9-2). By rewording it this way, it allows the focus to now be on what a person is able to do and takes away the focus from disabilities to abilities and makes a design system more user-friendly. Ability-based design also allows systems to go from assisting users to consider how systems can be made to fit the abilities of whomever uses them.

Ability-based designs are timely and there are many examples from Wobbrock and Kane that demonstrate these examples and illustrate the principles of ability-based design and how they can be upheld in various technologies. Several of these will be discussed. Starting as early as 1997 and 1999, Trewin and Pain looked into typing performance by people with motor impairments and developed a system to dynamically model users' typing skills on a physical QWERTY keyboard. With this system, they explored typing data from the background of users typing and it was then intercepted by the key presses before it was sent to the current application. According Wobrrock and Kane, this follows the principles of the ability-based design concept in that "the dynamic keyboard model recommends adaptations; makes suggestions rather than changing things out-of-sight, giving transparency; observes and responds to users' performance; and works with unmodified commodity keyboards" (Wobbrock and Kane 9-9). A second example provided by this same research is called True Keys. True Keys looked past using keyboard settings and filters and simply corrected typing errors as they occurred. It was found that it even corrected more errors than Microsoft Word 2004 spell-checker and the open source spell checkers aspell and ispell: "True Keys supports transparency by showing an N-best list of possible corrections. It observes user performance to automatically correct typing errors. True Keys works with unmodified commodity keyboards" (Wobbrock and Kane 9-11). Thus, it follows the principles of ability-based design. The last example I will discuss is what Wobbrock and Kane consider their "deepest example" of ability-based design, which is SUPPLE: "SUPPLE opted to make the interface on which the mouse acts more accessible. SUPPLE automatically generated user interfaces using an optimization approach that intelligently searched the space of possible interfaces for the one that minimized the movement time of the user. SUPPLE constructed a model of a user's movement performance from a short one-time battery of

clicking, pointing, dragging, and list selection tasks" (Wobbrock and Kane 9-13). The abilitybased design principles of SUPPLE "adapts interfaces to users based on their performance in a test battery. It gives users the power to inspect and override its choices, resulting in good transparency. SUPPLE allows commodity pointing devices to perform faster and more

Table II. Example Projects that Informed and Inspired the Formulation of Ability-Based Design and the Principles Shown Above (See Table I)

The projects generally span desktop text entry, mouse pointing, mobile devices, and Web access, and involve users with motor or visual impairments. Ability-based design is not confined to these areas, however, and could be used to address, for example, cognitive impairments or low literacy.

DESKTOP TEXT ENTRY	5.1 Dynamic Keyboard Model [Trewin and Pain 1997]	keyboard typing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, adaptation, transparency, performance, commodity	
	5.2 Invisible Keyguard [Trewin 2002]	keyboard typing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, adaptation, performance, commodity	
	5.3 Input Device Agent [Koester et al. 2005, 2007a]	keyboard typing and mouse pointing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, adaptation, performance, commodity	
	5.4 TrueKeys [Kane et al. 2008b]	keyboard typing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, transparency, performance, commodity	
	5.5 Trackball EdgeWrite [Wobbrock and Myers 2006a, 2006b, 2007]	gestural text entry from trackballs for people with spinal cord injuries	ability, accountability, adaptation, transparency, performance, commodity	
	5.6 Steady Clicks [Trewin et al. 2006]	mouse pointing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, performance, commodity	
MOBILE DEVICES MOUSE POINTING	5.7 Angle Mouse [Wobbrock et al. 2009]	mouse pointing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, adaptation, transparency, performance, commodity	
	5.8 SUPPLE [Gajos et al. 2007, 2008, 2010]	mouse pointing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, adaptation, transparency, performance, commodity	
	5.9 Automatic mouse pointing assessment [Hurst et al. 2007, 2008a]	automatic assessment of mouse pointing performance	ability, accountability, adaptation, performance, commodity	
	5.10 VoiceDraw [Harada et al. 2007]	paintbrush control for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, adaptation, performance, commodity	
	5.11 Barrier pointing (Froehlich et al. 2007)	stylus pointing for users with motor impairments	ability, accountability, performance, commodity	
	<b>5.12 Walking user interfaces</b> [Kane et al. 2008c]	touch screen access for walking users	ability, accountability, adaptation, context, commodity	
	5.13 Slide Rule [Kane et al. 2008a]	touch screen access for blind users	ability, accountability, performance, commodity	
WEB	<b>5.14 WebAnywhere</b> [Bigham et al. 2008, 2010]	Web access for blind users	ability, accountability, adaptation, transparency, context, commodity	

accurately" (Wobbrock and Kane 9-4). Once again, this type of technology is adapting to the user and not making the user adapt to it, which is where the ability-based design principles come into play. Without knowing what users could do, then the systems would not be able to adapt to fit those needs. Hence, ability-based design is

another example of how technical communicators can help make items more accessible for users. Figure 1 above gives a full chart from Wobbrock and Kane's study of technologies that have followed the principles of ability-based design.

#### **Conclusion:**

Throughout doing this research, my initial goal was the broad research term of "Accessibility in Technical Communication." Through this, I have been able to explore and go deeper in learning about not only accessibility but also usability and accessible design models. Initially, I thought that I would focus and find all the research on those with disabilities having accessibility setbacks, but in reality, this can happen to any type of user. This then leads me to my final thoughts on my findings throughout this research process:

- Usability testing for all types of users (regardless of disability) is the proactive step to take for technical communicators.
- When conducting usability tests, there are many factors to consider and approaches that can be taken; my research presented some of those options.
- In order for technical communicators to make work more accessible for all users, they must be able to allow users to be involved in the planning, editing, and revising process of products.
- Communicators should watch assumptions as a designer and avoid "ego design."
- Ability-based design should be the new norm for those looking to design and redesign products for those with a disability (focus on the ability not the "dis").

In all, by conducting this research, it has allowed me to explore factors and assumptions that have been made both past and current about accessibility in technical communication and provided me with guidelines and tools before becoming a technical communicator.

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#### Olivia Burke

#### Project III (Literary Analysis)

#### Sharp Objects: Violence and the Need for Control

*Sharp Objects* by Gillian Flynn is about a reporter from Chicago, Camille Preaker, who goes back to her home town of Wind Gap, Missouri, in order to investigate the murder of a young girl and the disappearance of another. While there, Camille learns secrets of not only her mother and sister, but we as readers learn about Camille's own dark past and what coming back to her hometown brings out of her. Throughout this novel, there are numerous acts of violence carried out by the women in Camille's family, including Camille herself. Camille self-harms herself by cutting words into her skin. Adora, Camille's mother, is found to have poisoned her now deceased daughter, Marian, along with her youngest daughter Amma. Amma is found to have been the killer of the two young girls in Wind Gap along with another girl in Chicago after Camille takes custody of her in at the end of the novel. All of these acts by each of the Preaker women reveal the dark side of people and what people do because of insecurities. Thus, the women's violence in the novel *Sharp Objects* signifies the need for these women to have control.

#### **Camille:**

Camille Preaker started cutting at a young age in order to feel control over her emotions. According to Tiffany Brown and Thomas Kimball in their article, "Cutting to Live: A Phenomenology of Self-Harm," the definition of self-harm is "the intentional harming of one's body in order to reduce emotional pain and cope with overwhelming emotions (Brown and Kimball 195). Camille went through a lot in her life. She lost her sister at young age, her mother resented her, and later on it is revealed in the novel that she was gang raped. Therefore, all of these moments would cause someone like Camille to have an overwhelming amount of emotions, and the only way to feel like she could control them and cope, would be to cut. While self-harming may seem like it would be with the intention to kill, Camille does not seem like she wanted to kill herself. Brown and Kimball note, "While mental health professionals have traditionally associated self-harming behaviors with suicide, researchers indicate that self-harming individuals engage in such behaviors to *avoid* killing themselves. Self-harming can relieve the intensity of emotional despair and help individuals cope with the challenges of life" (Brown and Kimball 196). After Marianne's death, Camille never had the emotional support from her mother, so therefore, she turned to cutting as her coping mechanism of releasing these emotions for this particular challenge in life. Overall, Camille's cutting was not a sign of suicide, but a way to control her emotions by literally wearing her words cut into her on her body.

Not only was losing her sister a cause for Camille to feel like she lost control and needed it back by cutting, but the fact that she was gang raped when she was younger is a cause of trauma to result in cutting. Brown and Kimball state, "Many sufferers of self-harm have either witnessed violence or other traumatic events or undergone a traumatic experience such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, or severe emotional abuse" (Brown and Kimball 196). Camille's traumatic event of being the victim to a gang rape when she was thirteen would fall under the category of sexual abuse and could be a clear indicator as to why she is self-harming. Therefore, her self-harming is a result of this traumatic event, so in order for Camille to feel like she has control over this event in her mind, she cuts/self-harms.

Brown and Kimball also did a study with participants who either self-harm or who had previously self-harmed. They broke the results of this study into categories in order for readers to

better understand the psychological need to cut. Camille's act of violence in cutting herself for control falls under several of these categories. First, "self-harm is misunderstood", meaning that participants felt that others do not understand what they are going through, so therefore they selfharm (Brown and Kimball 199). Camille did not feel she had anyone in her life who understood her pain, so all the words she cut on her body were her way of releasing that pain and controlling these emotions. Next, the participants in this study "discussed feeling rejected" (Brown and Kimball 199). Adora, Camille's mother, never felt like she was connected to Camille. She never expressed a love for her ever since she was a baby born out of wedlock. Any child who feels no love from a parent would develop a sense of rejection, which is why the results from the study show this as a potential reason people feel the need to self-harm, as in the case with the character Camille. Another category that developed from the research by Brown and Kimball is that "selfharm is an addiction" (Brown and Kimball 199). Camille not only is addicted to self-harming, but also alcohol: "For example, one participant [a part of the study] described how her self-harm was a way to feel different and compared herself with those who use substances for the same reason" (Brown and Kimball 199). In other words, Camille, like this participant, self-harmed as a means of addiction and naturally as some addicts do, they develop other addictions, and in the case of Camille, this addiction was alcohol. Both of these addictions for Camille are harmful to herself, so therefore, the "violence" these addictions bring out give Camille a way to feel control because she feels that the only way to cope and control the trauma and feelings of rejection in her life is to self-harm by cutting and drinking alcohol. Along the same lines of the category of selfharm being an addiction, a subtheme for this category in the results of this study was isolation and progression. Brown and Kimball describe this in the following way: "Those dealing with an addiction find themselves isolated from their relationships as they engage with their substance, or

behavior, more and more. Often the isolation occurred when they were actively self-harming and would create barriers between themselves and those around them" (Brown and Kimball 199). Camille created barriers with not only her mother and stepfather and half-sister, Amma, by moving out of Wind Gap and to Chicago, but she also was still creating barriers when she came back. An example would be when Camille and the detective, Richard Willis (who was sent to Wind Gap to help solve the crimes) were developing an intimate relationship. When they have their first physical intimacy moment, Camille insists on keeping her clothes on. Readers know it's because her body is covered in scars from cutting, but detective Willis is unaware of this because Camille insists on keeping this barrier between them. She's afraid to open up for fear of what he might think. On the whole, Camille's feeling of isolation makes her create a barrier, and she tries to deal with her emotions on her own, which is why the addiction of self-harming and alcohol are a part of her life.

The final category from the results of this study by Brown and Kimball worth noting is that "self-harm IS control" (Brown and Kimball 202). Brown and Kimball write, "The participants were able to take control of stressful situations by self-harming; it offered control in the face of what was happening to them and the thoughts they had about what happened (i.e., abuse)" (Brown and Kimball 202). In the same way the participants took control of stressful situations, Camille did the same and used the violent act of self-harming as a means of power over these situations in her life. If Camille was a part of this study, her need to self-harm would fit well in the category that she cuts for control because without the cutting, she has no control in her mind. She would be reminded more of her sister's death, her mother's coldness and lack of affection toward her, as well as the gang rape when she was thirteen. Therefore, Camille cuts as a means of control and distraction from the emotions building up inside of her, so much so that the only way to release these emotions is to self-sabotage her body.

In Sharp Objects, it is revealed that Camille started cutting for control at a young age, which would be categorized as what is known as adolescence. Mary T. Brady in her piece of writing, "Cutting the Silence: initial, impulsive self-cutting in adolescence," says that "the average age of onset of self-injury is 12-14 years and that females may be more likely to cut or pick..." (Brady 288). Camille started cutting around the age of 12-13 years old because starting at this point in her life, she felt she had lost control over her emotions and situations in her life like losing her sister, getting gang raped, and isolation from her mother. Brady notes from a research paper from Straker, "Signing with a Scar," who makes a statement on cutting that states, "the most disturbed sorts of cutting, such as psychotic cutting in which the person 'has no intuitively experienced sense of interiority' and cuts for concrete affirmation of her being" (Brady 288). Camille does not cut just lines on her skin, but instead words, such as "baby doll," "kitty," or even "wicked." Throughout the novel, as the readers learn more about Camille and her mindset, we learn that these words are most often either how she is feeling or perhaps words she's been called. These scarred words on her skin are her "affirmation(s) of her being." The moments in which Camille feels a loss of control are the moments she cuts these affirmations in her skin as though they are reminders of her own self and her own self-control over who she is or how others feel she is. Hence, Camille struggles to express these feelings verbally, so the way she expresses and holds power over these emotions is to self-harm by carving words of verification on her body as reminders of who she is and where she has been.

#### Amma:

While Camille commits acts on violence on herself for control, her sister, Amma, commits acts of murder on a total of three young girls her age (two from Wind Gap; one from Chicago) in order to regain control, she felt she lost. To start, when Camille comes back to Wind Gap, she runs into Amma, who she hasn't seen since a baby, and right away there is the perception that she is the leader among her friends and appears very popular. For only being thirteen, Amma dresses very promiscuous, yet she is fixated on a dollhouse. According to Karen Rosenbaum, Nichole Galley, and Susan Hatters Friedman from their article pulled from *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, "…her doll house that is a miniature version of her real house…a tiny world over which Amma has absolute control" (Rosebaum et. al. 127). To illustrate Amma's control, the novel gives her character a doll house to which she can manipulate and control this "world" just as she tries to control her real life with not only her friends, but also with her need for attention from her mother and sister.

To explain Amma's need for control, let's look at the article "Chick Noir: *Shopaholic* Meets Double *Indemnity*" by Victoria Kennedy. The definition of chick noir novels "are crime thrillers that usually focus on women and feature plots that revolve around relationships gone sour" (Kennedy 20). While Amma is not in a relationship with a boy that has gone sour, her perception of both her relationships with her mother and later in the novel, Camille, is that she has lost a connection with them to other young girls her age. With her mother, she is afraid she lost her relationship to the two girls, Natalie Keene and Ann Nash, both of whom her mother tutors and tries to mentor into polite young girls. Amma states in the novel with regards to these relationships, "But then she--as always Adora's name went unsaid--got all interested in them. I could never have anything to myself. They weren't my secrets anymore. They were always

coming by the house. They started asking me questions about being sick. They were going to ruin everything. She didn't realize it" (Flynn 250). Amma gets jealous that Adora is spending so much time with the girls and that the girls are spending a vast amount of time at her house, so therefore, she feels threatened. She even says that "they were going to ruin everything" (Flynn 250). This meant that Amma felt she might lose her mother's affection and nurturing her mother gave her in her sickness. Camille even reveals her theory to readers that Amma did all this violence for control. She states, "Amma controlled Adora by letting Adora sicken her. In return, she demanded uncontested love and loyalty. No other little girls allowed" (Flynn 251). Camille insinuates that the only way Amma saw to get the attention off of the girls her mother was doting on was to murder them. In the case with Camille and Amma's relationship, Amma was just starting to get settled in with her new life with Camille in Chicago at the end of the novel, even making a friend, Lily Burke, who she felt Camille was starting to like better, so therefore, she killed her.

The violence Amma demonstrates for control and power over people in *Sharp Objects* can be looked at as a subcategory of the femme fatale genre. Kennedy defines the femme fatale in regards to a woman in these stories as "the dangerous woman of the hardboiled tradition is manipulative, deceitful, murderous, and sometimes even psychotic" (Kennedy 30). Traditionally, these types of women act in these ways toward men in their lives; however, in the case with Amma, she connects with these character traits concerning her relationships with both her mother and sister. For instance, Camille already noted in the novel that Amma knew what her mother was doing with the poisoning to make her sick, but she didn't care because she was getting the love and attention she wanted. She plays well as the victim in front of Camille as well, so much so that when Adora is taken away initially for the murders of her daughter Marian

along with Ann Nash and Natalie Keene, Amma settles into her life with Camille by using her anger as a manipulation tool to gain Camille's attention. For example, "She [Amma] exhausted me. Amma was wildly needy and afire with anxiety-took to pacing like a caged wildcat as she fired angry questions at me" (Flynn 243). Camille goes on to say later in regards to her behavior, "Instead, she worked on her Adora dollhouse most hours of the day. Her way of dealing with the ugly things that happened there, her therapist said when I phoned" (Flynn 244). Amma's outbursts with Camille are her way of getting Camille's attention. Camille is calling her therapist, trying to figure out what's wrong and trying to nurture and love Amma as best as she can. Amma likes that Camille is frantic because that means she has the power over Camille. Camille even notes that Amma slaps her in the face for getting the wrong shade of blue for her dollhouse bed. The violence of slapping Camille is Amma's way of letting Camille know she isn't happy, which only makes Camille want to make her better more. Instead of Camille punishing Amma for this act, she tries "hug therapy, a ridiculous program that instructed I clutch Amma to me and repeat *I love you I love you I love you* as she tried to wiggle away" (Flynn 245). The more violent Amma is with Camille, the more Camille wants to help Amma in order to get her to stop. Amma knows this, which is why she continues these outbursts and acts of violence: she wants to keep power over Camille. This is where the murderous and psychotic traits of the femme fatale connect to Amma. Because she felt like she was losing control over Camille because of her friend, Lily Burke, she needed to get rid of another obstacle in her way of controlling the people in her life for what she wants, so she killed her. While the murderous characteristics in Amma are clear, readers do not learn the psychotic traits until almost the end of the novel when Camille discovers what Amma has been hiding in her dollhouse. As Camille is going through Amma's room after the news of Lily Burke being murdered and having two teeth

pulled, Camille gets suspicious and discovers gruesome evidence. Flynn writes, "The floor of my mother's room. The beautiful ivory tiles. Made of human teeth. Fifty-six tiny teeth, cleaned and bleached and shining from the floor" (Flynn 247). Ann Nash, Natalie Keene, and Lily Burke all had their teeth pulled after they were murdered, which means Amma not only killed these girls, but took the time to pull their teeth out one by one, clean them, and then place them as "floor tiles" in her doll house to model the ivory floors of her mother's actual room. Synonyms for the word psychotic include: insane, mad, demented, unbalanced, unhinged, etc. No matter the word used, Amma is psychotic for not only killing these girls for fear of losing control over her mother and sister, but the act of pulling the teeth of these victims out one by one for her own personal use in her dollhouse. Therefore, Amma's acts of violence, whether murder or outrage, demonstrate the control she so desperately wants over those around her.

#### Adora:

The final woman whose acts of violence are for control is Amma and Camille's mother, Adora. Adora commits the act of cruelty to her daughters by poisoning them and making them sick. First, this can potentially be explained based on her own upbringing. Rosenbaum et al. note from their analysis of *Sharp Objects* that "Adora's own upbringing is characterized as being isolative and lacking in affection. This lack of prosocial modeling may have contributed to her dysfunctional relationship with her own daughters." While this may not excuse Adora's cruelty to her daughters, it does help readers better understand how she came to be the way she was in the novel toward her daughters. It's noted not only in the novel but also in Rosenbaum et. al. article that Adora seems to have suffered from Munchausen syndrome by proxy (MBP). MBP is defined as "a rare condition in which an individual deliberately falsifies physical or

psychological symptoms, or induces injury or disease in another person, and presents that person to others as ill or injured" (Rosenbaum et al. 128). Adora first does this with her daughter Marian. Adora over time would make Marian sick by way of mixing a "medicine" of poison to give to her in order to make Marian want Adora's love and affection, something Adora never experienced with her mother. A nurse in the novel, who Camille talks to, noted the following in the records Camille finds of Marian's at the hospital:

I am of the very strong ['very strong' underlined twice] opinion that this child is not sick at all. I believe were it not for her Mother, she would be perfectly healthy. The child exhibits signs of illness after spending time alone with the Mother, even on days when she has felt well up until maternal visits. Mother shows no interest in Marian when she is well, in fact, seems to punish her. Mother holds child only when she is sick or crying. (Flynn 227)

This validates the belief that Adora exhibits MBP in order to control Marian by making her sick. Although she is not harming Marian with her physical abuse of her hand, she is harming Marian by giving her "medicine" that makes her sick in order to keep Marian close to her and only wants to remain close to Marian when she is sick, for she knows that is when Marian is the most vulnerable to need her. The question that comes to mind is then, why does Adora do this to Marian and later, Amma? Possible factors are "Etiological factors contributing to the development of MBP in later life are thought to include maternal rejection and lack of attention in infancy" (Rosenbaum et al. 128). As mentioned, Adora's mother showed her very little affection, which we can assume has always been the case, even as a baby. This means that Adora's development of MBP is due to her mother's lack of love and essentially rejecting Adora, so that as Adora had kids of her own, she wanted to be a good mother to her girls, and in her own

psychotic way, making them ill was her way of doing this. For that reason, Adora thought she was doing the right thing because she was being nurturing unlike her mother, but she was really killing her daughters for her own selfish control.

Not only does Adora's need for control through violence stem from her development of Munchausen syndrome by proxy, but genetics of potential mental instability along with environment could play a part in her behavior along with Camille and Amma's. In a study titled "Understanding the genetic and environmental specificity and overlap between well-being and internalizing symptoms in adolescence," authors Claire Haworth, Kathryn Carter, Thalia Eley, and Robert Plomin look at the potential correlations between well-being and mental illness and contributing factors to these. In their short report of their findings, they discuss that "Our results indicate moderate genetic and environmental overlap between internalizing symptoms and two indices of well-being in adolescence" (Haworth et al. 6). To paraphrase, their results from their study showed that there is a possibility of symptoms being affected by an overlap in genetics and the environment in which the adolescent is brought up in, which then affects their well-being as a person. Adora's case of her well-being stems from her mother, and it's a possibility that her mother experienced a similar lack of love from her mother, which she then passed on to Adora. Jackie, a friend of Adora who Camille visits explains to Camille about Adora's upbringing. She says,

Adora was...overly mothered. Never saw your grandma Joya smile at her or touch her in a loving way, but she couldn't keep her hands off her. Always fixing the hair, tugging at clothes, and...oh, she did this *thing*. Instead of licking her thumb and rubbing at a smudge, she'd lick Adora. Just grab her head and lick it...She was always having tubes and needles and such stuck in her. (Flynn 200-201)

Reading this, the connection of how Adora's mother treated her now connects with how Adora treated her daughters: it's all she knew. Adora never experienced the normal type of love and affection one needs from a mother, but instead what she got was an overbearing mother who it appears would make Adora sick just as Adora made her daughters sick. Adora's mother may have also suffered from MBP, which she potentially passed on to Adora through both genetics and how she treated her. To conclude their results, Haworth et al. explains, "This is the first analysis to show that life satisfaction has stronger genetic links with depression than happiness" (Haworth et al. 6). These results suggest that Adora's mother may have suffered from depression, which she then passed onto Adora, who then passed some of these traits onto her daughters, signifying that the lack of healthy nurturing by both Adora's mother and then Adora resulted in the acts of violence not only with what the two of them demonstrate, but also how violent Amma and Camille both are in their own ways.

#### Takeaways:

To come to the point that the women's acts of violence in *Sharp Objects* are the result of a need for control, here are some final thoughts. To begin, Camille's act of violence was to harm herself. Camille did this for a possibility of several reasons that could include: a need for control over her emotions or stressful moments in her life; a result of trauma she experienced in her life; or the lack of emotional and loving validation from her own mother. These factors resulted in Camille seeking an outlet of self-harm in order to gain power over her life and life choices. Amma felt as though she was losing control of the affection and doting she was receiving from her mother when she was making her ill. Her solution to this sense of loss was to get the control over her mother back by killing those that stood in her way: Ann Nash and Natalie Keene. She later did the same when she felt she was losing Camille to her new friend, Lily Burke. All these acts of violence solidify that Amma's only way she saw fit to stay in power over others was to be violent. Finally, Adora the mother of both these girls, passed on not only her own mental instability based on how she raised them, but also the fact that it appears as though it comes from how she herself was raised and treated by her mother. Adora's violent tendencies of poisoning her daughters for control over them establishes the point that she, like Camille and Amma, felt no control, so she cruelly treated her own children in order to maintain power. These acts by all of the Preaker women should be concerning, as it points out what not only genetics can be passed down among family, but also based on how people are raised can severely affect them for the worse, as in the case of these three women. Therefore, all the acts of violence Gillian Flynn writes in *Sharp Objects* illustrate the feelings of control or lack of control among the notable female characters.

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Olivia Burke Project 4 (Technical Document)

# 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE SURVIVAL GUIDE



OLIVIA BURKE ARCADIA LOCAL SCHOOLS





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## Module 1: New Year, New Schedules

#### Summary:

You will find information regarding the way 7th grade schedules are compared to what they were when they were in elementary. This module will include the bell schedules and the school calendar.

#### Differences in schedules now that you are in 7th grade:

\*Now that you are in 7th grade, instead of switching only for specials such as gym, music, and art, you will be switching classes around every 42 minutes (with 3 minutes in between to get from one class to the next). This may seem overwhelming at first, but it is possible to do.

\*Since you have three minutes in between classes, it is important to leave class in a timely manner (not stopping to talk in the hallways) and gather your supplies for the next in order to get to class on time. See Module 2 for tips on using your locker and organizing your class material appropriately.

## 2021-2022 Calendar

	Arcadia Local S 2021-2022 Schoo				
August 30	Monday	Tescher Workday			
August 31	Tuesday	Teacher In-Service			
September 1	Wednesday	Teacher In-Service			
September 7	Tuesday	First Day of School			
October 7	Thursday	Eleas. Parent/Teacher Conf. 3:20-7:30pm			
October 14	Thursday	Elem. Parent/Teacher Conf. 3:20-7:30pm			
October 21 Thursday MS/HS/Parent/Teacher Conf. 3:20-7:30pm					
October 28 Thursday MS/HS Parent/Teacher Conf. 3:20-7:30pm					
November 5 Friday End of 1º Qtr. (44 days)					
November 24, 25, 26	Wed., Thurs. & Fri.	Thanksgiving Break - No School			
December 23-Dec. 31		Winter Break - No School	June 1	Wednesday	Last Day of School for Students
January 3	Monday	Classes Resume			End of 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. <i>(45 days)</i> End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester (88 days)
January 17	Monday	Martin Lather King, Jr. Day- No School	June 2	Thursday	Teacher Workday
January 21	Friday	End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. (44 days) End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester (88 days)	June 5	Sunday	Graduation
February 10	Thursday	Parent/Teacher Conf. 3:20-7:20pm	School Days with Students in A	itendence = 176	
February 21	Monday	President's Day - No School	Parent-Teacher Conference Days = 2		
March 24	Thursday	End of 3rd Qir. (43 days)	Teacher Workdays/In-service days = 5 TOTAL DAVS = 183 No Arcadia Activities June 27 - July 16, 2022		
March 25	Friday	Teacher In Service - No School			
April 15-18	Friday & Monday	Spring Break- No School	CAR SECTION OF LANGE AND A LONG # 1	aufa ani enen	
May 30	Monday	Memorial Day - No School			







#### ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES

School begins at 7:55 a.m. Students should not arrive at school prior to 7:40 a.m. unless transported by school busses. Students are to enter the building upon arriving at school; they are not to loiter in the parking lot at any time. School is dismissed at 2:52 p.m. Students riding busses are expected to report directly to their assigned bus. Busses depart by 3:00 p.m. Students not staying after school for a practice, meeting, or detention are to leave the school premises by 3:05 p.m. Students remaining in the building for a meeting, practice, or detention should report directly to their assigned locations immediately after the dismissal bell.

	LY BELL SCHEDULE	
Warning Bell	7:50	
HR/Academic Assist	7:55 - 8:15	20 minutes
1st Period	8:18 - 9:00	42 minutes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Period	9:03 - 9:45	42 minutes
3 <sup>rd</sup> Period	9:48 - 10:30	42 minutes
4th Period	10:33 - 11:15	42 minutes
5th Period	11:18 - 12:00	42 minutes
6A Lunch	12:03 - 12:33	30 minutes
6A Class	12:36 - 1:18	42 minutes
6B Class	12:03 - 12:45	42 minutes
6B Lunch	12:48 - 1:18	30 minutes
7th Period	1:21 - 2:05	44 minutes
8th Period	2:08 - 2:52	44 minutes

#### TWO HOUR DELAY SCHEDULE

Warning Bell 9:50	
1 <sup>st</sup> Period 9:55 - 10:20 25 minut	tes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Period 10:23 - 10:45 22 minu	tes
3 <sup>rd</sup> Period 10:48 - 11:10 22 minu	tes
4 <sup>th</sup> Period 11:13 - 11:35 22 minu	tes
5 <sup>th</sup> Period 11:38 - 12:00 22 minut	tes
6A Lunch 12:03 - 12:33 30 minut	tes
6A Class 12:36 - 1:18 42 minut	tes
6B Class 12:03 - 12:45 42 minut	tes
6B Lunch 12:48 - 1:18 30 minut	tes
7 <sup>th</sup> Period 1:21 ~ 2:05 44 minut	tes
8 <sup>th</sup> Period 2:08 - 2:52 44 minut	tes





## Module 2: Study Skills

### Summary:

You will find information regarding study halls and homeroom time and how to manage assignments and due dates as well as organizational tips.

## Homeroom

## **> Purposes:**

- It gives time before the official class days starts in order for teachers to get the lunch count and attendance.
- It also provides all students every day, 20 minutes to get assignments completed, work on group work, study, or use this time to go to teachers and ask for assistance or help on work.
- It is also creates intervention time for teachers to pull students to close gaps in their academic work.

## Study Hall

## > Purpose:

> To provide students time during the school day to work on homework, projects, and other assignments, along with studying for various subjects in order to alleviate the amount of work students are having to take home.

## > **Prioritizing:**

- Choose work that is due first or that you feel you may need to ask for help to complete at school during these study hall times.
- If you have work to take home after study halls, choose work that you can get done in a timely manner on your own time outside of school.
- ➢ What is important is that you are working on assignments or studying during study halls; this is what they are for in order for you to have free time when you get home each night, so take advantage of the time given to you.





## Organization

### Tips for organizing class materials:

- Color-code each class with a set color folder for homework or take home work along with a binder of the same color for in-class notes, assignments, etc.
  - For example, for English Language Arts, you could have a blue folder for homework and take-home work and then a blue binder to put notes and other in-class work in for English Language Arts. This method would work for each class per color chosen for that class.

**Figure 1.1:** Organizing Materials

### **Book bags:**

- The purpose of a book bag is to take supplies, assignments, etc. to and from school and home; it is not supposed to be a locker on your back during the school day.
- > This is why you have a locker.

### Lockers:

- Lockers are provided for all students in order to store materials needed throughout the day.
- They give students a place to keep their materials, and then get the materials when they need them between classes.
- If all items are taken out of one's book bag and placed in the locker for the day, all materials should be able to be organized and used efficiently (See Figure 1.2 on an example of how to do this).





- For example, if you have English Language Arts 1<sup>st</sup> period then you have Math 2<sup>nd</sup> period, you have time to stop at your locker in between classes because they are in the same hallway.
- If you have a class in Science then History, take materials for both classes since you would go from the third floor to the second floor without going by your locker.

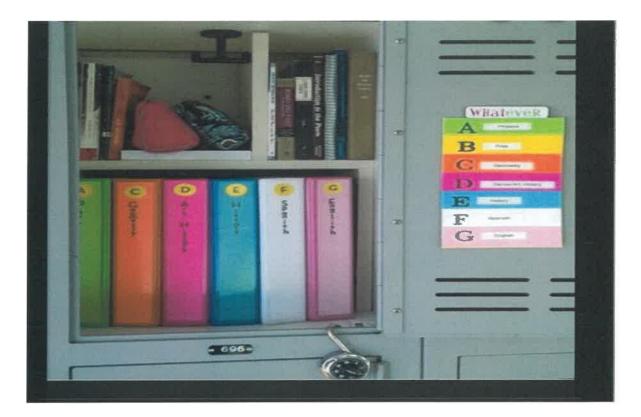


Figure 1.2: Organizing Locker

> Figure 1.2 provides an example image of what an organized locker should look like. Notice how the binders are color coded for classes and the extra textbooks and supplies are on top, making for easy access at all times.





## Module 3: PBIS: We are Respectful, Responsible Redskins

#### **Summary:**

You will find information on what PBIS is, why it is used at the middle school level, as well as the behavior matrix used at Arcadia Middle School.

### **Positive Behavior Intervention Services**

What is PBIS? PBIS is a process of planning and problem solving that includes direct teaching of social behaviors.

This is a data driven program. (SWIS) PBIS is a process for creating a safer and more effective schools.

PBIS focuses on improving a school's ability to teach and support positive behavior for all students.



A	ARCADIA MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS MATRIX			
Expectation /			Responsible	Redskins At all times, PROUD REDSKINS are:
Classroom	Follow classroom rules     Keep body parts and objects to     yourself     Use school appropriate language     Volume Lavel = as determined by     teacher.		Be on time     Have needed materials to learn     Complete and turn in essignments on     time     Do your own work	POSITIVE HONEST TOLERANT and WE OWN OUR BEHAVIOR
one other semant in dos Range: whisper - conve should only be four enso inside votes. Range: presentation - id.			r. To make noise at all or to speek very sofily. When car	nmunicating with a whisper, only
		Range: whisper conve should only be loud enou- inside voice. Range: presentation ic side voice, may be accep	a proceeding can near yow. Station. To speak very softly or to speak quietly. When or ogh for a small group of people, within 3-5 feet distance and. To speak load enough for a large group to hear you sable during events like pap rables, sporting events, or to	from you, to hear. Considered an . At times a loud voice, or an out-

### **Behavior Matrix for Arcadia Middle School**

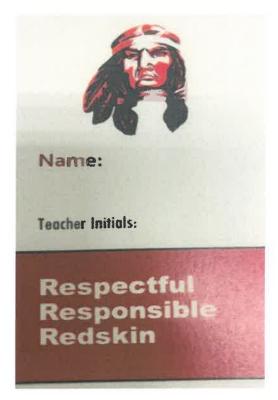
EXPE			MIDDLE SCHOOL	43
Expectation Location	Res	pectful	Responsible	Redskins
Arrival / Dismissal	Policiari es-}	in a disoly manner (1-3 robriete language Rhers arownolcy dro	Pet analytistic personal beingings     Gather newsery instances to start or red blie day     de talappropriate destriction er a timety isan bri (33 minutes). For antices, report is gint de calatores.	PORTINE HONEST TOLENAMY and WE DWIN chall betwortes
Auditoriun	<ul> <li>Use school acor</li> </ul>	r and abjects to sourcell tiprizes lenguage coves incoediately Law	Report states to telective or staff     Be attontive     Katip ténts ind realizings globar	PRISTING HOMONY TODALERANT Base Internation
Bus	Use school appe     Follow spell appe     Holiow spell appe     Holiows Land( + )	Climic Instructional actually 1946	Follow all buy ruley     Stay sorted writit you stable your stop     Soud and writiged is an exterity typhon     Foldort, anses to backler or a stif intensityapty	MORPHAGE BUG WW SWE SWE SWE SWE SWE SWE SWE SWE SWE
Cafetteria         • Sop body parts and abjects to yoursall • Cafetteria           • Stap body parts and abjects to yoursall • Cafetteria         • Follow decreases name           Classroom         • Follow decreases name           Vibran Loval - Mathia         • Help body parts and abjects to yoursall • Use should approximate humans           Gyms         • Maps body parts and abjects to yoursall • Use should approximate humans           Gyms         • Maps body parts and abjects to yoursall • Use should approximate humans           Hallmary         • Maps body parts and abjects to yoursall • to have a should be humans           Hallmary         • Maps body parts and abjects to yoursall • to have a should be humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           I does not approximate humans         • Calley adde approximate humans           • Calley adde approximate humans         • Use should approximate huma		speciale tanguagé clives invesediately extension/tachristingy policy elaction	Theore survey scade     Story solvide until denninsed     Vices yours area clean     Use tone wrisely     Privity exciting in the calenter to     Report instends the treepher or staff intereadably	IFCSTTWE HIGHEST TOLERAHT INE CAN'T DUR RELAVION
		end objects on valuetall which a hingwage	Bar close     Move meedeal outer lats se learly     Complete and barn in apagements an time     Do your own sauce.	WOWNERS TRANSLOT MARSLOT Marc Marca Rilo Hwo Jw
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		Anport immediatory to office     Seport with reason for being in the office     Own your Beltarior	PRINTING HONGST TOLERANT and WE CHNN OUR DEMANDIR	
		Welk     Welk     S-5 minutes to designated pickap or in vehicle marky to leave (pm2) or enter building (pm)     Be evene of your servourdings     Report leaves to builder or staff ennediately	POBITIVE HOMEST YOLERAM? and WE OWN OLK BENARIOK	
		Use facilities in a meety matrixe     Wrash hands     Vrash hands     Class up drafter yoursaff     vinform scall of any facility problems.	POSITIVE HONEST TOLERANT and WE OWN OUR BEHANDR	
		Stay in stadium during aven?     Stays school property safe and clears     Report leave is bancher or staff investigately	POSITIVE HOMEST TOLENOVIT Stal WE CHAN OUR BENAVION	
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## **Rewards Tickets:**

- If a teacher finds that you are exhibiting Responsible, Respectful Redskin behavior, they will give you a ticket.
- You are then eligible to turn in your ticket to Mr. Dobbins in the office and have a chance to be drawn for prizes in the weekly PBIS drawings.
- Prizes may include: gift cards, homework passes, candy, spirit wear, etc.
- Each quarter there is also a quarterly student drawing of two students that are awarded the Respectful, Responsible Redskins of that quarter.



**Figure 1.3:** Respectful, Responsible Redskin Ticket





## Module 4: Teacher Tips and Expectations

#### Summary:

The following provides information, such as expectations for each class, HW policies, and tips for being responsible students.

### **Classroom Expectations**

#### Expectations

- > Students must be in their seat/work area when the tardy bell rings.
- Come prepared to learn with supplies.
- Demonstrate respect to self, others, equipment (no tipping of chairs, feet on chairs, sitting on tables)
- Cell phones and electronic devices are to be turned off and out of sight unless given permission to use for class purpose.
- > Avoid behavior that disturbs the learning process.
- Follow the behavior expectations of being a Respectful, Responsible Redskin (See chart in Module 3)
- > Be kind to one another and follow the Golden Rule :)

#### Tips:

\*Come into the classroom ready to learn and be respectful of others around you who are also there to learn (ASSIST when you come in; SLANT while you are in the classroom; and CLOSE when you exit the classroom).

Arrive on time
Sharpen pencil
Sit down
Investigate Board
Stop Talking
Take out Materials

Sit Up Lean Forward Ask and Answer Nod and Note Track the Teacher Clean Up Look at the assignments Organize Materials Store Supplies Exit Appropriately

Keep a homework journal so you can write down your assignments. Many times you forget what needs to be done. Write it down!





- Complete your classwork and homework as asked by your teacher. There is usually a reason the teacher is having you complete the work other than just for busy work. Practicing will make you better!
- Turn in assignments either <u>before or on</u> the due date. Your future boss will not want an employee who is always late. Late assignments are unacceptable in the workplace, especially for a paying customer.
- Ask for help as soon as you don't understand rather than waiting until the day before or the day of a test.
- > Take notes. The better the note taking, the easier it will help you to understand the work when you look back.
- Study as you get new work, vocabulary, etc. Going over the notes, new terms, etc. each day will help you to remember in the long run. Cramming is not going to help you remember in the long-term.
- Check you work before turning it in... homework or a test. Many times small mistakes can be the difference between two grades.
- Keep your head on straight. Just because people are doing something that may make them seem/look popular doesn't always mean it is always right. Be a leader not a follower.
- > Be yourself! You all have special abilities and talents that make you unique.

You should always be practicing these "soft" skills during class: be on time, communication (listening, writing, speaking), following directions, turning in work on time, completing your assignments correctly and neatly, time management (if you're finished and waiting on others to get done then work on other class work or study), teamwork, professionalism, WORK HARD and be kind and respectful!







## Module 5: Advice from the 8<sup>th</sup> graders

#### Summary:

Here, 8<sup>th</sup> graders provide advice, tips, and tricks for "surviving" the 7th grade from 8th graders who were in your shoes just a year ago.

## 8th Grade Testimonials and Tips:

- "I keep a little notebook to write my homework down in, so I don't forget anything."
- "Try to complete things as early as possible and don't wait until the last day to do it."
- > "For tests, make flashcards to help you study."
- > "Take as many opportunities for the teacher checking your work as you can."
- > "Be kind. Say things like 'excuse me' or 'I'm sorry'."
- > "Avoid unnecessary drama with others."
- > "Ask questions. Your teachers can help you if you don't understand something."
- > "Give all the work you do your best."
- > "Don't make excuses."
- > "Be positive about schoolwork."
- > "Don't let other people bring you down."
- "Check Progress book often."
- Prioritize homework or in-school work. Mainly focus on what is due first out of what you don't have done. For instance, if you have math due Monday and





Language Arts due Tuesday, focus on math first that way you have it already done and then focus on Language Arts."

- > "Don't keep everything in your book bag."
- > "Do your homework in study halls."
- Color-code your binders/notebooks/folders to each class so you can easily see them and grab them faster."
- > "Be responsible and respectful at all times."





## Module 6: Extracurriculars

#### Summary:

You will find information on what organizations students in middle school may join.

## G.O.L.D. (Girls Owning Lives of Dignity)

#### What is GOLD?

GOLD is a leadership group now open to any girls in grades 7-12. The purpose of this group is to allow female leadership in Arcadia within both the school and community.

#### What does GOLD do?

GOLD is as the name states: girls taking ownership of their lives with dignity (self-respect). Therefore, the purpose of the group is to allow a safe space for the female students in Arcadia Middle and High School to meet and not only discuss leadership, but plan leadership events in both the school and community.

#### Goals:

> The goal is to bring each other up as females, not tear each other down as so often happens. Each nine weeks GOLD puts on some form of leadership event in the school or community.

## HYPE (Hancock Youth Prevention Education)

#### What is HYPE and what does it do?

➢ Hype is a group that meets to discuss and advocate for a drug free environment. We put on Red Ribbon week, which promotes a drug free life. HYPE also participates in a weekend event where students go to Camp Berry and learn about how they can encourage what HYPE stands for and believes among their fellow classmates.

#### **Benefits of HYPE:**

HYPE is a great activity to be involved with- as it promotes a healthy and drug free life. It would also look good on a college resume.





## Alliance (LGBTQ Support Group)

Advisor: Miss Holtsberry

#### What is Alliance?

Alliance is a support group for LGBTQ both for those that identify as LGBTQ and those who are supportive of LGBTQ.

## **Marching Band**

#### Advisor: Mr. Brake

#### How can I join? What is it about?

Enroll in marching band as a class, and then you are able to perform at football games, parades, pep rallies, concerts, and even compete in competitions.

## Choir

Advisor: Mr. Fullencamp

#### How can I join? What is it about?

Enroll in choir as a class, and then you are able to perform at concerts along with competitions and various events at Arcadia and in the Arcadia community.

### Theater

Directors: Miss Holtsberry, Miss Burke, Mr. Brake, Mr. Fullencamp

- Musicals performed odd years
- Plays performed even years

#### How can I join?

- All students in grades 7-12 are encouraged to audition to be in the performances each year.
- Theater also offers positions for crew if you are someone who does not want to perform on stage (lights, sound, and backstage).





## Module 7: Counseling Services Offered

#### Summary:

In this module you will find services offered by counselors at Arcadia, as well as connections to outside resources you may find helpful.

## **Guidance Services for Grades 7-12**

- Individual counseling based on parent, teacher, administrative, or counselor referral. Individual counseling can consist of but is not limited to the following:
  - Academic: Eligibility for Athletics, College Acceptance, Retention, Test Performance, scheduling of courses
  - Personal\*
  - Hygiene
  - College: Scholarships, In School Visits, Campus Visits
  - Pregnancy
  - Career

\*Students with severe issues can/will be referred to Family Resource Center, Hancock County Sheriff or Blanchard Valley Health Center

- Students are able to schedule their own meetings through email, referral forms or parent request.
- At the start of each school year, all 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students are "interviewed" for 3-5 minutes by the school counselor.
- A Family Resource Center (FRC) is at the school to meet with "open case" students and when referred by the school counselor.
- A FRC counselor is at school 1.5 days a week (1/2 day on Monday, full day on Tuesday).
- In addition to FRC, there is Century Health in Findlay to help with counseling issues.
- Ohio Means Jobs is on the school website, which has a myriad of resources for students in grades 7-8.
  - These may include: career interest surveys, career information, budget planning and more.













## Module 8: Student-Athlete: "Student First"

Summary: Here is information on being a part of sports in middle school.



### Student Athletic Handbook Download Here:

http://www.arcadia.noacsc.org/Downloads/Athletic\_Handbook\_17-18.pdf

## Eligibility

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) requires that a junior high student must be passing five classes the preceding nine weeks in order to be eligible for sport participation.

## **Study Table**

- If students fail to meet eligibility, each nine weeks, study tables are issued to ineligible students.
- Study Tables are allotted time before and after school for students to complete work in order to raise their grade to make them eligible again.





## Module 9: COVID Protocols

Summary: In this module, you will find the COVID protocols put in place as of the 2020-2021 school year.

## **Mask Wearing**

- Students and staff must wear a mask/face covering at all times while in the building.
- For the most effective method, masks need to be worn covering both one's nose and mouth (Figure 1.4 demonstrates the proper way to wear a mask)



Figure 1.4

### Sanitizing

- > At the end of each class period, students are expected to sanitize their seats.
- Students are also highly encouraged to diligently wash hands and use hand sanitizer to help prevent the spread of germs.
- Students are asked to carry water bottles with them as the fountain will be shut off, and students will only be able to fill a bottle or cup with water throughout the school day.

## **Social Distancing**

- Students are asked to maintain to the best of their ability a social distance of at least 6 feet between themselves and others.
- If students are not able to distance, it is very important that if students are closer than 6 feet apart, masks are properly secured.