

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: PROBLEMS
AND POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION
WITHIN A TRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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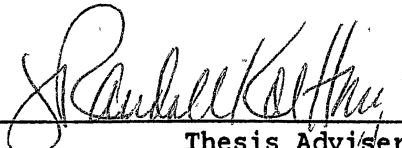
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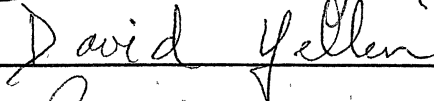
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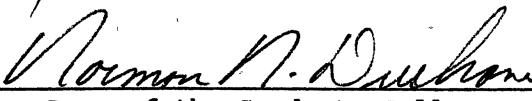
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research project grew out of my desire to improve the writing skills of my students at Ponca City High School. As I searched for methods to improve my own instruction, I discovered extensive amounts of writing research on process writing and writing across the curriculum (WAC). I became convinced that process writing could improve my classroom situation and students' skills. However, I experienced several difficulties employing process writing into a traditional, mandated curriculum. As I continued to examine more writing research in WAC, I began to look at other disciplines at my school and examine their role in reinforcing the writing skills that I teach in my composition classes. I discovered that little collaboration exists between departments; furthermore, many faculty members actually use teaching methods (i.e., writing as punishment) that work against what we are trying to do in the English classroom. With the ultimate, optimistic goal of getting all teachers to recognize the possibilities of writing in all areas of the curriculum, I designed a survey to "test the waters." My project, then, attempts to determine faculty attitudes about writing and teaching writing in order to determine what obstacles must be overcome in order to successfully implement WAC in a traditional high school. My research began with a review of the studies indicating the importance of writing in a child's education and the resulting development of the WAC movement.

In asserting the importance of writing, Robert B. Biggs emphatically claimed that "among all the revolutionary creations of man, writing ranks as the supreme intellectual achievement" (cited in Claiborne, 1974, p. 6). The importance of writing was further urged by the 1984 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Commission on Composition: "Writing is a powerful instrument of thought. In the act of composing, writers learn about themselves and their worlds and communicate their insights to others. Writing confers the power to grow personally and to effect change in the world" (p. 3). Despite its obvious importance, writing has been relatively unheralded as a learning tool in public schools and undervalued in its potential for learning. The research of Russian educator Lev Vygotsky indicated that "writing has occupied too narrow a place in school practice as compared to the enormous role that it plays in children's development" (cited in Walshe, 1987, p. 23).

One reason for this oversight was the lack of useful research that existed on the cognitive processes involved in writing. Compared with what is known about human perception activities, relatively little is understood about writing. Writing researcher Janet Emig contends this lack of knowledge resulted partially from a corresponding lack of valid and reliable strategies and methodologies for studying writing. Until the last decade, the methodology was dominated by the experimental method, which emphasized what is quantifiable. Consequently, research has focused on measurable aspects of written products rather than on the behaviors of the writers (1982). However, research interest in the cognitive processes of writers has recently flourished. Now the research has expanded beyond the classical experimental paradigm; other methods

are considered appropriate for investigating the cognitive processes involved in composing.

In addition to the lack of recognition of the learning power of writing and the lack of significant research, writing instruction has been further hindered by the inadequacy of current school writing instruction. In 1968, Ken Macrorie's assessment of writing skills produced this conclusion:

American taxpayers are paying money to support the teaching of writing which no one wants to read. In English classes most students write dead end themes. The teachers complain about having to read them and the students never pass them around to their fellows except to solicit aid in grammar, punctuation or spelling (p. vi).

An assessment of writing trends over a ten-year period during the 1970's indicated little improvement in writing skills. This study concluded that students are not producing papers that are organized, detailed, or imaginative (Applebee, Langer, and Mullis, 1987). Applebee (1981) also found an inadequacy in current school practices. He found that the average preparation for writing amounts to about three minutes, that most writing assignments in schools ask students to supply short answers requiring only a few words, and that the most likely writing assignment is a paragraph. George Hillocks further concurred that although student's compositions may be cosmetically appealing, they are usually superficial, poorly organized, and weakly developed. More recently, R. D. Walshe indicated that the English classroom has changed little in the last few years. He describes English instruction as still taking place in a "tell'm, drill'm, and test'm" classroom with a didactic teacher who

views children as unwilling learners and who periodically imposes a "composition" to be written at a single sitting, with little or no discussion. Mechanical and grammatical correctness, with neatness, is the desired product. He found that students almost always dislike writing and avoid it when they can (1987, p. 27).

Donald Murray (1982) complained that too many schools emphasize the cosmetics of writing and ignore the thinking that is central to the writing process. E. B. Jenkinson re-emphasized Murray's assertion. He compared writing in America's high schools to running through a minefield strewn with run-on sentences, misspellings, dangling modifiers, and trite expressions. Jenkinson, like Murray and many others, argue that writing should serve instead as a powerful catalyst for learning (1988).

Applebee (1981) further asserted that under the conditions currently prevalent in high schools, students may not be able to develop their capacities to conduct memory searches, construct and reconstruct complex plans, transform data, process much more information than they might produce in a conversation, or revise in more than a mechanical fashion. Applebee (1987) and many other writing researchers call for a more systematic program of instruction: one focusing more directly on the variety of different kinds of writing students need to learn to do and spanning a wider range of levels of complexity. From the research pointing out the inadequacies of traditional writing instruction evolved the WAC movement.

Many experts point to WAC to help composition teachers break out of their traditional isolation in writing instruction. WAC proponents feel that success in writing depends upon behaviors and skills that must be built and reinforced throughout the student's learning experience in all

disciplines. To better understand the WAC movement, a review of the research is important to first understand its origins. By a comparison with the traditional writing approach, the innovation in writing instruction this approach may offer becomes more apparent. The purpose of my paper is to review the literature concerning WAC and to explore the possibilities that it has to offer and the problems of implementation which it would face at Ponca City High School. If WAC holds great promise for the future of writing instruction, then what are its implications for this traditional high school?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background

Although research in writing is almost 50 years old, the idea of "writing across the curriculum" is only about 20 years old. Its origins were in England in the 1960's, where researchers explored the role of talk in English lessons. Drawing from the work of Russian educator Lev Vygotsky and the theoretical work of James Britton, the London Writing Research Group stressed to educators the importance of a child's own natural language. The term "language across the curriculum" was coined during a weekend workshop in 1966 when a group of teachers from the London Association of Teachers of English met to discuss the role of talk in learning English. As the discussions progressed, the teachers found it impossible to treat language as the sole concern of the English teacher, and felt instead that language was a concern for everyone (Barnes, Britton, & Rosen, 1969). Much of the resulting language across the curriculum work and literature in England grew out of this discussion of the role of language in learning across the disciplines.

In 1968 the London Association for the Teaching of English chose "language across the curriculum" as the theme of its annual conference. This local movement then grew to national proportions when the National Association for the Teaching of English adopted "language across the curriculum" as its 1969 conference theme. By 1970 the language across

the curriculum movement also included a book of published research by Barnes, Britton, and Rosen (1969) and a book of theory by Britton (1970) which discussed the relationship between language and learning in all areas of the curriculum.

In 1971, the School Council funded the Writing Across the Curriculum Project at the University of London Institute of Education. This project, directed by Nancy Martin, was the beginning of the WAC movement. The project report expressed equal concern with the role of talking to aid writing development and with the relationship of writing and talking to learning (Martin, D'Arcy, Newton, & Parker, 1976).

By the mid-1970's, interest in WAC spread to the United States principally through the institution of seminars in which faculty members from all disciplines talked about the writing of their students. The first summer institute was held at Rutgers University in 1976, followed by a second institute the following summer funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). In 1978, the Conference on College Composition and Communication chose "writing across the disciplines" as the theme of its annual convention.

By the late 1970's, more than 200 institutions reported a WAC program of some kind. One of the most notable was a program at Michigan Tech University organized by the Humanities Department and led by Art Young and Toby Fulwiler. Young and Fulwiler co-designed intensive four-day workshops in which participants were exposed to the pedagogical theories of writing researchers James Britton, Peter Elbow, Janet Emig, Ken Macrorie, James Moffett and others who emphasized the importance of writing to learn and to communicate.

Meanwhile the WAC movement began to reinforce and extend the paradigm shift taking place in composition teaching. With the implementation of cross-disciplinary faculty workshops at Carleton College in 1974 and Beaver College in 1975, English teachers there began to seriously question the validity of current traditional teaching methods. According to Young (1978), these faculty workshops forced English teachers to examine their current emphasis on the product rather than the process of writing. Elaine Maimon (1988) credited the WAC movement for greatly accelerating the paradigm shift to writing as process and writing as a mode of learning which should be extended throughout the disciplines.

Several diverse institutional settings were generally credited with spearheading the movement to re-examine the importance of writing in all disciplines in the 1980's. These included Beaver College, Michigan Technological University, the College of Great Falls, Assumption College, University of Tampa, Pacific Lutheran University, the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard, and Yale. Additionally, the National Writing Project, sponsored by NEH, funded a network of in-service experiences for teachers across the United States. NEH also supported the concept of regional cooperation on WAC through Beaver College Institutes in the early 1980's by creating a model WAC program in a New Jersey high school. Several teacher-education programs also instituted courses in the teaching of writing in all areas of the curriculum.

In addition to the increase in writing research which brought about a shift from language to writing and from product to process, politics and economics combined to further spur the WAC movement in the 1980's.

England established a comprehensive written exam system for 16-year-olds, catching the attention of the American public who then began to question the writing skills of American students. This concern was further complicated by the notorious Newsweek article "Why Johnny Can't Write." This article was the beginning of what was generally perceived as a "writing crisis" in American schools. Because the government and the American public were anxious to improve the writing skills of its children, writing research proliferated.

The dramatic increase of criticism of public education in the United States which began in the early 1980's included criticism of teachers of writing, their methods, and their training. The experimental WAC programs were instituted in reaction to this so-called crisis. It appears that WAC programs evolved from a new awareness of the importance of writing, the corresponding proliferation of writing research, and response to public criticisms.

Research Supporting Writing Across The Curriculum

The idea that writing is the business of the whole school community has been supported by major researchers in composition, including James Britton, James Moffett, James Kenneavy, Mina Shaughnessy, and Janet Emig. Collectively, they have argued that student writing will not improve substantially until students see writing as the center of their entire academic curriculum. Art Young and Toby Fulwiler (1986) described WAC as a comprehensive program which asks students to work on their writing in all disciplines and at all grade levels, placing some responsibility for assigning and evaluating writing with every teacher. In this program, writing instruction becomes the business of all

teachers in every discipline. Randall Freisinger believes that the WAC program challenges the traditional attitudes that the responsibility for teaching students to write belongs exclusively to English teachers who have failed to meet this responsibility (1980). C. W. Griffin thinks that the only hope for improving composition instruction is the WAC movement. He says, "It never made sense for composition teachers to work in isolation from their colleagues in other disciplines and for students to write outside the context of the rest of their academic lives." He challenged all educators to become teachers of writing (1982, p. 70).

R. D. Walshe (1987) further emphasized that only a curriculum with writing at the center of its core can carry thinking and learning ability to its highest level. He asserted that writing is "the present best frontier of educational advancement of the last 20 years" (p. 27). Advocates of writing across the curriculum contend that teachers can turn their classroom into cooperative ventures in which teachers and student learn together. Thus, writing across the disciplines can revolutionize teaching and learning.

For this revolution to be accomplished, it is important to first understand the theoretical base of the WAC movement. The following is a review of the literature concerning the three basic assumptions of an interdisciplinary writing program: (1) writing is a process; (2) writing is learning; and (3) writing is complex.

Writing is a Process

The basic theoretical underpinning for the WAC movement is the belief that the most important knowledge about writing is procedural.

Process writing proponents believe that writing must not be viewed as merely something that has been assigned, collected, and evaluated in a quick mechanical manner; rather, it is a continuous process of vision and revision, with a specific purpose, occasion, audience, and role implicit in each task and varying in each discipline (Weiss & Peich, 1980). Many researchers and teachers agree that this process writing approach represents a dramatic change from traditional writing instruction. In 1963 the Braddock Report first challenged the existing emphasis on product and the theoretical base of existing writing research. Then, in 1978, a collection of writing research edited by Charles Cooper and Lee Odell, Research on Composing: Points of Departure, corroborated Braddock's findings on the traditional product writing approach and further indicated that no single development has been more influential on research, teaching, and text publication than the shift to an emphasis on writing as process rather than product. The research indicated that when curriculum begins to focus on procedural knowledge, students become more effective writers (Hillocks, 1987). Process writing proponents, such as Donald Graves, Donald Murray, Janet Emig, Peter Elbow, Nancy Atwell, and Lucy Caulkins, agree that the process writing approach represents a dramatic improvement from what has been generally used in schools. The process writing approach has given teachers a pedagogy for resisting the narrow definition of writing in the static, traditional model of composition and could help students develop self-confidence, find their own voice, and ultimately gain the liberating power of effective communication.

Janet Emig of Rutgers has established an international reputation studying the composing processes of student writers. She points out

that writing progresses as an act of discovery and that no other thinking process helps develop a given train of thought as thoroughly (1971). Additionally, Peter Elbow has explained the significance of understanding the process of writing. He emphasizes that "meaning is not what you start with, but what you end up with. Writing is an act of making meaning--making thought--and not the other way around" (1973, p. 15).

Griffin (1982) has shown that process research is part of the theoretical undergirding for the WAC effort. He indicates that one cannot study the process of writing without realizing that it is intimately linked with the process of thinking and learning and that success in writing depends upon behaviors and skills that must be built and reinforced throughout a student's learning experience. He further theorizes that WAC will accelerate the movement in teaching toward an emphasis on the writing process and toward an understanding of the complexities of writing as a mode of learning.

Quite simply, the research clearly shows that writing across the curriculum does not work in a product-oriented classroom; the teacher's strategy must be to stress the process of writing over product. Moreover, the importance of the writing process must be reinforced in all disciplines because of its learning potential.

Writing is learning

The literature supporting WAC identified a second assumption that is essential to the success of any writing program; writing is important to learning. Emig stated that "writing represents a unique mode of learning . . . Writing serves learning uniquely because writing

as process-and-product possesses a cluster of attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies" (1977, p. 122). R. D. Walshe also summarized the learning potential of writing: (1) the best learning in most subjects is an act of composing carried out by the learner, with writing offering itself as the most consistently deep means of composing that is available; and (2) any curriculum should strive to make its subject mutually reinforcing. He stated that "no strand of curriculum can equal writing with its universally available learning power" (1987, p. 27). Walshe further asserted that the most essential problem of the student is acquiring self-reliance in learning. He suggested that only a curriculum which places writing at the heart of its enterprise can carry human thinking and learning ability to its highest levels and make the learner truly self reliant (1987). Walshe also has identified two learning potentials brought about by writing: (1) writing as the great collector of ideas (only writing can record the ideas that can become books and libraries); and (2) writing as the great clarifier of thinking (only written ideas can become the best thinking possible) (1987).

Britton's research (1970) indicated that the shortcomings of traditional writing instruction are its inability to produce independent thinking and, thus, inhibit learning. Randall Freisinger later agreed with Britton's research. He stated: "Excessive reliance on the transactional function of language may be substantially responsible for our students' inability to think critically and independently" (1980, p. 9). The research indicated that writing is inseparable from thinking; students who use their language abilities to explore ideas, synthesize, and communicate are actually learning the subject matter more fully.

Thus, as Jenkinson confirmed, by providing students with the opportunity to write, advocates of WAC and writing-to-learn can revolutionize teaching and enhance learning (1988).

Writing is complex

The third theoretical base of the WAC movement concerns the complexity of skills required in the writing process. The research indicates that writing includes a broad range of functions and audiences that may not be recognized by all teachers. Because of its complexity, writing should, therefore, be a part of all disciplines. The perspective on this premise has been formulated by two major writing researchers: James Moffett and James Britton.

In Teaching the Universe of Discourse (1983), Moffett classified writing into four modes, each mode providing the writer with a different point of view: drama, narration, exposition, and argumentation. Moffett felt that writers should have experience in all four modes. The good writer, he believes, is able to use the stylistic conventions that each mode dictates and write for a variety of audiences. Also, Moffett indicated that a writer may operate at different levels of abstraction, each of which makes different cognitive demands on that writer. Moffett argued that to develop cognitively and stylistically a writer must have repeated experience in both audience shifts and changes in levels of abstraction. His research indicated exposure to and practice with a full range of writing in all disciplines is essential for a writer to acquire rhetorical skill and versatility.

Britton's work bore strong resemblance to Moffett's. His research indicates that across the traditional writing curriculum little variety

in audience or levels of abstraction exists. His hypothesis is that such a narrow range of audience options inhibits the development of student writers, particularly their ability to adapt style and content to a large and unknown audience, the most difficult and mature form of discourse, and prevents them from reaching the more difficult abstract levels of writing (cited in Freisinger, 1980). George Hillocks' review of about 2,000 writing studies also reveals that writing is an enormously complex task. He identified the use of at least four types of knowledge needed for writing: knowledge of the content to be written about; procedural knowledge concerning the treatment of content; knowledge of writing structures, including the various types of writing, and punctuation and grammar usage; and the procedural knowledge that enables the production of a specific type of writing (1987). He concluded that the act of writing any set of words requires many complex skills.

More recently, David Russell theorized that WAC is one of the most important ways to prepare student for the complex new roles many of them will play in professional communities. Ideally, cross-curricular writing instruction would initiate students into the complex writings of a professional community and give them extensive experience in working with the discourse of other disciplines. He indicates that many professional associations, accreditation bodies, and private-sector granting agencies are paying attention to interdisciplinary writing as the key to mastery of the complex discourse of the professional community (1987).

In conclusion, a review of the literature revealed that the three assumptions important to the implementation and success of the WAC

movement concern the process, the learning power, and the complexity of writing. Randall Freisinger best summarized what the research revealed:

If we teachers, at all levels and in all disciplines, will use language to promote learning as well as informing; if we will approach writing as a complex developmental process; and if we will encourage students to travel extensively in the universe of discourse, then we can become both enablers and ennoblers, and we can help students discover the power of language to which, naturally or not, they are heirs" (1980, p. 12).

Problems With Writing Across the Curriculum

Although the WAC movement has been shown to have a sound theory base, many researchers have discovered difficulties with implementation of the program. A review of the literature revealed several problems in incorporating WAC into existing conditions.

Changing to a WAC program implies some fundamental changing in the way in which students, instructors, and administrators conventionally behave. Change, even for the better, is never easy. According to C. W. Griffin, this is especially true within the departmentalized structure of most high schools where faculty members are accustomed to working in isolated departments. Griffin noted that even the initial step of bringing instructors together to exchange ideas about writing can take a great deal of effort and could destine the program for failure if not handled appropriately (1982). Sharon Hamilton-Wieler has also cited the fear of change in general, apprehension of new rules, thoughts of planning meetings, interdepartmental articulation of program goals, dread of in-service training, and the nature of relationships among

faculty members as potential sources of frustration. She further cautions that if English teachers assume a leadership role in WAC, subject area teachers might resent the perceived intrusion into their subject domain. Successful implementation of a WAC program could be jeopardized by a perceived secondary role imposed upon subject area teachers (1987).

The research also indicated that implementation of WAC also represents a challenge to traditional methods and styles. E. B. Jenkinson (1988) and Toby Fulwiler (1981) cited the need for adequate training for teachers and administrators. They pointed out that WAC may not match the learning and teaching styles of all faculty; WAC doesn't necessarily translate to all disciplines. David Russell further emphasized that many teachers still retain the traditional view of writing as a finished product and solely the responsibility of the English department. He speculated that teachers may deny responsibility for teaching writing and view writing as a separate and individual technique learned elsewhere, taught by someone else (1987). Fulwiler additionally cautioned that "telling teachers how to use writing in their classes is very close to telling them that you know a better way to teach their subjects. Very touchy business" (1981, p. 55).

Jenkinson has identified other logistical difficulties with implementation of a WAC program. These include constraints of time, class size, teachers' attitudes, students' expectations, requirements of a structured curriculum, evaluation techniques, topic suggestions for writing, lack of interest by fellow faculty members, lack of materials, outdated grammar texts and workbooks, and statewide testing programs

that may tempt teachers to encourage writing to impress readers of standardized writing tests (1988).

Mina Shaughnessy questioned the longevity of the WAC movement. She theorizes that WAC must be securely ingrained in the institution so as not to be effected by academic politics. She has identified many WAC programs unable to succeed after the dynamic personalities who began the program left. She further cautions that WAC must be a school-wide plan with realistic goals; adequate funding, faculty preparation time, and reasonable class size must be provided; and WAC must become a tradition, not a trend (1977).

A review of the literature revealed that although WAC offers much promise for improvement of students' writing skills, problems with implementation exist. If beliefs about teaching effective writing--that writing is a complex, learning process--are not shared by the entire faculty, implementation would be difficult. Therefore, it is important to understand what obstacles to implementation exist before changes should be made. The survey described in the following chapter is the beginning of my efforts to determine if a WAC program has possibilities for my high school.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Demographics

Ponca City High School is a public school serving the educational needs of approximately 1206 students in grades 10 through 12 in a town of approximately 32,000. The high school employs 72 faculty members and 20 support staff. The average class size is 24 students. The graduating seniors consistently rank slightly higher than the state and national average on standardized achievement tests.

One principal and three vice-principals serve as the administration. Academic areas are departmentalized along traditional disciplines. Department heads oversee their respective areas and together with the principal form the Academic Council, which acts in an advisory capacity for curriculum decisions. The Board of Education curriculum committee and the superintendent of schools make the final decision on curriculum changes.

The school facility itself consists of five separate multi-level classroom buildings. The English classrooms, for example, are located on three different floors of one building. The physical layout of the school does not facilitate camaraderie and cooperation between faculty members.

The Survey

To assess the possibilities of a successful WAC program at Ponca City High School, I chose a survey of faculty attitudes (Appendix A). I adapted my own survey from the models previously used by Young and Fulwiler (1986) and Dan Donlan (1974) as models. The survey included statements which allowed me to evaluate if the respondents had attitudes conducive to implementation of WAC and also if they had adequate knowledge of the theory base to facilitate its use. In designing the survey, I devised the statements using the three premises upon which WAC is based: (1) that writing is a complex process; (2) that writing is a learning activity; and (3) that writing is an activity requiring a variety of complex skills.

When I began my research, I intended to design a survey which included objective and open-ended questions along with personal interviews. The logistics of scheduling interviews with busy classroom teachers soon eliminated this possibility. I also found many of my associates to be disinterested in this particular topic. I sensed that many teachers were quite skeptical about helping with any project which they perceived could possibly create additional work or stress. I discarded the interviews in favor of a more quantifiable survey. I also felt at this point that I would meet the same reluctance with too many open-ended questions, so I decided to only include one. I decided on this survey with a rating scale because it is quick, quantifiable, and specific to increase the likelihood of response. I included an open-ended question to encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences and to help me better develop a "feel" for the depth of commitment a faculty member might have for this program. I designed the

rating scales and checklists to determine that some writing was taking place outside the English classroom. I then distributed the surveys to 68 faculty members in all departments; I received responses within two weeks from 55. Due to busy schedules, many faculty members required encouragement to return the survey. I received approximately 50 percent of the surveys within a week; the remainder, within two weeks after prompting by me. The final response rate was 81 percent. Although I received 55 surveys, occasionally a respondent would omit a question for no explained reason. For that reason several of the total responses did not equal 55. I received only 13 surveys with responses to the opinion question. I included the results of these questions with the findings where it was appropriate. I hoped that the survey and comments would determine the potential for successful implementation of a WAC program and provide a base for further research into methods to improve student writing at Ponca City.

The survey instrument has limitations; numerical measures are not really accurate measures of attitudes. Nonetheless, the survey was still useful for basing an indication of the obstacles of implementing WAC. One obstacle was immediately apparent: three surveys (one from a math teacher and two from business teachers) were returned unanswered with the comment that writing was not applicable in their disciplines. Such attitudes can be difficult to change, so knowing the obstacles in advance can be a tremendous advantage in the long term. Since faculty members are the dominant influence on the quality of education, their attitudes and practices have direct influence on the success of a curricular change. This survey looked at faculty attitudes--a prerequisite for changes in pedagogy, course curricula, and ultimately student writing.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Results

Several factors indicate at least some interest in implementation of WAC at Ponca City High School. First, a clear majority of respondents (87%) disagreed that writing instruction was the sole responsibility of the English department (see Appendix B). This response indicated that some willingness may exist among staff members to incorporate writing instruction in their discipline. One faculty member shared these enlightened thoughts:

I agree that it [WAC] should be included for several reasons: 1.) Clear writing requires clear thinking as a prerequisite--it behooves all educators to foster clear thinking in any and all subject areas! 2.) Then, those clear thoughts must be shared with others in an organized, coherent fashion; otherwise, what good were they? 3.) Especially as we enter the Communication Age, we have to prepare our students for global interaction. The world is shrinking and the foundation of relationships is communication.

Also encouraging, the survey revealed that an overwhelming majority (87%) felt that teaching good writing skills is the responsibility of all faculty members in every department. One respondent commented: "Good communication skills are essential in every facet of life, and they should be reinforced by all disciplines." A genuine interest (84%) in

faculty in-service workshops to examine ways to incorporate writing in all areas of the curriculum was also revealed. Other promising information was the fact that most respondents did assign at least some writing, although the length is less than 100 words or between 100 and 300 words (82%). About half the respondents (47%) assigned more than 11 writing assignments during the school year. Also important, the clear majority of the respondents (78%) were not satisfied with the writing skills currently demonstrated by their students. The teachers are clearly not happy with the students' competence with formulation of ideas (67%) or the mechanics of writing in general (75%). Because the faculty is unhappy with the status quo, a cross-curricular writing program appears to be a possibility.

The possibility of successful implementation seems to be somewhat lessened by the fact that the survey also indicated an inadequate lack of knowledge of the necessary theory base. Many respondents indicated that they were unfamiliar with the importance of process in writing. For example, many faculty members (25%) still stressed mechanics and form as being equal to or more important than content. Approximately half the respondents (51%) thought that spelling and grammar instruction would solve students' writing problems, and a majority (56%) felt that conscientious teachers should point out all errors on students' papers. Although the majority (55%) felt that spelling and punctuation were not the most serious writing problem, many (36%) felt it was. One teacher asserted that "all teachers should count off for spelling." The majority of respondents (64%) felt that fixed rules should govern writing, including that writing should be structured with the main point at the beginning of the paper (67%). A majority of respondents (64%) replied

that they would like to see a set of required criteria for all disciplines which would identify acceptable writing skills. Also of concern to the process writing proponents is the statistics that revealed that 56 percent of the faculty thought writers should always outline before writing and 49 percent thought writers should know what they want to say before beginning to write. Many of the examples from the survey indicated that the respondents were probably not aware of the theory and writing research supporting the writing process approach and continue to accept the traditional belief that writing instruction should focus on grammar and form, not the process itself. One response especially illustrated this belief: "English should bear the main responsibility of teaching grammar and style, and the academic classes should focus mainly on content."

The successful implementation of WAC further seems hampered by the faculty's lack of recognition that writing can be a powerful, complex learning tool. One respondent noted: "I can't support the theory that writing is a learning process. Writing is a skill that can be improved upon with 'learned' grammar rules and much practice." The faculty survey also indicated no clear consensus on the statement that writers should know what they are going to say before they write. Obviously, many do not recognize the possibility of writing to learn. A clear majority (91%) felt the need for students to write for an audience other than their teacher, but the survey does not indicate that writing for a different audience occurs. Although the amount of writing being assigned is somewhat promising, the length of the writing assigned does not indicate that students are encouraged to develop their ideas with any depth or that students are encouraged to deal with complex ideas. I

found it surprising that such a broad range of writing assignments was offered, but on closer inspection I realized that each individual circled one or two types, but only two English teachers circled all four. It appears that the type of writing assignment varied with the teacher, but it is not clear that the students were being exposed to writing in all four of the types identified. The clear majority of writing assignments (62%) were for extension and/or expansion of what had been covered in class. A class explanation was clearly the most popular method of instruction (62%). The most popular method of evaluation was comments in the margins about form and comments in the margins about content (several used both methods). Few respondents (5) wrote summary paragraphs and a few (5) provided a grade with no comments at all. Apparently, many faculty members are not aware of the learning power offered by incorporating process writing in the curriculum.

In addition to the problem of an inadequate theoretical base, several additional problems with implementation were also discovered. Apparently, some faculty also felt somewhat inadequate to share in the responsibility of writing instruction. Several respondents (20%) did not feel competent or were uncertain about their ability to assist students with their writing problems. One teacher commented: "That [writing is a complex learning process] goes without saying. But, if the teachers in the other disciplines lack the necessary skills themselves, they can hardly help matters by 'teaching' or 'evaluating' writing." Another respondent added this plea: "I would like some guidance. I'm extremely alarmed at the poor writing skills almost all of my students display. However, I'm unwilling to totally discount content when I assign grades." Although concerned about their own abilities, the majority (58%) still

noted that students' grades would suffer if students were not competent in writing skills. Additionally, on many of the questions concerning evaluation, no clear consensus on how writing should be evaluated was apparent.

Another problem the survey revealed was that one third of the respondents (33%) felt that faculty members did not expect students to use correct spelling, grammar, or word usage. One respondent commented: "I watch students make spelling errors on assignments for other classes and when errors are pointed out they respond that the teacher doesn't care about spelling." Additionally, the grading time factor was mentioned by respondents. One replied, "I believe that writing can and should be encouraged in all areas, but I feel that I do NOT have the time to do so." Another suggested, "I do realize the english [sic] department spends more time grading papers than probably any other department. I do however not [sic] think others can spend as much time as the english [sic] teachers in the specific evaluation of the papers, because of the specific content we are looking for." And finally, two faculty members who shared their opinions seemed to want to "pass the buck" of writing instruction. One unedited comment was as follows: "Testing and teaching of writing and spelling skills should begin at the elementary level, and students should not be passed on until they can perform at certain levels, I see to many students that reach the High School level whose writing you cannot read and who cannot spell." And finally, I am not sure how to interpret this last comment: "Writing should be a vital and important part of every class. It is essential that students learn to formulate their thoughts and express them clearly in writing. However, only English teachers should grade these assignments."

These statistics and comments reveal problems may exist with the implementation of a cross-curricular writing program.

Discussion of Data

Implementation of a WAC program at Ponca City High School certainly faces an uphill battle. My first reason for this belief really has little to do with the survey instrument itself. The general attitude of teachers in Oklahoma now is not conducive to any suggestion that they perceive could result in more work for the same pay. It is my thinking, based on conversations with and observations of my colleagues in Oklahoma education for the last 13 years, that the frustration level is at an all-time high. There is little disagreement that a strong sense of being over-worked, over-regulated, over-criticized and under-paid exists with Oklahoma teachers. The source and validity of these frustrations could be the basis of further study. These frustrations themselves may account for the reluctance on the part of the faculty in assisting with this project. Many teachers expressed their skepticism about completing this survey simply because of their suspicion that some new program was about to be mandated without their permission or blessing. I found it difficult to get many of the surveys returned. Most of my friends in my department and in my corner of the building promptly returned the survey with sympathetic nods; however, the teachers in other buildings with whom I am not in daily contact required some gentle prodding on my part. I can only conclude that teachers in Ponca City, and I suspect elsewhere in Oklahoma, are not really excited about the state of affairs in education in our schools at present, so their response to implementation of a WAC program was less than enthusiastic.

A second reason for concern about successful implementation of a WAC program deals with the structure of the school system itself. The facility itself divides and isolates departments members so little comaraderie between teachers of different disciplines exists. Also the departmentalized structure which maintains separate disciplines is not conducive to cross-curricular programs. At present the departments themselves each have to compete for money, supplies, and materials. Suspicions of favoritism and competition for money would almost ensure that a cross-curricular program would fail. The English department head would most likely be given the task of facilitating implementation, so the program could only be successful if there existed no resistance to her leadership role. Any program perceived as elevating one person or department over the others would be carefully scrutinized by our faculty and would be received with suspicion and great reluctance. I suggest that successful implementation of a WAC program would only be possible if it were viewed as an innovative, self-initiated program implemented at the request of the teachers, and not a mandated program assigned from the top down.

Before such a program request would be made from the teachers, a massive educational campaign to provide the needed theory base for this program to succeed would be necessary. First, writing research literature would have to be provided so that teachers can recognize the importance of writing, the learning power of writing, the importance of process in writing, and the complexity of skills required for writing. Only with this knowledge base could a successful program begin and continue with any lasting commitment. In-service programs need to be made available to provide not only this theoretical base but also

research and suggestions for writing assignments specific to each discipline. In researching this project, I discovered researched articles on successful implementation of writing in classrooms of every discipline. This information must be available to and accepted by each teacher for the program to succeed.

A second area of teacher education which would be necessary for successful implementation of an interdisciplinary writing program would be methods to make the additional writing/grading loads manageable. If teachers are convinced that adding writing to their existing curriculum would dramatically increase their work load, the program would be doomed from the start. It is important that teachers be informed of all the current innovative evaluation techniques that make the additional writing well-worth the effort. Possibilities for workshops and in-service training include holistic grading, writing workshops, writing folders, peer critiques and evaluations, and many others. The survey clearly indicates that faculty members are uncertain about grading writing; many teachers want concise, quantifiable assignments to insure their own accountability and find evaluation of writing to be too subjective to translate easily into numbers and grades. However, writing evaluation does not fit that design; computer-graded paragraphs are still in the future. I believe that teachers must become comfortable with new evaluation techniques and be assured of their validity before additional writing will occur in their classrooms.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Implications for Future Research

Many unanswered questions about writing research remain. We do not know the specific requisites of quality for every writing task. Yet if we are to make writing a viable concept all across the curriculum, we must begin filling in the gaps in our knowledge of how writing may best be used within the specific writing aims of each discipline. We need to carefully investigate writing and the process of writing in a myriad of contexts: we need more writing research. Specifically, we need to identify what content can be taught more effectively using writing, especially in the more scientific and technical areas. Also we are not certain writing is a more effective means of teaching than the more traditional methods although a few studies indicate that probability. Also, little research exists which attempts to match types of writing to its most appropriate learning task. Further research is also needed to determine if WAC can be successfully implemented with traditional methods and materials and if physical constraints (class size, amount of class time, semester length, etc.) limit the effectiveness of writing as a pedagogical technique.

My main approach to WAC has been from a teacher perspective and as a teaching device; I have given little consideration to the students. Future writing research should include student assessment of a WAC

program. Would WAC change students' attitudes about writing and make them less reluctant to write? Would a cross-curricular writing program significantly improve their writing skills? We have questioned the manageability of increased amounts of writing for teachers, but what concerns would there be for the students? Many follow-up studies concerning students' responses are needed.

It appears, then, that additional research is needed to discover the uses and roles of writing, to determine how writing can best be used to improve learning, and to identify and deal with appropriate rhetorical concerns across the curriculum. It is important also to continue to search for ways to successfully implement an interdisciplinary writing program within the structure of a high school and to search for ways to effectively promote writing as a complex learning process which is vitally needed in all areas of the curriculum.

Summary

A hidden benefit of the survey was that it brought to consciousness the importance of writing to our faculty. One teacher commented when he handed me the survey that he needed to re-evaluate his teaching methods because the survey made him realize how little attention he paid to this important skill. Hopefully, the survey itself may have far-reaching consequences. While the survey attempted to "measure" on one hand, it "reinforced" on the other, as participants were asked to consciously evaluate their own attitudes about writing. In other words, the survey was an important introduction of the WAC movement itself as much as it was an external instrument which attempted to objectively analyze the possibilities.

Analysis of the survey reveals that successful implementation of a WAC program at Ponca City High School could occur only after a significant educational campaign which would provide faculty members with the theory base and methods needed to warmly embrace writing as an important part of their curriculum. Additionally, such curricular changes must be handled with utmost consideration and sensitivity to the attitudes of faculty members so as not to disrupt the already fragile status quo of education in our state and power structure of the school system.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

ATTITUDE SURVEY

Name _____

Department _____

Years Experience _____

Please complete this attitude survey using the following scale:

1--Strongly Agree

2--Agree with Qualification

3--Uncertain or No Opinion

4--Mildly Disagree

5--Strongly Disagree

- ____ 1. Rigorous spelling and grammar instruction in writing classes will solve most student writing problems.
- ____ 2. Faculty members should grade rigorously every writing assignment done by their students.
- ____ 3. To encourage students to revise their writing, teachers should withhold letter grades from early drafts.
- ____ 4. Conscientious teachers who want to improve student writing will point out all errors on each student paper they read.
- ____ 5. Students should read and critique each other's writing to improve their own writing.
- ____ 6. Students should rewrite and resubmit their writing assignments if they have not formulated and expressed ideas clearly.
- ____ 7. Poor spelling and punctuation are the most serious writing problems of students.

- ___8. Teaching writing skills is the responsibility of the English department only.
- ___9. Writers should always make an outline before beginning to write.
- ___10. Before beginning to write, writers should know precisely what they want to say.
- ___11. There are fixed rules which govern all good writing.
- ___12. High school students will improve their writing only when they are required to pass a writing proficiency examination in order to graduate.
- ___13. Writers should make sure they have their main point (thesis/ topic sentence) clearly stated in the first part of their composition before they write anything else.
- ___14. Students should always be required to write to a single audience--their teacher.
- ___15. Students learn bad writing habits when they read and criticize each other's writing.
- ___16. Teachers should have a set of requirements identifying acceptable writing skills for all classes.
- ___17. Faculty inservice workshops should be provided to examine ways to incorporate writing in all areas of the curriculum.
- ___18. I am satisfied with the quality of writing of my students.
- ___19. I believe most of my students are competent at formulating ideas and expressing them in writing.
- ___20. I believe that most of my students are competent in spelling, grammar, and correct word usage.
- ___21. Teaching good writing skills is the responsibility of all faculty members in every department.
- ___22. Most faculty members at PCHS expect students to use correct spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- ___23. I feel competent to assist students with their writing problems in terms of content and mechanics.
- ___24. Students are afraid to write because their writing has been severely criticized in the past.
- ___25. Students' grades in my class would suffer if students were not competent in formulating ideas and communicating them clearly in writing.

- _____26. Students' grades in my class would suffer if students were not competent in spelling, grammar, and correct usage.
- _____27. Teachers in disciplines other than English should give one grade for content and a separate grade for quality of writing.
- _____28. Teachers in disciplines other than English should evaluate the quality of students' ideas, not the quality of their writing.

Please respond to the following questions by circling the appropriate letters. Circle as many letters as appropriate.

1. How long are the writing assignments you give your students?
 - A. under 100 words
 - B. between 100 and 300 words
 - C. between 300 and 500 words
 - D. between 500 and 1500 words
 - E. over 1500 words

2. Over a period of a school year, how many writing assignments do you give?
 - A. 0-3
 - B. 4-10
 - C. 11-20
 - D. 20 or more

3. What types of writing do you assign?
 - A. narration (telling stories, anecdotes, personal experiences)
 - B. exposition (explaining, informing)
 - C. argumentation (persuading)
 - D. descriptive

4. What is the basis for assigning writing?
 - A. a summary of what has been covered in class
 - B. an extension and/or expansion of what has been covered in class
 - C. an addition to what is covered in class (bonus points)

5. How do you teach writing, with respect to your assignments?
 - A. by class explanation
 - B. by an explanatory assignment sheet
 - C. having students write in class under your supervision
 - D. using peer critiques

6. What types of comments do you make on the papers you assign?
- A. comments about form (manuscript appearance, grammar, spelling punctuation) written in the margins
 - B. comments about form written in a summary paragraph
 - C. comments about content written in the margins
 - D. comments about content written in the summary paragraph
 - E. no comments, just a grade
7. What is the basis for your evaluation of the assignments?
- A. evaluation based on content only
 - B. evaluation based on form only
 - C. evaluation based on a combination of form and content
- If you circled C, answer the following three sub-questions:
- 1. equal emphasis on form and content
 - 2. more emphasis on form than on content
 - 3. more emphasis on content than on form
8. How are grades assigned on the papers?
- A. a grade appears on the paper with no evaluative comments
 - B. a grade appears on the paper together with evaluative comments
 - C. evaluative comments appear on the paper with no grade assigned

Would you like to make a final comment regarding the theory that writing is a complex learning process which should be included in all areas of the curriculum?

Thank you very much for your help!!!!!!!

APPENDIX B

SURVEY RESULTS

QUESTION NO.	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE WITH QUALIF.	UNCERTAIN OR NO OPINION	MILDLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	5	23	5	14	8
2	8	18	1	17	11
3	15	15	15	7	3
4	11	20	3	16	6
5	14	22	13	4	2
6	28	22	2	1	1
7	3	17	4	22	8
8	0	5	1	12	36
9	13	18	8	13	3
10	4	23	3	17	7
11	8	27	9	9	2
12	2	10	8	15	20
13	15	22	8	6	1
14	0	1	4	15	35
15	1	2	7	17	29
16	13	23	12	4	4
17	25	21	6	1	2
18	0	4	8	21	22
19	0	11	7	21	16
20	0	12	2	24	17
21	27	21	3	4	0
22	13	15	9	15	3
23	19	25	3	8	0
24	3	7	23	19	3
25	10	22	5	13	5
26	10	22	4	13	6
27	1	15	10	16	12
28	2	15	5	22	9

APPENDIX B

SURVEY RESULTS

QUESTION NO.	A	B	C	D	E
1	21	24	9	6	3
2	14	14	13	13	
3	19	35	15	23	
4	19	34	15		
5	34	14	19	5	
6	32	5	32	13	5
7	8	0	37		
8	6	38	3		

SURVEY RESULTS

QUESTION NO.	1	2	3
7C	11	3	26

VITA

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