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Alice L. Trupe Ph.D.

Jenny M. Martin Ph.D.

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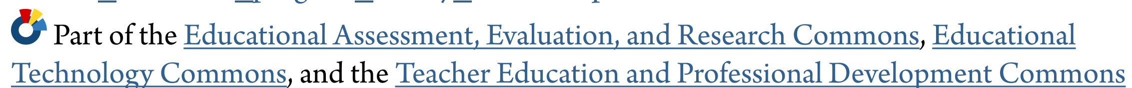
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Alice L. Trupe and Jenny M. Martin

Revisiting the Writing Process: The Teacher Writer in the Workshop

Teaching writing takes time, and the writing workshop, which has been considered the best practice for developing student writers for three to four decades, sometimes seems to take *too much time* for achieving outcomes. In a test-driven educational environment, it is easy to shift our focus from a time-consuming workshop pedagogy to classroom practices and formulas that promise high scores when writing "on demand." However, passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), with its emphasis on multiple measures of student achievement, affords us a pivotal moment for rethinking our beliefs and practices in writing instruction.

Drawing on our own experiences as writers, we recognize that sometimes our ideas come fast, sometimes slow, that sometimes a sentence or a transitional paragraph requires persistent effort before it comes right. From this we may conclude that, as teachers, we can implement writing process instruction more efficiently when we manage the process: today we assign a topic and genre, with clearly defined parameters; tomorrow everybody brings an outline to class; then everyone writes a rough draft, which will be peer-edited in class the following day; everyone does one revision with some feedback from the teacher; and the finished product is due on Friday. Assessment is easy, as each student is asked, essentially, to produce the same product. A narrowly defined approach to Belaboring "let's get[ting] serious about teaching writing" (Thompson, 2016) neglects the writer's role in the writing process.

It is easy to get away from the writing workshop practices that Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986) and Atwell (1987) promoted in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet their vision of the classroom as a workshop community in which writers produce texts on topics of their own choosing; gathering feedback from peers and teachers along the way; learning from short, focused mini-lessons about writing; deciding how much revising is enough; and "publishing" through sharing their polished texts with classmates is as timely as ever. We know this because the literature about teaching writing continues to affirm the workshop approach as best practice and earlier work has appeared in revised editions (e.g., Atwell, 2015; Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2013) and because our own experiences as writers confirm what we read.

If we are writing, that is. The challenge to teachers of writing is to keep writing ourselves. When we who teach writing also write, we bring our fresh experi-

ences of our writing processes and our challenges into our classrooms, and this experience revitalizes our instruction. Writers like Fletcher and Portalupi (2001), Gallagher (2006; 2011), and Kittle (2008) remind us that teachers who write with students, and use their own writing lives as models for students, have a powerful impact. Rather than position themselves as the teacher "making" the student write, these teachers connect with their students through the common experience of writing. These teachers write with their students, thereby placing themselves not as the teacher making the student write, but rather as the writer connecting with their students through a common experience.

Vygotsky (1978) introduced the concept of the *more knowledgeable other* (MKO), positing that everyone is knowledgeable about *something*. MKO pushes us to see that the person more knowledgeable usually has more experience in practicing whatever that something may be. When working with teacher candidates, Morris (2015), a state teacher of the year, positions herself in the classroom as the *more experienced learner*, which is a parallel paradigm of MKO. Here again, the teacher models and embodies knowledge construction with students in the teaching and learning process, without losing sight of the salient fact that she has a wealth of experience as an educator. We find that our students benefit most if we take the stance of the *more experienced writer*. The teacher as the more experienced writer resists the control and command of teaching writing and instead works toward building a community of writers with a strong leader in the midst.

More experienced writers who model the writing process know the efficiency this practice yields and realize that modeling risk-taking with the written word matters. According to Kittle (2008), "I believe you can't tell kids how to write; you have to show them what writers do. I believe you have to be a writer, no matter how stumbling and unformed that process is for you; it's essential to your work as a teacher of writing" (p. 8). Spandel (2005) claimed "the right to see others write" as one of the "9 rights of every writer," acknowledging that writing instruction takes time but arguing, "The fact that time is limited only underscores students' need to see writing in action. Seeing how other people go about it helps us visualize process in our minds . . ." (p. 79). When we write with students, moreover, our own writing processes daily remind us what it means to be a writer, where the challenges arise, and what the rewards are.

The Elements of Writing Workshop, from Prewriting to Publishing

Writing in communities creates an audience, a purpose, and a sense of

connectedness like no other. Numerous authors have described the writing workshop in terms of dedicated time for writing, building in process--getting ideas, drafting, revising--and a community identity where sharing is natural and productive, and recognizing students as writers. As writers, to be sure, they are novices, but they are nonetheless writers and, as such, they are entitled to choose topics of significance to them; make rhetorical decisions about genre, audience, and occasion; and develop their own unique voices. As writers, they need useful and specific feedback from readers at various points in their writing process. As writers, they need the freedom to choose which texts to take to completion and which to leave unrevised in their notebooks.

What is the role of the teacher who writes in this community of writers, which admittedly sounds a bit utopian? (You are probably thinking, "These authors have never been in my class! A community of writers?") Dean (2010) points out, "Constructivism does not, as some teachers might view it, leave everything up to the learner. Instead, it means that we value what students bring to our classroom, and we design activities that will help students make sense of what is still unknown" (pp. 183-184). As more experienced writers, we are in a position to share what we know about writing, about writers, and about texts that engage readers. We can design a workshop experience that facilitates writers' growth.

Setting aside the many books and articles on implementing workshop pedagogy for the moment, we can simply consider our experiences, as Ray (2002) urged us to do in *What You Know by Heart*, pointing out:

> . . . when we were in school, most of us never did the kinds of things we now ask our students to do. If we do not do them as teachers, then, we would actually be trying to teach our students how to do things we've never done ourselves. This is why so many of us try--at least once--the things we are asking students to do in our writing workshops. (p. 3)

As writers, we know that sometimes the biggest challenge in writing is getting started. That means that we need to teach students ways to generate ideas and develop fluency. In our experiences with workshop teaching, we have used the daily poem (Collins, 2003) and freewriting (Elbow, 1953) as a routine to jump-start the day's writing. Following Ray's (1999) advice, we're "filling the room with the sound of wondrous words" (p. 65). We also connect reading with writing: students do not write about the poem as receivers or appreciators of others' words; they write on topics of their choice that are inspired by the experience of sharing

the poem. Freewriting based on one's own thoughts and experiences fosters fluency and authenticity. Perhaps most importantly, we freewrite with our students, enacting Spandel's (2005) right of students "to see others write," as well as becoming more fluent ourselves and developing our own voices as writers. To maximize the power of modeling, we sometimes project the page as we freewrite. These freewrites establish a body of work, a writer's notebook, that students (and we) can draw on for further development or for writing lessons at a later date.

While freewriting is essential for developing writers, response is equally important. The freewriting that sits in a notebook, without response, begins to feel as meaningless as worksheet busywork. Taking a few minutes for immediate peer response, talking about the writing rather than requiring students to read their off-the-cuff work, and allowing students the option of keeping their writing private when freewriting has taken them into personal territory, validates students as writers. Of course, plenty of response is also useful to students when they take a freewrite or other prewriting activity from brainstorm to revised, published form. If we establish a writers' community through regular peer response, students will consult one another as well as us when they expand and refine their thinking to take a seed idea to full flower as a finished text, and peer response will be more than the empty exercise it so often becomes as an infrequent, teacher-mandated and directed peer editing activity.

As teachers in a workshop environment, we are mindful of time--students should have as much time as possible for writing and sharing. Hence, we incorporate instruction in writerly matters such as style, or genre, or coping with challenges in the writing process, or editing. We improve some element of the workshop through the minilesson, a 5- to 10-minute explanation of a concept, typically followed by some time for students to apply what we have just showed them. In the mini-lesson, we lead students to draw on text from their body of freewriting, to add text or revise text with the new technique. This is where mentor texts come into play.

Mentor texts are examples of authentic writing that our student writers can emulate in part (Heard, 2013) or as a whole when we teach genre lessons or purposes for writing (Gallagher, 2011). They may be drawn from published writing, students' finished writing, or texts that we write for the purpose. Mentor texts differ from templates in important ways. First, they are not formulas for writing but are actual, completed texts. Second, they work best when they are not school genres, assigned *only* to be graded by a teacher, but instead are real-world texts composed for genuine purposes. Third,

they are introduced to illustrate ways that writers can realize their own writing goals more effectively, rather than to dictate or limit writers' work (Butler, 2002, cited in Dean, 2010). When we combine the use of mentor texts with teacher modeling, as Gallagher (2006, 2011) suggests, by introducing the mentor text and then modeling how one can write on a topic of choice, utilizing features of the mentor text, we demonstrate a powerful and empowering matrix of writerly practices that has the potential to transform student writing. As Dean (2010) sums up this process, it "is probably a more accurate representation of how writers in life situations outside of school actually use process, more accurate than the idealized version often presented in classrooms" (p. 156).Teaching writing in this way, we necessarily become much more analytical and reflective about our own writing practices, which continues to inform our writing instruction.

That analytical and reflective frame of mind is the core of assessment. Not only do students receive response from the outset of their writing process within the workshop, but they consciously develop standards when mentor-text analysis and imitation are implemented. Instead of following directions to make a teacher-shaped text, they are involved in a process of meaning-making that extends from discussing the mentor text to self-assessing their own text as they write and revise. Students who are invited into a continuous process of textual analysis, self-assessment, and response to and from peers as well as their teacher, learn much more about writing than is possible when all standards are set by teachers and test makers. They learn a process of self-education in style and genre simultaneously with learning how to improve the texts they are currently writing.

To summarize, we advocate adhering to the well-established, research-authenticated (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Troia, Lin, Monroe, & Cohen, 2009; NWP with DeVoss, Eidman-Aadahl, & Hicks, 2010; Whitney, 2008) elements of workshop pedagogy:

- Authentic writing, developed through writers' choices of topic and genre;
- Response: from peers, from teacher, from outside audiences;
- Minilessons derived from students' writing;
- Assessment practices that include self-assessment, conferring, publishing;
- The reading-writing connection: daily poem; modeling; mentor texts, not templates or formulas; noting style; inquiring into writers' practices [curriculum of a workshop classroom]

Yet, while we adhere to these elements

of workshop pedagogy, the infusion of one-to-one devices changes the terrain of teaching writers. In fact, this technology has the potential to change the writer by widening the audience, enabling powerful innovation, and harnessing media to illustrate the written word.

Integrating New Literacies

Reconsider the bedrock of writing workshop (process, mini-lessons, daily poem, notebooks) in light of new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). New literacies assume that technology and literacy practices are continually changing and that these constructions are social in nature. Consider the new contexts and tools of literacy such as:

- Using Google Drive/Classroom
- Blogging
- Contributing to wikis
- Integrating interactive whiteboards
- Integrating smartphones
- Creating digital stories

Hicks and Turner (2013) advise teachers to "put [themselves] out there" (p. 60), first reading blogs, then commenting on blogs, and then writing their own blogs; and participating in professionally oriented social media communities. Their advice resonates with those teachers of writing workshops who write with their students. Maybe teachers are writing and modeling writing with their students, but how many English teachers have moved to public writing and modeling this risk-taking for the writers in their workshop?

Our Experiences as Teacher-Writers in the Writing Workshop

We met after being named co-directors by the executive director of a summer writing academy for teachers, which was modeled on the National Writing Project but created independently during a period of dwindling funding for NWP centers. This executive director values coaching writers (Hogan, 1980), as evidenced in both his writing and in the creation of the summer writing academy. With an experienced National-Board-certified teacher, Dee Grimm, we became friends, collaborators, and often the first audience for one another's writing.

As our relationship flourished during the next five years of planning and co-teaching the academy, we shared our stories of teaching and writing processes and we shared stories of the people who served as inspiration for us as we learned to help writers develop their skills. Jenny shared the impact of Rief's (1992) *Seeking Diversity*, after hearing Rief's keynote at the Virginia Association of Teachers of English conference. Alice told Jenny about Murray's (1968) early influence on her teaching of writing and, later, Dyson's (1987) work, which showed her that the writing processes of early literacy learners are not significantly different from those of adolescents and adults. Dee celebrated

Harwayne's (1987) workshop approach and Lane's (1993) pragmatic and entertaining explanations of effective revising techniques. We wrote with the teachers who participated in our intensive summer workshops, all the while keeping company with Atwell, Calkins, Kittle, Gallagher, Rief, and Murray, and many more. Most importantly, we wrote (see Appendix A & B). We wrote and we shared our writing when the teachers shared, modeling the risk taking that comes with being the teacher writer in the workshop.

While New Literacies (2011) were an essential component of our work with teachers, we were mindful of Hicks (2009) reminder that writing workshop best practice still focuses on the process approach; the process simply becomes more dynamic in terms of audience, purpose, and voice with the infusion of rapidly evolving technologies.

Writing with the teachers in our academy, we rediscovered our own pleasure in writing and sometimes surprised ourselves with the facility with language that we developed. Like our participants, we took the practices we had shared in the summer into our classrooms in the fall. We had rediscovered the joy of participating in a classroom community of writers by writing ourselves and sharing our writing with students and one another.

Let's allow ourselves to get away from the "Do as I say, not as I do" model of writing instruction, in which teachers assign and assess, and experience the joy of the "Do as I do" model, where teachers write alongside their students, and the fullness of the writing experience in a community of writers truly engages students. It is here, within the community of writers, that words take flight and are encouraged by others.

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Appendix A

Missing Moustache
By Alice L. Trupe

I am curled into the corner of the sofa, facing the wall behind it, sobbing into the cushiony pillow. It won't matter if I shed real tears or if my sobs are noisy. My daughters, aged 8 and 6, aren't home to hear me cry. The cheery field-of-flowers slipcover I've covered the worn sofa with and the girly pink ruffled curtains jibe incongruously with my ugly grief. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I've cried like this.

And what am I crying about? I've lost my cat. He has slipped out the door past my feet one time too many. He's been gone for days. I know in my heart that this time he's not coming back, and I am desolate.

Moustache came to us as a perky, winning kitten, a long-haired tabby and white cat with green eyes. Aside from the fact that his white face was marked with a gray mustache, he looked a lot like Tikitty, the cat my family had when I was a teenager, the little personality who had changed my lukewarm attitude toward felines to passionate fondness. My mother, lover of every creature that drew breath but especially cats, used to say of Tikitty, "Beauty is its own excuse for being." He too was gray and white, fluffy, with a magnificent flirty tail. Tikitty never saw a paper bag he didn't want to play in, and my brothers and I spent hours dangling strings or lengths of yarn in front of him. Mom also called Tikitty a "time-waster." Early mornings, a time my father and I shared as the only early risers in the family, I'd find my father, a lot less sympathetic to cats, working early at his desk with Tikitty lounging across his lap or picking his way daintily across the books and papers on the desk. Tikitty was a lap hog--he'd jump in our laps and purr and nestle until suddenly he'd tire of the attention and nip the owner of the lap before skedaddling, fully aware that only my mother would take the nip without retaliating.

The neighbor who brought the small

waif, Moustache, to my mom after she retired from teaching, months after she'd fully recovered from the stroke, was following a kind impulse. She knew the fuzzy kitten would call out Mom's abundant kindness, perhaps thinking he would help her move past worrying about her future health and soothe her when my self-absorbed and exasperating grandmother raised Mom's blood pressure by just being her irascible self. Mom turned down the offer of a cat, maybe just saddened by his resemblance to Tikitty, but she called to tell me about him, knowing I might want another cat to keep scaredy-cat Shadow company.

Moustache moved into our household and became the family cat, not my cat. My girls loved Moustache, and he loved them. He was a silly-putty sort of cat who let them tuck him under a blanket in a doll carriage and wheel him around the house, slept indiscriminately with whoever didn't kick him off the bed, and never scratched or bit my very little girls. Shadow, living up to his name, continued to skulk out of reach of my preschoolers, but they didn't care anymore--they had a cat who let them play with him.

When we lived in the house that had been my grandmother's, the cats slipped past us sometimes to play outdoors. The house was tiny but situated on two acres just beyond the streetlights. For my girls, the outdoors was like an addition to the house April through October. They scrambled down the bank from out front of the house to the stream side of the house to dabble in the minuscule spring-fed trickle, and then they clambered up the bank to the back of the house to play on the swings or in the sandbox.

My cats were indoor cats. I had lost a very dear nine-year-old cat to the road not long after moving into Grandma's house, and I didn't want a repeat of that experience. But the outdoors lured Moustache, and he easily slipped past the girls to go climb the small trees close to the house and catch birds. We'd find pathetic remains on the front porch, and I had to accept that the kitten who'd lived heaven knows where before we took him in had learned to hunt and developed a taste for cardinals and sparrows.

Mary was going on seven and Natalie was going on five when we moved to a duplex in Sewickley. It was town! Sidewalks. Houses close together, streetlights galore, on-street parking, small yards. By then I'd been a single mom for a couple of years, and my father had been pressuring me to give up the house, which required too much work, too much maintenance. He felt responsible, and he couldn't handle that responsibility, not with my independent, feisty mom ill with cancer and dementia from undiagnosed causes. I was tired of the long commute from our

suburb to the community college where I was teaching part-time. My church was in Sewickley, and I knew several people there, and the school district was excellent, so I rented the rather run-down duplex, put up the frilly curtains, and it was there we lived as my mother's disease progressed, my grandmother's health deteriorated just before she would have turned 93, and my former mother-in-law suffered through six months of terminal cancer before dying two days before a wedding, my next-to-youngest sister-in-law's.

I didn't know how depressed I was through some of that period that culminated in Grandma's March death, Mom's April death, and my mother-in-law's May death, a year and a half after we'd moved into the duplex, but I'd find myself coming out of periods of dullness, of not caring much about things, and say to myself, "Oh, I guess I've been depressed for the past month." It wasn't something you medicated in the circles I'd always lived in, and I didn't have health insurance in any event.

I had tried one more time to repair my marriage. It was too hard to raise two small girls alone, and I'd watched my ex, by then, go through five years of dating. We often had dinner together with the girls, and he still saw them two to three evenings a week. We were trying hard to have an amicable divorce. The divorce had actually gone through on a Christmas Eve, two days before our wedding anniversary, and the holidays were hard.

What saved me from deeper depression then was the cuddle times with my little girls, sitting close together on the bed trying to stay awake as I read *Dr. Seuss's Sleep Book*, Moustache settled at the end of the bed. Or times in the kitchen together, making peanut butter pizza or having a dinner of baked potatoes or apple slices with peanut butter, yogurt, granola, and raisins and ants on a log or banana caterpillars with peanut butter between the segments. That and teaching. The ordinary, day-to-day life of raising small children and working at a job I liked, even if it still was part-time.

Moustache still headed for that back door occasionally, and he would disappear quickly. I couldn't count on finding him in our small back yard. I didn't even know where he took off to. I knew the landlord wouldn't be happy if the cat got into his Sicilian immigrant father's beautiful garden. The father wouldn't be happy either, but he didn't speak much English, so we didn't talk about cats and gardens.

When Moustache vanished not long after that season of deaths, I hoped at first that he would return as he had in the past. A day passed. Another day passed. I stopped hoping. I had lost only one cat before, but it had been easier in a way to know that he'd been hit by a car than to wonder and imagine where Moustache

might be, hurt and scared, maybe hungry. I knew he wasn't coming back the night that I finally mourned him. It was a night when my girls were out with their father, and I would have liked to have a cat to cuddle. Losing Moustache brought home to me all of the losses I'd lived through: my father-in-law's death the year between the girls' births--I always said my father-in-law wouldn't have let his son divorce me. Separation and divorce--I would have said my husband was my best friend, and what was worse was the change in my close relationship with the big Italian family I'd married into. My mom's dementia just when I needed her most. An ongoing relationship with my mother-in-law that I cherished even when it became complicated. The pressure to leave my house on two acres for a duplex with someone else's garden in the back yard. Then one death after another, in rapid succession.

The night I mourned for Moustache was the night I mourned for the enormous changes that had transformed my life. By the time those three deaths came, I was ready for them--the lingering suffering came to an end for each of those mother figures in my life. I wasn't ready to give up the small creature comfort of cuddling with a cat, but that bout of weeping was a watershed. When my tears dried, I faced a future that was very different from the one I'd imagined for myself. I fully accepted my divorce and my losses, and I knew I could survive them and make a life for me and my girls.

Appendix B

The Sweet Promise of a Challenge

By Jenny M. Martin

Usually the challenges that I accept begin with a subtle wooing like the whiff of honeysuckle that grows along the fence that lines one of my favorite dirt roads near our house. It's no wonder they named the road Honey Run. When the conditions are right, and the urge is strong enough, the smell while passing by is not enough to satisfy, and the plant pulls me towards its splendor. I seek out the choice bloom and grasp hold of the green tip, pinching it off. Slowly I pull the stem until the solid drip of flavorful juice is ready to spill, and with a steady hand I raise it to my mouth for that light, divine taste. As I stood on the dirt road in the early morning silence, savoring the taste of honeysuckle, I considered John Dewey and his encouragement to extract the most out of every single opportunity. I knew it was time to accept a new challenge.

Robin, a former student teacher, had become a good friend over the last 10 years. Her optimism and adventurous spirit lit up any room she entered. Something productive and good was going to happen if Robin was around. She asked me to participate in the

swimming part of a relay triathlon in a voicemail message, and the thrill at the chance to ease into a challenge that had enticed me for years enveloped me. After the family check of the calendar I agreed, and soon those calendar squares had new notations daily that read "short swim," "long swim," "off."
After 12 weeks of invigorating training, I found myself with a new challenge of the race entitled "Big Lick" that went beyond the physical to the mental strength of suppressing self-doubt. Packet pick up for the race was at Smith Mountain Lake the night before, and with my parents, two children, Katrina and Patrick, and big sister Julie along for the adventure, we looked out at the lake and gauged how the swim compared to the map. One mile loop and the water looked choppy. I dug deep inside myself with a breath and held it long and strong, and released. "I can do this," my silent, self-talk encouraged as we headed to the car with my packet in hand.

My parents' cleaning couple had offered their trailer at the lake to us, and we set off on this venture while my husband Grant stayed home with work. It felt good to have the support of family; as the nervous feelings crept my way, they helped me not focus on those unproductive jitters. I wanted to be strong for Katrina and Patrick, wanted them to see me take on this challenge with confidence. As I put Katrina to bed she said,

"Aren't you scared Mom?"

"Yes, I am nervous. But the worst thing that can happen is that I don't finish, and I had a friend that, that happened to. They keep canoes and kayaks nearby and all I would have to do is wave my hand and they would come help me out."

Morning came long after my eyes were open. The night on the couch was filled with swirling dreams. After bagels and coffee we headed to the lake.

Even in the early morning, the darkness of the lake imposed itself like a monster bouncing the red and yellow buoys, up and down and up and down with a hypnotic cadence. Trees along the shoreline stood guard, and paddle boats mingled along the parameter of the human made polygon. I took a deep breath in and recalled what a man at the Wellness Center had advised, "Just focus on your breathing, and you'll do fine. You're a strong swimmer." I needed those words just now.

All around us music lub dubbed, start and finish lines raised, and I kept my eyes on the buoys. In one area men and women wrote on tight muscles with Sharpies, 37, 45, 80. I later learned that was their age. The buoys still puzzled me. "I wonder why there are yellow buoys?" I asked Julie, my big sister. A fit, middle aged man in a warm up suit replied from beside us, "You turn on

the yellow buoys." Ah- good to know I thought.

I wiggled into my rented wetsuit from Kathy's scuba and Julie zipped up the back. Robin and Susan showed up with a buzz of energy and we talked over passing the timing chip as I strapped it on my ankle. The announcer called us to the water, 193 yellow swim caps of the 30 – 39 age group moving like a speckled sun to enter to ankles, calves, thighs or waist with toes sinking in the thick suctioning mud. As we waited I reminded myself that this was not a race of me against anyone other than me. I wanted to finish in less than 30 minutes, but the main goal was to finish. I'm not a competitive person really, growing up with gymnastics as my main sport; I focused on technique and mastering new tricks and practiced routines until they were polished. This was much like that for me, a new trick, a challenge, and the process of training was the best part. Focus, and breathe I reminded myself. Spot the buoys, but not too much. The fog horn blared after the announcer's had prepared us for the start.

Just as I had read and been told, feet thumped around me and the tightness of the swimmers bumping into me made breathing and spotting buoys confusing. I aimed for open water and found space away from the mob and began my mantra, "This is my race pace. Thank you God for swimming. This is my race pace…" and in my mind I kept the mantra going with the rhythm of the strokes. Red Buoy #1 seemed so long off, but it eventually came and passed, Red Buoy #2, I counted remembering to stay on the outside of the buoys. Stroke, stroke, stroke, spot and breathe, stroke, stroke, stroke, spot, and breathe. Yellow buoy, now turn. I caught a glimpse of one swimmer on her back, doing a steady backstroke and was reminded of my mother's revelation that there are so many ways of getting from point A to point B.

After turning at the second yellow buoy a THUMP THUMP of a big breaststroke kick swished and splashed close to my face. "A man?" I thought. I steered around and felt encouraged to be passing someone from the wave before me. Red Buoy #3, Red Buoy #4. My arms burned, but with the shoreline coming closer I gave all that I had left, breathing less, pushing myself hard. When my hands hit the loose, wet, sediment of the lake's bottom, I dropped my feet, stood, and ran out of the water, up the flagged aisle to the bike racks. Mom, Dad, Julie, Katrina, and Patrick yelled as I went by, the proud smile of my father standing out to me. Robin's nervous smile met me at the bike racks as she said, "How'd it feel? You look great," all the while taking off the timing chip, placing it on her ankle and unracking her bike.

Later, after all the participants had finished, the fine food and drink con-

sumed, and the goodbyes said, I relished in the feeling of accomplishment on the ride home. That feeling was a little like the drip of honeysuckle when a good, full bloom had been found and pulled just right. I had stepped out and tried something new. The time preparing made the race successful. The imposter of fear did not override me, and it felt good to have met a goal. Now the wooing of the next challenge had already presented itself. I wanted to tackle the bike and the run so that soon I could do the entire race instead of the relay form. I could almost taste the honeysuckle now.

Alice L. Trupe, associate professor of English, directs Bridgewater College's composition program and writing center. She teaches Literature for Young Adults and Teaching Writing, as well as writing courses. Her Ph.D. from Indiana University of Pennsylvania is in Composition and TESOL. Publications include book chapters on writing instruction, Thematic Guide to Young Adult Literature, and Reading Julia Alvarez. In addition to an ongoing interest in the impact of new literacies on writing instruction, she is currently exploring the possibilities of creative nonfiction to engage students in reading and writing.

Jenny M. Martin is an assistant professor at Bridgewater College and is currently licensed to teach English in grades 9-12. She received her undergraduate degree in English and secondary teaching license from Radford University, her MAED from Eastern Mennonite University, and her Ph.D. from Virginia Tech. She taught English 9 and 10 and Photojournalism I, II & III for seven years at Broadway High School in Rockingham County, and Dr. Martin now teaches Introduction to Teaching, Educational Psychology, and Literature for Young Adults at Bridgewater College. Her research investigates voice and the use of new literacies in writing instruction, blended learning field experiences with teacher candidates guiding secondary students' writing, and motivation and learning. This past fall she was awarded the School/University Partnership Project Award from the Association of Teacher Educators in Virginia for the project "Blended Instruction Field Experience."