

AUTHOR(IZ)ING LITERACY: A RHETORICAL/HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF
LITERACY FOR COLLEGE READINESS IN KENTUCKY FROM KERA TO THE
COMMON CORE (AND BEYOND)

By

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M.A., University of Kentucky, 2005
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A Dissertation Approved on

April 12, 2023

by the following Dissertation Committee:

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DEDICATION

For Loni Anderson, my consigliere.

And in memory of Jeremy Bowman (“You talk too much.”), Nell Whitman (oranges on an airplane), and Jim Wilson (Mexican Cokes and John Donne)
Shine on, you crazy diamonds.

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR(IZ)ING LITERACY: A RHETORICAL/HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF LITERACY FOR COLLEGE READINESS IN KENTUCKY FROM KERA TO THE COMMON CORE

Susannah C. Kilbourne

April 12, 2023

This dissertation traces the economy of documents representing literacy for college readiness through an analysis of the interplay of literacy theory, literacy policy, and policy documentation. Specifically, this dissertation examines how college-level literacy is defined in Kentucky through a network of related documents. With Latour's Actor-Network Theory serving as a theoretical frame, this dissertation tracks not only the vast and interconnected system of compositions operating as articulations of college-level literacy but also the presence (or absence) of rhetoric and composition's *compositions* within the network of relations defining literacy for college readiness.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One outlines the historical foundations, research methodologies, and theoretical framework for the project. Chapter Two contextualizes literacy for college readiness in the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and corresponding implementation of an assessment and accountability structure, including the adoption of the writing assessment portfolio. This chapter includes the translation of legislation into *Transformations*, Kentucky's expansive

curriculum framework. Chapter Three analyzes the introduction of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into the network of relations tracking literacy for college readiness. This chapter details the translation of national literacy policy for accountability into Kentucky's state assessment and accountability structure with the implementation of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). Chapter Four examines the durability of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) in the network of relations as national literacy standards, purportedly operating as universals, are translated into state systems of assessment and accountability. Chapter Five considers the implications of this project's research outcomes for rhetoric and composition scholarship in terms of sources of authority and locations of participation in defining literacy for college readiness.

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CHAPTER 1:
LOCATING LITERACY FOR COLLEGE READINESS: HISTORIES, POLICIES,
AND SCHOLARSHIP

Once built, the wall of bricks does not utter a word—even though the group of workmen goes on talking and graffiti may proliferate on its surface. Once they have been filled in, the printed questionnaires remain in the archives forever unconnected with human intentions until they are made alive again by some historian. Objects, by the very nature of their connections with humans, quickly shift from being mediators to being intermediaries, counting for one or nothing, no matter how internally complicated they might be. This is why specific tricks have to be invented to make them talk, that is, to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce scripts of what they are making others—humans or non-humans—do. (79)

Bruno Latour in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*

Defining literacy is not idle semantic debate or academic hairsplitting but is almost always a consequential political act. The working definition of literacy adopted by a school district, a government agency, or any other institution will to a large extent determine education priorities in general, hence specific allocations of funds. Furthermore, an institution's or society's definition of literacy is also in large part a definition of the culture itself. (2)

W. Ross Winterowd in *The Culture and Politics of Literacy*

In *The Culture and Politics of Literacy* W. Ross Winterowd asserts that the construction of literacy as a defined term involves various vested stakeholders, all vying

for authority, all attempting to formalize the meaning and limits of literacy. Matters of literacy, typically associated with definitions of reading and writing¹, concern contested territories in what Doug Hesse described in his 2005 CCCC's address as "the buying, selling, and leasing of textual acreages" (337). Hesse's metaphor of textual real estate and related contracts conjures images of mapped spaces and documented ownership, as these definitions seem to seek singularity from literacy's strange multiplicity. In *Whose Knowledge Counts in Government Literacy Policies?: Why Expertise Matters*, editors and contributors Kenneth S. Goodman, Robert C. Calfee, and Yetta M. Goodman provide a survey of the recent history of literacy policy as a study of various (and often conflicting) definitions reflected in policy documents, public conversations, and sanctioned curricula. In "Whose Knowledge Counts, for Whom, in What Circumstances?: The Ethical Constraints on Who Decides" Sue Ellis recognizes that literacy instructors and researchers "are finding themselves in an increasingly political and legal landscape, where frameworks that help to locate what evidence really means in the context of complex interventions are extremely important" (90). Additionally, Kenneth S. Goodman highlights the various participants operating as agents of literacy for pedagogical as well as political purposes:

¹ See Linquest, Julie. "Literacy." *Keywords in Writing Studies*. Eds. Paul Heilker and Peter Vandenberg. Logan: Utah State UP, 2015. 99-102. Print.

In the context of 21st century America, all that we have learned about literacy through our research and the theory we have built from it are less valued than the concepts of literacy that serve the political and economic purposes of those who have the power to control the decision making of federal, state, and local politicians. And the reason those concepts are valued has nothing to do with literacy. (22)

As Goodman points to the politics of literacy, his statement reveals significant proprietary agitation associated with definitions of literacy. Literacy circulates as a power term with shifting meaning determined by specific contexts of use. “To understand contemporary literacy,” write David Barton and Mary Hamilton, “it is necessary to document the ways in which literacy is *historically situated*” (“Literacy Practices” 13). Consequently, definitions of literacy are made by time and location. Literacy is historically *placed* within texts.

In spite of some efforts in rhetoric and composition to find consensus on the subject of literacy for college readiness, the field equally seems to represent Barton and Hamilton’s “situatedness” and Hesse’s “textual acreages,” in that no single definition of literacy, particularly within the context of the first-year composition classroom, holds. In “The Literacy Demands of Entering the University,” Kathleen Yancey compares attempts to compose a comprehensive articulation of college-level literacy with the “creation of a map of tectonic plates, overlaying nation-states” as the endeavor can only be a characterized as “an exercise in palimpsest, an attempt through multiple arrangements to make a dynamic set of practices stand still” (269). A survey of research trends in rhetoric

and composition over the past thirty years reveals dramatic shifts in the scholarly focus of the field, and corresponding shifts in the focus and content of the first-year composition course suggests a disciplinary multiplicity and related uncertainty as to what exactly it is to write in college. The movements or “turns” just within the field in the last three decades suggest that the identity of college-level literacy and the competencies² necessary to succeed in the college writing classroom is mixed and uncertain. Correspondingly, matters of literacy for college readiness are complicated when we must confront the fact that we are not quite sure what we are getting ready *for*.

The construction of literacy between secondary school and college stands as a particularly disputed site. Involving areas of study and activity both inside and outside the field of rhetoric and composition, the history of literacy policy and college readiness is a study of tensions reflected in policy documents and established curricula. The archive of literacy policy reveals the struggles for authority that inevitably accompany definitions of literacy, as legislators, corporate entities, philanthropists, and scholars in various fields (including rhetoric and composition) all occupy this place between high school and college, each operating to claim the authority to name what literacy *is*. Consequently, literacy for college readiness is characterized as a sort of no man’s land, a space of power but uncertain identity. Evidencing Bakhtin’s centripetal and centrifugal forces at work as “processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification,” the space between the high school and the university - a seemingly short distance to travel -

² I use the word “competencies” here in an effort to avoid other terms associated with literacy for college readiness, including “skills” and “habits of mind.” Both of these terms will be addressed specifically in relation to specific policy initiatives in this dissertation.

is a place littered with texts set at addressing the subject of literacy for college readiness (272). Often characterized by the liminal language of “boundary objects” (Fenwick and Edwards)³, “contact zones” (Pratt), and “threshold concepts” (Adler-Kassner; Adler-Kassner, Majewski, and Koshnick; Meyer and Land), definitions of literacy as they relate to college readiness make literacy a thing - specifically a text.

In *Literacy and the Politics of Representation*, Mary Hamilton argues that literacy policy is, itself, a text subject to the “process of transition,” resulting in various interpretations and applications (15). These policy documents generate other texts (curriculum documents, assessment instruments, and scholarly articles) in a vast network of documents charged with “the building, transforming, or disrupting power relations” (15). Across literacy scholarship in rhetoric and composition exists a similar recognition of literacy policy documents serving multiple functions (collaborative, interpretive, competitive), yet these various texts share a common purpose – all these documents operate as compositions set on codifying and enacting definitions of literacy and college readiness as a matter of authority. Specifically, rhetoric and composition scholarship often provides articulations (to employ a term already in use to describe text-based relationships between secondary and college contexts) of what is college-level literacy and, alternately, what is not college-level literacy based on research in the field.

Scholarship in rhetoric and composition highlights not only the apparent economy of documents circulating in the name of literacy and college readiness but also the

³ See Geoffrey C. Bowker, Susan Leigh Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1999.

network of relations within this economy. Scholarship in rhetoric and composition has, up to this point it seems, participated in this economy in the form of (1) reactions to constructions of literacy for college readiness, (2) alternative/divergent definitions of literacy for college readiness, and (3) alignments/negotiations with existing policies related to college writing and college readiness. Regardless of position taken relative to literacy policy, all texts resulting from literacy policy for college readiness appear to be working to claim the power to define, to normalize, and to assess literacy. Though the field of rhetoric and composition has provided countless studies in college writing and corresponding representations of literacy rhetoric and composition scholarship has not yet mapped the network of texts forming the system of authority and ownership related to matters of literacy for college readiness. In this dissertation I will trace the features of this economy of documents through an analysis of the interplay of literacy theory, literacy policy, and policy documentation. Calling on composition history, literacy studies, and assessment studies, my project engages with conversations focused in one state as literacy policies were composed and implemented as a matter of state legislation and national policy compliance. The specific objective of this project is to trace the network of negotiations and assemblages present in literacy policy documents. This dissertation identifies how literacy for college readiness is multiply defined through a network of documents. In order to identify the authorial foundations for such definitions and related interpretations, translations, and enactments, this dissertation identifies literacy for college readiness not as a single “common sense” definition but rather as a term Mary Hamilton describes as “linked to governance and privilege” that “have become

naturalized in our society” (13). Consequently, this dissertation will track the ways that the definition of literacy for college readiness is appropriated and re-appropriated across contexts through an economy of documents.

For the field of rhetoric and composition, matters of college writing and, relatedly, literacy for college readiness are, I would argue, foundational to disciplinary identity. Nonetheless, legislative mandates for scientifically based research in literacy, standardization of curriculum and assessment, and institutional calls for K-16 alignments⁴ suggest that increasingly definitions of college writing and college readiness are being implemented and circulated outside of the disciplinary authority of the field of rhetoric and composition. Consequently, the focus of this dissertation is not only to locate definitions of literacy for college readiness over three decades of policy but also to locate the field of rhetoric and composition in policy conversations. This dissertation identifies translations of literacy for college readiness across policy documents, curricula, and assessment instruments, but this project also operates as a means of tracking rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary participation and scholarly authority in public articulations of literacy for college readiness. Put simply, this dissertation represents a sort of political map of literacy for college readiness, and this map, by design, also surveys the field’s historical engagements with literacy policy.

Additionally, I have chosen to ground this dissertation in policy rather than pedagogy as a way of identifying the web of interests operating in the classification of literacy for college readiness within legislated standards-based systems of documentation.

⁴ MLA’s K-16 Alliances initiative will be discussed in Chapter 4 as a point of professional comparison.

Through the “institutional processes” of literacy policy, literacy becomes legalized as a binding text (Hamilton 12). Anticipatory definitions of college-level literacy in college readiness seem very much within the jurisdiction of rhetoric and composition scholarship, yet I wish to highlight to what extent this scholarship is operating in active or reactive roles relative to literacy policy and public discourse. The purpose of this project is to identify instances in which definitions of literacy and college readiness are – through a vast system of texts—articulated, revised, enacted, and contested. My project is, by design, a historiography of literacy and college readiness, and I see the shape of my research as a network of intersecting texts both limited and enabled by the historical context of their use. Using Actor-Network Theory as the basis of my methodological design, I have set out to analyze the literacy policy related to definitions of college readiness in the state of Kentucky.

This dissertation will track not only the vast and interconnected system of compositions operating as articulations of literacy for college readiness but also the presence (or absence) of rhetoric and composition *compositions* within this system of relations. In this text-based network, literacy (re)written and (re)interpreted, I will identify texts functioning as artifacts and instruments of literate college-ready skills and practices.

In this chapter I will provide an overview of discussions of literacy for college readiness in the field of rhetoric and composition. In the first section I consider literacy for college readiness in terms of disciplinary history. These historical approaches to composition not only serve as scholarly models for my research but also place

discussions of college readiness firmly in the history of rhetoric and composition as a field. In the second section I will provide an overview of composition scholarship concerned with constructions of literacy including representations of literacy particular to college writing and college readiness. In the third section I will outline the work of rhetoric and composition scholars in the area of assessment studies. In the fourth section, I will list examples of literacy policy documents both within and beyond the field as articulations of literacy for college readiness. In the fifth and final section of this chapter I outline my methods and methodology for this study. Based in an Actor-Network Theory approach to archival research in literacy policy, this dissertation finds additional theoretical grounding in texts related to the analysis of systems of power.

College Readiness and the History of Composition

In an effort to locate my dissertation in the critical disciplinary histories of composition, I call upon scholarship focused on documenting the origins and evolutions of composition, particularly in the college-level literacy and the context of first-year composition (FYC). Though the term “college readiness” has only come into common use within the past decade, the business of defining literacy for college readiness is intertwined with the identity of composition as a field.⁵ As multiple sources of disciplinary precedent in historical scholarship of rhetoric and composition as well as in the field’s connections with matters of college readiness, the work of James Berlin, Robert Connors, Sharon Crowley and Richard Fulkerson provide historical studies of composition with attention to constructions of literacy in transition from secondary

⁵ For evidence of early use of the term “college readiness in the field, see J. L. Kendall. “The College Readiness Program: An Experiment at Oklahoma.” *CCC* 8.2 (1957): 100-104.

school to the university. Additionally, I refer to scholarship in/of our disciplinary history that addresses the place of texts (including textbooks and assessments) as formalizations of privileged literacies in the transition from high school to college.

James Berlin's history of composition is useful for this project because it makes clear connections between the power of assessment instruments and the privileging of particular literacies. Berlin traces the origins of composition to the implementation of an English entrance exam at Harvard in 1874. In *Rhetoric and Reality*, Berlin argues that the use of this assessment resulted in the creation of the freshman English course at Harvard in 1879 as a response to the literacies privileged in the exam.⁶ Berlin identifies the exam with current-traditional rhetoric, a skills-based model of writing emphasizing features of correctness such as grammar and punctuation,⁷ a definition of literacy for college readiness that persists over a century later. Also, Berlin's study highlights the tensions that arise from claims of professional authority with regard to constructions of literacy for college readiness. Berlin cites the influence of the college entrance exams on the secondary school English curricula and the subsequent creation of the National Council for the Teachers of English (NCTE) in response to the influence of colleges on the structure of high school English content. Berlin characterizes the NCTE as a complex organization born out of protest against the university control over the shape of

⁶ Expanded discussion of examination is addressed in the *Assessment Studies in Composition* section.

⁷ The definition of current-traditional rhetoric is widely used in scholarly conversations within rhetoric and composition (Berlin; Connors; Faigley, Young), but this term does not transfer into public discourse as a conventions-centered definition of literacy. Nonetheless, I will use this term in later chapters in the identification of conventions-centered representations of literacy within texts.

secondary-level that also served as a site of collaboration between secondary and university instructors (*Rhetoric and Reality* 34-35).

Because this dissertation relies on the role of texts as sources of centralization and authority, I find the historical contributions of Robert Connors and Sharon Crowley offer valuable insight into the power of curricular materials in setting out particular representations of literacy. Both Connors and Crowley consider the historical use of multiple texts as archival representations of a college readiness model typically associated with current-traditional rhetoric. In *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*, Connors describes these instructional texts as “shaping tools” purposed with initiating students into literacy for college readiness, and these instruments display a conflation of literacy with mastery of convention. Connors also points to the origins of “literacy crisis” resulting from the lack of student awareness of conventions, and this perceived crisis of literacy created a need for even more support texts in the form of handbooks and practice workbooks (84). In *Composition in the University*, Sharon Crowley also complicates the connected histories among education, literary studies, and rhetoric and composition in her analysis of texts in the college writing course. In her analysis of textbooks, Crowley also describes the use of literary texts in the composition course as “models of current-traditional principles” (116).

With attention to recent history in the field, I look to Richard Fulkerson’s “Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century” as useful overview of pedagogical trends in composition since the 1980s, from process through the “social turn.” Fulkerson argues that shifts in definitions of college-level literacy have moved

toward a content-based cultural studies approach. Fulkerson asserts that “classroom practices are in dispute, but tending toward an emphasis on reading” rather than the teaching of writing (681). Additionally, Fulkerson’s critique highlights the role of text selection and generation in representations of college-level literacy and, correspondingly, the uncertainty in the field with regard to the competencies necessary for college-level composition. Though Fulkerson serves as a useful model for historical research in rhetoric and composition (particularly because the chronological scope of his study parallels the time frame of this dissertation), I find Fulkerson equally useful as evidence of the disciplinary tensions that seem to define rhetoric and composition as a field.

Defining Literacy: Literacy Studies and Composition

In *Literacy: Reading the Word & the World* Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo state that “reading always involves critical perception, interpretation, and rewriting of what is read” (24). Following Freire and Macedo, literacy scholarship in rhetoric and composition both documents and performs on-going, recursive practices of reading and writing, and my project attempts to enter into this scholarly conversation by means of survey rather than engagement. By this statement I wish to provide documentation (rather than direct critique) of claims of authority in literacy scholarship. Mary Hamilton describes literacy as “the ultimate flexible friend - a word that can be filled with all kinds of anxieties, hopes and prescriptions,” and the semantic dexterity of the term further complicates the ways literacy is discussed and documented both in and outside the discipline (130).

With attention to the apparent dexterity of the term “literacy,” I align my research with Brian Street’s “ideological model” of literacy in which literacy is not seen as a “technical and neutral skill” within an “autonomous model” of literacy but “embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles” (“What’s ‘New’ in New Literacy Studies?” 77). Specifically, I enlist Street’s ideological model of literacy as a way of looking at and interpreting constructions of literacy for college readiness across different policy-based contexts. Though I find my own theoretical grounding in Street’s ideological model, I also rely on Street’s autonomous model as a way of describing representations of literacy often found in state-initiated literacy policy documents. Attention to Street’s autonomous model of literacy is particularly important in the analysis of standards-based literacy policy initiatives that often operate to centralize and universalize literacy:

Where the social context of literacy has been addressed, the premises of the “autonomous” model have directed attention away from its significance for power relations in specific social conditions. With regard to bureaucracy and the social organization of the modern state, for instance, literacy has been seen as a “neutral” mechanism for achieving functional ends, a *sine qua non* of the state whatever its ideological character, a technology to be acquired by sufficient proportions of the population to ensure the mechanical functioning of the institutions” (“The New Literacy Studies” 437).

Street's ideological model allows a way to discuss literacy policy documents as historical/political compositions reliant on the "unaccented" authority of ideological invisibility.

Following Street's ideological model of literacy, literacy scholarship in rhetoric and composition consistently engages with topics concerning the "large but not unruly bundle" of meanings and intentions that accompanies definitions of literacy (Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola 351). With attention to claims of authority in texts as exercises in "arguing about literacy," I look to rhetoric and composition scholarship as source texts as well as sites of discussion and dispute related to definitions of literacy for college readiness (Bizzell 141). In response to the in policy documents and public conversations regarding literacy, Robert Yagelski describes "the misleading 'simplicity' of literacy" commonly employed by institutional entities (28). Yagelski's critique of the common reduction of literacy to discrete skills corresponds with standards-based constructions of literacy for college readiness and corresponding assessments of literacy. Similarly, Deborah Brandt's concept of "sponsors of literacy" as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy-and gain advantage by it in some way" highlights the interested parties (including those in composition scholars and their corresponding home institutions) working to somehow define literacy (141). I find Brandt's literacy sponsorship particularly useful in characterizing the corporate interests associated with definitions of literacy for college readiness.

Due to recent interest in collaborative work between secondary and college composition teachers, the field of composition has a significant body of scholarship concerned with literacy for college readiness, preparedness for college writing, and the identity of the FYW course. Quite logically, connections already exist in very explicit ways between secondary school and college composition, particularly in regard to discussions of college writing and the literacies associated with academic discourse. In *Because We Live Here: Sponsoring Literacy Beyond the College Curriculum* Eli Goldblatt details his pursuit of “an intact and coherent pathway” between secondary and college spaces in an effort “to define and pave the literacy path from school to college” (80). With attention to collaboration across secondary and post-secondary contexts, Goldblatt calls on the concept of “deep alignment” as “a shared understanding of students’ needs that would encourage common approaches and sequential coursework” (84). With regard to engagement with national standards and conversations of alignment, Glynda Hull and Elizabeth Birr Moje describe standards-based literacy policy as “at once ideological, pedagogical, and institutional” (2). Hull and Moje display a healthy awareness of the negotiations built into standards-based literacy policy. A number of other composition scholars including Joanne Addison and Sharon James McGee (“Writing in High School/Writing in College”), Sheridan Blau (“Academic Writing as Participation”), David Jolliffe and Allison Harl (“Study the ‘Reading Transition from High School to College’”), Miles McCrimmon (“High School Writing Practices in the Age of Standards”), Patrick Sullivan (“An Essential Question”), and Kathleen Yancey

(“Responding Forward”) offer studies in possibilities for conversation if not consensus in the literacy space between secondary and college.

Assessment Studies in Composition

Foucault’s “means of correct training” as outlined in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* positions assessment as “the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination” (170). Consequently, assessment - like literacy - rarely exists as a single term, instead being placed alongside corresponding and contextualizing modifiers and qualifiers, adjectives and phrases that attempt to corral and tame a term that is, itself, so often associated with normalizing judgments and clearly-drawn limits. In “Threshold Concepts at the Crossroads: Writing Instruction and Assessment,” Peggy O’Neill states that “through our assessments of texts, we convey what we value as readers” (O’Neill 157). With attention to assessment and constructions of literacy for college readiness within composition, I ground my project in the scholarship of assessment and the foundational documents used to assert disciplinary authority for the assessment of college readiness and college-level literacy.

In “Looking Back as We Look Forward: Historicizing Writing Assessment,” Kathleen Yancey historicizes assessment in composition studies asserting that “even if by another name, writing assessment has always been at the center of work in writing” though initially existing as not just “routine” but “ubiquitous and invisible” (483). Yancey goes on to track the various “waves” of assessment, progressing from “objective

tests” to “the holistically scored essay” and on to “the portfolio assessment” and “programmatic assessment” (484). Yancey’s presentation of assessment as both history and field poses a number of questions regarding the nature of assessment, specifically asking “who is authorized and who has the appropriate expertise to make the best judgment about writing assessment issues?” and “who is best suited to orchestrate these questions, design an assessment based on the answers and implement that design? In other words, who will wield the power?” (“Looking Back” 487). Ed White maintains that “our private world of assessment” should be defended as “a matter between our students and us,” yet he also recognizes that assessment offers rare “links to such suspicious partners as educational research, statistics, and politics and with profound effects on public policy and educational funding” (“Opening” 306-307). Assessment “inevitably defines the meaning and importance of what we do in the classroom; as always, a test is not merely a test but also a statement of what is valued” (“Opening” 309).

Additionally, assessment scholars in rhetoric and composition are those actively engaging with and offering critiques of the standards-based national literacy policy and constructions of literacy for college readiness. Bruce McComiskey addresses national literacy policy in relation to assessments, stating that it is not policy but rather “the assessment instruments written by publishing companies as a means to sell textbooks” that should a focus of concern (539).). Chris Anson critiques standards-based characterize this type of assessment practice as existing within “a closed system” that is both “a-contextual” and “a-rhetorical” (119-120, 124). Similarly, Kristine Hansen considers literacy for college readiness in relation to assessment instruments:

The huge state testing apparatuses that want to measure “readiness” or “competence” and the private industries that want to sell courses and tests, asserting the “equivalence” of their products with our college courses, have usurped the role our society once allowed teachers to play, that of professionals whose judgment matters, whether in designing curriculum or assessing students. (542).

Hansen argues that those with the expertise to speak about assessment (namely literacy scholars and instructors) possess little or no authority in conversations related to literacy and public policy. In terms of standards for assessment and the isolation of skills, Bob Broad connects the proliferation of rubrics as a means to “simplify and standardize” writing in a reductive system of assessment privileging efficiency over complexity (*What We Value* 63). In *The Testing Trap: How State Writing Assessments Control Learning*, George Hillocks discusses assumptions built into standards-based writing assessments as extensions of legislated literacy policy. Specifically, Hillocks looks at variations in the types of assessments (multiple choice, on-demand writing, and portfolio) attached to particular policy movements.⁸ Similarly, Michael Neal describes “mechanization of writing assessments” in the form of in-direct writing assessments, assessments that do not actually involve writing but that rely on claims of “reliability and objectivity” (*Writing Assessment and the Revolution* 61). In “Standardized Students: The Problems with Writing for Tests Instead of People” Bronwyn Williams highlights the disconnect

⁸ Hillocks addresses the assessment of writing in Kentucky as an outcome of state literacy legislation. Each assessment type listed will be discussed in the primary chapters of this dissertation.

between definitions of literacy within the field and those circulating quite forcefully in the public discourse:

Yet U.S. culture clings to standardized literacy tests as a means of providing meaningful information about students, teachers, and schools because such tests offer the illusion of scientific rigor (as well as those all-important quantifiable numbers) to an endeavor that ultimately can't be measured in a lab and for which numbers are meaningless. This infuriating numbers game allows politicians and media pundits to make facile judgments, and cynical proclamations, about education that they turn into a relentless cycle of testing, criticism, and punishment. (154)

As Williams shows, the evaluation of assessment in rhetoric and composition scholarship frequently provides a critique of authority and systems operating in the quantification of literacy.

Mary Hamilton provides an extensive analysis of the use of numbers in literacy policy in *Literacy and the Politics of Representation*. Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation include Hamilton's "Literacy by Numbers" as an interpretative frame for the quantification of literacy.

With attention to literacy and quantification, the historical view of assessment is often considered in the binary of validity and reliability. These terms (frequently phrased as prefaces to assessment: *validity of assessment* or *reliability of assessment*) are consistently used to legitimize specific sides of assessment, each term apparently benevolent its seemingly positive associations yet most often exploited for individual

denotative power in cultivating oppositional views of assessment. The implication is that assessment establishes credibility through a possible truth presented (validity) on a consistent, quantifiable basis (reliability). Within composition studies, representations of validity and reliability saturate conversations regarding the purpose and focus of assessment schemes. Historically, assessment has been marketed as a neutral territory for tracking and calculating evidence of knowledge transferred, retained, and redistributed, and reliability models, in seeking the consistent over the contextual, and composition studies have been attentive to such persistent assessment trends. In “A Usable Past for Writing Assessment” Brian Huot, Peggy O’Neill, and Cindy Moore point out that “the history of writing assessment can be seen as a reliability-driven march to more consistent (reliable) scoring,” the intentional pursuit of interpretation-proof assessment (499). When considering assessment as a conversation regarding reliability and validity, Huot, O’Neill, and Moore attempt to invalidate common uses of validity measures in which “validity almost seems like an afterthought” and “test authors” serve as “the supreme authority on the validity of their tests” (505). Because validity is associated with qualitative instead of quantitative measurements, valid assessment suggests a subjectivity that can be employed in the service of reliability. Tensions between reliability and validity are also tied to “writing assessment’s preoccupation with reliability” and “the inappropriate reification of validity types” resulting in validity claims for college readiness assessments, such as the ACT and Compass tests, “that contain no writing at all” (508).

With regard to literacy for college readiness, assessment scholarship in rhetoric and composition provides insight into what we value collectively as a field (in instances

where consensus exists) as well as highlights instances of collaboration and, more recently, contention between the discipline and constructions of literacy presented through legislation and standards-based curricula. The creation of literacy assessment stands as an interpretative act in which the abstraction of literacy is made concrete and usable. In this project I identify assessment of literacy as a vital artifact in the chain of translations as expressions of power and authority. Locating rhetoric and composition in this system in relation to assessment provides insight into how our disciplinary expertise is enlisted (or ignored) in policies of literacy.

Policy Documents and College Readiness

Scott Wible argues that capacity for any language policy to exert power in the public discourse “depends not just on the ‘quality’ of the theories and ideas written into its pages” but, rather, “the interpretative frameworks of other scholars, school administrators, government officials, journalists, and citizens all affect how the policy circulates and gets used as well as how it does (or does not) get recorded and analyzed in our disciplinary history” (22). In beginning with policy documents I wish to locate current (and often competing) definitions of literacy for college readiness across different sources of policy. Constructions of college-level literacy and ongoing debates related to standards for college readiness evidencing attempts to unify and contain literacy and college readiness under a single umbrella policy are often transformed into the generation of additional documents – documents of support, of appropriation, and of discord.

Documents for analysis will include multiple interconnected strands including (1) Kentucky's primary policy documents related to literacy for college readiness such as the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), and Senate Bill 1; (2) primary policy documents operating to activate legislation and define literacy in usable terms. The Common Core State Standards (Common Core), the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (the *Framework*), Kentucky Council on Post-Secondary Education Quality and Accountability Policy Group Reports (Council Reports), and the *Writing Program Administrators Outcome Statement for First-Year Composition* (WPA OS); (3) documents generated as interpretations of literacy policy such curriculum documents and assessments for college readiness.

The first area for analysis is the creation of literacy policy for college readiness through legislation. Specifically, I consider documented instances in which literacy and college readiness are legalized as defined terms. KERA, NCLB, and Senate Bill 1 serve as the foundational documents for this area of study. Because these texts are each legal documents representing the discourse conventions of legislation (rather than those of pedagogy, scholarship, or public policy), each must necessarily be translated into a usable form for implementation. It is in these various translations in all forms that I locate the focus of my study. In the translation from legislation to policy, the most impactful text generated (or adopted) tends to be a set of standards; consequently, this section of analysis will include the translation of law into literacy standards. For Kentucky's history of literacy legislation, these standards will include both "homegrown" state-made standards in the form of the Kentucky Core Content (Core Content) and Program of

Studies (POS) documents as well as national standards such as the ACT College Readiness Standards (ACT CRS) and the Common Core State Standards (Common Core), as adapted into the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS).

I will also look to literacy policy documents generated by organizations affiliated with the field of rhetoric and composition. Specifically, I will consider organizational policy documents generated in contexts of professional authority including texts composed by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the National Council for the Teachers of English (NCTE), and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA). In addition to the *Framework* and the *WPA OS*, I will consider CCCC positions statements on writing assessment, dual credit/concurrent enrollment as well as NCTE position statements on assessment, literacy, and standards. These documents working in relation to (but not necessarily in collaboration with) legislated literacy policy. Because these documents, by design, tend to reflect the collective expertise and consensus of fields of study (including education, literacy, and rhetoric and composition), these documents will also be linked to scholarly conversations and engagements regarding literacy for college readiness.

Finally, I will include documents as interpretations of literacy legislation outside of the field. In most instances the texts represent formal translations in the form of policy documents composed and circulated by government agencies such as the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Council on Post-Secondary Education (CPE). Examples of these documents as sanctioned translations typically involve outlines of accountability and assessment structures for college readiness such as the Kentucky

Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS), the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), and Unbridled Learning: College and Career Readiness for All (Unbridled Learning) and corresponding assessments including the ACT, COMPASS, and Kentucky Online Testing Program (KYOTE). In an apparent effort to maintain continuity and foster smooth transitions between one literacy policy movement to the next, government agencies (and their policy/assessment partners) will often provide crosswalk documents detailing equivalencies across different sets of standards. Such crosswalk documents include the Common Core State Standards Comparison to Kentucky English Language Arts Standards (Common Core KY ELA Crosswalk) and the Program of Studies and College Readiness Standards Alignment (POS CRS).

Methods and Methodology

Context and Project Overview

On November 15, 1984, a group of citizens from across the state of Kentucky organized an evening of linked town forums focused on improvements in Kentucky’s educational system. Self-identified as non-political and non-expert, this group of citizen volunteers known as The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (The Prichard Committee) brought together 20,000 Kentuckians “at 145 locations that represented all 176 of the state’s school districts” in dialogue that resulted in the documentation of 6,000 recorded comments and suggestions, 1,500 written statements, and approximately 200 letters – all related to reforming the structure of Kentucky’s existing educational system (Sexton 40-41). The members of the Prichard Committee later analyzed these various comments and documents and transformed public response to educational reform into

The Path to a Larger Life: Creating Kentucky's Educational Future, a comprehensive report on Kentucky's educational system published in 1985. Through the identification of persistent problems and the corresponding recommendation for possible solutions, the report provided a usable proposal and plan of action for the direction of educational policy. Interestingly, direct links can be identified between *The Path to a Larger Life* and the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), as policy initiatives are present in the language and proposed directives of The Prichard Committee's report. The grassroots work of The Prichard Committee represents a translation of advocacy into legislation in which one document informs others, initiating a network of text generation. Legislators and Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) leaders enlist The Prichard Committee in the implementation of KERA through the translation of its recommendations (many now legalized) into organizational and administrative documents, curriculum, and assessment tools. The story of educational policy reform in Kentucky is also the narrative of literacy, and the language of literacy policy has been characterized in anticipatory terms of readiness.

In the decades since KERA's passage, definitions of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky have been reimagined, revised, and rewritten several times, and The Prichard Committee's role in policy activism has changed along with these multiple movements. Once an outside entity intent on exerting influence on the structure of educational policy in Kentucky, The Prichard Committee has since acquired insider status as a powerful force in public conversations of college-level literacy and college readiness. Put simply, The Prichard Committee has occupied (and continues to occupy)

various positions within the vast network of relations forming Kentucky's literacy policy structures. This project is an analysis of multiple, associated texts, and the authority and credibility of policy documents.

The history of literacy policy in Kentucky is a study in shifting claims of authority.⁹ The first movement for analysis is Kentucky's initial (and radical) education reform evidenced in the grassroots work of The Prichard Committee and its long-time director Robert F. Sexton. The advocacy and public forum work of the Prichard Committee in the 1980s resulted in the publication *The Path to a Larger Life: Creating Kentucky's Educational Future – A Report of The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence* in 1985. This report states that the “primary academic goal for the schools should be to help each student master basic communication skills—to be able to read and write effectively,” and the definitions of literacy and corresponding recommendations for literacy policy implantation contained in the report are utilized as the foundations for literacy legislation (26). In 1990 the Kentucky General Assembly passed the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA) in response to the 1989 Supreme Court ruling finding the structure of Kentucky's educational system unconstitutional. The urgent implementation of education policy reform ushered in by KERA (and the 1997 Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act) represents a watershed moment for public policy matters relative to literacy and college readiness in that KERA indicates a clear

⁹ For some sample discussions of Kentucky's education reform see “Kentucky's Sweeping Overhaul of Education Offers Lessons Both Positive and Negative” in *The New York Times* and “What Kentucky Can Teach the Rest of the U.S. About the Common Core” in *The Atlantic*.

shift toward a standards-based model for literacy. Specifically, what it is to be literate and college ready is, itself, *written*. KERA consequently necessitated the generation of documents serving as interpretations of legislation and standards-based alignment.

In 2001 NCLB required a reorientation of existing literacy policy in Kentucky from state to federal jurisdiction, and this second movement in policy reveals the negotiations of power and authority between policy documents in an expanding network of compositions. Attempts to reconcile KERA with NCLB required the creation of crosswalk documents and standards-based assessments. Additionally, NCLB mandates that scientifically based research provide the authoritative rationale for policy decisions in literacy, and most qualitative research studies could not be utilized as authoritative points of reference. The presence of this legislated view research represents an interpretative shift in definitions of literacy for college readiness and an identification of authority with the quantification of literacy and introduction of other parties (including corporate entities) into the business of defining literacy for college readiness is. Less than a decade later after the implementation of NCLB (and nearly two decades since the implementation of KERA), Kentucky was again the subject of literacy reform as the first state to adopt the Common Core as the means of meeting the accountability requirements set out in Senate Bill 1.

Today, Kentucky continues to operate under the residual force of all these policies simultaneously. KERA, NCLB, Senate Bill 1, and Common Core – though different in structure and context – are all documents with the apparent authority to define literacy for college readiness.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Current conversations in rhetoric and composition scholarship point to the methodological possibility of archival research (particularly digital archival research) in the creation of historiographies in/of our discipline (Glenn and Enoch, Enoch and Gold, Carter and Dent). Calling on Foucault's description of the archive as "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements," I construct this project as rhetorical/historical analysis of multiple associated texts operating to define and control literacy (*The Archeology of Knowledge* 130). The archive at the Prichard Committee, the Robert Sexton (The Prichard Committee director, 1980-2009) Archive in Special Collections at the University of Kentucky, and the digital archive for the Kentucky Department of Education serve as the research foundation for this project because these archival collections provide a useful point of entry into the institutional history of education reform in Kentucky.

In an attempt at "tracing the global in the local," I would argue that the recent history of educational reform and literacy policy for college readiness in the United States cannot be discussed in any critical way without considering Kentucky as a site of investigation and shifting participation (Hamilton 15). With an emphasis on the concept of "traces," my analysis methods include practices of textual analysis that rely on the relations between documents. I see my approach to textual analysis as a sort of title search for literacy, in that my research is focused on the ways that documents engage with other documents in both collaborative and combative ways. My dissertation is an

attempt to “write the network” that operates to construct definitions of literacy for college readiness.

Research Questions

- What is the history of literacy legislation (and corresponding constructions of college readiness)[in Kentucky? What are the origins and evolutions of standards-based movements related to literacy and reading/writing policy creation?
- How is literacy for college readiness defined and documented? What non-human actors participate in the constructions of these definitions and documents?
- How are definitions of literacy and college readiness enacted across the network? How is literacy research translated through legislation? How is literacy legislation translated into policies, practices, and digital/material artifacts?
- What assemblages and negotiations are present in the network? How and where is power located in these assemblages and negotiations?
- What assemblages provide network mobility and durability for policy-based literacy movements? How is the network made, unmade, and/or remade in different policy movements according to these assemblages?
- How has rhetoric and composition scholarship participated in and responded to legislation and standards-based constructions of literacy and college readiness? What is the presence (or absence) of this scholarship in the network? How are rhetoric and composition’s own policy documents in dialogue or tension with literacy policy documents?

Methods and Methodology

Writing Systems of Power: Althusser, Foucault, and de Certeau

My awareness of systems of power in relation to literacy policy very much informs the methodological frame for my project. The term “college readiness” has taken on a metonymic character in that mention of this phrase activates associations with not a single document or list of objectives but rather a whole network of texts. I have chosen to pull from the work of Latour, Althusser, Foucault, de Certeau. Additionally, I would like to note that because of the weight and complexity of these theorists, I am aware that my description here will only begin to describe the orientation of power and the CCS. Nonetheless, my hope is that I can direct attention to key concepts and terms as functional signposts in my overall theoretical outline. These theorists are here to give me necessary scope and help me “find the edges” on a system of power in which I participate. I have chosen these theorists based not only on their individual contributions to theories of power but also on the ways that each theorist’s work seems to inform and enable another. Foucault engages Althusser; de Certeau and Latour engage Foucault. Consequently, these theorists used together represent a conglomeration in a meta-theory of power. Because literacy policy for college readiness is vast in its presence across multiple discourse communities, these various strands of theory, though complex in their arguments, provide a functional multi-positional representation - a *polyphony*, to borrow from Bakhtin - of utterances conveying through texts.

I find Althusser an obvious choice for my project due to the fact his theory directly characterizes school as a codified system of power and control. In “Ideology and

Ideological State Apparatuses,” Althusser identifies the “educational ideological apparatus” as a system of power and control presented as at once neutral and beneficial (152). Clearly, references to school-as-system and education-as-apparatus presents a functional framework in relation to the literacy policy implementation and management, as secondary and college literacy contexts both fall under the school identifier. I find “educational ideological apparatus” as a term of infinite utility in describing the power and complexities of the literacy policy for college readiness. Similarly, Althusser identifies the “relations of production” and the conflation of the public and the private in the operations of the educational ideological apparatus (156). The adoption and implementation of the literacy policy cannot be disconnected from corresponding relations of production (productions of instructional materials, of assessment, of individual student documentation and so on), and, by design, the literacy policy for college readiness ensures a system of sustained maintenance. My project attempts to articulate these relations of production as manifestations of power structures through texts.

When considering the ways that power is identified, situated, and managed relative to the literacy policy, Foucault obviously comes to mind as a theorist with an expansive body of work addressing operations of power and the identification of discourse. *The Archeology of Knowledge* provides a methodological approach (an archeology) for locating and describing mechanisms of power, and this Foucault details his method of archeology:

It does not treat discourse as document, as a sign of something else as an element that ought to be transparent, but whose unfortunate opacity must often be pierced if one is to reach at last the depth of the essential in the place in which it is held in reserve: it is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a monument. (138)

The “formation of concepts” in Foucault’s archeology helps to give shape to literacy policy through identifying design and movement in terms of “succession” and the “ordering of enunciative series,” “coexistence” including “the analysis of error,” and “procedures of intervention” allowing “modes of translating quantitative statements into qualitative formulations and vice versa (the establishment of relations between purely perceptual measurements and descriptions)” (56-59). Using Foucault’s archeology as a reference, I interpret literacy policy for college readiness as a containment and regulation of literacy. Additionally, I find Foucault’s language in articulating the observational and correctional procedures of power to align with (and, any many instances, echo) the language used in the systems associated with literacy policy implementation, management, and assessment. In “The Means of Correct Training” I point to the examination concepts outlined as “simple instruments” of “hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and their combination” as an identification of assessment and power in the literacy policy. Foucault states that the “examination introduced a whole mechanism that linked to a certain type of the formation of knowledge a certain form of the exercise of power” and outlines the nature of the examination:

1. The examination transformed the economy of visibility into the exercise of power.
2. The examination also introduced individuality into the field of documentation.

3. The examination, surrounded by all its documentary techniques, makes individuals a “case.” (187-191)

Foucault’s system of examination expresses the nature and direction of large standardized assessments, but this system also tracks the seemingly endless formative work of observation and intervention related to tracking the normalization of literacy practices. The language of standards documentation represents a medicalization of literacy that functions as a power rhetoric of absolute authority.

My inclusion of de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* makes a move toward the matters of literacy and power and the multiple responses to the use of literacy practices in structures of power. I reference literacy not only in relation to the prescription outlined in the literacy policy itself (as a list in ways of reading) but also in the acts of literacy-in-shared-interpretation in the form of generated texts such as curriculum documents, position statements, and assessments. de Certeau addresses these matters of reading relative to the reader or reading collective:

Whether it is a question of newspapers or Proust, the text has a meaning only through its readers; it changes along with them; it is ordered in accord with codes of perception that it does not control. It becomes a text only in its relation to the exteriority of the reader, by an interplay of implications and ruses between two sorts of “expectation” in combination: the expectation that organizes a readable space (a literality), and one that organizes a procedure necessary for the actualization of the work (a reading). (171)

de Certeau's statement points to power relative to arranged interpretation, and this concept of reading and containing texts helps to manage the multiple uses of literacy policies for college readiness in a "scriptural economy" of varying documentation (131).

Writing the Archive: Approaches to Historical/Archival Research in Rhetoric and Composition

David Barton and Mary Hamilton state that the study of literacy requires "a historical approach for an understanding of the ideology, culture and traditions on which current practices are based" ("Literacy Practices" 13). Relying on the methodological precedent of archival research in rhetoric in composition, I present my dissertation as a study of historical documents serving as representations of literacy across three decades and a number of archival locations. In "Dreams and Play: Methods and Methodology," Robert Connors outlines the particular methodological demands of working within an archive:

The Archive must be explored, analyzed, cross-checked, deconstructed, reconstructed, made meaning of, be stripped, checked, and polished. Here, for the composition historian, is the world of the written word, the printed word, the picture, the table, the diagram, the voice on the tape. The Archive is where storage meets dreams, and the result is history. (17)

In line with Connors's articulation of the archive and the corresponding making of a history, my dissertation stands as an ANT-informed historiographic study of constructions of literacy for college readiness.

In “Reseeing and Redoing: Making Historical Research at the Turn of the Millennium” Liz Rohan states that “historians are coaxed into intoxicating contact zones as agents who introduce and sometimes even marry the present to the past, a phenomenon for which we could use a metaphor, more formally and sometimes related, a *method* for interpreting texts and posing questions” (26). I find Rohan’s description of archival method as a means of making connections across time and space (and across texts) represents a useful articulation of my archival work. Additionally, Barbara E. L’Eplattenier asserts that methods are “about achieving access to information, about finding aids, about reference materials, about archive locations and restrictions, about the condition of the materials, about the existence of evidence or the lack of evidence, and about the triangulation of information” (69).

Because an archive is traditionally understood as a curated space already representing a selected collection of texts, this dissertation engages with multiple archival spaces outside of the university in an effort to survey a sort of meta-archive of literacy for college readiness. Accordingly, my ANT-informed project relies on a system of textual analysis of documents located in multiple archives. In “Changing Research Methods, Changing History: A Reflection on Language, Location and Archive,” Jessica Enoch asks “What spaces does our field deem worth studying?” and “How might other places and spaces complicate our understanding of writing and rhetorical instruction?” (57). This dissertation sets out to answer these methodological questions in an effort to locate the field of rhetoric and composition with the broader conversations related to literacy and college readiness. Additionally, archives for analysis include digital archives and

corresponding texts and artifacts. With regard to digital archival research, Alex Ramsey-Tobienne argues that use of digital archives generates critical questions “of authenticity, of authority, and of the history of the archive itself,” and the analysis of digital archives as one aspect of study also brings into question matters of circulation and control in the creation of the archive (24). Following calls from Enoch and Ramsey-Tobienne for an expanded view of both archival location and possible archival content, my archival locations and source texts for analysis represent an attempt to move beyond traditional spaces of inquiry (such as the university archive) and into areas not yet studied as source texts for literacy in the field of rhetoric and composition. Specifically, ANT-informed archival research in rhetoric and composition’s recent history in relation to literacy for college readiness affords me provides a way to survey the field’s alliances and engagements *outside* of the field. The project provides insight into the rhetoric and composition’s shifting identity in the public discourse while also tracking emerging and authoritative stakeholders operating in the construction of literacy for college readiness.

“Writing Risky Accounts”: Actor-Network Theory

Tracing definitions of literacy for college readiness over the course of three decades and across various discourse communities presents particular methodological challenges. attention to the heterogeneity that characterizes any expanded-scope study of literacy. Following the ways of talking about literacy in line with Jens Brockmeier and David R. Olson, my dissertation presents an *archeology* of literacy in an effort to show literacy “as an episteme rather than simply a skill, a competence, a social practice, or a universal good – that is, as a frame rather than a content” (8). This archeology-based

methodological model provides a functional way of analyzing multiple identifications of literacy presented across contexts. I rely, then, on Bruno Latour's *Reassembling the Social* as the methodological foundation for this dissertation. In asking, "What makes a good textual account?" Latour makes explicit the weight of location and documentation for the researcher. All research begins with exigency not just related to our area(s) of interest but also a critical (and ethical) exigency related to the necessary reflexivity of qualitative research as interpretative acts. In answering his own question, Latour asserts that "a good text elicits networks of actors when it allows the writer to trace a set of relations defined as so many translations" (Latour 129). Relatedly, Latour outlines how a network is brought into existence through research and analysis:

Network is a concept, not a thing out there. It is a tool to help describe something not what is being described. It has the same relationship with the topic at hand as a perspective grid to a traditional single point perspective painting: drawn first, the lines might allow one to project a three-dimensional object onto a flat piece of linen; but they are not what is to be painted, only what has allowed the painter to give the impression of depth before they erased. In the same way, a network is not what is represented in the text, but what readies the text to take the relay of actors as mediators. (131)

With attention to translation, the influence of a particular document can be traced through its connection to other documents. Latour states that "if an actor makes no difference, it's not an actor," so translations provide a means of following lines of participation within a

network as one document connects in some way with other documents (Latour 130).

Translation is particularly important for this study because it offers a way to talk about how legislation becomes policy as well as how standards for college readiness are “unpacked” in the form of curriculum, instructional materials, and assessments.

Though I ground my project in the field’s historiographical research traditions based in archival analysis, my dissertation attempts to contribute to recent and emerging scholarship based on the use of ANT as a methodological frame.¹⁰ In “Tracing Uncertainties: Methodologies of a Door Closer” W. Michele Simmons, Kristen Moore, and Patricia Sullivan utilize ANT as a methodology occupying “a space between ontological assumptions pursued by scholars in object-oriented ontologies and epistemological procedures often pursued in field studies of literacy and public participation” (278). Laurie Gries argues that ANT provides a way to “discover how collectives are held together by the intra-actions of various actants--human and nonhuman, material and semiotic, individual and institutional” (302). In considering the scope of the terms “literacy” and “college readiness” both within rhetoric and composition and across other discursive spaces, I find ANT provides a way of viewing and documenting multiple points of participation.

In an effort to localize my dissertation in the space between secondary school and college, I also align project with ANT research studies in education and literacy as evidenced by the work of Tara Fenwick and Richard Edwards (*Actor-Network Theory in Education*) and Mary Hamilton (*Literacy and the Politics of Representation*). Because the

¹⁰ See *Thinking with Bruno Latour in Rhetoric and Composition*. Eds. Paul Lynch and Nathaniel Rivers. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2015. Print.

business of locating definitions of literacy for college readiness is not a tidy enterprise, I employ ANT as a functional methodology with “a sensibility for mess” that attempts “to suspend a priori assumptions” about the nature and shape of literacy (Fenwick and Edwards 146). ANT helps to identify the many inclusions and exclusions that occur in assembling this literacy-defining network, which can be easily obscured in references to standards that appear to exist as inevitable and immutable (Fenwick and Edwards 86). Additionally, ANT acknowledges the ideological allegiances and tensions between literacy stakeholders including secondary and post-secondary contexts, public advocacy, private enterprise, and literacy scholarship related to constructions of college-level literacies. In this dissertation, I analyze texts in terms of content but also interpretation and use relative to other documents, as all these documents serve as non-human actors participating as representations of literacy for college readiness. I consider all texts as relational, dialogic objects.

As a functional frame for observation of workings within networks, Fenwick and Edwards offer a four basic methodological identifiers ANT-based analysis:

Symmetry -- treating human and non-human elements as equally interesting, important and capable of exerting force upon each other as they come together.

Translation--examining how individual things connect, partially connect, or fail to connect to form nets or webs of activity, and examining how these things change through their connection

Network assemblages--attempting to trace the multiple networks at work, how they came to be enacted and what work holds them together despite blockages and counter-networks.

Multiplicity--allowing for multiple ontologies and the relations among them, rather than explanations relying on multiple perspectives.

Ambivalence--tracing the contradictions and uncertainties at play within and among these networks and the work they do. (146).

I have employed these identifiers as my methodological foundation, and my methods correspond with these features of the ANT frame. In terms of symmetry, I look to texts in the archive as non-human actors often operating as proxies for human actors, particularly when individual, named authors are attached to a text. Alternately, texts without specific authorial identification (as is often the case with policy documents and position statements) often display the authorial power of the non-human actor in their use as source texts in the generation of other texts. The “subjects” for this student are documents representing various definitions of literacy for college readiness. With regard to translations, I used an ANT-based textual analysis approach in which I have traced linkages revealing collaborations and disruptions occurring as these documents engage with each other. These translations evidence interpretative acts in the movement across networks and discourse communities (legislative, educational, corporate, scholarly) in a sort of “telephone game” form.

Additionally, analysis of network assemblages allows an even broader approach to the documents operating within multiple networks as a means of “tracing the

contradictions and uncertainties at play within and among these networks and the work they do” (Fenwick and Edwards 146). These assemblages – many resilient and adaptive – perhaps best reveal the authority embedded in and activated through particular networks. Finally, ANT-informed analysis allows views into multiple sites of exchange simultaneously, and an expanded (if not complete) representation of literacy for college readiness necessarily involves the recognition and documentation of multiple ontologies. Relatedly, a recognition of ambivalence in networks evidencing relations in the construction of literacy for college readiness provides some insight into instances of stalled and incomplete exchanges, as these examples of not-quite-realized connections reveal of the complex negotiations present in networks.

Though I am aware of the methodological impossibility of viewing and analyzing the network of relations from some objective, outside position as a researcher, much of the functionality of ANT as a methodological frame exists in its avoidance of singular explanation and conclusion. Fenwick and Edwards describe the methodological affordances of ANT in embracing the chaos of the network:

This approach demands a certain willingness of the ANT researcher to not only notice ambivalence, but to dwell within it throughout the analysis process. This means suspending the need for explanation and resisting desires to seek clear patterns, solutions, singularities, or other closure in the research. It is about noticing instead the strains, the uncanny, the difficult, and the ill-fitting, allowing the messes of difference and tension

to emerge alongside each other, rather than smoothing them into some kind of relation. (156)

ANT allows room for irregularities and absent conclusions; relatedly, ANT provides the opportunity to reveal so many strained, missed, and incomplete connections in the network of relations.

Limits of Research

Every research endeavor must necessarily begin with a confrontation – a confrontation of the motives and responsibilities for coming to this project, a confrontation of fascinations as investigators and interpreters of information, and a confrontation of the probable tilt toward a particular ideology informing a sustained study. Accordingly, Jeff Grabill highlights the importance of claiming a particular research stance, which he defines as “a position or set of beliefs and obligations that shapes how one acts as a researcher” (211). The call for research stance is an overt recognition of the researcher’s position to the study and provides a convenient and usable term in the design of the researcher identity (perhaps the researcher’s persona of position) as it corresponds to the development of the research project. As my particular study represents hybrid methodological form enlisting an ANT approach for archival research, I must necessarily recognize that my project does not include human actors. Instead, my project tracks the relations between and among texts as non-human actors in a network assembling and dismantling definitions of literacy for college readiness. Fenwick and Edwards identify these processes of researcher selection in the context of ANT as guiding (as well as constraining) features in the making of a research study:

This choice, deliberate or not, will always be based upon presuppositions about reality, as well as cultural-historical influences shaping a researcher's selection of what questions, actors or network is most worth following. This choice will affect the viewpoint that goes on to shape the study and the research narrative that is finally produced. (149)

I have chosen to exclude human actors in my research, and this choice obviously provides a different (though I would argue, no less complex) view of the system operating to define literacy. The various texts addressed in this project (literacy policy documents, research studies, academic articles, and curriculum guides, among them) are all published and public, and I track texts across the network in terms of circulation/reproduction (including citation) and interpretation-through-translation.

Additionally, an ANT study of literacy focused on texts carries particular issues of interpretation and representation. In my position as literacy researcher, I am "in effect enrolling both textual objects and readers into a single account" in which "everything left out is othered" and "everything included is potentially domesticated and purified into a network strategy of the researcher's own devices" (Fenwick and Edwards 159). My own interpretative moves as researcher resulting in this dissertation become part of the network of relations in the form of this text. An ANT-based analysis necessarily requires "any observer" (including the researcher) "to also assess their own entangled involvements in the emerging networks of thought, things, and action" (Fenwick and Edwards 128). This dissertation, like the various other texts forming the foundation of

this research project, is another example of the “intellectual technologies” composing the network of relations regarding literacy for college readiness (Latour 76).

With attention to my own research stance, I recognize that the shape and progression of my project is, of course, limited by my own *interestedness* in constructions of college-level literacy and the systems of power that seem to enable such constructions. In “Invigorating Historiographic Practices,” Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch describe interestedness as a statement of acknowledged positionality conceding that any archival account is incomplete:

Naturally, any stance inevitably leads to our accentuating some materials and passing over others; we cannot tell everything and move in every direction. What is important is that we do our best to try to uncover the ways our positionality operates and to consider, throughout the historiographic process, how this stance channels us to write one kind of history and directs us away from other possibilities. (22)

With regard to my project, I recognize that my focus on specific documents from the archive is necessary for the practical progression of the research, yet attention to certain texts and not others constructs a particular view of history and present. Additionally, Fenwick and Edwards describe the conversion these selected documents into the researcher’s written interpretations as studies in the “limits of representation as these accounts “tend to collapse the multiplicity into one particular totality” (161). The necessary selection of specific documents and corresponding interpretations both enable and delimit the study.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2: Writing Revolution and Readiness: The Kentucky Education Reform Act and the Composition of Transformation

In this chapter I will trace the origins and implementation of sweeping education reform (as translated/interpreted), beginning with the Kentucky Supreme Court decision in *Rose vs. the Council* that resulted in the Kentucky Education Reform Act and expansive policy concerning college-level literacy. This section will also analyze literacy policy related to the implementation of writing portfolios for assessment of college-level literacies and the research-based rationale for their inclusion. This chapter will also include discussions of process pedagogy and portfolio assessment from rhetoric and composition.

Chapter 3: Revising Revolution: Kentucky’s Literacy Reform Meets National Literacy Policy

In this chapter I will address the effects of federal policy including No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on the evaluation and revision of KERA’s literacy assessment design as it relates to definitions of literacy for college readiness. As a study in adaptation and sustainability following KERA’s initial implementation, this chapter will rely on analysis of policy revision rather than reform as Kentucky must reconcile existing approaches to literacy assessment with issues of federal compliance. Specifically, this chapter will detail the effects of NCTE’s requirement for “scientifically based research” on locations of authority with regard to literacy assessment. This section will also consider the presence (or absence) of national language policy documents (CCCC, NCTE, and WPA) as texts

informing the composition and interpretation of literacy legislation and college readiness. This chapter introduces the formal use of the term “college readiness” resulting from cooperative alignments between Kentucky’s assessment system and the use of the ACT as a nationally-recognized literacy measure.

Chapter 4: Standardizing Literacy for College Readiness: Senate Bill 1, the Common Core State Standards, and (In)Direct Writing Assessment

In this section I will look at the content of Senate Bill 1 relative to requirements for standards-based literacy assessment as well as the 2010 adoption of the Common Core. These centralizing policy documents will form the basis for archival analysis of documents generated as interpretations of standards alignment and assessment for college-level literacy. This section will also include analysis of Kentucky’s Unbridled Learning accountability system and related policy documents in alignment and assessment, as college readiness becomes a formal component of accountability. This chapter will focus on various “crosswalk” documents (including the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*) used to establish cooperative definitions of literacy for college readiness across secondary and postsecondary contexts.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The conclusion will consider the current attempts to (de)centralize definitions of literacy and college readiness with particular emphasis on the Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge and its call for comments in the analysis and revision of the standards.

Additionally, the conclusion identifies possible areas for rhetoric and composition scholars to engage in conversations regarding literacy legislation and to become stakeholders in the composition of literacy policy.

CHAPTER 2:
WRITING REVOLUTION AND READINESS: THE KENTUCKY EDUCATION
REFORM ACT AND THE COMPOSITION OF TRANSFORMATION

Revolution itself, that “modern” idea, represents the scriptural project at the level of an entire society seeking to constitute itself as a blank page with respect to the past, to write itself, by itself (that is, to produce itself as its own system) and to produce a new history (refaire l’histoire). It is on the model of what it fabricates (and this will be “progress”). It is necessary only for this ambition to multiply scriptural operations in economic, administrative, or political areas in order for the project to be realized.

Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (135)

Equipped with a computer and the right software, a child today can do what sculptors and poets have tried to do for thousands of years: transform one image into another. The computer catalogue promises that you soon can be “creating dazzling images and transitions, see last year’s car model turning into this year’, or a futuristic cyborg villain disguising itself as a valiant heroine. With carefully chosen tools the sculptor may hope to transform raw wood or stone into works of radiant majesty and beauty. The poet tries to choose and combine letters and words in such a way that paper takes on an identity and character of its own. No matter the process, the goal of transformation has always been the same, to markedly change the form, appearance, nature, function, or condition of an object or an institution.

“What is Transformation?” from *Transformations:
Kentucky’s Curriculum Framework* (1.3)

In “How Bruno Latour Teaches Writing” Marilyn M. Cooper argues that “experiments, whether in an actual laboratory or in a written text, are a way of engaging entities in a trajectory of composing knowledge” (188). KERA, as an experiment in the remaking of a state’s system of literacy instruction and assessment, represents a

text-based site of multiple engagements and interpretative alignments evidencing this epistemological project. Though reform legislation as a *composition* attempts a sort of *ab ovo* status of *beginning again* as a means of allowing policy to make things new, an ANT reading of reform suggests that policy implementation relies on immediate connection with multiple existing sources of authority, all already “framed and localized by others” (Latour 196). Accordingly, an ANT study of literacy reform necessarily starts not *at the beginning* but in the middle of things – *in medias res*.¹¹ With attention to the multiple associations made to sustain KERA’s literacy reform initiative (and the corresponding “dynamics of change”), I analyze the system of compositions operating as constructions of literacy for college readiness within the explicit context of dramatic educational reform (Fenwick 100). In this chapter KERA serves as the entry into a network of multiple actors operating to construct definitions of literacy for college readiness, and the study of KERA reveals not a place of original creation but rather a site of tangled engagements resulting from an effort to establish authority, stability, and accountability for the reform program. Forward from the language of education reform legislation and program goals and into the interconnected compositions of curriculum design, standards, assessment instruments,

¹¹ Latour uses the Horatian concept of *in medias res* as a method for theorizing ways into the webbed (rather than linear) formations of networks (27).

reveals not a place of original creation but rather a site of tangled engagements resulting from an effort to establish authority, stability, and accountability for the reform program. Forward from the language of education reform legislation and program goals and into the interconnected compositions of curriculum design, standards, assessment instruments, and authoritative research, this chapter serves as a topographical representation of literacy for college readiness in the context of educational reform implementation. Playing on Latour's assertion that "information is transformation," this chapter maps the trajectories of the various "intellectual technologies" mediating meanings of literacy in the reform network (153).

Following de Certeau's characterization of revolution as an enterprise in the multiplication of scriptural operations, this chapter traces the definition of literacy for college readiness through an expansive "scriptural system" of textual mediators (136). Employing an "ANT reading of available documents" to reveal how reform moves "not through top-down imposition but through the circulation of inscriptions, intermediaries, collaborations with objects and technologies, and a host of actors," this chapter traces the generation of new texts as well as the use of existing texts as the mediational means for linking the reform goals to assessment and accountability. (Fenwick and Edwards 107-108). With attention of educational policies functioning as "powerful actors," this chapter maps the network of texts utilized in the creation of an assemblage based on legislated literacy goals and artifacts of both authority and accountability (Fenwick and Edwards 129). First, I describe legislated reform goals as studies in distillation and simplification requiring immediate interpretation and expansion for implementation.

Second, I trace the interpretation of these goals and related outcomes through *Transformations: Kentucky's Curriculum Framework (Transformations)*, an expansive reference document including rationales, models, and resources for KERA's literacy objectives. Specifically, I identify *Transformations* as a bridge document presented as a sanctioned "unpacking" of program goals resulting in the production of specific types of literacy artifacts. I analyze the system of relations established through *Transformations* as a construction of literacy for college readiness evidencing alignments with professional organizations as representations of standards-based education. Additionally, I identify the various strands of composition scholarship (including process, portfolio assessment, and writing across the curriculum) serving as the authoritative foundations of KERA's literacy goals for graduating seniors. Finally, I conclude that the particular areas of scholarship used in reform implementation highlight tensions and ambivalences in the reform design regarding the definition of literacy for college readiness.¹²

I should note that this chapter as an ANT account of the KERA's implementation reveals the multiplicity of engagements making the reform network, and such an account seems appropriate as a methodological practice of "*recording* not filtering out, *describing* not disciplining" the participants in this vast and volatile network (Latour 55). This chapter is a study in/of the topography of literacy reform as an example of Bakhtin's heteroglossia where "alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward" (272).

¹² I trace some instances of ambivalence in the field of composition regarding definitions of literacy for college readiness in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Setting the Boundaries of Literacy Reform: KERA, KIRIS, and the Project of Controlled Change

In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault offers a way of looking at reform not as a single statement or event but rather an observable structure:

Rather than refer to the living force of change (as if it were its own principle), rather than seek its causes (as if it were no more than a mere effect), archeology tries to establish the system of transformations that constitute ‘change’: it tries to develop this empty, abstract notion, with a view to according it the analyzable status of transformation. (173)

Reform is neither singularity nor boundless abstraction but rather a counter to an existing system in the creation of a different system – *a system of change*. Though the public language of reform often relies on statements of liberatory possibility,¹³ KERA exists as a condition of institutional constraint, and such “educational change projects are typically premised on a functional logic of implementation and measurement” (Fenwick and Edwards 101). This section follows the documents used in the implementation of reform program literacy goals and related methods of measurement.

KERA’s design relies on an “outcomes-based” system requiring the “development and implementation of a sophisticated program of assessing student learning” (9). In terms of associations, KERA aligns with a specific assessment model, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as a way of engaging the reform enterprise

¹³ Peter Applebome of *The New York Times* described KERA as “a state’s bold experiment” and “the most comprehensive overhaul of public education the nation has ever seen.”

with nationally recognized assessment techniques that will enable Kentucky to compare its assessment results with other states as well as national data (9). The NAEP model calls for multiple points of assessment across grades and content areas, but, for the purpose of this study, I focus on the initial identification of reading and writing goals and assessments in the 12th grade year as indicators of the literacy proficiencies necessary for successful transition from secondary school to college.

KERA presents an articulation of the reform program's ultimate aims in the form of six goals:

1. Schools must develop students' abilities to use basic communication and math skills for purposes and situations similar to what they encounter in life.
2. Schools must develop students' abilities to apply core concepts and principles from mathematics, the sciences, social studies and practical living studies to situations and problems similar to what they will encounter in life.
3. Schools must develop students' abilities to become self-sufficient individuals.
4. Schools must develop students' abilities to become responsible members of families, work group or communities.
5. Schools must develop students' abilities to think and solve problems both in school situations and in a variety of situations similar to what they will encounter in life.

6. School must develop students' abilities to connect and integrate experiences and new knowledge with what they have previously learned and build on past learning experiences to acquire new information through various sources (KRS 158.6451.3)

Here, a policy text functions to translate “the interests of the multiple into the singular,” refining the reform enterprise into seemingly simple and usable directives (Fenwick and Edwards 132). Kentucky’s Learning Goals represent the absolute articulations of Kentucky’s reform project, and these goals are explicitly purposed with providing the legally-binding basis for the generation of all documents related to constructions of literacy for college readiness.¹⁴

Though Kentucky’s Learning Goals document the scope and intention of KERA, these goals provide limited guidance in matters of reform implementation. The goals, by design, require the almost immediate generation of supplemental interpretation in order to make them useful within assessment contexts. Correspondingly, the initial translation of Kentucky’s Learning Goals is inspired not by the creation of pedagogical tools but rather out of the legislated imperative to establish a system of accountability and assessment embedded in KERA. Consequently, The Council on School Performance Standards (CSPS) “translated these goals into measurable, or testable terms” resulting in the generation of the Learner Outcomes, the first systematic translation of reform goals into representations of what students should be able to do as a result of reform implementation (*KERA Briefing Notebook*, “Accountability”). Fenwick and Edwards argue that “reforms

¹⁴ Kentucky’s Learning Goals persist as the foundation for conceptions of literacy for college readiness throughout various policy shifts that I will take up in later chapters.

and contexts mutually create each other” (103). With attention to the reflexivity of reform, I emphasize CSPA’s statement in an effort to recognize the institutional conditions of KERA’s literacy model from its inception. In an attempt at linear alignment, the reform goals and the related system of accountability and assessment serve to set the intended boundaries of literacy reform design.

Because the processes of alignment as conversions of policy goals into assessments are necessary for the realization of the literacy reform design, I believe it is important to recognize the mechanisms functioning as the various “go-betweens” in the network in the form of intermediaries and mediators. The distinction between intermediaries and mediators is vital to the work of describing the ways that meaning is made and circulated in a network. According to Latour, intermediaries serve as transporters of singular meaning:

An intermediary, in my vocabulary, is what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs.

For all practical purposes, an intermediary can be taken not only as a black box, but also as a black box counting for one, even if it is internally made of many parts. (39)

Policy, as an intermediary for legislation, attempts to construct a closed system of operations in an effort to minimize variability of interpretation. According to the intentions of the alignment program, the texts generated to align goals with assessments are presented as intermediaries, “passive vessels simply carrying the force or meaning of something else that is truly active or determinate” (McGee 35). Intermediaries “function

more like a stabilized black box” allowing for the circulation of “a force or meaning without transforming it” (Fenwick and Edwards 117). As intermediaries, both human and non-human actors represent equivalency rather than possible variability, and the apparent fixedness of intermediaries in the reform design allows for easy passage between goals and assessments. Intermediaries are the reliable, non-agentive messengers in the network.

Of course, texts, regardless of their intended function, are complex and not-always-predictable entities. In contrast to intermediaries, mediators “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” and, unlike intermediaries, mediators introduce variability and multiplicity into the network of relations. Mediators “actively work upon events and entities” and “can be tinkered with, adapted, interpreted, and redirected” (Fenwick and Edwards 117). Rather than counted as just one, mediators “might count for one, for nothing, for several, or for infinity” as “their input is never a good predictor of their output” (Latour 39). In an effort to limit their interpretative capacity, texts of alignment defining literacy for college readiness are black-boxed as *intermediaries* within policy, as the alignment itself relies on a smooth “rolling out” of legislation into instructional instruments and related assessments (Fenwick and Edwards 102). In spite of the intentions of clarity and containment promised in such linear models, an analysis of the translations of documents in the broader network reveals that even sanctioned compositions function as mediators representing various interpretations and allegiances in the network. Consequently, reform design presents texts of alignments as intermediaries seamlessly transferring meaning,

but these documents actually operate as mediators circulating variability and instability in the network of relations.

With attention to the intermediaries and mediators in processes of alignment, the KERA goals and outcomes are translated into mediational compositions in an effort to provide additional explanation and clarification for the program goals and associated outcomes. In July 1994, the Learner Outcomes are further translated (and renamed) through administrative regulation in the creation of the Academic Expectations (703 KAR 4:060). For purposes of tracking literacy for college readiness within the reform network, the statement of Academic Expectations identifies the particular project of KERA as a program of *preparedness*. With the adoption of the Academic Expectations, Kentucky's Learning Goals are formally fused to specific types of student-based performance. This new document, called "Kentucky's Learning Goals and Academic Expectations: What Kentucky High School Graduates Should Know and Be Able To Do as They Exit High School" (KLGAE),¹⁵ is significant for this study because it functions as a codified articulation of the *exit literacies* required of students graduating from high school. Though the document does not include "literacy" or "college readiness"¹⁶ as defined terms, this text establishes an explicit link between KERA's goals and the space of literacy beyond secondary school.

The ambiguity of KERA's Learning Goals leaves room for translation into literacy outcomes depending on use and context, yet English/Language Arts is located almost

¹⁵ "Kentucky's Learning Goals and Academic Expectations: What Kentucky High School Graduates Should Know and Be Able To Do as They Exit High School" is attached hereto as Appendix A.

¹⁶ I will take up the use of the term "college readiness" as a defined term in Chapter 3.

singularly in Goal 1 with definitions of capacities in “basic communication.” Through the unpacking of Goal 1, basic communication is identified in six related Academic

Expectations:

- 1.2 Students make sense of the variety of materials they read.
- 1.3 Students make sense of the various things they observe.
- 1.4 Students make sense of the various message to which they listen.
- 1.11 Students write using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.
- 1.12 Students speak using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes. (2)¹⁷

The identification of these expectations sets the foundation for assessment in the Kentucky Instructional Information System (KIRIS). As KERA’s accountability scheme, KIRIS outlines the performance assessments serving as text-based measurement of KLGAE. Performance assessments are defined evaluations focused “not only on what student should know, but also on what they can do with what they know and in more realistic situations or contexts” (Matthews x). In KIRIS , the original assessment for literacy in the 12th grade included multiple-choice and open response questions (reading),

¹⁷ Academic Expectation 1.1 (Students use reference tools such as dictionaries, almanacs, encyclopedias, and computer reference programs and research tools such as interviews and surveys to find information they need to meet specific demands, explore interests, or solve specific problems) and Academic Expectation 1.16 (Students use computers and other kinds of technology to collect, organize, and communicate information and ideas) are both “literacy-esque” goals related to research and digital proficiencies, but neither cited as literacy-specific expectations within the initial assessment structure.

on-demand writing prompts (writing), and the writing portfolio (writing). The set of assessment tools used to measure literacy in the 12th grade is subject to multiple revisions as the KERA initiative is implemented and reviewed. Nonetheless, the 12th grade portfolio remains fairly stable as an assessment of exit literacies of literacy for college readiness throughout KERA's implementation, accountability evaluation, and subsequent modifications to the assessment structure.

In 1994, KDE published "Transitional Course Outline: English IV" as a sanctioned text representing the alignment of KLGAE to KIRIS. This reference document includes unit themes, exemplar texts, and literacy outcomes for course implementation as well as sample KIRIS literacy assessments for 12th grade. Quite expectedly, the course cites Goal 1 and corresponding outcomes for reading (1.2), observing (1.3), listening (1.4), writing (1.11), and speaking (1.12) and lists course outcomes as translations and alignments with KLGAE and KIRIS:

1. Using the writing process, students write in a variety of modes (expressive, transactive, imaginative) and forms (letters, stories, poems, plays) to a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes. These purposes include, but should not be limited to, those of portfolio assessment: personal narrative; imaginative pieces; predicting an outcome; defending a position; solving a problem; analyzing or evaluating a situation, person, place, or thing; explaining a process or concept; drawing a conclusion; and creating a model.

2. Students construct meaning, elaborate, and respond critically to a variety of types of print materials (literary, informational, practical, persuasive). They apply a variety of strategies (e.g., predicting, questioning, summarizing, previewing) appropriate to the purpose to construct meaning.
3. Students form and defend ideas by connecting new observations with prior knowledge/ experiences.
4. Students construct meaning and listen for a variety of purposes (information, persuasion, imagination).
5. Students speak to a variety of audiences for a variety of purposes (imagination, information, persuasion) in informal and formal situations.
6. Students analyze the historical, cultural, and aesthetic significance of British and/or world literature. (4)

The course outline, “based on publications from professional organizations such as the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English,” illustrates some of the initial affiliations serving as authoritative foundation for KERA’s literacy program for 12th grade (7). Contained within these outcomes is the strange multiplicity of the English IV course in the context of KERA. Citing these outcomes as indicators of literacy for postsecondary¹⁸ readiness, the course as a representation of

¹⁸ This term is listed in multiple across policy documents (postsecondary; post secondary; postsecondary). For the sake of clarity and uniformity, I use “postsecondary” throughout this dissertation.

successful transition to life after high school requires experience in the analysis of canonical literary texts,¹⁹ in use of writing process, and in awareness of the features of different modes of discourse, though the word “discourse” is never used. Similarly, the phrase “rhetorical modes” is not present in the document.

I wish to recognize the absence of the term “discourse” within the course outcomes because the exclusion of this word in a pedagogical text purposed with outlining exemplary course design for 12th grade English suggests a certain *situatedness* of composition scholarship within KERA’s transition program. Specifically, a closer reading of the course’s structural language reveals that composition scholarship seems to serve as the authoritative foundation of the course outcomes, but such relations of authority are not made explicit. In historicizing the course in conversations related to disciplinarity and pedagogy (Chiseri-Strater; Ede and Lunsford; Flower; Haraway and Brossard) and the identity of the field of composition (Crowley; Faigley; Miller; North), the lack of discourse’s use reflects a selective appropriation of composition scholarship without theoretical and pedagogical consideration of its use as a knowledge source²⁰ for constructions of literacy for college readiness. The language of the course outcomes displays a number of obvious alignments with composition scholarship as engagements with pedagogical topics, but the reluctance to include discourse (replaced instead with

¹⁹ A sample unit called “Birth and Death” includes the following: John Donne's "Holy Sonnet 10" (Poem); Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale" (Short Story); Doris Lessing's "A Sunrise on the Veld" (Short Story); Marc Talbot's Dead Birds Singing (Novel); Leo Tolstoy's "What Men Live By" (Short Story); Elie Wiesel's Night (Autobiography); news magazines; obituaries; advertisements. Just as a matter of interest, obituaries are listed as source texts in another unit called “Endings and Beginnings.” (7)

²⁰ Chapter 3 of this dissertation takes up knowledge creation and its circulation in matters of literacy for college readiness. The location of composition scholarship as sources of foundational authority for definitions of literacy is addressed in detail in that chapter.

“writing” singularly) with its corresponding citations of research in composition suggests a sort of fracture between secondary and postsecondary representations of literacy for college readiness. Such incomplete or limited alignments hint at the competing locations of knowledge creation. Perhaps discourse was left out because the term was perceived as too obscure for this pedagogical context – a viable possibility considering that other, seemingly more approachable elements of composition are present throughout the outcomes.

Such implied and incomplete engagements are probably best demonstrated in the ways that texts themselves are described relative to their function in the stated outcome and the sources of text-based authority that these descriptions introduce into the network of relations. The texts that students read are identified as “types of print materials” categorized as “literary, informational, practical, persuasive,” which seems to echo (though not exactly align with) the texts types that James Kinneavy describes in *Theory of Discourse*. In contrast, student-produced texts are described as “modes,” categorized as “expressive, transactive, imaginative” in apparent alignment with the classification system developed and utilized by James Britton and colleagues in *The Development of Writing Abilities*. Britton’s term “transactional” is replaced with the (rather unusual) “transactive,”²¹ and “poetic” becomes “imaginative.” Additionally, purposes of “imagination, information, persuasion” relate to texts both spoken and heard.²² As a

²¹ Though the word “transactive” is present in documents related to KERA and its writing program, I have been unable to locate the origin of this word and the rationale for using the term “transactive” instead of Britton’s “transactional.”

²² I use the term “text” here in its functional Derridean, and I make this note only because the identification of spoken/heard items as texts in the particular context of the

composition researcher, I find the adoption of the multiple systems of classification for texts complicates the purposes and associated products of the 12th grade English course. The presence of these different text identifiers in the outcomes makes the intentions of the course uncertain and opaque. The sophistication required to parse the distinctions among these text types suggests that their inclusion represents an all-in adoption of various authoritative sources (a sort of pedagogical hedging of bets) rather than a functional, linear translation of goals into outcomes.

Additionally, the inclusion of writing process *as an outcome* introduces process into the assessment archive and the system of accountability. The inclusion of a process model in the 12th grade course simultaneously brings proponents of process such as Peter Elbow (*Writing without Teachers*), Janet Emig (*The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*; “Writing as a Mode of Learning”) and Donald Murray (“Teach Writing as a Process Not Product”) into the network of relations defining literacy even as the occasion for its inclusion is an element in the system of surveillance for reform accountability. Shelby Wolf and Monette McIver (“Kentucky State Reform for Exemplary Teachers of Writing”) and Ken Jones and Betty Lou Whitford (“Kentucky’s Conflicting Reform Principles: High-Stakes School Accountability and Student Performance Assessment”) both highlight the contradictions embedded in efforts to reconcile literacy reform goals with accountability models. Accordingly, process within the 12th grade course highlights tensions of interpretation in the network particular to composition. Sharon Crowley

development of Kentucky’s literacy reform program might have seemed (and may still seem) peculiar and possibly controversial.

describes the competing agendas of emancipatory possibility and institutional expectation simultaneously informing process:

Theorists of process constructed a self-directed student who would take control of his or her own writing process; this projected student subjectivity was to replace the docile, rule-bound, grammar-anxious student subjectivity produced by current-traditional instruction. The instructional paradox, of course is that students are forced to take the class in which they are to be constructed as self-directed writers. (217)

Though Crowley problematizes process as “the doctrine of the very establishment it once critiqued,” Crowley’s analysis as an interrogation of process reflects emerging uncertainties about the work of composition and its associations with the first-year composition course (214). Within the context of the 12th grade course, these critiques of process within KIRIS reveal the uncertainty of definitions as reform goals are translated and adapted into assessment instruments. In compliance with accountability, the features of process are modified and become multiple and contradictory. Consequently, process, in its hybridity within the network, is both “growing” (as Elbow asserts) and static. As it is “historically shaped by the current of decentralizing, centrifugal forces,” process becomes a series of performance events as well as a document (Bakhtin 273). Evidencing Foucault’s “insistence on discontinuities,” these tensions of interpretation related to process reveal the expansion of the network through contradiction as well as attempted control (*Archeology* 187).

Additionally, the purposes of writing under Course Outcome 1 exactly correspond to the content requirements of the KIRIS Writing Portfolio Assessment. Though the outcome states that writing purposes should not be limited to those associated with the assessment portfolio, the repeated references to such purposes obviously constrains the interpretation of appropriate writing tasks for the 12th grade course as a site of focused accountability and assessment. Of equal interest is the ambiguity of these purposes. Prompt stems such as “defend a position” and “analyze or evaluate a situation, person, place, or thing” contain almost unlimited interpretative potential. For example, George Hillocks argues that, according to the portfolio content requirements, academic writing qualifies as a legitimate form in the assessment portfolio (*The Testing Trap* 188). The apparent paradox of the outcome as a list of named purposes framed by the context of assessment yet not tied to definitive genres or writing situations creates an exigency for the generation of additional documents of interpretation and alignment. Consequently, KDE provides *Transformations: Kentucky’s Curriculum Framework* as textual reference operating as a source of clarification and elaboration for KERA’s literacy goals for the transition out of high school, and this document (with its numerous text-based engagements) locates (or, perhaps, *dislocates*) literacy for college readiness in Kentucky’s reform program.

Traversing the Spaces Between: *Transformations* and the Translations of Goals and Outcomes into a Model Curriculum

When documenting the features of change, Foucault argues that “we must define precisely what these changes consist of: that is, substitute for an undifferentiated

reference to *change* – which is both a general container for all events and the abstract principle of their succession – *the analysis of transformations*” (*Archeology* 172).

Focusing on uncertainties related to definitions of literacy for college readiness within KERA’s English/Language Arts curriculum, this section turns to *Transformations: Kentucky’s Curriculum Framework* as a document purposed with providing explanation, justification, and authoritative support for the reform enterprise. Published in 1995, *Transformations* functions as a vital node for the broader network of texts activated and rejected in curricular change.

According to KERA, the implementation of locally-directed curriculum is presented as vital for the realization of the learning goals, and a state-mandated curriculum is not part of the KERA project (KERA i). Nonetheless, further translation of KLGAE takes the form of a curriculum framework, *a model* of model curriculum – a usable preface to local curriculum construction. As a point of connection in the translation of legislation into functional, pedagogical tools, *Transformations* evidences the inundation of authoritative source texts operating to legitimize the project of literacy with KERA. Though *Transformations* is not presented as a prescribed curriculum but rather a guiding curriculum framework, this document functions to give specific shape and meaning to the reform in terms of classroom practice, lesson design, and the generation of student artifacts. Though not a curriculum *per se*, *Transformations* endorses select pedagogical approaches (the use of a Whole Language approach to reading, for example) and applications for all areas of reform. The assemblage of literacy made in the

name of innovation contains various strands of composition²³ (writing across the curriculum and portfolio assessment among them), but Fenwick and Edwards assert that curriculum formation reflects intentional presences and absences in the network:

Curriculum-making is multiple because the prescribed curriculum mobilizes different and often conflicting networks. Difference and multiplicity in the curriculum is therefore to be expected and described rather than identified as problematic and explained (away). This raises important educational questions about the status and equivalence of learning outcomes within a standardized curriculum and the type and amount of work that is necessary to exclude multiplicity in the name of standardization. (68)

Transformations evidences the alignments as well as refusals and deletions in the curriculum framework, and the following sections recognize these features of the network in equal measure.

Because *Transformations* attempts comprehensiveness in an effort to shore up ambiguities related to reform implementation, numerous engagements are contained within and enabled by its two dense volumes and over 500 pages of text.

Standards-Based Education: Locating Literacy in Professional Policy

A vital feature of KERA's implementation is a standards-based educational design for literacy, and "Standards-Based Education" in *Transformations* makes use of multiple sources of professional authority in an effort to legitimize the reform project for literacy (2.6-9):

²³ I discuss alignments with composition scholarship in *Transformations* later in this chapter.

The transformation of schools envisioned by KERA is founded on a standards-based approach to education. This requires teachers to decide before they design the instructional unit what they want their students to know and do at its conclusion. Unit standards include Kentucky’s learning goals and academic expectations, critical content, parameters²⁴, and national standards” (2.66).

Bringing national literacy standards into the reform network, *Transformations* enlists the authority of standards-based compositions related to professional organizations including the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). In this section, I focus on three particular documents – the *Standards for the English Language Arts* (SELA),²⁵ *Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing*, and “Teaching Composition: A Position Statement” – as evidence of KERA’s engagements with standards-based composition policy as a matter of authoritative foundation and professional judgement. Interestingly, the standards-based texts for literacy in *Transformations* do not really function as representations of instructional standards but rather as connections to professional credibility.

SELA as a model for standards-based education is adopted before its actual publication in 1996. Additionally, Under Goal 2 (Apply Core Concepts and Principles)

²⁴ Parameters refer to local and district judgments regarding the design and implementation of curriculum.

²⁵ For as standards-based text not referenced in *Transformations* but related to NCTE positions regarding literacy at KERA’s inception, see *The English Coalition Conference: Democracy through Language*.

for Language Arts, *Transformations* does not outline the foundations of literacy attached to KERA but rather defaults to the anticipated publication of the SELA:

The International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Center for the Study of Reading have united efforts to develop national standards for reading, language arts, and English in the United States. These standards will guide teachers as they help students develop literacy, language abilities, critical thinking skills, and creative problem-solving strategies. Scheduled for completion in 1995, the standards will include a framework for teaching and learning with vignettes of classroom practice. (*Transformations* 1.40)

Though the SELA document is in draft form²⁶ at the publication date of *Transformations*, the adoption of these standards in anticipation of publication aligns KERA's literacy goals with IRA and NCTE. The "Language Arts" section of *Transformations* directly quotes Janet Emig, identified as Chair for the Standards Project for English Language Arts: "Only through learning to speak, listen, read, and write imaginatively and skillfully can any of us achieve personal fulfillment and the literacy necessary to participate...in a democratic society" (40). The inclusion of this quote not only aligns the KERA project with national professional (though as-yet-defined) articulations of literacy but also suggests a particular ideological/pedagogical orientation for definitions of literacy for college readiness. The reference to Emig carries the authority of NCTE but also suggests the endorsement of writing pedagogy privileging process over product. Additionally,

²⁶ *Transformations* states the expected publication date of the SELA document as 1995; the SELA is finalized in 1996.

even in draft form, SELA brings multiple connections from composition and literacy studies into the network as participants to the standards project. In addition to Janet Emig, Sheridan Blau, Yetta Goodman, Lester Faigley, and Gail Hawisher are listed as contributors to the SELA document.²⁷

Transformations also cites the CCCC's *Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing*. This inclusion is a curious one because unlike the SELA, this standards document does not engage with pedagogical approaches or matters of content for writing instruction but rather functions as a labor document outlining the just and equitable practices for the employment of writing instructors. Though the presence of this document from CCCC provides a connection between secondary and postsecondary representations of writing, the text leaves open the literacies privileged in college composition. Additionally, the use of the term "postsecondary" complicates definitions of writing after high school. Other than its use to describe teaching in the title and introduction, the word "postsecondary" is used exclusively to describe "institutions" (listed as 2-year colleges or 4-year colleges and universities). It seems that "postsecondary" is employed to consolidate community college, college, and university sites of writing into one term, but the absence of the term "college composition" in a document apparently about teaching college composition does suggest conscious avoidance. In this statement published by CCCC's Executive Committee, "college composition" and "college writing" are never used to describe the type of work done by

²⁷ As a final note on SELA, I think it is important to recognize that Apple Computer, Inc. provided computers for the project.

writing instructors. Though I know that I am making heavy weather of the term “postsecondary” in this standards document, I think it is important to note that a CompPile search reveals very limited use of “postsecondary,” and its use is almost exclusively related to *writing assessment*. Interestingly, “A Selected Bibliography on Postsecondary Writing Assessment, 1979-1991,” published in *College Composition and Communication* in 1992, lists no texts with “postsecondary” in the title but multiple texts include “college writing.” Though theoretically purposed with providing clarification and expansion regarding definitions of writing, this document functions as an ambivalent actor in matters related to literacy for college readiness within the reform network.

The apparent shift in function of the CCCC’s *Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing* represents an instance. In “Literacy, Reification, and the Dynamics of Social Interaction,” David Barton and Mary Hamilton describe this application of a text for cross purposes as “recontextualization” in the network (23). *Transformations* and the standards-based reform enterprise appropriates the statement “to immediate and different purposes” as an object or artifact carrying (as the title of the document implies) the pedagogical standards for college writing and creating a link between CCCC and the reform project (Barton and Hamilton 31).

Another document cited in *Transformations*, “Teaching Composition: A Position Statement,” functions more directly as a standards-based reference for definitions of literacy. Though the term “composition” is used seventeen times in *Transformations* (primarily in reference to music, health, and science), the position statement represents the only instance in which the term is used to describe writing. Published by NCTE’s

Committee on Composition, the statement sets standards for writing according to multiple categories. “The Act of Writing” identifies writing with a process model in which product is recognized but deemphasized:

The act of writing is accomplished through a process in which the writer imagines the audience, sets goals, develops ideas, produces notes, drafts, and a revised text, and edits to meet the audience's expectations. As the process unfolds, the writer may turn to any one of these activities at any time. We can teach students to write more effectively by encouraging them to make full use of the many activities that comprise the act of writing, not by focusing only on the final written product and its strengths and weaknesses.

Under “Scenes of Writing,” the classroom is recognized as a particular site of writing and the teacher as an appropriate audience for writing:

In the classroom where writing is especially valued, students should be guided through the writing process; encouraged to write for themselves and for other students, as well as for the teacher; and urged to make use of writing as a mode of learning, as well as a means of reporting on what has been learned. The classroom where writing is especially valued should be a place where students will develop the full range of their composing powers. This classroom can also be the scene for learning in many academic areas, not only English.

Here, the classroom and English as an academic area are legitimized as contexts for writing, but these scenes are situated according to an expanded view of writing's use in

the classroom. Following Elbow and Emig, writing is presented as a “mode of learning” rather than simply as a method for documenting what is learned. Though this section also introduces the possibility of writing across the curriculum, the classroom remains the primary place of writing. With attention to audience and writing-as-product, the described scenes of writing do not extend specifically to “writing for publication.” As a reference for standards of writing practice, this section hints at tensions between process pedagogy and the requirements of “authentic” published²⁸ writing in KERA’s system of accountability.

Turning to foundations of authority in the standards, “The Teaching of Writing” calls for engagements with composition scholarship (“our knowledge”) including “the nature of the composing process; the relationship between reading and writing; the functions of writing in the world of work; the value of the classical rhetorical tradition; and more.” This alignment with the work of composition as a field not only establishes links between secondary and postsecondary constructions of composition through particular strands of scholarship but also situates composition scholarship as a (if not *the*) source of expertise for interpretations of literacy within the reform program.²⁹ Under a particularly Foucauldian subheading, “The Means of Writing Instruction,” provides the orientation for assessment of composition:

²⁸ The “Writing Process” section of *Transformations* cites the importance of publication as described in the *Kentucky Writing Portfolio Teacher’s Handbook*: “Publishing is a critical part of the writing process because it gives students a real purpose for their writing” (2.137).

²⁹ The basis of knowledge creation and use with regard to literacy for college readiness is the major focus of Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Epistemological tensions are present not only in jurisdiction over literacy for college readiness but also in the disciplinary identity of composition.

The evaluation of students' progress in writing should begin with the students' own written work. Writing ability cannot be adequately assessed by tests and other formal evaluation alone. Students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their writing ability in work aimed at various purposes. Students should also be encouraged to develop the critical ability to evaluate their own work, so they can become effective, independent writers in the world beyond school.

Here, a standard of self-assessment provides a vital link between practices of self-reflection, and formal evaluation. This standard of self-assessment introduces the possibility of a reflective writing piece serving as its own text-based measure of student progress in which the student's own assessment is, in fact, assessed within the system of accountability. Accordingly, the required contents for the KIRIS Writing Portfolio Assessment includes the Letter to the Reviewer, described as "a letter written by the student analyzing himself/herself as a writer and reflecting on the pieces in the portfolio" (*Kentucky Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook*, 1992).

Literacy as Readiness: Transformations and the Transition to Postsecondary Spaces

To this point I have traced alignments in constructions of literacy for college readiness with specific attention to descriptions of *literacy*. Shifting attention to the contexts beyond high school, this section analyzes how *college readiness* is (or is not) defined within Kentucky's reform design for transition after graduation from high school. In connection with KERA, Kentucky Registered Statute (KRS) 158.645 states that "schools should be measured on the proportion of students who make a successful

transition to work, postsecondary education, and the military,” and this feature of KERA called “Transition to Adult Life” is part of the KIRIS accountability for schools (*Transformations* 1.201). Within the system of accountability, the purpose of secondary school is equipping students with the “knowledge and skills necessary for making successful transitions to college, technical school, military service, and/or work” (*Transformations* 1.202). Though KRS 158.645 and *Transformations* recognize the function of secondary school as a place of preparation for postsecondary contexts, no distinction is made among these multiple possible sites after high school. Specifically, the literacies for postsecondary placement are lumped under the category “Vocational Studies for High School” (*Transformations* 1.202). Vocational studies connect with “three academic expectations: career path options, transition skills, and postsecondary opportunities search,” evidencing what “all students should know and be able to do to make successful transitions *from school* to enriched lives *in careers*” (1.201; my emphasis). The phrasing of this statement reflects what I interpret as the absence of college as a unique postsecondary space. The implication is the conflation of college readiness literacies with literacies required of careers in the military or careers in any other unspecified area. This lack of specificity and distinction for transition to college (coupled with the apparent privileging of career contexts) creates a relation of ambivalence between the context of “college” and Kentucky’s reform policy documents. As a result the precise identification of literacy for college readiness is left unidentified, “the direction of action” left “undecidable and unpredictable” (Fenwick 114).

Though *Transformations* does not include any references to the literacies specific to the college context, the language throughout the document does enlist a refrain of “real world” competencies for postsecondary preparedness, and variations on the word “real” are used nearly 200 times in *Transformations* to describe both the contexts for literacy after high school and the types of literacy performances attached to these contexts (2.105). The “Language Arts” section of *Transformations* establishes the literacy aims for the reform project as the “the use of language for real, worthwhile purposes” (1.39). *Transformations* also states that “the academic expectations for language arts – reading, listening, observing, writing, and speaking – are included in Learning Goal 1 to emphasize the application of communication skills in situations similar to real life” (*Transformations* 1.40). *Transformations* lists possible job roles and related performance events/exhibitions (archaeologist - determine the culture or time frame of a mystery artifact or person; policy analyst - predict the future in a country being studied), but the methods of communication for these tasks are not listed (2.105). Through the lens of composition scholarship on discourse communities, the performance events attached to the listed occupations attempt to represent literacy without consideration of the communicative means necessary to engage effectively with specific discourse communities (Bazerman; Geisler; Porter). The absence of these critical considerations of the mediational means necessary to introduce students to discourse-specific literacies in pursuit of careers (as necessarily takes place in the college context) begins the indication that the *Transformations* document develops a representation of literacy after high school

as practices and performances connected directly with professional (rather than academic) spaces.

Interestingly, the types of performance artifacts cited in *Transformations* evidencing “real world” writing seem to present approximations of professional texts. In the deconstruction of Goal 1 with Academic Expectation 1.11 (Writing) for high school, *Transformations* lists the writing prompts including “Write a handbook, survival manual, or books of tips for high school students to sell to middle school students,” “Construct an operations manual for a piece of equipment (e.g., lawn mower, blender, wheel chair),” and “Write slogans to encourage classmates to follow school safety rules,” supporting a vocational interpretation of the KERA literacy goals and outcomes (1.27). With attention to composition pedagogy and sites of writing, this particular approach to the transition between secondary school and college in literacy instruction posits a view of college readiness that erases academic discourse from Moffett’s “universe of discourse” and college from Laurer, et al’s *Four Worlds of Writing*. Instead, *Transformations* orients literacy in the reform network along a path that combines “educational and economic aims” into what Jory Brass describes in “English, Literacy and Neoliberal Policies: Mapping a Contested Moment in the United States” as a shared project in “human capital development” in which education is understood “as central to individual social mobility, to job creation, and to U.S. corporations’ abilities to compete in the global economy (119). Though the stated goals of *Transformations* relate to the design of local literacy

curriculum, the exemplar writing prompts contextualizes literacy in the global, skills-based market.³⁰

An insistence on authentic literacy within the context of educational reform enacted through schools complicates the legitimacy of literacy acts and artifacts for the transition out of secondary school. Like the paradox of process, “real world” writing *in school* presents similar contradictions and conflicted agendas regarding the limits of real literacy for readiness. In “Composition and the Circulation of Writing” John Trimbur argues that the policy-based endorsement of authentic or “real world” writing (what he calls “public writing”) sets up a false dichotomy between “schooled and ‘real’” writing that suggests “student writing is not otherwise part of the ‘real world’” (195). Similarly, in “The Context of the Classroom,” Les Perelman brings into question the *authenticity* of “real world” writing “within the institutional context of the classroom”:

We read student papers not to be informed or entertained, but to assess how well students perform certain kinds of discourse acts, such as describing, reporting, or arguing. The reaction of the audience to a student’s paper, then, is governed by the audience’s role as a teacher and the existence of certain explicit and implicit rules within pedagogical institutions. (472)

Student texts generated in the context of the reform accountability system are not made to circulate in the world outside of school, and these texts are assessed by teachers rather than the audiences imaged in the “real world” writing prompts. Through the system of

³⁰ I take up the place of neoliberal capitalism, expertise, and the legitimacy of knowledge (Giroux; Harvey; Ohmann;) in matters of literacy for college readiness in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

assessment, these purportedly functional compositions become performances in pretense rather than active participation with the world beyond school. Additionally, in line with Foucault's "The Means of Correct Training," Perelman's recognition of institutional regulation in orientations of real literacy also suggests that the deletion of school (and corresponding deletion of college) as a site of particular literacies reflects an attempt at institutional invisibility for the reform program (187). The absence of school as a recognized and managed location of literacy allows the state's disciplinary power to disappear from view. David Bartholomae provides an expanded explanation for the seemingly intentional disappearance of school: "Why, we might ask, do we have such a strong desire to talk about schooling as though it didn't have to be schooling, a disciplinary process? I have started one answer – it is part of a general desire to erase the past and its traces from the present" ("Writing with Teachers" 68). In the revolution of KERA reform, Bartholomae's assertion seems quite in effect. In an effort to sever the present with the past, *Transformations* does not acknowledge representations of literacy in existence prior to reform implementation including, it seems, the academic literacies so often associated with the college composition classroom.

Situating Assessment of/for College Readiness: Strategic Alignments and Transformative Interpretations

Though *Transformations* offers interpretations of KERA's goals that appear to enact instances of institutional invisibility, the presence of assessment as the realization and materialization of program goals provides a very clear reminder of the ways that KIRIS accountability informs (if not dictates) definitions of literacy. In a subsection of

Transformations entitled “Curriculum and Assessment Connection” the vision of assessment related to the curriculum design is outlined:

Why assess? Historically, “assessment” of students has ranged from “blue-book” essay exams to standardized tests with “bubbles” which can be scanned and graded quickly. Appropriately or not, scores have been used for promoting and retaining students, giving end-of-course grades, evaluating teachers, tracking students, and comparing states. Test results have often been used for other purposes besides those for which they were designed. Therefore, we must ask ourselves: What is the purpose of student assessment? How do we assess students to accomplish that purpose?

Assessment has historically driven the curriculum. Particularly in the last few decades, standardized testing has been used to influence institutional goals, teacher performance, and program funding. This reliance on standardized assessment has been a major focus driving curriculum in our schools and dominating instruction in the classroom. If assessment has this kind of power, imagine what a changed form can do to influence teaching and learning in the classroom. If our purpose is to improve teaching and learning, assessment must be used to complement and measure what we really want students to learn and be able to do. We must closely align expectations for curriculum and assessment. (2.12)

Though KIRIS includes references to the use of multiple performance-based assessments of literacy³¹ as the basis for the accountability structure, the actual culminating assessments attached to transition from secondary study to postsecondary placement (college, military, or work) involve writing as the primary representation of literacy. Specifically, the student writing portfolio is the only KIRIS assessment used in the 12th grade year.³² The *KIRIS* assessment structure (as enacted through the Kentucky Writing Assessment Portfolio and corresponding Holistic Scoring Guide³³ for the 12th grade) activates an interpretation of literacy for college readiness aligned with certain strands of scholarship. Contained within *Transformations* are the various apparent (and sometimes partial) engagements with composition scholarship as the authoritative foundations for KERA's assessment of exit literacies for high school. In addition to process³⁴ (which I discussed earlier in this chapter), portfolios assessment with holistic scoring and writing across the curriculum represent evidence of alignment between KERA's literacy program and strands of composition research in writing *generally* and writing assessment

³¹ *Transformations* also aligns with researchers in the whole language approach to literacy. Though this particular association is significant for the identification of literacy scholarship seen as most authoritative within the reform design, the focus of analysis relates more to matters of writing particularly due to the fact that the single 12th grade literacy assessment is the writing portfolio. Nonetheless, whole language scholars (including Kenneth Goodman, Lois Bird, and Yetta Goodman) are vitally important in the ways authority and knowledge creation are theorized in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

³² Though the initial KIRIS design included expanded assessments (including reading assessments) at the 12th grade, the accountability system was revised to move all 12th grade KIRIS assessments other than the student writing portfolio to the 11th grade beginning with the 1994-95 school year. For details regarding the KIRIS assessment structure prior to the publication of *Transformations*, see Kentucky Department of Education. *Kentucky Instructional Results Information System: 1992-93 Technical Report*. Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Department of Education, 1993. Print.

³³ I take up the revision of the Kentucky Writing Portfolio and corresponding Teacher Handbook in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

³⁴ The "Writing Process" section of *Transformations* lists prewriting, drafting, conferencing, revising, editing, and publishing as the elements of the writing process (2.136-137).

specifically. I should also note that the authority of composition scholarship for assessment is often tied not just to particular studies but also to the professional and administrative affiliations of the researchers including committee and professional development work with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), The National Writing Project (NWP), and the Kentucky Writing Advisory Committee (KWAC). These strands of scholarship highlight not only the tensions between the selected threads and the institutional demands of KIRIS but also to recognize the absence of consensus in composition scholarship regarding definitions of literacy for college readiness.

In this section I identify examples of scholarship cited in *Transformations* as sources of authority for secondary literacy assessment with particular focus on the portfolio assessment. Though the portfolio assessment does provide an assessment method that represents a clear departure from the one-time administration of multiple choice assessment instruments, the portfolio is, by design, a study in dexterity, and its use for assessment relies on interpretations of portfolio-appropriate content. In *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom*, Kathleen Yancey describes portfolios as collections representing writing as sustained, diverse, and collaborative. With the expansiveness of Yancey's characterization, the portfolio has the capacity to introduce significant multiplicity into the network of relations for literacy assessment. As a compilation of genres and approaches to writing as evidence of literacy for the transition out of high school, the Kentucky writing assessment portfolio, in its intrinsic variability, provides interpretative possibilities for the privileging of certain literacies and pedagogies and the simultaneous

exclusion of others. In practical terms and for meaningful use, a portfolio cannot contain all possible representations of literacy for college readiness, so what, then should and does the portfolio contain? And who decides its contents?

Transformations lists *Writing Portfolios: A Bridge to Teaching to Assessment* by Sandra Murphy and Mary Ann Smith as an exemplar reference text for portfolio assessment implementation. With this text Murphy and Smith focus attention on the relationship between writing pedagogy and portfolio assessment. Both Murphy and Smith are described as former high school teachers turned writing researchers, and the study in their text represents work with teachers affiliated with the NWP in the use of portfolios as an innovative approach to assessment. Additionally, the text makes use of Elbow and Belanoff's "Portfolios as a Substitute for Proficiency Examinations" and "State University of New York, Stony Brook Portfolio-Based Evaluation Program" as well as Elbow's 1990 Keynote Address at the National Testing Network in Writing as points of alignment for the orientation of the portfolio design.³⁵ The connections with the NWP (California's Bay Area Writing Project, specifically) and Elbow reveal an interpretation of the portfolio assessment as a mechanism for growth and possibility that suggests the availability of a space outside institutional observation. Murphy and Smith assert: "We hope that no one will have the last word on portfolios. The promise of portfolios lies in their potential variations, in the willingness of the educational community to let them adapt to a range of teaching and learning situations" (83). Here, Murphy and Smith offer the portfolio as an assessment instrument, yet they do not

³⁵ The following quote by Elbow serves as the epigraph to a chapter: "Getting to know students helps me to like them better and like their writing better" (79).

problematize the use of the portfolio as the “last word” in a system of accountability evaluating 12th grade literacy.

Another textual link to writing assessment included in *Transformations* is *Creating Writers: Linking Assessment and Writing Instruction* Vicki Spandel and Richard Stiggins. Though Spandel and Stiggins are identified with K-12 education scholarship related to writing assessment rather than composition scholarship, the approaches to reflective assessment practices outlined in the text provide clear connections with composition research in assessment. [See Karen Greenberg’s review of the book in *College Composition and Communication* 41,4 (1990): 478-480. Greenberg states that the authors “deliberately omit the kinds of theoretical discussions, research reports, and technical analyses that many CCC readers have come to expect in a book on assessment” yet argues that the text is relevant to composition as a resource providing “practical suggestions for improving our ability to evaluate students’ writing”(480). In terms of defining literacy for college readiness, *Creating Writers* serves as a powerful foundational text for assessment. Specifically, Spandel and Stiggins outline the Six-Trait Writing method, an analytic model intended for use by teachers as a tool for providing meaningful feedback to student writers, based on the following criteria: ideas and content; organization; voice; word choice; sentence fluency; and conventions (57). Basing much of their research on the work of Elbow³⁶ and Murray, Spandel and Stiggins support an expanded view of writing assessment arguing that “a good scoring guide

³⁶ The pedagogical debates between David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow occurring at the same time as KERA’s adoption and implementation do not surface in the archive of Kentucky’s literacy reform design. Additionally, scholarship cited in *Transformations* relies heavily on Elbow’s work as a pedagogical foundation. Bartholomae is not mentioned in these texts.

should a tool for stretching and revising our thinking about writing, not for reducing and shrinking it” (15). In the context of Kentucky’s literacy assessment structure, an adapted Six-Trait model³⁷ forms the basis of the Kentucky’s Analytic Annotation Guide, a support document in the assessment portfolio presented as a way for teachers to isolate areas of “commendation” and “need” without the necessity of extensive written comments. The guide also works with the assessment portfolio’s Holistic Scoring Guide.

In addition to engaging with Elbow and Murray, Spandel and Stiggins also make a margin note citing Judith Langer and Arthur Applebee’s *How Writing Shapes Thinking* which brings conventional assessment methods into the conversation: “Thus new criteria need to be developed to evaluate more complex forms of student learning, and these criteria need to become part of traditional testing programs” (15). The inclusion of this particular citation reveals additional links in the network of relations, and the connection to Arthur Applebee brings another source of authority into play.

Arthur Applebee’s *Writing in the Secondary School: English and the Content Areas*, an empirical study of writing across the content areas published by NCTE in 1981 serves as a sort of textual matrix for the professional and scholarly foundations of literacy for college readiness in the KERA assessment structure. Applebee’s text in *Transformations* establishes connections between KERA’s literacy assessment design and the NAEP and foundational composition scholarship.³⁸ According to KERA, the NAEP

³⁷ The criteria for Kentucky’s Analytic Annotation Guide vary as adapted elements of the Spandel and Stiggins model. Some of the variations include the use of idea development/support as a single area in one guide and as two separate areas in another. Surface features (in apparent alignment with conventions) is also listed as mechanics.

³⁸ Applebee also served as long-time collaborator with the NWP. According to Applebee’s CV, his initial formal collaborative projects with NWP through regional affiliates began in the mid 1990s.

(as a national and credible system of assessment) functioned as the basis for the initial KIRIS assessments, and Arthur Applebee conducted extensive research and provided a number of reports for the NAEP.³⁹ In terms of authoritative foundations for the design of literacy for college readiness, the presence of Applebee's text as a "tiny conduit" in the network links James Britton's terms and concepts (including writing across the curriculum and the identification of discursive modes) to the 12th grade course overview and the contents of the 12th grade assessment portfolio (Latour 174). Applebee studied under Britton at the University of London, and *Writing in the Secondary School* and other studies conducted by Applebee include credited (though adapted) versions of Britton's pedagogical models including "audience and function in student writing, the nature of writing assignments," and "student literacy development in the secondary school" (Durst 384).

Though Applebee's research in *Transformations* links KERA's literacy assessment design for 12th grade to both the NAEP framework and Britton's scholarship, these engagements do not fully explain the approved contents of the 12th grade writing portfolio. Specifically, the rationale for the heavy emphasis on "real world" writing as defined in *Transformations* and the identification of certain *transactive* writing types (editorials, feature articles, letters, speeches) in the 12th grade English course is not explicitly linked to the texts cited as sources of authority. The sanctioned writing types for the 12th grade assessment portfolio represent not only intentional inclusion of particular types of writing but also the simultaneous exclusion of other types, including

³⁹ See "Directory of NAEP Publications." National Center for Education Statistics. U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1999. Print. See also Evans-Adris, Melissa. *Changing for Good: Sustaining School Improvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010. Print.

the academic essay (Fenwick and Edwards 151). Put simply, the structure of the writing portfolio assessment places teacher-as-audience constructions of writing often associated with academic writing *outside* of KERA's network of relations related to literacy in the transition to postsecondary spaces.

In *The Testing Trap: How State Writing Assessments Control Learning* George Hillocks asserts that Kentucky “did not have an explicit theory of writing” in the KERA design, and the collaborative work between secondary and college writing contexts through the various university-based extensions of the NWP provided the opportunities for portfolio discussion to take shape (Hillocks 44; 38-39). Turning attention to the local engagements between Kentucky policymakers and the university NWP affiliates, these professional engagements and related committee work establish local sources of authority for the construction of literacy policy. One group in particular, Kentucky's Writing Advisory Committee (KWAC), emerges as a powerful actor the reform network. The KWAC's interpretation of KIRIS assessment and accountability into the features of assessment portfolio represent a critical translation for definitions of literacy for college readiness related to KERA. Though I could not locate an individual document (or set of documents) reflecting the minutes of the KWAC meetings in my archival research, the conclusions I reach regarding participants, committee recommendations, and related policy decisions are the result of the analysis of peripheral documents including a published reflection on the KWAC's interpretation of the portfolio design and two academic studies regarding student perceptions of the effects of the Kentucky's 12th grade writing assessment portfolio of preparedness of college composition.

In “Ten Years of Puzzling about Audience Awareness” Starr Lewis, a teacher member of the KWAC writing in 2001 as the interim associate commissioner of for KDE’s Office of Academic and Professional Development, cites September 1991 as the date of the KWAC meeting that decided the structure of Kentucky’s writing assessment. Lewis lists the following objectives guiding the KWAC’s portfolio assessment design:

1. We wanted an assessment that would create the opportunity for students to do more writing throughout their education.
2. We wanted an assessment that would provide students the opportunity to write in a variety of forms for a variety of audiences and purposes.
3. We wanted an assessment that would provide opportunities for students to write in all content areas. (192)

Like KLGAE, the KWAC objectives are large and ambiguous, and the flexibility of these objectives allows the KWAC significant room for interpretation as the committee goals are translated into the portfolio assessment policy.

Various sources of authority for K-12 literacy education including teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels as well as Lewis identify the KWAC participants by role rather than by name, and one university representative is listed in the capacity of “university writing project director” (192). In 1991, Professor Gene O. Young simultaneously held positions as chair of the English department at Morehead State University (Morehead), director of the Morehead Writing Project, and member of the KWAC.⁴⁰ The presence of Morehead Professor Gene O. Young on the KWAC appears

⁴⁰ Professor Young’s CV is available through the Sam Houston State University’s website (http://www.shsu.edu/eng_www/faculty/). Professor has been on faculty at Sam Houston State University since 1992.

to have made a definitive impact on the construction of literacy for college readiness related to KERA's implementation and corresponding assessment design, as Young functioned as the only college composition representative⁴¹ on the committee.

Additionally, Lewis's description of Young's role on the KWAC singularly as a university writing project director orients his participation toward the work of the NWP and collaboration between university programs and secondary English teachers on the use of writing portfolios. Lewis's statements do not make it clear whether consensus on the contents of the 12th grade writing portfolio resulted from a "top-down" representation of college writing (with Morehead's college composition program serving as the model) or a "bottom-up" alignment (with KERA's accountability structure informing Morehead's conception of college writing). What Lewis does make clear is the KWAC's systematic authorization of particular forms of writing in the portfolio assessment. Lewis states that the committee "consciously decided not to include writing to demonstrate learning to the teacher, forms such as reports research papers, and academic essays" arguing that the rationale behind the portfolio was to "encourage new writing experiences" (192). The KWAC concluded that "strictly academic forms did not fit the criteria" outlined in the guiding objectives (193). Through the KWAC's translation of objectives into objects for observation, writing for publication including personal narratives, short stories, and editorials "becomes connected and mobilized into a network" while academic writing "remains different according to that network's terms and relations" (Fenwick and Edwards 104). With this interpretative move the KWAC disqualifies academic writing for

⁴¹ Young also served as Morehead's Writing Program Coordinator, 1987-89.

inclusion in the assessment portfolio; consequently, literacy for college readiness as articulated in policy and evaluated in the portfolio is defined as writing for an “authentic audience” (Lewis 193).

Though the KWAC’s interpretation of “real-world” of writing forms the institutional definition of literacy in the 12th grade assessment portfolio, other actors in the network of relations reflect uncertainty regarding literacy for college readiness. Studies of the effectiveness of the Kentucky Writing Portfolio in preparation of first-year composition reflect both alignments and tensions between the assessment portfolio design and the work of the college composition course. In “The Impact of KERA Writing Portfolios on First-Year College Writers” Kathryn Mincey argues that composition students at Morehead who completed the Kentucky writing portfolio were better prepared for college writing (particularly in use of the writing process) than those who did not complete a writing portfolio (3). Alternately, in “It Was the Best of Times. It Was a Waste of Time: University of Kentucky Students' Views of Writing under KERA” Elizabeth Spaulding and Gail Cummins document criticisms of the Kentucky writing portfolio in preparing students for college-level writing. Types of writing in the portfolio did not align with the writing completed in the composition course. As a vital point of distinction, the focus of the university writing program was “focused on argumentative writing that typically is on a topic assigned *by* the professor *for* the professor” (Lewis 195, emphasis added). Spaulding and Cummins describe the disparity between “genre requirements and performance standards” of the Kentucky writing portfolio and the expectations tied to college writing (focused on argumentation) at the University of Kentucky (186). George

Hillocks identifies the disconnect between writing assessments in Kentucky's 12th grade writing portfolio and the University of Kentucky composition classroom as an apparent difference in expectations about what college writing *is*:

If high school teachers accept the kind of support for claims offered in newspaper

editorials and feature stories, as they well might because they may teach those forms, and if their students use comparable support in their college writing, the students might well complain that high school writing did not prepare them for college. (*The Testing Trap* 187)

Hillock's statement emphasizes that compliance and alignment in one area of the network can (and often does) result in fracture in another area.

Another instance of such simultaneous alignment/disruption surfaces in secondary English teachers' interpretations of literacy for college readiness reflected in the generation of writing assignments and corresponding student artifacts included in the writing portfolio that reflect deviations from the accepted genres for transactive writing. In spite of the best efforts of the KWAC to identify and formalize assessment portfolio contents according to "authentic" genre categories such as letters and editorials, Lewis recognizes the "pervasiveness" of the essay form in the writing portfolio as an indication of teachers' translation of literacy for college readiness. Lewis relates the "amazing staying power" of the essay⁴² to teachers' associations of "this type of writing" with the requirements of the first-year composition course (194). Lewis also suggests that "perhaps teachers associate writing with college, and therefore they see the real purpose

⁴² Lewis refers to the 3.5 essay rather than the academic essay in this section, but various terms (3.5 essay, academic essay, five-paragraph theme) are used across composition and education scholarship in literacy to describe the form of writing in academic contexts.

of writing instruction as preparing students for college” (194). The presence of academic essays in the assessment portfolio exemplifies de Certeau’s “tactical trajectories” operating “according to their own criteria” rather than the measures of legitimacy outlined in literacy policy; consequently, the persistence of the essay in the assessment portfolio highlights tensions between the strategic methods of the KWAC policy and the compositions of deviation resulting from tactical pedagogies (35). These multiple orientations of literacy for college readiness display not only the lack of uniformity in definitions of literacy between high school and college spaces but also the absence of consensus in Kentucky 12th grade English classrooms or college composition programs, even between two state universities in Kentucky.

Additionally, KIRIS charges schools with the responsibility of scoring assessment portfolios, but the portfolio assessment is used as a measure of state accountability for individual schools rather than as a formal assessment of student literacy proficiencies in the transition from secondary to postsecondary contexts.⁴³ In KERA’s system of accountability for literacy, teachers’ scores on the writing portfolio are collected and reviewed as both a way of ascertaining the reliability of the portfolio as a measure of literacy as well as a means of tracking the compliance of teachers and schools with KIRIS regulations. Thus, the connection of the 12th grade writing portfolio to accountability and professional procedural normalization highlights the “emergence of an audit culture” in policies related to literacy for college readiness (Kamens 117). In

⁴³ The individual student scores for the student assessment portfolio are not tied, by policy, to graduation. According to individual school Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) policies, schools do incentivize students to produce proficient performances on portfolio and other assessments (including On-Demand Writing described in Chapter 2), but these practices are dictated by local administrative policies.

policy's capacity to create a sort of textual panopticon, Kentucky's accountability structure reveals the reach of literacy policy in the network as a space "traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing" in which "the state⁴⁴" watches schools watch teachers watching students create an archive of observable literacy objects (*Discipline and Punish* 198).

In the next chapter, I continue to follow the trajectories creating definitions of literacy for college readiness as Kentucky's 12th grade literacy assessment is evaluated and revised. Operating as powerful actors, both psychometric critique documents and federal educational policies are introduced into the network of relations in the years following KERA's initial implementation. These texts complicate representations of literacy for college readiness as Kentucky is forced to reconcile existing literacy policy and assessment with federal accountability. Additionally, the next chapter documents the shifts in locations of authority regarding literacy scholarship as both psychometric studies of assessment results and the passing of NCLB "reterritorializes" literacy as an area of scientific study. This relocation of literacy creates tensions between existing sources of authority for literacy (including composition scholarship and professional policies issued by NCTE and CCCC) and national policy initiatives operating to normalize the "unruly practices" attached to literacy (Hamilton 40). As new policy texts enter the network, the relations between documents increasingly reveal sites of attempted and incomplete alignments as well as ambivalences exposing the uncertainties of literacy policy at the transition from secondary to postsecondary spaces.

⁴⁴ In local conversations regarding compliance with Kentucky's education policy, "the state" typically refers to KDE.

CHAPTER 3
REVISING REVOLUTION: KENTUCKY’S LITERACY REFORM MEETS
NATIONAL LITERACY POLICY

If you wish to go out of your way and come back heavily equipped so as to force others to go out of *their* ways, the main problem to solve is that of *mobilization*. You have to and come back with the “things” if your moves are not to be wasted the “things” have to be able to withstand the return trip without withering away. Further requirements: the “things” you gathered and displaced have to be presentable all at once to those you want to convince and who did not go there. In sum, you have to invent objects which have the properties of being *mobile* but also *immutable*, *presentable*, *readable*, and *combinable* with one another.

Bruno Latour, “Visualization and Cognition:
Thinking with the Eyes and Hands” (7)

Literacy looms as one of the great engines of profit and competitive advantage in the twentieth century: a lubricant for consumer desire; a means of integrating corporate markets; a foundation for the deployment of weapons and other technology; a raw material in the mass production of information. As ordinary citizens have been compelled into these economies, their reading and writing skills have grown sharply more central to the everyday trade of information and goods as well as the pursuit of education, employment, civil rights, status. At the same time, people’s literate skills have grown vulnerable to unprecedented turbulence in their economic value, as conditions, forms, and standards of literacy achievement seem to shift with almost every new generation of learners. How are we to understand the vicissitudes of individual literacy development in relationship to the large-scale economic forces that set the routes and determine the worldly worth of that literacy?

Deborah Brandt, “The Sponsors of Literacy”

(166)

In “Visualization and Cognition: Thinking with the Eyes and Hands” Bruno

Latour presents the concept of *immutable mobiles*. The use of immutable mobiles

requires the invention of things that can move while remaining reliably unchanged, allowing for the possibility of “translation without corruption” even as these things traverse various areas of the network (7-8). By establishing an immutable mobile, particular conceptual representations are codified, made to “stand still” and remain unchanged in mass circulation. Applying Latour’s concept of immutable mobiles to matters of literacy for college readiness reveals that certain definitions of literacy take on durability in the network while other definitions are more precariously placed, characterized not by stability and mobility but rather by instability, isolation, and inertness.

How immutable mobiles take shape and ultimately circulate within the network of relations seems very much related to the sources of authority endorsing specific representations of literacy. These endorsements are perhaps best understood in terms of Deborah Brandt’s *sponsors of literacy*, described as “agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy--and gain advantage by it in some way” (166). Through sponsorship, some representations of literacy become immutable mobiles - at once sturdy and circulatable - while other representations exhibit both limited mobility and vulnerability to mutation and translation. Still other representations of literacy maintain stability but are essentially absent from the broader network of relations. These representations tend to remain in close proximity to their compositional origins and exert little or no force in

terms of network engagements. Consequently, in this chapter I track literacy sponsorship and the presence and absence of immutable mobiles in competing “economies of literacy,” as sponsors “fight for economic and ideological position” in the network (Brandt 167; Brandt 177). In “Situated, Relational and Practice-Oriented: The Actor-Network Theory Approach” Radhika Gorur considers who has “the authority to produce credible knowledge” and the function of “instruments” to enable some strands of knowledge while simultaneously denying others (91). Put simply, the most powerful sponsors of literacy operating in a network have extensive mediational capacity which is typically used to establish intermediaries in the circulation of immutable mobiles. Focusing on the epistemological tensions within and among network assemblages, this chapter addresses the systems of power at work in perpetuating definitions of literacy.

In this chapter I will analyze how knowledge about literacy for college readiness is made, measured, and circulated, in the network of relations. With a specific focus on the development of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky, this chapter addresses literacy policy during KERA’s second decade (approximately 1998-2008). In identifying the features of network assemblages (and corresponding multiplicity and ambivalence)⁴⁵ functioning to produce and circulate definitions of literacy for college readiness, I will place particular emphasis on the role of sponsorship in the codification of scientific and

⁴⁵ This use of the terms “network assemblages,” “multiplicity,” and ambivalence” corresponds with the definitions in Fenwick and Edwards as listed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

economic orientations of literacy. Through this chapter, I expand my analysis of the location of literacy for college readiness with an eye to the engagements and uncertainties related to research-based definitions of literacy in the network of relations. Relatedly, this chapter maps the various trajectories of literacy for college readiness as additional actors (including national literacy policy and corresponding literacy research) enter the network.

I should also note that establishing a clean and pristine immutable mobile in the network of relations is, realistically speaking, an impossible endeavor, particularly in a text-based network such as the one I am using as the basis of my analysis. Even the most powerful literacy sponsors are subject to the precarity of text. Nonetheless, the endorsement by powerful literacy sponsors does make certain texts less vulnerable to variability - the essential ideological position persists across textual translations. Immutable mobiles are these sponsored interpretations of texts that successfully move across the network largely unchanged.

In terms of trends of engagement and disengagement in the network, this chapter focuses on the assessment of literacy and corresponding methods and methodologies as representations of power in the network. My analysis of literacy policy and assessment across the network highlights the multiple authoritative foundations of knowledge making related to definitions of literacy for college readiness. In order to establish Kentucky as my specific site for analysis, this chapter first considers literacy for college readiness in KERA's revised assessment and accountability system, as KIRIS is replaced

with the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). This initial orientation places literacy within the formal context of assessment and accountability. In the second section of the chapter, I turn my attention to national literacy policy and Kentucky's implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This section provides an overview of efforts to align KERA's literacy goals with federal literacy regulation. The third section of this chapter considers conversations in rhetoric and composition scholarship related to literacy for college readiness. In this third section I trace the methodological shifts and tensions in composition research as a matter of participation in conversations related to literacy theory and pedagogy, assessment policy and scholarship, and the identity of the field. In the final section of this chapter, I look to Kentucky's primary literacy assessment policy documents, including the *Kentucky Writing Handbook*, in order to identify which literacy sponsors exert force in Kentucky's assessment and accountability structure. In this section I analyze how definitions of literacy for college readiness have traveled across the network, ultimately taking the form Kentucky's transitional literacy assessment instruments. I consider how sponsors of literacy mediate and translate representations of literacy in the generation of new texts operating in the network of relations. Specifically, I argue that the translation of state and national literacy policy documents into various curriculum and assessment texts evidences the variability of definitions of literacy for college readiness across the network. I also argue that the same literacy policy text, in encountering multiple mediators, serves as the authoritative foundation for multiple interpretative strands, evidencing the mutability typical of text in mobilization.

Reevaluating the System of Evaluation: The Transition from KIRIS to CATS

In order to track constructions of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky in KERA's second decade, I must first contextualize definitions of literacy within Kentucky's own systems of assessment and accountability. As I describe in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, multiple policy texts (including *Transformations* and the 1992 *Kentucky Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook*) function as the standards-based foundations of literacy measurement. Accordingly, the assessments resulting from interpretation and deconstruction of these standards-based documents represent the most usable overview of what counts as literacy for college readiness in Kentucky. Changes to the accountability system and corresponding assessment structure evidence the persistent precarity and mutability of standards interpreted into curriculum progression and corresponding assessments of literacy.

Critique of KIRIS's effectiveness focuses on the writing portfolio as a credible means for measuring literacy. In *Perceived Effects of the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS)* Koretz et al describe some of the problem areas and points of possible revision for the KIRIS accountability and assessment structure. With attention to literacy for college readiness, Koretz et al state that the apparent gains students made on Kentucky's assessments (including the writing portfolio, the primary means of measuring literacy for college readiness in the 12th grade) do not correlate with higher ACT⁴⁶ scores. In fact, ACT scores continued to stagnate and fall under KIRIS⁴⁷ (xv).

Additionally, Koretz et al reveal that the conflicted purposes of KIRIS, identifying "a

⁴⁶ The ACT is often cited as the touchstone assessment for measuring literacy for college readiness.

⁴⁷ ACT scores actually continued to decline under the KIRIS system, and this trend continues under the subsequent accountability system. I will take up alignments of Kentucky's definitions of literacy for college readiness with the ACT later in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

fundamental tension between assessment as an inducement to instructional reform and assessment as a measurement tool” (61; reference to Koretz et al, 1994a):

In the case of the Kentucky portfolios, the variation between classrooms and schools in teachers’ portfolios practices (including the number of times pieces were revised, the amount of time devoted to a typical piece, the level of difficulty of pieces in students’ portfolios, and the amount and type of assistance provided by teachers) potentially undercuts the validity of comparisons among schools, including comparisons among schools in growth over time. Thus, the same features that make portfolios instructionally desirable threaten their use for accountability. (61-62)

The variability of the writing portfolios (coupled with the absence of transfer of literacies measured on the ACT) highlights the apparent (and undesirable) mutability of portfolio assessment as a translation of Kentucky’s literacy standards. Through the lens of empirical research frameworks typically used in educational measurement, this mutability casts doubt on the KIRIS assessment structure as a simultaneously reliable and valid means of measuring literacy for college readiness. Though the KIRIS portfolios placed greater emphasis on student writing and the cultivation of writing and communication skills (an outcome that rhetoric and composition scholars in assessment would consider quite valid⁴⁸), the lack of reliability from school to school, portfolio to portfolio, compromises the legitimacy of the portfolio assessment for accountability and comparison to literacy measures outside of the immediate instructional context (Koretz,

⁴⁸ I discuss matters of assessment reliability and validity in rhetoric and composition research later in this chapter.

et al. 52). Put simply, the KIRIS portfolio is subject to scrutiny because the portfolio contents as translations of literacy for college readiness vary widely across Kentucky, from district to district and school to school. Consequently, the KIRIS portfolio evidences Bakhtin's centrifugal and centripetal forces at work. Though KIRIS is implemented as a centripetal system operating to stabilize representations of literacy⁴⁹, an analysis of the portfolio artifacts reveals literacy as decentralized, disruptive, and variable (Bakhtin 272). Such disruption runs counter to the foundational premise of standards-based literacy assessment - the idea that elements of literacy can be isolated and quantified.

After six years under KERA's initial system of assessment and accountability, the Kentucky legislature decided to dissolve KIRIS in order to make room for what Fenwick and Edwards would describe as a "stable and durable" network (9). In April 1998, lawmakers introduced the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). The most significant change with CATS is the implementation of a norm-referenced assessment component allowing for the translation and interpretation of Kentucky's definitions of literacy in the Core Content and Program of Studies through nationally norm-referenced assessments (K. White). This change creates an explicit link between Kentucky's system and national educational standards and measures. Though the legislative language does not cite a specific source for these norm-referenced

⁴⁹ Not long before KIRIS is replaced with CATS, the legislature passes the Kentucky Postsecondary Act of 1997. Though this document addresses matters of literacy for college readiness in general terms, including defining literacy as "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential," this legislation does cite the need to "enhance the relationship of credentials between secondary and postsecondary programs" including dual enrollment (4; 16). This language of cooperation between secondary and postsecondary spaces suggests the possibility of greater alignment in definitions of literacy for college readiness in the transition from high school to college.

assessments, the connection of Kentucky's system to sources of comparison on the national level introduces Kentucky's system into what Fenwick and Edwards describe as an authoritative and "collective network of coordinated things and actions":

After all, accounting creates a continuous form of control precisely because it can proceed without any interpersonal contact. Numbers can be gathered and transformed into measures of educational inputs and outputs that circulate through texts, codes, databases, and pedagogical devices to govern activity. (9; 116)

Through the use of numbers, the instructional contexts for literacy are remade into "calculative spaces" allowing for surveillance at local, state, and national levels (Fenwick and Edwards 125).

Though the connection of CATS to norm-referenced measures affords Kentucky the opportunity for a position in a stable network of relations, the new assessment and accountability system does not include significant changes with regard to definitions and corresponding measurements of literacy for college readiness. In spite of the various criticisms related to the use of the writing portfolios as a performance assessment and measure of accountability under KIRIS, the 12th grade writing portfolio remains the dominant measure of literacy for college readiness in the CATS structure.

In "Learning from Kentucky's Failed Accountability System," George K. Cunningham argues that Kentucky's various policy documents related to standards (including the Learner Goals, Transformations, Academic Expectations, Content

Guidelines, and Core Content for Assessment⁵⁰) compete among themselves for “the final word on what students were supposed to learn and the basis for the KIRIS assessment” (274). Though these documents seem intended to work as cooperative instruments, as a chain of translations - one into the next - of the standards, Cunningham argues that these texts set out competing representations of standards both “in terms of content and philosophy” (274). According to Cunningham, the writing portfolio evidences KDE’s adoption of a “progressive education philosophy” with “a confused and contradictory theoretical basis for assessment” in which “ideology was substituted for sound psychometric practice” (297). With this turn, Cunningham reveals the methodological turf wars at work in the assessment of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky. Cunningham’s dismissal of the writing portfolio as ideological moves to make portfolio assessment illegitimate while simultaneously discrediting the theoretical foundation for its use - a foundation, of course, firmly grounded in rhetoric and composition scholarship.

At no point in his analysis does Cunningham engage with rhetoric and composition scholarship directly regarding process theory and portfolio assessment. Instead, Cunningham uses the general phrase “advocates for use of writing portfolios” to provide some insight into a counterclaim to his analysis without explicitly identifying the scholarship behind the assessment structure. I would argue that this move renders rhetoric and composition scholarship invisible while also tacitly discrediting rhetoric and composition as a source of authority for literacy assessment. Cunningham’s critique translates the portfolio assessment through the lens of education scholarship and

⁵⁰ These various documents are discussed at length in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

psychometric measure, and the absence of engagement with rhetoric and composition scholarship functions as a refusal to the legitimacy of the knowledge about literacy generated in the field.

In spite of Cunningham's lack of direct engagement with rhetoric and composition scholarship, his critique does include interpretations (perhaps best described as misinterpretations) of both process theory and portfolio assessment. Cunningham, an education professor at the University of Louisville at the time of KERA's initial implementation through 2005, conflates process theory and portfolio assessment with expressivist writing:

There is also the belief among advocates of the writing process that the most important outcome of writing activities by students in school is the opportunity for them to express their feelings; that is, advocates of the writing process method believe all writing is personal. The role of writing as a means of communication is deemphasized. (296)

Though Cunningham makes these assertions regarding the portfolio assessment as a single entity, his critique does not address the portfolio as comprising multiple forms of writing - literary, narrative, transactive. Finally, Cunningham not only states that portfolios are ineffective for writing assessment but also goes so far as to say that the inclusion of student writing portfolios in the assessment and accountability structure actually compromises the integrity of writing instruction and makes for "poorer" student writers (297).

From the vantage point of rhetoric and composition scholarship, I would argue that Cunningham's critique presents a rather reductive view of process theory, portfolio assessment, and the function of such performance-based assessment in a broader hybrid-form system of assessment, particularly when considering the complexity of literacy in the transition from high school to college. But his position is not surprising and quite valuable in understanding how different sponsors of literacy emerge and assign value to certain interpretative strands in literacy assessment research. Such oversimplifications of complex systems of accountability and literacy assessment (and, I will concede, neither KIRIS nor CATS is a particularly elegant system of/for analysis) are common across the network of relations and effectively reveal the epistemological tensions within the network. In terms of literacy for college readiness, Cunningham's interpretations of the writing portfolio through the lens of psychometric measure are particularly significant for mapping conversations regarding literacy assessment in Kentucky. Most notably, Cunningham's evaluation of the portfolio runs counter to discussions of the writing portfolio among rhetoric and composition scholars in assessment including Brian Huot⁵¹, who was at the University of Louisville at the same time as Cunningham and conducting extensive research in portfolio assessment.

In contrast to Cunningham, Andrew Harnack, David Elias, and Charles Whitaker⁵² offer an overview of the response to the 12th grade writing portfolio from college composition directors and department chairs in Kentucky. In "The Impact of Kentucky's

⁵¹ I address Brian Huot's contributions to assessment research in rhetoric and composition later in this chapter.

⁵² Charles Whitaker engages with at multiple sites in the network of relations related to literacy for college readiness, and I document these participations throughout this chapter.

Educational Reform Act on Writing throughout the Commonwealth,” Harnack, Elias, and Whitaker provide an explicit site related to literacy for college readiness as their inquiry addresses “the use of portfolios for placement, instruction, and assessment” as well as “changes in preparation of freshman composition students” (5). Additionally (and quite evocatively), Harnack, Elias, and Whitaker address literacy for college readiness as represented through Kentucky portfolio assessment as an example of the “pragmatic difficulty of translating plans for reform into teaching, learning, and assessment practices” (6). This description of the portfolio assessment in terms of translation reveals an awareness of variability as policy initiatives are converted into assessment structures. Specifically, Harnack, Elias, and Whitaker express a degree of anxiety regarding inevitability of translation in the context of literacy for college readiness:

That translation should be reason for concern in itself because no curriculum can be teacher-proof, that is, immune to alterations. When actual human beings try to put the profession’s brilliant ideas on how to teach into practice, they interpret, reacting to local conditions and specific classroom dynamics, and, for better or worse, change these ideas. Such distortion in implementing reform is inevitable. (6)

Harnack, Elias, and Whitaker also identify the apparent function of the Kentucky’s assessment and accountability structure as a means of forced conformity “to the values and expectations of corporate culture, that is, the tenets of corporate capitalism” (6). In documenting concerns from Kentucky’s rhetoric and composition community related to

both translation and corporate interests, Harnack, Elias and Whitaker effectively present a tidy distillation of the network of relations related to literacy for college readiness.

Conflicting ideologies and methodologies among policy documents, education research, and assessment scholarship in rhetoric and composition persist throughout KERA's second decade as the CATS system is implemented. Even as a revised system of accountability and assessment is put into place in an effort to create consistency and stability, these text-based tensions evidence a lack of consensus about literacy for college readiness in Kentucky at the beginning of the 21st century. These tensions also provide vital context for definitions of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky as national literacy policy is adopted and implemented in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Literacy Policy Goes National: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Disqualifications of Literacy Research

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is an enormous piece of legislation. A text of over 600 pages, NCLB points to a single objective:

The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement and state academic assessments. (15)

The remainder of the document describes the means of realizing this goal. Like KERA, NCLB establishes a location based on the boundary between standards and related assessments as translations of these standards. In the NCLB document, the term

“literacy” is used 172 times, often with qualifying modifiers establishing particular directions for literacy including “family literacy,” “adult literacy,” and “technology literacy.” Additionally, “literacy” and “reading” are used as side-by-side (but not synonymous) terms, suggesting that reading of particular texts leads to particular types of literacy.

Though NCLB’s definitions and descriptions of literacy provide information regarding the ways that literacy is situated in federal policy, it is NCLB’s definition of research related to literacy (and all areas of instruction under the policy’s accountability framework) that is most significant for locating sources of epistemological authority related to matters of literacy. NCLB mandates the use of “scientifically based research” across all policy programs. NCLB defines scientifically based research as follows:

(A) research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs; and

(B) includes research that

(i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;

(ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;

(iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable

and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators;

(iv) is evaluated using experimental or quasiexperimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls;

(v) ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and

(vi) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review. (115 STAT 1964-65)

This language in NCLB regarding the criteria for credible research places literacy in a “positivist epistemology” that effectively limits opportunities for certain sponsors of literacy to engage in the network of relations in any meaningful capacity (Eisenhart and Towne 31). This move affords researchers using empirical methods singular access to the network, as literacy studies relying on scientifically-based methods are transformed, through policy text, into the only authoritative mediators regarding matters of literacy.

In “No Child Left Behind Policy Brief: Literacy” Kristie Kaurerz pulls out the exact language regarding scientifically-based research and unequivocally locates its application in the context of literacy. Kaurerz credits science with identifying “the core elements of effective reading instruction” (1). As a mediated translation of NCLB published by the Education Commission of the States⁵³, this policy brief displays how literacy through its associations with “scientific activity” allows for “privileged cases of transportation through transformations” (Latour 223). Through a single statement of authoritative association and engagement, literacy is transformed and transported into the domain of science, rendering other locations of literacy invisible or inaccessible in the network of relations. Similarly, Michael Zerbe argues that such a policy move places science as ideological state apparatus (29). Through this Althusserian lens, the application of scientific methods to literacy secures not only a research design of tracked reproduction but also establishes the reproduction of the relations of this reproduction. Those who endorse scientifically-based methods for literacy are guaranteed a privileged place in the network.

Though NCLB as a policy does not directly engage with assessment and accountability related to literacy for college readiness,⁵⁴ the basis of the NCLB initiative presents definitions of literacy and literacy research that place literacy within what Mary Hamilton describes as a “technicist government discourse” (25). A technicist government discourse for definitions of literacy effectively represents an example of

⁵³ The Education Commission of the States is a non-profit entity originally formed under the 1967 Compact for Education as “a partnership between the educational leadership and the political leadership for the advancement of education” (Education Commission of the States).

⁵⁴ NCLB mandates the implementation of assessments in reading/language arts and math for grades 1-8 only.

Brian Street's ideological literacy model - one created and endorsed for the observational purposes of the state and promotion of neoliberal capitalism - but the model operates, through the apparent objectivity of numbers, *autonomously*.

This privileged placement of numbering literacy effectively eliminates the legitimacy of competing constructions of literacy, relegating any ideological models of literacy outside of the network of relations. In this move to make only scientifically-based literacy scholarship credible, NCLB shows "how certain forms of scientific knowledge emerge and become powerful" as "institutions are seen as encouraging, selecting, and privileging certain practices and thereby devaluing others" (Fenwick and Edwards 137; Hamilton 12). In sponsoring definitions of literacy produced through scientifically-based research methods, NCLB establishes literacy as an immutable mobile in a closed network of relations much like Bourdieu describes in "The Market of Symbolic Goods":

The autonomy of a field of restricted production can be measured by its power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products. This implies translation of all external determinations in conformity with its own principles of functioning. Thus, the more cultural producers form a closed field of competition for cultural legitimacy, the more the demarcations appear irreducible to any external factors of economic, political or social differentiation. (5)

Endorsed for "the ease with which it allows people to be categorized, the NCLB model of literacy affords policy "action at a distance" and translation without slippage across state lines and multiple sites of implementation across this closed network of relations

(Roberts 415; Latour, *Science in Action* 222). NCLB's position on scientifically-based research also evidences what also privileges what Mary Hamilton describes as the reduction of literacy scholarship to "the use of numbers and statistical argument" as the only "way in which 'real' evidence and credible research about literacy should be presented" (*Literacy* 62-63).

NCLB is a large, complex text written in legislative language, yet powerful literacy sponsors have the capacity to transform and simplify hundreds of pages of policy text into four letters used as a sort of synecdoche representing any and all shifts in matters of assessment and accountability for literacy. Though NCLB's assessment and accountability directives for literacy do not extend to the secondary level, NCLB affects the ways that credible knowledge related to literacy at all levels can be generated and circulated.

A Part of/Apart from the Network: The National Writing Project in NCLB

NCLB's alignment with scientifically-based research significantly narrows the cooperative sites of engagement and translation in the network, but the policy text does include a site explicitly linking secondary and post-secondary spaces for literacy. Even as NCLB conflates literacy (through assessment language) with reading, the policy also includes endorsements of partnerships between secondary and post-secondary literacy spaces through the National Writing Project (NWP) (115 STAT. 1660-1662). The US Department of Education's *No Child Left Behind: A Desktop Reference* describes the function of the NWP as a point of explicit connection between secondary and

post-secondary contexts for purposes of establishing professional collaborative relationships between K-12 teachers and university professors:

The National Writing Project must enter into contracts with institutions of higher education and nonprofit education providers that will establish and operate programs that train teachers to teach writing effectively. The program also must establish a national advisory board to advise it on issues related to student writing and teaching writing. (77)

The policy reference document as a translation of NCLB seems to suggest that teacher means K-12 instructors only, but the language of NCLB sets the charge of the NWP to “train teachers who teach grades kindergarten *through college*” (115 STAT.1661; emphasis added). This important distinction in roles between secondary and post-secondary literacy spaces alters the shape of participants in the network of relations. Rather than identifying K-12 teachers as neutral intermediaries receiving information from sources of university authority, the NCLB language regarding NWP locates all NWP participants as teachers, all with mediational capabilities in the creation and circulation of information regarding writing.

In *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching* Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood detail the importance of this cooperative location in national literacy policy and reinforce the NWP’s recursive design in terms of theory and practice:

The NWP, like a number of other reform efforts, depends on a school-university partnership arrangement. This relationship makes the

NWP a special kind of reform because it joins the knowledge of the university with the knowledge developed by teachers. In theory, many people now accept the fact that teachers develop knowledge as they teach over the years, some believe it to be of critical importance. Nevertheless, the university has traditionally privileged theoretical knowledge over practitioner knowledge. Creating a partnership where these two forms of knowledge can intersect and build on each other demands rethinking the nature of knowledge from a more egalitarian perspective. (86)

Lieberman and Wood highlight the NWP's epistemological potential as a dialogic enterprise across literacy-based sites involving multiple contributors. The inclusion of the NWP also introduces strands of composition scholarship and corresponding (often qualitative) methodological frameworks into the network of relations (Eisenhart and Towne; Feuer, Towne, and Shavelson). The inclusion of the NWP provides both a site of engagement in articulating definitions of literacy for college readiness as well as documented (though roundabout) source of authority for rhetoric and composition in national literacy policy.⁵⁵

Even as NCLB seems to seek to stabilize defined terms and related engagements concerning literacy in the United States, the text cannot account for all potential and implied relations. The NWP's presence in NCLB populates the network with other, possibly conflicting, representations of literacy and opens up the opportunity for tactical responses to the mandate for systematized assessment and scientifically-based research.

⁵⁵ I discuss instances in which rhetoric and composition scholars in Kentucky engage/disengage with state and national literacy policies later in this chapter.

The NWP most notably complicates NCLB, highlighting its complexity as a text and a study in Bahktinian heteroglossia. In spite of sponsored efforts to reduce NCLB to the language of accountability, a thorough textual analysis of the document's contents reveals both its scope and inevitable contradictions.

National Literacy Policy Goes to Kentucky: The No Child Left Behind State-Specific Kit

Though I have conducted a pretty thorough textual analysis of NCLB as part of my research, my research has also revealed that very few people are actually reading hundreds of pages of educational policy. Consequently, entities in various institutional contexts (including state education officials and district-level administrators) rely on policy translations as sources of information related to matters of literacy policy, assessment, and accountability. The sheer volume of NCLB as a policy document creates an almost immediate need for translation in order for it to have practical application in educational contexts. Such translation must also address NCLB through the lens of the existing system of assessment and accountability; therefore, Kentucky must reconcile CATS with the NCLB design as a matter of compliance and alignment.

Published by the International Center for Leadership in Education, *The No Child Left Behind State-Specific Resource Kit for School Leaders in Kentucky* (NCLB Kit) serves as a professional development resource for state and local implementation of federal education policy.⁵⁶ This document represents an example of a mediational text commonly created as new policy initiatives are put into place. Often referred to as a

⁵⁶ The International Center for Leadership in Education is an affiliate of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, but the name of this entity as author presents the language operating as a neutral and autonomous “research-based” representation of Literacy under NCLB.

“crosswalk,” such a document purportedly operates as a clean consolidation of two or more larger policy texts, but the NCLB Kit as a translation of these other texts reveals the mediational capacity of this crosswalk composition, particularly a composition generated by a third-party actor attempting to create engagements within the broader network of relations regarding literacy for college readiness.

The NCLB Kit provides a functional description of NCLB’s objectives, and extensive attention is given to the place of literacy and reading assessment in the NCLB design. “The NCLB Kit also provides a “Curriculum Matrix” as alignment of Kentucky’s state standards with NCLB. The Curriculum Matrix prioritizes areas of assessment in what is described as an overcrowded curriculum”:⁵⁷

The alignment of state standards to the national survey of what graduates need to know and be able to do once they leave school can be helpful in determining instructional priorities. The data can be disaggregated according to the opinions of educators, the general public, and the business community. The data can also be compared with priority given to each standard or curriculum topic in the state testing program. (4)

Here, the NCLB Kit makes a turn toward a hierarchical deconstruction of both standards and curriculum based on an economic rationale. This turn presents a neoliberal translation of the NCLB/KERA alignment that effectively makes literacy a matter of

⁵⁷ A subsection of the NCLB Kit entitled “What Technology Means for Students and Education” cites the significance of technology relative to “America’s ability to remain competitive in the global economy” (8). Additionally, the same section contains a short description of Bill Gates as a bullet point: “When Bill Gates retired as CEO of Microsoft in 1998, 23 years after he founded the company, he was worth more than all the gold in Fort Knox, more than the GNP of China, more than the 100 poorest nations of the world” (8). Digital literacy is not mentioned as an area of proficiency nor is it assessed under NCLB or CATS.

business with material consequence for the economic stability of the United States. The language of data disaggregation affords the NCLB the authority of quantification privileged in NCLB, but the text provides no detail behind these measures. Though the use of such data-driven authority relies on “complex intertextual chains that would have to be reconstructed in order to understand how they were derived,” the NCLB Kit makes no effort for such reconstruction (Hamilton, *Literacy* 35). It seems that the reader is expected to accept the NCLB Kit on the basis of its scientific and economic invocations alone.

Although these complex intertextual chains forming the authoritative foundations for definitions of literacy remain opaque in the NCLB Kit, I made every effort to “go down the rabbit hole” where possible to locate the textual engagements for the Curriculum Matrix. The Curriculum Matrix for High School English/Language Arts appears to function as a clean alignment (a “crosswalk”) between Kentucky’s state literacy standards and national standards for literacy under NCLB, but the national standards used in the Curriculum Matrix are listed as the Curriculum Survey of Essential Skills (Curriculum Survey), as NCLB is not, in fact, a standards document (87). The Curriculum Survey is based on a “forced ranking by 20,000 adults of the 100 proficiencies deemed most important for high school graduates” (4). The NCLB Kit does not provide detail regarding the survey participants, but the basis for the national literacy standards aligned with the Kentucky standards are listed as NCTE “exit standards” (67). This single reference is the only time that NCTE is addressed in the NCLB Kit. The Curriculum Matrix represents, in graph form, numerous translations across multiple

contexts, “all of them launching tiny bridges to overcome the gaps created by disparate frames of reference” (Latour 117). Consequently, the Curriculum Matrix functions as a clean visual representation of immutable mobility in which divergent definitions of literacy are absent by design.

Even as the NCLB Kit neglects to engage with multiple areas of literacy addressed in the NCLB (the NWP is not mentioned), the Curriculum Matrix does operate as a purposeful mediator for policy language related to assessment and accountability. The Curriculum Matrix is simply a grid of numbered standards organized according to “Testing Priority Designation” so that standards most likely to be assessed are listed as high (H) priority on the grid (Summary 1). An analysis of priority standards for literacy in the 12th grade reveals that only five standards received a testing priority designation: Writing Content - Purpose/Audience, Writing Content - Idea Development/Support, Writing Structure - Organization, Writing Conventions - Language, Writing Conventions - Correctness (English/Language Arts 90, 92, 94, and 97). Though these standards align exactly with the Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric for the 12th grade portfolio assessment, Neither Writing Process nor any reading standards (including Responding to a Text) received high priority designation on the matrix. The Curriculum Matrix evidences Latour’s assertion that “everything,” including literacy, “can be converted into diagrams and numbers, and combinations of numbers and tables to be used which are still easier than words or silhouettes (“Visualization and Cognition” 18). Literacy, typically the messy business of words, is instead presented as a numbered list of quantifiable skills ranked in importance by an ambiguous and untraceable authority.

The NCLB Kit also identifies “A Changing Concept of Literacy.” In this section, the term “literacy” is used interchangeably with the word “reading⁵⁸.” Not only does the NCLB Kit describe literacy as reading *singularly*, literacy is defined as a proficiency in reading informational texts: “Educators have attempted to solve the problem within their own paradigm, teaching more of what they have always taught -- literature. While reading literature is an important and culturally enhancing competency, it is not the same as informational reading” (13). Referencing the use of the Lexile Framework⁵⁹, described as a computer program used “to examine a whole text for such characteristics as sentence and syllabic intensity⁶⁰” as a measure of text complexity⁶¹. Literacy is increasingly presented as a sort of transferable object based on assertions of specificity and objectivity. The translation of literacy through the language of scientifically-based research transforms literacy into a thing “that can be counted and placed in ordered categories” and putting “borders round this ‘thingness’ -- defining with apparent precision what is and isn’t literacy” (Hamilton, *Literacy* 40). Only those elements of literacy that can be easily counted and tracked are allowed within this network of accountability. This scientifically sponsored definition of literacy simultaneously limits literacy’s complexity and variability while confirming this definition as both compliant and reliable. Put

⁵⁸ “Literacy: No Child Left Behind Policy Brief” also uses “reading” and “literacy” interchangeably.

⁵⁹ The Lexile Framework is a system for measuring the readability of texts based on quantifiable features including sentence length and word frequency.

⁶⁰ “Syllabic intensity” means the number of syllables in a word.

⁶¹ The section “Key Reading Skills in Learning to Read” endorses a phonics-based model of literacy in contrast to the “Whole Language” approach described in Transformations. Relatedly, literacy scholars referenced in Transformations including Kenneth Goodman and Yetta Goodman are not included as sources of authority in the NCLB Kit.

simply, what counts as literacy is what can be most easily counted. Literacy is effectively rid of its ideological complications through the power of science.

Additionally, the NCLB Kit translates the NCLB policy language in largely economic (rather than civic) terms. The NCLB Kit states that the literacy required for entry-level jobs surpass those associated with both current state tests and college-level reading (13-14):

So although reading skills do need to be improved, what students require to function in the 21st century workplace is better technical reading skills for understanding documents and quantitative material not more reading of prose, poetry, and other literary forms. To acquire these other skills, students need to be taught reading in all content areas, not just in English language arts. A new definition of literacy is required. (14)

Though NCLB accountability does not engage with matters of literacy for college readiness, the NCLB Kit does identify a disconnect between college-level proficiencies and the competencies expected for employability. The NCLB Kit goes on to state that American college graduates are equipped with the skills to “do school,” but these school-based proficiencies “do not necessarily connect well with the skills requirements of the 21st century workplace” (14). Beyond its translation of NCLB, the NCLB Kit cites two other texts as its authoritative foundations - Thomas L. Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* and *A Nation at Risk*. Through the inclusion of Friedman’s text, the NCLB Kit places literacy in “discourses of competition and economics” that focus not on elements of literacy but “language of measurement and

comparison” (Metcalf and Fenwick 217). Through such discourses, both composition scholarship specifically and “academic knowledge and theory” generally are located outside of the network, replaced by “professional standards, free market competition, data-driven decision-making, and entrepreneurialism” (Brass 119). In “Assessing ‘No Child Left Behind’ and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies” David Hursh argues that NCLB (and its translation in a document like the NCLB Kit) offer “no choice but to submit to the discipline of the market rather than relying on processes of deliberative democracy” (514). In terms of literacy for college readiness, the NCLB Kit promotes literacy in the creation of workers (rather than or even in addition to participatory citizens). The placement of literacy in a neoliberal framework also allows for the commodification as it is now reduced to a means to economic capital for the growth of the American economy. Literacy is then doubly commodified in that it functions as a commodity for powerful sponsors while also being presented as a source of economic capital for those who possess sponsored literacy skills.

The NCLB Kit also states that the “concerns that lead to *A Nation at Risk* and subsequent reform initiatives have not abated and may indeed have worsened over the last decade” (14). The NCLB Kit engages with *A Nation at Risk* as text-based tool for attaching anxiety to literacy. Even as the report was published nearly two decades before NCLB, the referential inclusion of this text in the NCLB immediately relocates literacy within the language of crisis, what John Trimbur describes as “the discourse of crisis” concerning literacy (279). Though the NCLB Kit does not provide detailed connection to the content of *A Nation at Risk*, the mere mention of the title conflates literacy and its

assessment with a “perpetual literacy crisis” that is presented as a threat to American economic progress (Williams, “Why Johnny” 178). In the NCLB Kit, the maintenance of this “crisis narrative” serves as a way of reserving “policy action space” in that the representations of literacy endorsed in the NCLB Kit are presented as the only way to avoid impending economic doom within a neoliberal frame (Fenwick and Edwards 139).

The NCLB Kit not only endorses a definition of literacy aligned with neoliberal capitalism, the kit’s design for the circulation and assessment of literacy also functions much like a mass business model. Under the section not-so-elegantly titled “Standardized Testing - Get Over It and Get On with It,” the NCLB Kit’s language of a “ideological obviousness” operates for the generation and observation of “good data regarding the alignment of state standards, state assessments, and community expectations” (NCLB Kit 29). Though the NCLB Kit seems to take the “just the messenger” position of intermediary for the content of NCLB, the kit actually functions as a powerful mediator offering a narrow translation of NCLB’s definition of literacy.

The NCLB Kit’s various moves of inclusion and exclusion within the network of relations set up a sponsorship of literacy aligned with the idea of literacy as an object for production, consumption, and functional circulation. The scale of the NCLB Kit as an actor in the network of relations is evident in what Latour describes as its “ability to produce, capture, sum up, and interpret information” (“Visualization and Cognition” 29). The NCLB Kit takes the voluminous NCLB text and distills it for maximum mobility without variation. Through the NCLB Kit, definitions of literacy for college readiness are

essentially boiled down to a single rubric representing a handful of skills privileging trackable features of writing including organization and language conventions.

Though the NCLB Kit does not engage with conversations in rhetoric and composition related to literacy as sources of authority, such conversations concerning literacy and its measurement (apparent in the creation of academic articles and professional policies) are, of course, taking place. Consequently, in the next section I look to the field of rhetoric and composition as a location of definitions of literacy for college readiness with a focus on assessment. I analyze strands of assessment policy and scholarship in rhetoric and composition as points of direct engagement in the broader network of relations related to literacy. Relatedly, I also consider post-process theory as intradisciplinary engagements informing rhetoric and composition's authority and focus as a field.

Disciplinary Multiplicity and Ambivalence: Composition and Its Literacy

Discontents

In "The Long Revolution in Composition," Anne Ruggles Gere states that "change in the academy's epistemology will not occur smoothly or all at once; it will be marked by contradictions within multiple patterns" (132). Epistemological struggles are well documented in rhetoric and composition scholarship and are as much an identifier for the field as are the various lines of scholarship competing for the authority to speak for the discipline. Perhaps the unifying feature of rhetoric and composition is a sense of disciplinary uncertainty, of absent consensus regarding what we do (or should be doing) and, from a methodological standpoint, how such work is generated.

In order to locate the field of rhetoric and composition in the network of relations regarding literacy for college readiness near the end of the 20th century, it is important to identify trends in scholarship concerning matters of literacy with a focus on literacy assessment. I have chosen assessment as my primary research strand for analysis because both portfolio assessment and related process theory represent points of direct engagement between rhetoric and composition and the broader network of relations regarding literacy for college readiness, including Kentucky's system of assessment and accountability. As Karen Kopelson describes in "Sp(l)itting Images; or, Back to the Future of (Rhetoric and?) Composition," rhetoric and composition's engagements with assessment and secondary English education provide rare instances of "interdisciplinary influence," even if analysis of assessment research in rhetoric and composition reveals a complicated relationship between the field and assessment in both theory and practice (768).

In this section I also trace strands of policy and scholarship related to literacy in rhetoric and composition as actors in an *intradisciplinary* network. Each disciplinary strand functions as both an assertion of disciplinary identity and authority as well as a body of texts evidencing disciplinary conflict and fracture in what Fenwick and Edwards identify as the "uncertainties" within "the folds of calculative and non-calculative energies in the complex spaces of accountability" representing "not just moments of transgression or resistance or fabrication, but also the ambivalences between calculation and non-calculation" (128). I argue that this lack of disciplinary consensus (coupled with intentional disengagements at various points in the network of relations regarding

literacy) places the field of rhetoric and composition outside of important conversations involving literacy policy and compromises existing and potential sources of disciplinary authority in the ways that literacy is theorized and assessed. Additionally, I argue that rhetoric and composition's resistance to (or, perhaps, avoidance of) dialogic engagements with literacy assessment further isolates the work of the field in assessment from literacy policy conversations.

The Measure of Literacy: Assessment Policy in Rhetoric and Composition

Though Brian Huot argues that “writing assessment has never been claimed as part of the teaching of writing,” professional policy documents in rhetoric and composition evidence efforts to claim assessment as a domain of authority for/within the field. “Writing Assessment: A Position Statement” (the Assessment Position Statement) was initially published in *College Composition and Communication* in October 1995⁶². A document resulting from the collaborative authorship of the CCCC Committee on Assessment,⁶³ the Assessment Position Statement outlines a theoretical framework for assessment in rhetoric and composition and provides a professional foundation for the assessment of literacy with particular attention to the assessment of writing. This policy document offers a concise declaration of the common theoretical and pedagogical features of effective writing assessment:

⁶² Writing Assessment: A Position Statement was later prepared and published by the CCCC Committee on Assessment in November 2006. I will return to this policy document in its revised (March 2009) and reaffirmed (November 2014) in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁶³ The members of the CCCC Committee on Assessment cited as authors of the Assessment Position Statement area as follows: Kathleen Blake Yancey, Arnetha Ball, Pat Belanoff, Kathleen Bell, Renee Bertz, Emily Decker, Christine Farris, Thomas Hilgars, Audrey Roth, Lew Sayers, and Fred Thomas. Donald Daiker, Sandra Murphy, and Edward Nolte are also cited as contributors.

Assessment of written literacy should be designed and evaluated by well-informed current or future teachers of the students being assessed, for purposes clearly understood by all the participants; should elicit from the student writers a variety of pieces, preferably over a period of time; should encourage and reinforce good teaching practices; *and should be solidly grounded in the latest research on language learning.* (431)

This definition of assessment in the position statement presents assertions of approaches to assessment without providing prescriptive language about what assessment actually is and which lines of “latest research on language learning” should provide the basis for its design.

The Assessment Position Statement includes a series of ten related assumptions on which this declaration is based, and these assumptions provide the epistemological foundation for assessment. A number of these assumptions relate to the way assessment is theorized in the field. Specifically, assessment is described as socially-situated, rhetorical, and highly-contextualized. In rhetorical terms, assessment is presented as necessarily driven by purpose and context, in which writing accomplishes something the user wants to accomplish” relative to the audience. Correspondingly, local assessment is driven by the rhetorical demands of particular contexts. But, the local assessment is also presented as contextual rather than spatial/geographical, making room for “schools with common goals and similar student populations and teaching philosophies and outcomes” to “form consortia for the design, implementation, and evaluation of assessment

instruments” (431-432). Assessment is also identified as pedagogical⁶⁴ “with the objective of improving both teaching and learning” (432).

Some of the assumptions seem to serve as a response to encroaching representations of literacy assessment. For example, one assumption associates the use of assessment for purposes of accountability with “avoidance of error” (433). Another assumption addresses the material realities of assessment and states that financial resources should not be used for the purchase of assessment instruments created outside of the local assessment context (433). Relatedly, assessment research (presumably generated in the field of English/literacy education and rhetoric and composition) is identified as the authoritative foundation for assessment (433-434). Though the Assessment Policy Statement does not mention particular entities as other (and potentially threatening) sources of authority for literacy assessment, the language of the text does hint at an anxious defensiveness regarding disciplinary authority regarding assessment.

In terms of engagements with rhetoric and composition scholarship in assessment, the Assessment Policy Statement makes connections with portfolio assessment and process theory. Though the terms “portfolio” and “process” are not used in the assumptions as defined terms, the statement asserts that “assessment should be designed around multiple pieces over time and across genres” with time available for revision, reflection, and peer collaboration, (432; 433). Among the authors of the Assessment Position Statement are two scholars listed as sources of authority in Kentucky’s

⁶⁴ Quite logically, this “pedagogical turn” locates assessment in an academic context even though the types of products generated are not described as “academic.”

Transformations document⁶⁵ - Pat Belanoff and Sandra Murphy. The presence of these scholars provides an interesting point of intersection with Kentucky's literacy assessment structure, research in the field of rhetoric and composition, and the CCCC policy for literacy assessment. Additionally, the Assessment Position Statement makes reference to Peter Elbow's "Ranking, Evaluating, and Linking: Sorting Out Three Forms of Judgement," providing another link between the CCCC policy and the sources of authority for Kentucky's literacy assessment policy.

Assessment Scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition: Portfolio, Validity, and Professional Identity

Perhaps the most efficient way to contextualize rhetoric and composition scholarship related to assessment in the network of relations regarding literacy for college readiness is to begin with a site of obvious (though seemingly productive) tension in the Bartholomae/Elbow debates. These debates reveal a great deal about disciplinary identity as it relates to literacy and associated forms of sponsorship. As I discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, Peter Elbow's expressivist model (including an emphasis on personal writing and the use of process in the creation of student writing portfolios) serves as a foundational template for literacy assessment, particularly in Kentucky with the implementation of a writing assessment portfolio designed to include three expressivist artifacts. Nonetheless, the persistent presence of academic writing as a representation of literacy for college readiness reveals that David Bartholomae's model of literacy continues right alongside Elbow's, often in the same 12th grade portfolio.

⁶⁵ I provide an analysis of *Transformations* in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

In spite of efforts to utilize the contents of the assessment portfolio as a means of confirming (or affirming) once and for all what singularly counts as literacy in the transition between secondary and post-secondary spaces, the portfolio actually does the opposite, as the assessment portfolio itself can best be understood as its own contentious site in the network of relations, subject to competing sponsors and corresponding translations. As Fenwick and Edwards point out, the portfolio is a productive site for analysis because it does reveal the multiple participations operating to define and assess literacy:

Portfolios can act as mobilizers of diverse student expression, as everyday receptacles of activity, as demonstrations that state mandated standards have been met, as visible evidence of acceptable pedagogy, and as a cumulative student record that follows them year to year. They can be both actant and actor in the network of evaluation. (21)

Even as other powerful actors are present in the portfolio, both Bartholomae and Elbow in their foundational assessment scholarship are identifiable and traceable as well.

The Bartholomae/Elbow debates are also useful for locating conversations in rhetoric and composition regarding literacy for college readiness because both Bartholomae and Elbow present clear progressions about what literacy *should* look like. In spite of their differences in definitions of literacy (or, perhaps because of an awareness of these differences), each articulates some sort of endorsement of what is valued as well as what is worthy of reproduction (gasp!) through instructional means. In the language of assessment, both researchers set out measures of validity (albeit in very different ways)

with attention to reliable instructional frameworks. Even though the assessment portfolio reveals the difficulty of establishing immutable mobiles in the network of relations, the portfolio does serve as an archive documenting the various valued and endorsed features of literacy. To paraphrase Walter in *The Big Lebowski*, say what you want about Elbow's expressivism or Bartholomae's academic discourse, at least each is an ethos.

The definitions of literacy from other scholars in rhetoric and composition can be more difficult to identify. Of obvious significance is the way that rhetoric and composition scholarship in assessment contends with issues of reliability and validity, as the way that an assessment structure is, itself, measured relies on readings of these qualitative and quantitative features. My analysis of conversations in rhetoric and composition reveals a general discomfort with discussing assessment and an apparent avoidance of addressing reliability and validity in explicit ways. Brian Huot describes "discourse about assessment" as both "critical and unexamined," and identifies "slippage of assessment, grading, and testing as interchangeable terms" (163). Nadia Behizadeh and George Engelhard Jr. call on "researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers" to "accurately measure what is meaningful, rather than relying on reliable, but less valid assessments of isolated skills" (207). Of course, stating that assessment should be founded on what is "valid" and "meaningful" in no way illuminates how these terms can be functionally translated into definitions of literacy in the classroom context. Michael R. Neal argues that assessment can and does take many forms, yet all of these forms are presented relative to the impersonal nature of the assessment encounter, including "anything from large-scale assessments (e.g., program assessment, placements,

standardized testing) to responding to, grading, or otherwise evaluating individual student texts (e.g., portfolios, graded essays, and responses of all types)” (3). Neal states that “one of the problems” with assessment is that “it can become something too specific for many of us, depending on our position and relationship to it” (3). Therefore, such a limited understanding and recognition of proximity and situatedness neglects to identify the “multifaceted nature of writing assessments that exist outside our own personal connections to it” (3). Neil’s position highlights issues of proximity in the discipline in that those involved in assessment scholarship are too close to see much of what is happening outside of the immediate, and *what* exactly stands as a valid representation of literacy remains unnamed and undefined. Huot, O’Neill, and Moore argue that validity, “like all theoretical concepts, continues to evolve,” but the perpetual evolution of validity as a theoretical concept for the assessment of literacy seems to run counter to any sort of reconciliation between measures of validity and reliability (496).

Like Bartholomae and Elbow, Huot provides a pronounced presence in the network of relations because of his multiple points of engagement outside of rhetoric and composition including Kentucky’s assessment and accountability structure for literacy. But unlike Bartholomae and Elbow’s engagements in the network of relations through representations of literacy, Huot’s engagements typically take the form of critique both of and outside the field of rhetoric and composition. For example, Huot argues that rhetoric and composition’s “avoidance of assessment issues” has resulted in testing companies “that do not reflect current knowledge of literacy and teaching” assuming a position of

authority in literacy assessment (8). Huot also confronts NCLB and state accountability systems like CATS:

The notion that assessment as something done because of a deficit in student training or teacher responsibility is still with us in the plethora of accountability programs at the state level for public schools and in the recent national assessment programs advocated by the George W. Bush administration and adopted by Congress. (1)

Huot's scholarship as it relates to portfolio assessment for college composition placement, is vital to the work of this dissertation because this point of engagement represents an explicitly intersectional site among assessment research in rhetoric and composition and the definitions of literacy for college readiness as tracked and enacted in Kentucky. Huot describes an instance in which he and his colleagues were invited to participate in a state-sponsored portfolio assessment training exercise:

A couple of years ago at the University of Louisville, we were contacted by an employee of the Kentucky Department of Education who had heard we were using state-mandated portfolios to place students into first-year writing courses. She offered to train us according to the holistic rubric and methods the state uses for scoring the portfolios. We told her we were adapting William L. Smith's method, and when she questioned the lack of a rubric we referred her to literature on the reading processes of holistic raters which seems to indicate that readers have an internalized rubric⁶⁶

⁶⁶ This idea of the internalized rubric is reminiscent of the teachers' conflation of the college literary analysis essay with literacy for college readiness as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.]

that they use to read and rate student writing regardless or in spite of holistic training they might receive. (105)

Huot goes on to detail how KDE expressed concern that the University of Louisville was allowing instructors' "intuition" rather than the prescribed assessment rubric in the use of writing portfolios. Additionally, Huot interprets KDE's analysis of the writing instructors' approaches to assessment as evidence of the "suspicion with which teachers' decisions are often viewed and the lack of authority accorded to their expertise and experience" (105):

In our specific case, we were aware that the design of our procedures were based upon research into the ways teachers read student writing in holistic scoring sessions; we were also aware of the ways in which standardized methods of assessing student writing are privileged over more local ones. What we also see at work here is that local, contextualized knowledge about the way people read and arrive at judgments about that reading is not considered to be as good or appropriate as procedures that are more standardized, that appear more scientific, objective, or quantifiable (105).

Even as Huot makes a case for local writing assessment, his argument does not attend to the rhetorical situation of the possible cooperative relationship between KDE and the University of Louisville in establishing definitions of literacy for college readiness. Huot's resistance to work within the constraints of Kentucky's established system of portfolio assessment places his body of scholarship and, to a great degree, the field of rhetoric and composition outside of the network of relations.

Disrespect the Process: Locating Literacy for College Readiness in Post-Process

Rhetoric and Composition

Locating definitions of literacy for college readiness in rhetoric and composition scholarship becomes an increasingly difficult enterprise as trends in research turn toward post-process. An increased interest in the generation of theoretical study and an interrogation and subsequent rejection of what Victor Vitanza famously called the “pedagogical imperative” represents an intentional professional distancing between much research in rhetoric and composition and education research. In “Embracing Wicked Problems: The Turn to Design in Composition Studies” Richard Marback outlines the disciplinary separation of rhetoric and composition from a focus on literacy instruction:

In the 1990s, as many compositionists turned away from research in process pedagogy toward post-process pedagogy, critical theories and cultural studies of writing, ethnographic research of writing, poststructuralist accounts of writing, or poststructuralist ethnographies of writing, the field of composition studies became more diffuse and further divided, somehow less capable of accounting for the activity of composing itself. (W397)

The post-process movement not only displays a profound sense of disciplinary anxiety and unease but also a rejection, articulated in both overt and covert ways, for the actual teaching of writing.

Also, the degrees of engagement/disengagement with both process and writing pedagogy varies wildly across the rhetoric and composition’s intradisciplinary network of

relations. Some theoretical strands identify process only in terms ranging from oppression to impossibility. In “Paralogic Hermeneutic Theories, Power, and the Possibility for Liberating Pedagogies” Sidney Dobrin argues that “prescribed processes” (such as those associated with the progression of process theory) are oppressive by design (139). In “Research in Professional Communication: A Post-Process Perspective,” Nancy Blyler states that “post-process scholars clearly reject the notion of conceptual schemes that mediate between individuals and the world” including the rejection of scientific method (74). Rather, Blyler argues, the objective of the scholar is “to interrogate existing existing social structures and practices with the aim of uncovering the workings of domination and power and thus fostering critique and social change” (77). In “Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm” Thomas Kent writes process into nonexistence by stating that “no codifiable or generalizable writing process exists or could exist “(1). In “Toward a Post-Process Composition: Abandoning the Rhetoric of Assertion,” Gary Olson argues that process theory misses the mark in “attempting to systematize something that is simply not susceptible to systematization”:

The problem with process theory, then is not so much that scholars are attempting to theorize various aspects of composing as it is that they are endeavoring (consciously or not) to construct a model of the composing process, thereby constructing a Theory of Writing, a series of generalizations about writing that supposedly hold true all or most of the time. (8)

Similarly, Joe Petraglia asserts that “the objectification of writing process by empirical method provided a ‘thing’ that could be intact, and thus worthy of emulation, or broken, and thus in need of repair” (53). Both Olson and Petraglia essentially identify the impossibility of process theory as the reduction of writing to cleanly-contained immutable mobile that can easily circulate across the network of relations. By identifying process as “fake, archaic, absurd, irrational, artificial, or illusory,” Olson and Petraglia’s critiques represent a common move in the network in which one actor-as-text dismisses another, but this move is much less prevalent in actors with such close disciplinary ties (Latour 56).

Others in the field imagine post-process through reinterpretation and replacement. In “Activity Theory and Process Approaches: Writing (Power) in School and Society” David Russell recognizes the need for any alternative to process to have functional use outside of the immediate and insular space of post-process theories, allowing for engagement with the broader network of relations: “Whatever discourse might replace ‘the (current) process approach’ will also be commodified if it is to have an ongoing usefulness to those outside the core researchers” (91).

In “Post-Process ‘Pedagogy’: Philosophical Enterprise” Lee-Ann M. Kastman considers the definition of process as subject to the disciplinary fluctuations of interpretation and application. Kastman argues that “post-process scholarship has ignored process as how-centered and has curiously assumed that process is content-based,” suggesting that process itself - a method defined by the dynamic - is not necessarily the issue; rather the word “process,” as a defined term, has been tethered to specific pedagogical systems of

prescription (106). Consequently, Kastman recognizes the possibility that “post-process scholars have created their own rhetorical narrative of process as content-based, thus casting process scapegoat” (109). When considering process in the alternate terms of origin, the post-process assumptions about writing as public, interpretative, and situated events and acts seem to function quite hospitably within process. Nonetheless, Kastman’s analysis of a functional post-process pedagogy requires extensive contingency and negotiation between and among hostile participants, and the possibility of reclaiming process for alternate post-process purposes presents an obvious complication.

Ultimately, assessment policy and scholarship (and, relatedly, post-process theory) do little to “lock down” what exactly is valued in the field of rhetoric and composition. Complications relative to how researchers in rhetoric and composition see their own work and the work of others in the field and how these interpretations represent what is valued and what is not across the discipline. The multiple voices speaking for the field present no clear definition of literacy for college readiness and ultimately bring into question whether these voices speak for/with/about literacy at all. Though scholarship in literacy and the composition classroom remain primary areas of focus in the field, my analysis of definitions of literacy for college readiness leads me to conclude that at the beginning of the 21st century rhetoric and composition does not provide a functionally cohesive definition of literacy for college readiness. Additionally, the very idea of establishing a definition seems to run counter to much research in the field related to literacy.

Relatedly, I would also argue that the same could be said for the definition of rhetoric and composition as a field of study. With attention to pedagogical approaches and outcomes in rhetoric and composition, post-process theory seems to represent an ontological (rather than epistemological) disconnect concerning the identity of the field. Post-process theory and the related scholarship of the “Social Turn” evidence an intentional disengagement with academic precedent concerning work in composition pedagogy both for and within the university. Though these new and emerging areas of scholarship do not take over or displace literacy and composition pedagogy as primary areas of research (and do offer diverse areas of creative potential), these strands of scholarship do, by design, further decentralize the field’s apparent focus while also disrupting the possibility of a shared knowledge base. In the 2008 CCCC Chair’s Address entitled “Representing Ourselves,” Cheryl Glenn speaks to these obvious tensions and their effects on rhetoric and composition’s place in conversations outside of the field:

Thus, too often we allow ourselves to become divided when a decision to transcend our disagreements at that moment might allow us to leverage our diversity into a strategic representation of the CCCC as an intellectual community with professional force and public influence over those external powers who want to fashion who we are or what we should do.
(423)

Glenn’s statement describes how the variety of scholarship in the field could serve as a source of power in its diversity and connection to multiple points of contact in the network of relations, but intradisciplinary tensions regarding research and the identity of

the field undermine rhetoric and composition's authority and legitimacy. Additionally, such unproductive internal conflict makes rhetoric and composition vulnerable to interpretation by other mediators in the network of relations, allowing actors outside of the discipline to interpret and define the field's identity and the value of its work.

In the next section I return to Kentucky's assessment and accountability system with an awareness of these disciplinary discontents. I locate the status of rhetoric and composition scholarship in the network of relations regarding literacy for college readiness through Kentucky's literacy policy and administrative documents. Additionally, I wish to emphasize the particular time frame of these documents in relation to Cheryl Glenn's 2008 CCCC Chair Address, as 2008 represents a year of transition in Kentucky's literacy assessment and accountability.

Meanwhile, Back in Kentucky: An Updated Analysis of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System and The Kentucky Writing Handbook

Sarah J. McCarthy argues that the standardized tests mandated under NCLB privilege reading, resulting in an abandonment of writing instruction and assessment in order to allow for test preparation, but the enduring presence of the writing portfolio assessment in Kentucky evidences a continued focus on direct, process-driven writing assessment at the beginning of the 21st century (493). Though Kentucky continues to use the Writing Assessment Portfolio for accountability, significant changes in the portfolio's contents and the related rationales for these changes do indicate a clear shift in focus in terms of literacy for college readiness. In this section I analyze the *The Fall 2006 Kentucky Writing Handbook* (the 2006 Handbook) and the *2007-2008 Update to the*

*Kentucky Writing Handbook (2007-2008 Update)*⁶⁷ in order to locate definitions of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky near the end of the CATS era. Both the 2006 Handbook and the 2007-2008 are relatively small documents compared with the NCLB texts considered earlier in this chapter, but these handbooks reveal significant changes in Kentucky's definitions of literacy for college readiness as represented in the system of assessment and accountability.

Even as the 2006 Handbook stands as a composition written under the requirements of NCLB, the handbook does not engage with NCLB presumably (as detailed earlier in this chapter) because NCLB primarily relates to accountability for reading (rather than writing) assessment through 8th grade. Rather, Kentucky's legislative texts serve as the explicit authority for definitions of literacy for college readiness. The statutory and administrative foundations for Kentucky's Writing Program are listed as five cornerstones including Writing Portfolio Procedures (703 KAR 5:010), the Program of Studies for Kentucky Schools (704 KAR 3:303), the Administrative Code for Kentucky's Educational Assessment Program (703 KAR 5:080), research-based practices (2005-2006 703 KAR 5:010 revision), and on-going evaluation (2).

Though the 2006 Handbook does not engage explicitly with NCLB, traces of NCLB are present in the text. The language of "research-based practices" and "on-going evaluation" represent the incorporation of NCLB. Additionally, the 2006 Handbook does make reference to university partnerships through Kentucky Writing Projects, evidencing

⁶⁷ A comparison between the 2006 Handbook and the 2007-2008 Update reveals no significant differences in the contents of the texts. The 2006 Handbook serves as the primary text of reference because it provides the point of transition for implementation of new portfolio design at the 12th grade. The 2007-2008 Update is a continuation of changes made in the 2006 Handbook.

the language of NCLB and its endorsement of the NWP (vii). Yet, in the context of the 2006 Handbook, both of these NCLB terms are translated as process theory and the portfolio assessment respectively. With attention to the pedagogical foundations of the 2006 Handbook, process occupies an entire subsection of the 2006 Handbook and 2007-2008 Update with direct reference to process as a state literacy standard (WR HS 4.9.0-4.130.00): “**Evidence of the writing process (emphasis in original)** is clear and shows a student’s growth over time” (27). But the 2006 Handbook does qualify process as a recursive (rather than linear) operation:

To communicate effectively, students should engage in the various stages of the writing process including focusing, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and reflecting. The writing process is recursive; different writers engage in the process differently and proceed through the stages at different rates. (67)

This description of process as an interpretation of state literacy standards provide a productive site of engagement between the Kentucky’s literacy standards, process (and post-process) scholarship in rhetoric and composition, and archival evidence of process in student work. Put simply, this definition identifies the importance of process in the generation of writing but allows process flexibility within the actual context of composing.

Kentucky’s 12th Grade Writing Assessment Portfolio

In addition to a more nuanced definition of process, the 2006 Handbook also reveals a clear shift in the assessment portfolio’s contents between 2005 and 2006.

According to *An Analysis of the Commonwealth Accountability System* composed by Kentucky's Legislative Research Commission, the only accountability assessments for 12th grade students in 2004-2005 are literacy-based direct writing assessments: the writing assessment portfolio and the Core Content on-demand writing assessment (7). Evidencing the expressivist-centered approach that had been in place since the portfolio's inception, this report documents the four types of writing required in the 12th grade assessment portfolio: reflective, personal, literary, and transactive (11). Citing the Program of Studies and Core Content for Assessment, the 2006 Handbook prioritizes transactive (rather than narrative) writing in the assessment portfolio contents. Unlike previous portfolios, the 2007 portfolio (based on 2006 Handbook) includes the following texts for assessment:

1. Reflective Writing
2. Personal Expressive **OR** Literary Writing (**emphasis in original**)
3. Transactive Writing
4. Transactive Writing with Analytical or Technical Focus (**12th grade only**)
(emphasis in original) (79)

Though narrative writing is still present in the portfolio, personal expressive writing and literary writing have been compressed into a single entry. The reflective writing piece, essentially a literacy narrative related to the portfolio contents, also remains. Transactive Writing occupies two entries in the updated assessment portfolio, and "while one piece in the Grade 12 Portfolio *must* have an analytical or technical focus, both transactive pieces *could* be developed this way" (88).

The portfolio's privileging of Transactive Writing reorients definitions of literacy for college readiness in terms of authenticity related to context. Transactive Writing is defined as requiring students to "analyze and communicate through authentic transactive purposes for writing (e.g., explaining, persuading, informing, analyzing" as outlined in the Program of Studies (87). Characteristics specific to Transactive Writing with Analytical or Technical Focus are linked to subareas in Technical Writing, Academic Writing, and Content Area Writing (91-94).

The inclusion of Transactive Writing with Analytical or Technical Focus as a unique category in the assessment portfolio does seem to echo the types of texts endorsed *for reading* in the NCLB Kit, but the recognized subareas in this part of the portfolio also reflect the persistent presence of academic writing (including the literary analysis form) in the portfolio. With a particular focus on the nature of Academic Writing, the 2006 Handbook addresses the inclusion of academic writing artifacts as a contentious site but provides rationale and textual examples to support its inclusion in the portfolio:

Some might say that academic writing is not always practical in its purposes, though many practical outcomes result from academic writing, and it certainly is a form of "real-world writing" available to teachers and students in our schools. The forms used in academic writing vary, but among them are articles for magazines and journals, papers to present at meetings, reviews, etc. Academic writing certainly can be an appropriate choice for the Kentucky Writing Portfolio. Writers of academic writing

intended for the portfolio should have in mind the important criteria expected of such work. (94)

The expectations for academic writing artifacts include student awareness of existing conversations about an addressed topic and the use of research-based support for contributions to the conversations. The 2006 Handbook states that “an authentic application of academic writing” shows students “approximating the role of university scholar by writing to others in the discipline” (37). With this representation of Academic Writing, the 2006 Handbook effectively places 12th grade students in the role of “inventing the university,” echoing Bartholomae’s text some thirty years after its initial publication.

What our beginning students need to learn is to extend themselves into the commonplaces, set phrases, rituals, gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion, obligatory conclusions, and necessary connections that determine the "what might be said" and constitute knowledge within the various branches of our academic community. (10)

Bartholomae describes “beginning students” as presumably students beginning the work of college composition, but this “beginning” can also be read as entry into the space of academic discourse generally. Here, the language of the 2006 Handbook locates academic writing at the threshold connecting secondary and post-secondary spaces.

Though Bartholomae is not named in the 2006 Handbook as source of authority for definitions of academic writing (and, relatedly, literacy for college readiness), the descriptions of academic writing as both authentic and performative suggest

Bartholomae's obvious influence. The presence of such language and the corresponding contents of the assessment portfolio as reflected in the 2006 Handbook reveal that the Bartholomae-Elbow debates continue to play out within the portfolio itself, and tensions between narrative and academic writing as *the* representation of literacy for college readiness persist. If the 2006 Handbook and corresponding assessment portfolio are to be read as the archive defining literacy for college readiness in Kentucky at the end of KERA's second decade, Elbow and Bartholomae are tied with two texts each, yet neither are cited as sources of authority.

Timed Writing: Kentucky's 12th Grade On-Demand Writing Assessment

The 2006 Handbook addresses the importance of on-demand writing in direct relation to assessments typically operating as representations of literacy for college readiness, and the handbook includes an excerpt from Anne Ruggles Gere's *Writing on Demand*:

“We live in a world of high-stakes testing and, in the area of writing, of testing on-demand writing. This serious for secondary school students, who must learn to write effectively within a narrow window of time...Highly focused writing in response to a specific prompt, completed within a limited amount of composing time, and scored using a weighted rubric, is the norm for most large-scale writing samples currently required by states and schools, by the current Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) writing exams, by some colleges, and by Advanced Placement (AP) English exams.” (106)

Beyond the 12th writing assessment portfolio, on-demand writing stands as the only other measure of literacy for college readiness in the Kentucky accountability structure. This focus on on-demand writing and its described importance in college entrance and AP exams links Kentucky's measures for literacy in the 12th grade with other nationally-recognized measures, and Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment may be interpreted as a predictor for performance on these timed writing exams. The rationale for the place of on-demand writing in 12th grade literacy assessment and accountability suggests that the literacies privileged in the on-demand writing assessment do reveal a distinct definition of literacy for college readiness. The inclusion of on-demand writing reveals that literacy for college readiness is measured not only through a process-based portfolio assessment but also through writing tasks similar to AP end-of-course assessments and highly standardized college entrance writing assessments.

Though the on-demand writing assessment represents a departure from the process model of writing in the portfolio assessment, the 12th grade on-demand assessment does privilege transactive forms of writing similar to those present in the revised portfolio assessment. Both direct prompts (prompts based on a scenario with corresponding writing task) and passage-based prompts (prompts based on a specifically-provided text with corresponding writing task) require that responses be written in a prescribed form, and all 12th grade sample prompts provided ask that students compose a persuasive response to an identified audience using "logical forms" (110). For 12th grade, the prescribed forms include only letters, articles, speeches, and

editorials (112). The 12th grade on-demand writing assessment does not include narrative writing.

The inclusion of the 12th grade on-demand writing assessment establishes direct links between Kentucky's system of assessment and accountability and assessment instruments in the broader network of relations. Though Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment as an assessment instrument does not translate into measures of literacy for college readiness outside of Kentucky, the engagement of the on-demand writing assessment with ACT, SAT, and AP that Anne Ruggles Geer describes establishes the assessment's purpose relative to national measures of literacy related to both college admissions and college course credit. Kentucky's on-demand writing assessment is presented in terms of preparation for these other assessments, assessments that define literacy for college readiness as a timed performance of prescribed literacy skills. Though the 2006 Handbook heavily emphasizes the importance of "authentic" writing and its publication with portfolio assessment, the context in which on-demand writing occurs suggests that the assessment's authenticity can only be linked to the occasion of assessment events as nationally-recognized standardized measures of writing skills and the delivery of content knowledge (35). This explicit justification for on-demand writing in relation to college readiness assessments further complicates exactly what represents literacy for college readiness at this point of transition in Kentucky's assessment and accountability structure.

Who Says What's Important?: Sources of Authority for Literacy in the 2006 Handbook

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, neither Peter Elbow nor David Bartholomae are identified as sources of authority in the 2006 Handbook. Nonetheless, their debates about the types of writing that should be produced as representations of literacy for college readiness continue to play out in the assessment and accountability design described in the 2006 Handbook. I would argue that the 2006 Handbook not only allows for these tensions to surface but also makes room for the possibility that *both* expressivism *and* academic discourse represent vital strands of literacy for college readiness. I should also note the significant points of engagement between the 2006 Handbook and strands of rhetoric and composition scholarship. Sources of authority for the 2006 Handbook include Chris Anson, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein (*They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*), George Hillocks, and Ken Macrorie (*The I-Search Paper*).

Of particular interest is the direct reference to the work of Charles Whitaker in the 2006 Handbook. Whitaker, a professor at Eastern Kentucky University, co-authored a 1994 article related to KERA's effects on writing instruction that I reference earlier in this chapter, but his primary engagements in the network relate not to rhetoric and composition scholarship but, rather, to policy translations and curriculum design. Unlike Brian Huot's scholarship in the critique of (rather than cooperation with) Kentucky's system of literacy assessment and accountability, Whitaker's texts in the network serve as bridges between secondary and post-secondary spaces, as his workshop materials and "sample purposes, audiences, and forms" represent the most authoritative foundations of the 2006 Handbook (38). Whitaker, in his affiliation with NWP as co-director of the

Eastern Kentucky Writing Project, also provided professional development materials for Kentucky teachers in support of the Kentucky writing portfolio (Holland).

I would argue that Whitaker's work in Kentucky's literacy policy and curriculum design creates a node that productively connects KERA, NCLB, the NWP, and rhetoric and composition scholarship in literacy assessment. Whitaker's participations through these various sites in the network and the related circulation of texts reveal the mediational possibilities of engaging (and reconciling) with multiple actors in the network. The presence and influence of Whitaker's texts evidence the potential sources of authority that can result from such cooperative participations.

Conclusion

At the end of KERA's second decade, definitions of literacy for college readiness seem firmly grounded in Kentucky's writing assessment structure combining the 12th grade portfolio assessment (a constant feature in Kentucky's assessment and accountability structure since KERA's inception) with a 12th grade on-demand assessment. These two types of assessment, though very different in design and purpose, both serve as direct writing assessments requiring students to compose in response to various prompts.

But, in spite of the significant revisions to Kentucky's writing portfolio, the 2008 assessment portfolio represents the last time portfolio assessment is included in Kentucky's system of assessment and accountability. The following year, portfolios were moved under a new program review system in which schools provide a self-assessment of the overall writing program, but individual portfolios are no longer scored for

accountability purposes. In the absence of state accountability, the writing portfolio is relegated to a matter of compliance without consequence.

In 2008, Kentucky conducted its first statewide administration of the ACT for all 11th grade students. The same year, the Common Core State Standards were introduced in draft form as the basis for a national literacy curriculum. Unlike NCLB, which served as document mandating systems of accountability for literacy, the Common Core is presented as a foundational document for curriculum design. In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I track literacy for college readiness in the decade that follows Kentucky's initial statewide ACT administration as well as Kentucky's adoption of the Common Core (2008-2018), as Kentucky's system of assessment and accountability undergoes a complete overhaul. Through this new comprehensive system of assessment and accountability, Kentucky's Department of Education *explicitly* addresses literacy for college readiness.

CHAPTER 4
STANDARDIZING LITERACY FOR COLLEGE READINESS: SENATE BILL 1, THE
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS, AND (IN)DIRECT WRITING
ASSESSMENT

Standards and metrology solve practically the question of relativity that seems to intimidate so many people. Can we obtain some sort of universal agreement? Of course we can! *Provided* you find a way to hook up your local instrument to one of the many metrological chains whose material network can be fully described, and whose cost can be fully determined. Provided that there is also no interruption, no break, no gap, and no uncertainty along any point in the transmission. Indeed, traceability is precisely what the whole metrology is about!

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social*

It goes without saying that the Common Core represents the collective wisdom and the field's best intentions regarding what constitutes the most powerful literacy practices today. But it will also be important to keep in mind, particularly as we implement the standards, that they represent a particular version of literacy, one that is being elevated no doubt for good reasons. Yet other versions of literacy do exist, and more importantly, are being created (literacy practices and tools have never changed more rapidly than now), and will exist in sub-rosa or open competition with societal- and school-sanctioned varieties.

Glynda A. Hull and Elizabeth Birr Moje
“What is the Development of Literacy the
Development Of?”

In “What is the Development of Literacy the Development Of?” Glynda A. Hull and Elizabeth Birr Moje take a position in support of literacy standards as representations of disciplinary expertise put to use for an explicitly pedagogical purpose. Hull and Birr Moje do not sanctify standards but rather speak of their usefulness in nuanced terms and,

correspondingly, identify the importance of engaging with the standards as sources of power for not only literacy practitioners but also their students. Hull and Moje astutely recognize the complications of standards in their multiple representations “at once ideological, pedagogical, and institutional,” and the argument of the piece actually serves as modeled navigation of the affordances and constraints associated with these identifiers operating simultaneously (2). Hull and Moje argue that the work of literacy teachers is to “insure that the powerful literacies” contained in standards “are accessible to the full range of our student populations” (2). This characterization of standards as tools of access and power presents a point of cooperative engagement between scholarship in rhetoric and composition, (including literacy studies) and national literacy standards. In this context, standards offer opportunities for professional authority and pedagogical progress. Though Hull and Moje locate literacy studies in a potentially productive dialogue with standards, the word “standardized” tends to make a lot of folks in literacy education generally (and scholars in rhetoric and composition specifically) more than a bit anxious. The term instantly conjures up images of the meat grinder scene from the film *Pink Floyd - The Wall*, with students entering the educational apparatus as individuals only to be reduced to a homogeneous mush in the name of common and equitable literacy education. Though standards and standardization are often associated with these dystopian outcomes through a sort of education-industrial complex, it is important to

avoid a reductive reception of standards, particularly when considering standards through the lens of ANT. Subject to an ANT analysis, standards can (and, I would argue, should) be understood as functional compositions attempting to define what is valued and measurable. Standards serve as representations of Bakhtin's "unitary language" operating as "the theoretical expression of historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of centripetal forces of language" (270). In the work of identifying definitions of literacy for college readiness, standards exist as explicit articulations of what *is* (and, by omission, isn't) literacy.

In "(un)Doing Standards in Education with Actor-Network Theory," Tara Fenwick argues that standards can best be described as "the attempt to order practice as a distance" in that they "aspire to ensure consistency and comparability in the everyday conduct that occurs in diverse locations in which a whole constellation of relations meet and weave together to constitute practice" (119). Therefore, standards provide a seemingly clear-cut resolution to the "contested and precarious multiplicities" and "multiple simultaneous ontologies" associated with competing definitions of literacy (119).

Latour presents the function of standards in their capacity for restricting the field of participants in the network of relations. Standards by design serve to limit the "repertoire of actants" in an attempt to stabilize "uncertainties" and keep "controversies at bay" (*Reassembling* 249; 227). These features of exclusion, distillation, and certainty suggest that standards represent what Latour identifies as *universals*. Universals can be

described as a body of shared and circulatable knowledge objects engaging in a public performance of purity and consensus. Universals are “stabilized definitions” that, at their most functional, operate as contracts of participation (233). Relatedly, universals are conceptual and ideological, an accepted and shared collection of knowledge that functions as the basis for the generation of *intermediary* texts in the network of relations.

Additionally, standards as universals in the context of literacy formalize (even legalize) specific disciplinary strands in order to establish presumably reproducible representations of literate acts. Through this assertion of universality, literacy standards take on a sort of *a priori* status, relying not on precedent but rather self evidence.

Relatedly, the adoption of standards typically corresponds to moments of shift as an easy means to stabilization. Standards as universals serve as a hard reset in the transition of power in that these standards are employed as a way of making things both new and whole simultaneously. Put simply, standards as universals might best be described as an articulated attempt at ontological singularity.

Standards as universals walk the walk of stability even as the occasion of their implementation is often quite the opposite. Though literacy standards as universals are supposed to allow for unspoiled agreement regarding the fundamental and irreducible character of literacy, standards of practice cannot fully determine either practice itself or its corresponding artifacts. In spite of the intention of stability within standards, standards as universals do not operate as immutable mobiles. It is the public nature of universals and their corresponding (and necessary) mobility that affect their stability. The language of standards may remain static as these universals are circulated across the network of

relations, but standards (like other text-based universals such as the Constitution or the Ten Commandments) contain a vital “heterogeneity” in which activation is only possible through translation and application (Fenwick and Edwards 87). Rather than offering closure and conclusion, standards assume a position of origin in a mediational progression defining and enacting literacy through a chain (or, perhaps, web) of translations in which standards are interpreted (or “unpacked” as is the parlance of our times) in the generation of new texts. Consequently, an ANT analysis of standards as universals actually recognizes “the uncertainty of standards as both rhetorical positioning and the bases for the judgment in the governance of educational activity” (Fenwick and Edwards 88). Though standards are often offered up as devices for definition and conclusion, they typically operate in a counter capacity. Rather than the end of the conversation, standards exist as the site of persistent dialogic engagement highlighting the contingent interplay among prescription, adoption, and translation.

With attention to the precarity (rather than the clarity) of standards, this chapter focuses on standards as universals in the network of relations defining literacy for college readiness. As a way of “mapping the controversies,” this chapter tracks definitions of literacy for college readiness as these definitions move from state and national literacy policy through the implementation, translation, and assessment of national literacy standards (Latour, *Reassembling* 31). In this chapter, I identify how standards operate within and move across the network of relations related to literacy for college readiness. Focusing specifically on the transactive and mediational nature of standards, this chapter

follows how literacy standards as universals are interpreted, unpacked, and enacted in the complex network defining literacy for college readiness.

This chapter tracks definitions of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky from 2008, the year of Kentucky's initial statewide ACT administration, through March 10, 2020, with Kentucky's ACT administration followed a few days later, on March 13, 2020, by the global pandemic shutdown in response to Covid-19. To trace the implementation of national literacy standards in the context of state accountability, this chapter first addresses the legislative actions informing another shift in Kentucky's assessment and accountability design, including a mandate for the adoption of new academic standards. The chapter then describes the Common Core as a standards-based text with the explicit purpose of defining literacy for college readiness in the United States. This section of the chapter also describes the implementation of the Common Core in Kentucky as national literacy standards are translated through state and national policies into partnership agreements and crosswalk documents linking the standards with Kentucky's new assessment and accountability model. In considering the other, multiple actors in the network of relations regarding literacy for college readiness, the chapter then turns to rhetoric and composition's response to the Common Core through both scholarship and the creation of the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, another crosswalk document seeming to connect secondary and postsecondary literacy contexts while also serving as a sort of assertion of disciplinary authority. The chapter concludes with a description of the gradual falling away of multiple measures of literacy

for college readiness and the eventual rejection of the Common Core, as yet another *transformational* set of standards is put into place.

This chapter highlights the proliferation of crosswalk documents between and among various (seemingly competing) sets of standards circulated across the network of relations. These crosswalk documents evidence the “translations between mediators” generating “traceable associations” (Latour, *Reassembling* 108). Within Kentucky, at least four separate sets of standards (Kentucky Program of Studies, ACT, Common Core State Standards, and NCTE/IRA SELA) are used as foundational sources of authority for definitions of literacy for college readiness, and each of these sets of standards are translated into not only curricula and assessments but also into other lists of standards. Using Latour’s comparison to a cartographer, an ANT analysis “must deal not only with reports coming from many travelers but also with multiple projection grids, where each point is requesting its own ad hoc coordinates” (*Reassembling* 25). A great deal of effort is made to reconcile one set of standards with another, in an almost theological exercise attempting to establish universality with the apparent assertion that they all mean the same thing - *that we all believe literacy for college readiness to mean the same thing* - across these multiple contexts.

Kentucky’s Movement to Metrology and Universality: The Legislation of New Standards and the ACT for Everyone

In an effort to identify shifting definitions of literacy for college readiness in the adoption of new literacy standards, I must first contextualize these changes in legislation dating back to 2006, changes that set into motion modifications to policy and standards

that inform definitions of literacy for college readiness in the decade to follow. In 2006, the Kentucky legislature passed Senate Bill 130 as an amendment to KRS 158.6453. The legislation called for significant revision to Kentucky’s foundational policy documents in the state’s education assessment and accountability structure. Among the changes mandated in the amendment is an overhaul of “all academic content standards” across academic areas of study (including reading, language arts, and writing), establishing a December 15, 2010 deadline for full implementation of these revisions (2.g.3).

In terms of literacy for college readiness, the amendment engages with literacy across secondary and postsecondary spaces in various ways. First, the amendment provides a definition for writing: “‘Writing’ means a purposeful act of thinking and expression that uses language to explore ideas and communicate meaning to others. Writing is a complex, multifaceted act of communication” (1.k).⁶⁸ Second, the amendment requires that changes to the standards necessarily include explicit alignment between secondary and postsecondary spaces as well as the cooperative participation of secondary and postsecondary teachers in the standards revision process (2.b.6; 2.c). Third, the amendment lists secondary literacy assessments as measures of college readiness within the accountability system. The secondary literacy assessments include a “college readiness examination” in the 10th grade in the form of a Pre-ACT/PLAN test and the “ACT college admissions and placement examination” in the 11th grade as the required measures of literacy for college readiness (11.2; 11.3)⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ The source and rationale for this amorphous definition for writing is not provided, but the exact language of this definition is used in the 2011 NAEP Writing Framework.

⁶⁹The Pre-ACT/PLAN test is an ACT product in the EPAS assessment progression.

Additionally, it is important to note the amendment's reference to writing and the writing portfolio in the new assessment and accountability model. Though the amendment continues to require a formal school-based writing program, including the maintenance of writing portfolios, individual writing portfolios are no longer scored as a measure of accountability. With the language "individual student scores on portfolios shall not be included in the accountability system," the amendment effectively excludes all direct writing assessment from the new assessment and accountability structure (7.c.3). This language does not, of course, remove writing from the secondary curriculum but, rather, reframes the way writing - through assessment - is understood, taught, and tracked. The once-mighty writing portfolio assessment, long the signature feature of progressive literacy assessment in Kentucky and a model for process pedagogy, is relegated to a place of procedure, holding no real power or importance beyond folders circulating across a school.

In an effort to reconcile this new assessment progression based on ACT standards, KDE published the *Program of Studies and College Readiness Standards Alignment* (the PCSA) in September of 2008. This document functions as a crosswalk aligning EPAS College Readiness Standards (EPAS CRS) with Kentucky's existing state standards in the Program of Studies (POS). Through the crosswalk, Kentucky's existing standards document and the ACT's standards document, simultaneously translated "a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexisting" (Latour, *Reassembling* 108). This crosswalk also works to comply with the amendment's standards' requirements without significant disruption to existing educational policy

documents. This crosswalk, as an exercise in “connecting sites” across the network of relations, allows Kentucky to “generate traceable associations” between state literacy standards and the authority of the ACT (Latour, Reassembling 118-119). The fact that the alignment is a sort of retrofit job is irrelevant because the public declaration of cooperation and engagement in the crosswalk reconciles and dissolves any disconnects. All standards now meet in the immutable mobile of the ACT assessment.

In the alignment of the POS with the EPAS CRS, assessment privileges the most easily assessed aspects of writing, which includes no *actual* writing. Kentucky’s alignment with ACT standard attaches assessment of writing to the English section of the ACT test. In place of a process model of direct writing assessment, writing in Kentucky shifts to an indirect, current-traditional model that “measures the student’s understanding of the conventions of written English (punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure) and rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, and style” through a timed, multiple choice test (ACT 35). Consequently, only writing standards that can be measured through the indirect writing assessment of the ACT English test carry any relevance in the system of assessment and accountability.

The amendment’s explicit engagement with the ACT is also significant because the alignment of legal requirements with a specific (and nationally recognized) assessment strategically places an immutable mobile in the network of relations. And the ACT as immutable mobile circulates almost immediately, as Kentucky’s first statewide administration of the ACT took place in the spring of 2008, two years before any national literacy standards were finalized.

Articulating the Universal in the National: The Common Core State

Standards for Literacy

In June of 2010, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA)⁷⁰ released the Common Core State Standards (Common Core), a set of national literacy and math standards presented as an initiative with the intention of establishing consistent and rigorous academic standards for schools in the United States. Unlike NCLB, the national educational policy described in detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation and based on paced proficiency targets, the Common Core is not a system of accountability but “a set of expectations for student knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to master to succeed in college and careers” (Preface, Common Core 1). These standards are consistently described in terms of the following specifications: “research and evidence based, aligned with college and work expectations, rigorous, and internationally benchmarked” (Introduction, Common Core 3). From its inception, the Common Core was designed with the intention of universality through its engagements with sources of authority⁷¹ and its ability to connect its credibility to globally-recognized measures of academic proficiency, a system of standards built with mobility and influence in mind.

The Common Core places particular emphasis on literacy and the importance of

⁷⁰ Though the CCSSO and the NGA are credited with primary authorship of the Common Core, a number of other entities are listed as participants in the creation of the standards, including the exceedingly ambiguous “international partners,” “researchers,” and “many stakeholders,” per KDE’s “An Introduction to the ELA Standards” (2).

⁷¹ The connections to research and evidence sound very similar to the scientific language used to describe legitimate literacy scholarship discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

literacy across multiple content areas and rhetorical contexts.. Though the scope of the Common Core is set out in terms of preparedness in post-secondary spaces including the university classroom, the project of the Common Core is much bigger, stating that “as a natural outgrowth of meeting the charge to define college and career readiness, the Standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century” (Introduction, Common Core 3). The enterprise of the Common Core is to equip students with agency through literacy:

Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. In short, students who meet the Standards develop the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression of language.

(Introduction, Common Core 3)

I cite this significant section of the Introduction to the Common Core not only to identify the project of the standards as stated in Common Core text itself but also to establish this

excerpt as a sort of mission statement for the standards before they are ultimately translated through numerous mediators in the network of relations. Here, the Common Core establishes the objectives attached to the universality of standards. This is the public declaration of the literate acts (what could even be described as “habits of mind”) ideally resulting from the implementation of the standards. Accordingly, these literate acts represent the *end* with the standards providing the *means*.

I also cite this part of the text because this section of the Common Core (as vital as it seems to understanding how literacy is imagined and defined in the Common Core project) is not typically cited in scholarship or public conversations related to the standards. Considering this absence through ANT (and echoing Fenwick and Edwards), I must ask the question: “what actually circulates among different settings in the name of standards?” (88). This question is critical to an analysis of the standards because it identifies the distinction between the circulation of standards *in name only* as opposed to their circulation as a foundational list of literacy ideals. Much like other national literacy initiatives previously cited in this dissertation, the Common Core synecdochic

At the most basic level, the term “Common Core” itself operates as a study in assumed ubiquity, the perfect tiny articulation of centripetal consensus. Though the Common Core in name does move around the network of relations in a performance of universality, the movement and use of this name does not necessarily convey the actual content of the standards and related translations to which the name is attached. Instead, the Common Core, much like other national literacy initiatives previously cited in this dissertation, takes on a synecdochic quality allowing for the conflation of the term with

all kinds of meanings and engagements depending on the context of its use. But this is the exact peculiarity of the Common Core as a universal. The name allows for a codified simplicity regarding definitions of literacy for college readiness, but the source text related to the term reveals a complicated network of engagements, sponsorships, and translations conveying the absence of universality. Consequently, it can be difficult to identify what exactly is being referenced when the Common Core is cited and discussed.

Though the complications with universality begin with the Common Core in name, the Common Core document, specifically the comprehensive text containing the standards (as published and circulated) is probably best described as a sort of standards matrix evidencing the various assemblages operating in the name of the standards prior to their implementation. An analysis of the Common Core document from the middle outward provides an overview of this matrix structure. Beginning 35 pages into the Common Core document, the literacy standards in isolation, known as the “anchor standards,” cover just four pages, one page for each literacy strand: reading, writing, language, and speaking/listening/observing. The standards are simply lists of literacy proficiency objectives including language that is not particularly revelatory or controversial. For example, the anchor standards for writing are distilled down to ten items privileging a directed process-and-product approach to writing:

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. Research to Build and Present Knowledge
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. (40)

These anchor standards, in their brevity and seeming clarity, do offer a glimmer of universal possibility, but an analysis of what comes before and after these standards in the Common Core document shows how the standards are tied to specific affiliations and translations. Simply stated, the standards can assume a state of universality in isolation, but standards as functional texts cannot exist in isolation. They are made for translation and application.

Consequently, the Common Core document in its outward expansion from these anchor standards shows the textual network linking the standards to numerous actors, alignments, and interpretations. The anchor standards are immediately linked to an “unpacked” and exploratory version of the standards spanning a total of 66 pages across all grade levels (K-12) and literacy strands. The inclusion of introductory/contextual material, rationales, exemplar texts across content areas, and sample assessment prompts that bookend the standards makes the length of Common Core document swell to over 300 pages (not including the math standards). In the following section I will map the various engagements contained within the Common Core document.

Leading (and Leaving) with Assessment: Citing Literacy Measurement in the Common Core

Moving outward from the standards in the Common Core document leads to a substantial introduction and voluminous supplementary material purposefully connecting the standards to particular literacy assessments. Specifically, the introduction of the Common Core document immediately links the standards to existing precedent for national literacy assessment through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The rationale for the focus and distribution of the literacy standards is explained as an explicit alignment with the NAEP⁷² Reading and Writing Frameworks and corresponding assessments:

Evidence concerning the demands of college and career readiness gathered during development of the Standards concurs with NAEP's shifting emphases: standards for grades 9–12 describe writing in all three forms, but, consistent with NAEP, the overwhelming focus of writing throughout high school should be on arguments and informative/explanatory texts.

(Introduction, Common Core 5)

The 12th grade reading standards are divided into two types, with 70% connected to informational texts and 30% connected to literary texts. Relatedly, the 12th grade writing standards are distributed across three composition types: persuasive writing (40%), informational/explanatory writing (40%), and narrative writing (20%).

The Common Core's engagement with NAEP almost immediately situates the literacy standards in relation to particular interpretations of literacy assessment. Within the context of literacy for college readiness (which is explicitly stated as the primary

⁷² The NAEP is discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. It is important to note that not all students participate in the NAEP.

charge of the standards), the Common Core’s reference to the NAEP brings the existing NAEP assessments into the network of relations. At the 12th grade level, these literacy standards are translated into assessments containing multiple choice and short answer tests for reading and timed (25 minute) on-demand essays for writing.

The Common Core document’s engagement with the NAEP also introduces the assessment behemoth ACT into the standards’ network of relations. The *Writing Framework for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, the text cited as the basis for the NAEP writing assessment as well as the foundation of the Common Core writing standards, was published by the ACT⁷³ (Introduction, Common Core 5). In Appendix A to the Common Core literacy standards entitled “Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards,” ACT again surfaces as integral to the Common Core project, this time in the form of a 2009 research report attributing a lack of preparedness for post-secondary spaces to literacy deficits in the 12th grade:

In brief, while reading demands in college, workforce training programs, and life in general have held steady and increased over the last half century, K-12 texts have actually declined in sophistication, and relatively little attention has been paid to students’ ability to read complex texts independently. These conditions have left a serious gap between many seniors’ reading ability and the reading requirements they will face after graduation. (Common Core, Appendix A 2)

⁷³ Three ACT publications are listed as source texts for the Common Core literacy standards.

This report again revives the language of literacy crisis to establish an imperative for standards adoption and implementation.. Though these citations of ACT publications do not make an explicit link between the standards and the ACT assessment, the text chain reveals both the Common Core’s alliance with the ACT as well as the sanctioned translations of standards in the form of certain forms of assessment.

In addition to ACT, the College Board as well as its highly recognizable assessment products, Advanced Placement (AP) and SAT, serves as sources of authority for the standards as translated into particular types of literacy assessments. In the “Common Core State Standards Alignment: Advanced Placement Research Report” published by the College Board, Hart et al detail the College Board’s role in assisting with drafting the Common Core standards as well as “providing executive guidance” for the Common Core Advisory Committee. It is also important to note that David Coleman, often described as the “architect” of the Common Core and one of three members of Student Achievement Partners credited with drafting the Common Core standards, became the President and CEO of the College Board in 2012, just as the implementation of the Common Core entered its full assessment phase (Achieve the Core).

Coleman’s various points of participation and engagement with the Common Core project further evidence how the universality of the standards is ultimately intended as universality in translation through assessments, resulting in the circulation of specific immutable mobiles across the network of relations. Even as Coleman’s engagement with the College Board brings AP and SAT assessments into the standards network, his public comments regarding a lack of literacy preparedness among high school seniors rely on

data connected to ACT scores (Goldstein). With Coleman, the Common Core standards are cleanly aligned with America's assessment behemoths - ACT, AP, and SAT, establishing a streamlined representation of literacy for college readiness in this battery of tests.

It is also important to recognize how these various alliances endorse (and, simultaneously, dismiss or omit) particular performances of literacy. For example, in the 2012 speech "Bringing the Common Core to Life," Coleman publicly dismisses personal writing (which he identifies as "the exposition of personal opinion or the presentation of a personal narrative"), citing this form as problematic because "people don't really give a shit about what you feel and what you think." This statement reinforces the absence of personal writing and any reference to expressivist approaches to writing in the Common Core. Personal writing as both task and assessment form is relegated to a place of illegitimacy that does not qualify as an artifact evidencing literacy for college readiness. Instead, the Common Core document includes only two categories of writing, "Argument" and "Informative/Explanatory," as sanctioned representations of literacy for college readiness.

Appendix C to the Common Core contains student samples as artifacts of the standards in practice while also providing examples of exemplary assessment tasks. A total of seven samples, two under the category "Argument" and five under the category "Informative/Explanatory," are included for 12th grade as models of literacy for college readiness aligned with the standards. Though no direct reference is made here to AP or SAT assessments, the prompts mirror those used for AP and SAT essay tests. Both

prompts for the argument entries are identified as timed (one 30 minutes and one two hours), on-demand “college placement” assessments (76-78). With the inclusion of these prompts and corresponding essays as representative of the Common Core writing standards for argument, argument is reduced in size and scope to fit the “unnatural rhetorical situation” of the examination, without meaning outside of the occasion of the assessment itself (Herrigton and Moran 487). Within the Common Core document’s translation, argument exists in “a closed system” that is both “a-contextual” and “a-rhetorical,” (Anson 119-120, 124).

In contrast to the argument samples, the five expository samples all evidence process-based writing assessments with “unlimited time to write” and the opportunity for “feedback” and “instructional support” (80). The “Informative/Explanatory” samples are also contextualized as classroom artifacts evidencing literacy for college readiness, including an essay written in AP U.S. History and an essay from a portfolio⁷⁴ submitted for enrollment in a dual credit college composition course. Though these student texts are presented as proficient performances of literacy for college readiness, the inclusion of the essay from the portfolio assessment is the only sample listed with the capacity to move beyond the immediate classroom space and the post-secondary context as an acceptable representation of college-level literacy. Even then, this sample is not afforded the same mobility linked to the AP and SAT argument samples because the portfolio essay is tied to the acceptance of portfolio assessment for dual credit enrollment in composition. At

⁷⁴ This is only reference to portfolio assessment in the Common Core document.

this point in time (in 2010)⁷⁵, AP and SAT assessment scores have the ability to represent literacy for college readiness with numerous participant colleges and universities.

Sources of Authority for the Standards: Rhetoric and Composition Scholarship in the Common Core

Though an analysis of engagements with assessment in the Common Core document reveals powerful sources of authority in ACT and the College Board, the standards document also selectively cites rhetoric and composition scholars as sources of authority for specific strands of the literacy standards. Richard Fulkerson's *Teaching the Argument in Writing*, Gerald Graff's *Clueless in Academe*, and Joseph Williams and Lawrence McEnerney's *Writing in College: A Short Guide to College Writing* are included (alongside multiple research reports from ACT and SAT) among the nine total texts cited as the sources for the Common Core's writing standards. David Bartholomae's "The Study of Error" and Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing* are also cited as two of the total 42 source texts for the Common Core's language standards, the standards related to grammar and conventions. Though various ACT and SAT research texts are again included within the 32 sources of authority for the Common Core's reading standards, no rhetoric and composition scholarship is cited as an authoritative source for reading (Common Core, Appendix A, 36-40).

Beyond the list of citations, the Common Core document also includes engagements with scholars in rhetoric and composition in the promotion of *argument* specifically as the form most representative of literacy for college readiness. Gerald Graff

⁷⁵ I discuss the shift in artifacts evidencing literacy for college readiness following the pandemic in the conclusion of this dissertation.

is quoted as saying “because argument is not standard in most school curricula, only 20 percent of those who enter college are prepared in this respect” (Appendix A, 24). Williams and McEnerey, discussing the distinction between proficient high school writing and proficient college writing, identify argument as the defining type of writing, representing “a serious and focused conversation among people who are Richard Fulkerson is also cited in reference to the importance of argumentative writing, “in which the goal is not victory but a good decision, one in which all arguers are at risk of needing to alter their views, one in which a participant takes seriously the views different from his or her own” (Appendix A, 25). These engagements between the Common Core and disciplinary authority regarding argument seem to position rhetoric and composition in a place of foundational power for the standards, yet the translation of the standards in the assessments (as described previously in this section) suggests otherwise.

National Standards/State Implementation: The Common Core Comes to Kentucky

An ANT analysis of the Common Core document as an attempted universal reveals the various engagements and related translations contained *within the text*. But what happens to this attempted universality as the Common Core circulates across the network of relations? An analysis of the processes of adoption and implementation of the standards provides a view of what happens when the universal is mobilized and subject to translations at the state level. I again locate Kentucky as my point of orientation in the network of relation defining literacy for college readiness. In order to document the intrastate circulation of the Common Core in Kentucky, I must first trace back the *interstate* circulation of standards forward from the federal level.

The Common Core, as a list of standards composed and endorsed by various sources of authority, “appears to be immutable and stabilized as a self-contained and self-evident object,” but the instability of the standards becomes immediately evident as the standards circulate across the network of relations (Fenwick, “(un)Doing Standards 123). This instability begins with the contingency tied to the Common Core project and how this contingency compromises universality. Though the federal government did not mandate that each state adopt the Common Core, states seeking federal “Race to the Top” grant funding were required to participate in the Common Core project in order to have access to this federal grant program (Sanchez and Turner). According to a report from the U.S. Department of Education entitled “State Adoption of the Common Core State Standards: the 15 Percent Rule,” forty-eight states and the District of Columbia had adopted the Common Core literacy standards by March 2012 (Kendall, et al). Such a large number of participating states is significant, even if this participation must be qualified in terms of the contingency of funding. But what is perhaps more significant is the opting out by four states. Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia all elect not to participate in the Common Core project, immediately compromising the universality of the national literacy standards initiative. Another 11 states either rewrite or replace the Common Core during the implementation phase, leaving 35 states as the “common” sites for the Common Core, including the first state to adopt the standards: the great state of Kentucky (“Tracking the Common Core Standards”).

As states moved forward with implementation of the standards, another divide emerged related, unsurprisingly, to assessment. Even as the circulated standards

attempted to unify the country under shared definitions of literacy for college readiness, the Common Core as a standards framework splits into two consortia, each with the purpose of creating and administering common assessments aligned with the standards. Of the states adopting the Common Core, thirteen states joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness in College and Careers (PARCC), and nineteen states joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The thirteen remaining states joined both. Kentucky entered the PARCC consortium.

The implementation of the Common Core in Kentucky was the direct result of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) working collaboratively with the Council on Post-Secondary Education (CPE). In adopting the Common Core and entering into the PARCC consortium, Kentucky simultaneously met the requirements for “Race to the Top” grant funding and the statutory obligations of Senate Bill 1 regarding the implementation of new standards and corresponding assessments with explicit focus on post-secondary readiness:

A catalog of evidence-based college readiness strategies will be developed for use by colleges and universities, educational cooperatives, and P-16 councils in their efforts to promote college and career readiness. In addition to these efforts, KDE and CPE have joined several state and national partners to align course content and assessments between P-12 and postsecondary institutions. (Senate Bill 1 for the CPE Board)

These points of engagement seem to show Kentucky’s subscription to a shared and unified definition of post-secondary readiness (and, relatedly, literacy for college

readiness) in the form of horizontal (interstate) and vertical (secondary to post-secondary) alignments for curriculum and assessments. But the introduction of new actors into the network of relations presents a more complicated representation of the Common Core standards in translation.

In the fulfillment of statutory requirements, Kentucky's adoption of the Common Core brought yet another system of accountability, and relatedly, a whole new set of assessments. In 2011, *Unbridled Learning: College/Career Readiness for All* (*Unbridled Learning*) replaced the existing CATS system of assessment and accountability. Due to the timing of Kentucky's Common Core adoption and implementation (and the corresponding timeline, no actual assessments existed that explicitly aligned with the new Common Core standards, so Kentucky's affiliation with the PARCC consortium was in name only. Kentucky never actually participated in any PARCC assessments⁷⁶. Instead, KDE purchased assessments from ACT and Pearson as a way of meeting policy compliance. The Quality Core assessments included text-based multiple choice tests with no direct writing component. The Pearson assessment included timed, on-demand writing examinations scored holistically according to a four-point rubric. The *Unbridled Learning* examinations were presented as assessments aligned with the Common Core standards even though the canned assessments predated the standards. These assessments, as a sort of retrofit alignment, relied on standards' crosswalks connecting and triangulating Kentucky's Program of Studies, ACT, and Common Core (*POS/KCAS Crosswalk*)⁷⁷. The creation of crosswalk documents, often as workarounds, reveals the translation of

⁷⁶ Kentucky officially left the PARCC consortium in 2014.

⁷⁷ Crosswalk documents aligning the Common Core (KCAS), Kentucky Program of Studies (POS), and ACT are no longer available on KDE's website. I have cited printed versions of these digital texts.

standards as texts of connection and negotiation. Within the network of relations, such crosswalk documents show how seemingly disparate participants engage. One set of standards is even used to reconcile, absorb, and include other sets of standards, arguing approximation. In spite of these apparent alliances, Fenwick asserts that “the connections are never settled, but constantly being renegotiated, shifting the alignments and forms of the entities that have come together” (Fenwick, “(un)Doing Standards 120).

Unbridled Learning also formalizes literacy for college readiness as a part of the accountability structure. Under Unbridled Learning, literacy for college readiness is measured in reading and writing according to a selection of standardized assessment “indicators” (KDE, Summary of Approved Regulations, Unbridled Learning 1).

Unbridled Learning includes three separate assessment sources as indicators of literacy for college readiness. The ACT English and Reading tests represent the primary indicators for academic proficiency, with benchmark scores set at 18 and 20 respectively. Unbridled Learning also included the COMPASS Reading and Writing tests as indicators. The COMPASS, an ACT product, included multiple choice questions in an untimed testing context as another way of representing literacy proficiency. Finally, the KYOTE Reading and Writing, an indicator unique to Kentucky and created by composition instructors from Kentucky colleges and universities, was used as the third indicator of literacy for college readiness. Like the COMPASS, the KYOTE Reading assessment is an untimed test including multiple choice questions related to a selection of short texts. The KYOTE Writing, an untimed on-demand writing assessment based on a single prompt, stands as the only indicator involving the direct (rather than indirect) assessment of

writing as a measure of literacy for college readiness (KDE, College and Career Readiness Delivery Plan 2).

Returning to the concept of universality with the standards, it is important to pause, step back, and look at the network of relations, locating the Common Core from this vantage point in Kentucky at this particular moment in time (2012-2014). In Unbridled Learning's inclusion of the indicators of literacy for college readiness through ACT, COMPASS, and KYOTE, the durability of the Common Core as a universal (almost, if that's possible) appears to be confirmed, if only temporarily. The Common Core *in name* persists as the foundation of Kentucky's new system of assessment and accountability, and the term has moved through numerous texts in the network of relations, each time establishing linkages. Similarly, the Common Core document, including its alliances (both subtle and direct) to the ACT, with sample assessments to match these alliances, transports a representation of literacy for college readiness found in Kentucky's transition literacy measures.

And Kentucky, as an individual site of observation for the Common Core's universality, is like so many other sites among the dozens of states initially adopting the Common Core. Tracing the Common Core forward through various states' implementations reveals that most of these sites end up in the same place, with the Common Core name stamped on a curriculum in which literacy for college readiness is measured by the ACT. The Common Core standards aren't really the point; rather, the Common Core name (coupled with the carrying forward of the sample assessments in the Common Core document) circulates as it is translated into existing assessments that can

travel across state lines. The Common Core was a (temporary and imperfect) success story in universality because it was able to “restrict the repertoire of actants” in the “stabilization of controversies” surrounding definitions of literacy for college readiness by its low-key alliances with ACT and SAT, each as a powerful immutable mobile, an intermediary that embeds a history of network constructions, struggles, and mediations which have settled into one fixed representation” (Latour, *Reassembling* 227; Fenwick, “(un)Doing Standards 123).

Because who needs standards when you already have standardized assessments?

Rhet/Comp Has Entered the (Standards) Chat: Rhetoric and Composition, the Common Core, and the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*

In “Clarifying College Readiness: The Common Core State Standards” Gerald Graff, a prominent literacy scholar in rhetoric and composition cited in the Common Core document, considers the place of literacy standards in functional pedagogical terms:

What is easy to overlook is that standards like these aren’t just another set of hurdles for students to jump over. They actually serve a useful teaching function by defining and clarifying mysteries about college-level work that colleges themselves leave students to figure out on their own. I wish it hadn’t taken a document from the K–12 sector to disclose secrets of college readiness that we in higher education should have spelled out long ago. I sometimes think the only places where “college readiness” isn’t being discussed these days are colleges.

While Graff makes a case for the standards as practical tools for helping teachers and students to locate definitions and corresponding representations of literacy for college readiness, his statement also expresses an element of disciplinary unease regarding standards that seems to run through rhetoric and composition scholarship. Saying out loud a sort of *Fight Club* approach to definitions of literacy for college readiness in the university, Graff suggests that the first rule of the college composition is not to talk about what exactly goes on in college composition, and this avoidance seems to be shaped, in no small part, by an avoidance to using standards as the basis for practice. Though the Common Core document includes multiple sites of engagement with scholarship in rhetoric and composition as sources of authority for the standards (if limited in scope), a survey of scholarship related to standards in rhetoric and composition reveals disciplinary discord (rather than consensus) related to the role of standards *generally* and the Common Core *specifically* in matters of literacy for college readiness.

One strand of scholarship in rhetoric and composition identifies the complicated relationship college composition instructors tend to have with standards, even as they expect students to enter the university classroom with certain *standard* literacy skills. In “When a College Professor and a High School Teacher Read the Same Papers,” Andrea Gallagher and Tom Thompson describe how college instructors “chafe at the idea of standardization” and attribute the absence of clear definitions of literacy for college readiness to “the lack of standardization in college classes (25-26). Gallagher and Thompson also include

As things stand now, high school students can at least find published standards (for their school, their district, or their state) for acceptable work; college students may or may not be able to point to any such standards. In college, students must figure out for themselves what counts as acceptable performance -- more evidence that the distance between high school and college is not just another step up some academic staircase but instead a chasm. (28)

This chasm between high school and college literacy classrooms coupled persistent resistance to standardization in the university might account for the need for students to “invent to the university” even though the moves (or standards) of the university have been quietly codified through writing assessments.

In “An Immodest Proposal for Connecting High School and College” Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein-Graff state that avoidance of identifying and naming literacy standards for college readiness does not mean that expectations for practice and performance do not exist:

Those who are successful in the academic world and beyond (even as opponents of our views) are successful not because they learn to do something completely different each time they encounter a new subject, audience, or situation, or because they all do something different from each other, but because, often without noticing it, they have mastered this convention summary/response pattern. (W415)

Here, Graff and Birkenstein-Graff recognize the presence of standard practices and corresponding products representative of college-level literacy, even as these repeated moves are not necessarily described in terms of standards in the context of the university. Both Graff and Birkenstein-Graff and Gallagher and Thompson state that scholarship in rhetoric and composition typically does not reference standards in definitions of literacy for college readiness. Rather, often when standards are addressed in rhetoric and composition, “standards” exists as a pejorative term.

Consequently, another (and much longer) strand of rhetoric and composition regarding standards shows scholars presenting varying levels of anxiety, distrust, and dismissal of standards while simultaneously offering alternatives to standards that sound a lot like *standards*.

In “The Literacy Demands of Entering the University,” Kathleen Yancey describes the moves for evidencing literacy for college readiness as “the ability to read and use texts, to employ an elaborated writing process in the construction of ‘academic’ texts where argument is a preferred genre, and to reflect on and improve one’s writing often in the company of one’s peers” (256).

Yancey, in listing these literacy proficiencies, establishes what might be called “standards” for college-level literacy. Yancey goes on to cite the *WPA Outcomes Statement* as *not* a standards-based document because the text “intentionally defines only ‘outcomes’ or types of results, and not ‘standards, or precise levels of achievement 258).

In instances when scholarship in rhetoric and composition engages directly with the Common Core, this consistent disciplinary resistance to standards as mechanisms for

professional control becomes increasingly apparent. Relatedly, rhetoric and composition's critique of the Common Core often reveals the conflation of standards with assessment, particularly assessment dictated by forces outside of the composition classroom. In "Teaching and Learning in an 'Audit Culture': A Critical Genre Analysis of Common Core Implementations," Brad Jacobson describes the Common Core writing standards as "not ideal" but offers that "they do identify a more complex, situated theory of writing than most of the state standards" used for assessment under NCLB (9). Though Jacobson concedes that the Common Core standards in isolation offer a more sophisticated approach to writing, the related "accountability mandate and the focus on 'raising standards' perpetuate the audit culture of constant evaluation" (9). In "Moving Beyond the Common Core to Develop Rhetorically Based and Contextually Sensitive Assessment Practices," Clark-Oates et al. also locate their critique of the Common Core standards in relation to assessment rather than evaluating the standards themselves. Specifically, Clark-Oates et al. locate their evaluation of the Common Core in relation to the PARCC assessments "actively resisting the culture of testing and its implications on the teaching and learning of writing" (3). Similarly, Joanne Addison warns that the standards, in their engagements with testing companies and private sources of financial support, present the possibility of creating an educational context "in which teacher and student agency are increasingly restricted and assessment is used as a tool of accountability and control" ("Shifting" 5).

Though the various instances of rhetoric and composition's evaluation of standards do reveal consistent suspicion and resistance, there are instances of attempts at

cooperative engagement. In “Three Interpretative Frameworks: Assessment of English Language Arts-Writing in Common the Common Core State Standards Initiative,” Elliot, et al. offer a different, more dialogic approach to the standards in considering how frameworks “might provide conceptual scaffolds for asking critical questions that lead to enriched discussions among stakeholders” (2). Additionally, Elliot, et al. engage with the standards as an individual element in a web (rather than line) of actors and connected texts:

Such strategies are needed to navigate a maze of complex debates in which everything and its opposite both appear to be true. As researchers in writing assessment (Elliot), cognitively-grounded diagnostic measurement (Rupp), as well as automated scoring and modern psychometrics (Williamson), we are positioned to enter the controversial roar in a very precise way. (2)

This approach provides a model for *how* to consider the standards as a force already at work in the network of relations.

Rhetoric and Composition’ Reaction to Action: The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education

Perhaps rhetoric and composition’s most noteworthy and comprehensive response to the Common Core came in the form of the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education* (the “Framework”) in 2011. An analysis of the Framework as a Common Core crosswalk (even in a performative sense) displays how “processes of *enrollment and mobilization* work to include and exclude elements from the chains,” and these selective

processes ultimately “direct this activity such that the network is performed into existence” (Fenwick, “(un)Doing Standards” 121). The creation of the Framework, a policy document generated through the collaborative work of college and high school writing teachers, evidences a critical exigence for members of the field of rhetoric and composition to present a text outlining literacy for college readiness. The Framework serves as not only as an articulation of college readiness and shared goals across secondary and postsecondary sites of literacy instruction but also as a sort of “boundary object” evidencing the allegiances among the Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project in the shared enterprise of defining literacy in terms of college readiness. With the creation of the Framework, a tiny network-within-the-network of relations is performed into existence, a counter (rather than truly collaborative) engagement with the standards in the existing network.

The Framework outlines “the rhetorical and twenty-first-century skills as well as habits of mind and experiences that are critical for college success” (1). The eight “Habits of Mind” listed as foundational representations of literacy for college readiness are curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition, in that order (1). The expansiveness and abstraction of the Habits of Mind as usable ways to frame a college composition classroom (how does a composition instructor teach and measure openness?!) requires that they be instantly translated into a more functional form. Consequently, the Habits of Mind are unpacked into action

statements showing students exhibit the habits in classroom practices. For example, the habit of openness is translated into three bulleted action statements:

- Examine their (students’) own perspectives to find connections with the perspectives of others;
- Practice different ways of gathering, investigating, developing, and presenting information;
- Listen to and reflect on the ideas and responses of others – both peers and instructors – to their writing. (4)

As these habits are “unpacked” and translated, the Framework increasingly looks like a *standard* standards document including proficiency lists and task targets.

From the unpacked Habits of Mind, the Framework moves to “Experiences with Writing, Reading, and Critical Analysis,” further isolating representations of literacy for college readiness into discrete representations (5). These experiences typically begin with the word “developing,” suggesting the content of the Framework offers a point of origin as well as continued growth (rather than culmination and finality) for these privileged literacies. With the term “developing,” process pedagogy establishes the ideological frame for the Framework. Five experiences are listed as the focus of this process:

Developing Rhetorical Knowledge;

Developing Critical Thinking Through Writing, Reading, and
Research;

Developing Flexible Writing Processes;

Developing Knowledge of Conventions; and

Composing in Multiple Environments (6-10)

Like the Habits of Mind, the Experiences are immediately translated into bulleted lists (including bulleted lists embedded in bulleted lists) further detailing the desired results for the composition classroom. The Framework does not name any definitive artifact resulting from these experiences, but standards (a word so intentionally avoided) are still set. Without its contextual material in the brief Executive Summary, the Framework looks a lot like the Common Core without its introduction and appendices: a list of targets regarding reading and writing with a research component.

But the Framework does not simply outline the “habits of mind” necessary for success in college composition; rather, this policy document reveals a system of translation operating to construct a particular representation of literacy for college readiness. The context guides the translations themselves. Considering rhetoric and composition’s historical resistance to articulating the concrete objectives for the transition from high school to college, the Framework represents an instance of formalization of literacy for college readiness, even as this formalization is reactive rather than proactive in its engagements with standards.

Carol Severino asserts that the Framework “does a good job of demystifying what happens in composition,” but the text as a document laying claim to definitions of literacy for college readiness does not seem to provide (or even attempt) a way into the existing network of relations (534). Though scholarship from the symposium “On the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*” describes the rationale for composing the Framework as a response to standards movement related to the Common Core, the

actual text of the Framework makes no mention of the Common Core at all. In this regard, the Framework functions as a sort of anti-crosswalk. The absence of alignment, even in name only, seems quite intentional. Instead of a composition of cooperation, the Framework again emphasizes the tensions between secondary and post-secondary spaces with regard to literacy for college readiness. Additionally, the Framework offers no citations, instead relying on the authority of its authorship in three professional organizations: the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project. The triangulation of these professional entities without reference to the Common Core or any outside source of authority essentially places the Framework in a closed system of circulation. The Framework attempts a power move authority grab in relation to the standards, but no point of engagement is established for this move to take place.

Standardized writing curricula or assessment instruments that emphasize formulaic writing for nonauthentic audiences will not reinforce the habits of mind and the experiences necessary for success as students encounter the writing demands of postsecondary education. (3)

This statement at the end of the Framework's "Executive Summary" again reveals the authority (and anxiety) tied to the translation of standards into particular types of assessments.

The approaches to assessments (and the corresponding scholarly critiques of the types of assessments justified in the name of the Framework) further evidence the chasm between K-12 approaches to literacy (as responses to accountability mandates and the

force of public discourse) and college composition classrooms. In “Creating the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing” O’Neill, et al. contextualize the Framework as a reaction to “the absence of the voices of college writing teachers and researchers” in the development of the Common Core (522). O’Neill go on to state that if the goal of the Common Core is “to make certain that all students are prepared to succeed in college and career, then, at least in terms of writing, it’s imperative that the Standards[Common Core] and the assessments promote the experiences and habits of mind outlined in the Framework” (524). Again, the standards are understood in the power of their translations through assessments.

Bruce McComiskey identifies the Common Core as a document necessarily understood within a broader network of documents including curriculum texts and assessments. When considering the common standards framework McComiskey states that the Common Core “is not itself to be feared” yet “the assessment instruments written by publishing companies as a means to sell textbooks are greatly to be feared” (539). Similarly, Kristine Hansen speaks directly to the place of the Framework relative to the Common Core in her identification of standards-based literacy policy. Hansen identifies assessments as texts of standards alignment asserting seemingly clean and objective translations of literacy policy into material/digital objects for accountability that “ have usurped the role our society once allowed teachers to play that of professionals whose judgment matters, whether in designing curriculum or assessing students” (542). In these arguments both Hansen and McComiskey suggest that the standards are attached to

definitions of literacy for college readiness generated outside of the composition classroom in the form of institutionally-sponsored standardized assessments.

Though standards as universals attempt to codify how literacy for college readiness is defined and, ultimately, assessed, the varied responses to the Common Core from rhetoric and composition again evidence absent consensus regarding not only the reception and interpretation of standards but also the pedagogical disconnect between secondary and university definitions of literacy for college readiness (Blau, Sullivan, and Tinberg xiii). I should note that, in my ANT analysis, I have done my best to avoid a polemical reading of rhetoric and composition in relation to standards, but I feel my feelings about this topic come through in spite of my best efforts to hide them.

A survey of rhetoric and composition regarding definitions of literacy for college readiness (both in scholarship and professional policy) in relation to standards suggests that it is not only students, in that liminal space between high school and college, who are “inventing the university” but also high school teachers and college composition instructors, policymakers and testing companies - all of these participants are working to invent the university.

Replacing the Universal with the Local: A Return to Kentucky and Another Literacy Revolution

Though Kentucky’s adoption and corresponding assessment of the Common Core are held up as a “rare Common Core success story,” the Common Core as the foundational standards for the state begins to collapse within a couple years of implementation (Nelson). In 2014, KDE asked for public comment regarding revision of the standards through an initiative called the “Kentucky Core Academic Standards

Challenge.” This initiative introduced local critique of the national literacy standards into the network of relations, shifting Kentucky focus from shared, common interpretations of literacy for college readiness to a more “homegrown” approach. Though the call for public comment did not result in significant changes to the content of the standards, the request for public inquiry compromised the Common Core’s fragile universality in the state where the national standards were first adopted.

Following the “Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge,” Unbridled Learning, Kentucky’s system of assessment and accountability, also began to fall away. In measures of literacy for college readiness, the number of indicators are reduced (rather than expanded) from three source assessments to one. In 2015, ACT started to phase out the COMPASS literacy assessments. Simultaneously, KDE removed KYOTE as an accountability measure of academic transition readiness. By 2016, ACT stands as the only remaining measure of literacy for college readiness in Kentucky that remains from Unbridled Learning⁷⁸, and the ACT will remain as the single measure in the transition to a new system of assessment and accountability.

In 2017, Senate Bill 1 for “Required Revision of Academic Standards” mandated a standards review with “possible revision or replacement to ensure alignment with postsecondary readiness standards necessary for global competitiveness.” In 2019, KDE replaced the Common Core with the Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS). This new set of standards, which is currently in place for Kentucky’s current assessment and

⁷⁸ The 2018-2019 measures of literacy for college readiness also reference AP exams, International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework, and dual credit courses as evidence of academic transition readiness. The KYOTE exam is also brought back as a measure of literacy for college readiness in the spring of 2019, but this is under the new system of accountability.

accountability system, is almost identical to the Common Core. The language of the literacy standards show only one significant change in the replacement of the word “writing” with “composition.”

Through the renaming/rebranding of the standards, the national literacy standards are transformed into a state-based product. Unlike the Common Core, the KAS cannot travel outside of Kentucky. This disengagement with national literacy policy and the absence of cooperation with other states regarding definitions both convey a position of anti-universality. Also, even though the standards *in content* are the same, the KAS makes no citation of or reference to the Common Core as a source of authority⁷⁹. A search for the term “Common Core” on the KDE website comes up with nothing. The Common Core has been scrubbed from KDE, as if it never existed.

In the absence of references to the Common Core, the KAS instead connects to other sources of authority as the foundations for the literacy standards. After nearly three decades and now a fourth distinct system of assessment and accountability, Kentucky’s current literacy standards are based on the the NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts (SELA⁸⁰), the same standards initially published in 1996 and cited as a source of authority (and adopted in draft form) in KERA’s *Transformations* document deconstructed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Additionally, the KAS literacy standards document includes a “Writers’ Vision Statement” that positions teachers in control of the translation of Kentucky’s literacy standards through a vision for writing “created by

⁷⁹ The only reference to the Common Core in the KAS is through a 2017 Achieve footnote re: Achieve’s work study “Strong Standards: A Review of Changes to State Standards Since the Common Core.”

⁸⁰ I provided extensive analysis of the SELA in Chapter 2 as a foundational text for definitions of literacy for college readiness at KERA inception.

educators for educators with the purpose of preparing each and every Kentucky student for a productive post high school transition” (8). The language of this vision statement is reminiscent of the early days of KERA, the days in process and the portfolio assessment were *standardized*⁸¹.

Everything old is new again.

With the KAS, a new battery of assessments were planned for the spring of 2020, but the ACT remained as a measure of both college readiness as well as school and district accountability. On Tuesday, March 10, 2020, the ACT was administered to all Kentucky 11th grade students. The following Thursday, March 12, 2020, Kentucky’s governor Andy Beshear, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, called for all public schools to be closed beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. Kentucky schools, including colleges and universities, transitioned to distance learning, called “Non-Traditional Learning” (NTI) by the Kentucky Department of Education, for the duration of the semester. The planned KAS assessments were canceled, as were the ACT, AP, and SAT exams scheduled for later that school year. These events related to the pandemic forced shifts in policy regarding measures of literacy for college readiness, including the criteria used for enrollment in dual credit composition courses. Currently, the University of Louisville requires a 3.0 unweighted GPA in English classes across high school as the primary measure of literacy for college readiness⁸².

⁸¹ Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, Jefferson County Public Schools adopted the Backpack as a portfolio assessment required at the 12th grade for graduation.

⁸² Secondary areas for enrollment include the following: “completion of official recommendation letter from a teacher or coach who can testify to your work ethic,” 2.5 cumulative unweighted GPA, or benchmark score on a standardized assessment (ACT Reading Subscore +20r, PSAT/SAT Evidence Based Reading/Writing Subscore 480, or KYOTE Reading 14+.

Conclusion

An ANT analysis of the network of relations for literacy standards and measures of college readiness “pictures a world made of *concatenations of mediators* where each point can be said to fully act” (Latour, *Reassembling* 59). A survey of the network of relations reveals that these lists of knowledge statements cause a lot of trouble, even as they are typically presented as simplified distillations of complex topics, the complexity eventually emerges. Viewing the operation of standards through an ANT lens “helps locate the many inclusions and exclusions that occur in assembling these networks of standards, which can be easily obscured in references to standards that appear to exist as inevitable and immutable” (Fenwick, “(un)Doing Standards” 121). Relatedly, the more a set of standards attempts to reach universality as a representation of knowledge moving across the network, the more complicated and destabilized the standards become.

Standards in the pursuit of universality are also different from the immutable mobiles they may engage or generate. Functional standards are not static, and their universality relies on their ability to move and establish hospitable linkages across the network of relations. Standards rely on making connections, and those connections may sometimes lead to multiple translations. Sometimes those connections and translations made in pursuit of universality frequently include alignments with immutable mobiles, particularly at the end of the chain, in the form of assessments.

Within the network of relations tracked in this chapter (and, to a great degree this entire dissertation) the ACT stands as the ultimate immutable mobile as it remains present and unchanged in spite of apparent engagements and reconciliations with new

sets of standards. As a result, the persistence of the ACT as an immutable mobile actually highlights the precarity of standards such as the Common Core. Standards *in language* may remain constant, but standards can only be utilized and mobilized through their translation. Perhaps this is why various sets of standards have been implemented and revised, over space and time, even as the ACT remains unchanged, regardless of the set of standards with which it is aligned. The *standardized* (meaning the application of standards in the form of assessment) then is the only persistent immutable mobile carrying both translations of standards and, relatedly, definitions of literacy. The only way to stabilize standards, to rid them of abstraction and subjectivity, is through standardized assessment.

That said, it is important to note that the translation of standards into an immutable mobile like the ACT is an interpretative choice tied up in all of the power struggles and sources of authority and various mediators operating in the network of relations. Though the term “standardized assessment” is often conflated with tests like ACT, an assessment of literacy involving a process-driven, direct writing assessment with a research component could just as easily be standardized, based on outcome statements or course objectives or some other variation in the identification of what is meant to be taught and learned. Any of these ways of framing what we want to bring into the world could be called standards. Perhaps some of the weirdness about standards that surfaces in rhetoric and composition scholarship has to do with a certain level of disciplinary anxiety. The resistance to making explicit what we do in the field may be the result of us not being quite sure ourselves.

CHAPTER 5:
COMPOSING AMBIVALENCE: SO MANY UNCERTAIN FUTURES

This is why it's important to maintain that power, like society, is the final result of a process and not a reservoir, a stock, or a capital that will automatically provide explanation. Power and domination have to be produced, made up, composed.

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (64)

You want it to be one way. But it's the other way.

Marlo Stanfield, *The Wire*

When I began this project nearly ten years ago, I set out thinking of my work as a sort of excavation, a methodical digging out that would eventually lead to the epistemological foundations of literacy for college readiness. I figured that if I looked around long enough, sifting through text after text, an origin story would emerge from under the layers of policy and critique. I think my entire motivation for entering into this extended encounter with so much composition history, literacy pedagogy, and public policy was to locate and ultimately tell the story of what literacy *should* look like in the magical transition from high school. I went into this secretly (or, maybe, not so secretly)

hoping to discover the definition of literacy for college readiness as an object of certainty and conclusion. I wanted to find the Ark of the Covenant confirming that David Bartholomae was right about academic writing. In my initial thesis chasing, I wanted a truth - *this truth* - to surface. I wanted. I wanted.

But the truth that I found instead is a parallax view of literacy, a seemingly fixed point shifting with each engagement made in multiple contexts across space and time.

The story of literacy for college readiness, like so many stories, is a story of numerous voices talking to and over each other while so many other voices sit silent or silenced. Consequently, *definitions* (plural) of literacy for college readiness cannot be tracked in a clean, linear progression. Instead, an ANT analysis of literacy for college readiness reveals “the unfolding social heteroglossia *surrounding*” literacy, in a “Tower-of-Babel mixing” of texts (Bakhtin 278). This project taught me “not only to notice ambivalence” in the network representing definitions of literacy for college readiness “but to dwell within it throughout the analysis process,” giving control over to “the messes of difference and tension,” (Fenwick and Edwards 156). Through an ANT analysis of literacy for college readiness, I realize my discovery is not an object but a topography, something akin to the map of the universe from *Time Bandits*, holes and all.

With attention to this map of strange and absent “alignments and alliances,” I can see patterns of practices emerge in the network of relations for literacy for college readiness (Edwards 1). Not surprisingly, the patterns evidence the ambiguities and resistances pulsing through the network. Three notable patterns in the network of relations include rhetoric and composition’s disciplinary ambivalences, ambivalences of authority in the global and local, and performances of crisis as a reboot to literacy revolution.

Rhetoric and Composition’s Disciplinary Ambivalences

The history of rhetoric and composition, particularly in terms of literacy for college readiness, is a history of *internalizing* - of looking inward regarding the work of the field, of critiquing the field’s places of participation, of often making the case for

privileging theory while disengaging with matters of practice and pedagogy. The discipline's historical preoccupation with internal matters has resulted in not only anxiety and uncertainty regarding the nature of the work in rhetoric and composition but also a sustained disengagement from participation in public discourse regarding literacy for college readiness. College composition is, to a great degree, the bread and butter of rhetoric and composition, but it is also the dirty work of the university.

Through an ANT analysis, rhetoric and composition's relationship with literacy for college readiness is probably best characterized in terms of an anxious ambivalence.

Specifically, rhetoric and composition's focus on disciplinary identity in the generation of scholarship coupled with a resistance to naming the "threshold concepts" necessary for the transition from secondary to postsecondary spaces jeopardizes the field's authority in not only matters of literacy in the university but also matters of literacy in the public discourse. In searching for epistemological foundations of literacy for college readiness in rhetoric and composition, I observed disciplinary resistance to both naming the literacies required for the transition to the university from high school engaging with the stakeholders (including policymakers) charged with codifying these literacies in public discussions. Stated plainly, rhetoric and composition often talks about publics and the place of literacy without actually engaging with these publics in meaningful ways.

Ambivalences of Authority in the Global and the Local

Another pattern present in the network of relations representing literacy for college readiness is the ambivalences of authority in the global and the local. Like

rhetoric and composition's uncertain engagements with spaces beyond the local⁸³, other participants in the network of relations including teachers/literacy practitioners, policymakers, and assessment instruments/entities define their engagements in the scope of their circulations.

Representing Bakhtin's centrifugal and centripetal forces at work, the scope and variation of circulations, including simultaneous circulations, from local to global (and back again) provide information about how authority and control is exercised in the network of relations. From an epistemological perspective, sites of translation varying in degree of mediatal means show how the global ultimately performed in the local, and vice versa. Also, the local may mean a classroom, a department, a university, even a state because it is understood in relation to the global as an attempted universal. These translations in the local and the global, carry the ambivalences of the network of relations, a system constantly performing stability, ambiguity, and uncertainty at the same time.

Performances of Crisis as the Reboot to Literacy Revolution

A pattern of performed crisis also appears as characteristic of the network of relations making literacy for college readiness. I use the term "performed crisis" to distinguish the identification of literacy crises from other types of (typically unpredicted and overt) crises. Specifically, the literacy crisis tends to follow a pattern of presentation. Every decade or so another literacy crisis pops up to usher in another literacy revolution, a new regime, a new system of assessment and accountability.

⁸³ Here I use "local" as an elastic term meaning a reach that does not extend to the "global" (national or universal) space.

As translations of literacy for college readiness have moved to more local (state-level rather than national-level) measures, so have the narratives of crisis. In October of 2022, Louisville's *Courier-Journal* published "Between the Lines: An Investigation into Why Kentucky's Kids Can't Read." Even though this literacy crisis is *localized* in Kentucky, the measure evidencing the crisis is still global in the form of the NAEP, a sturdy immutable mobile carrying crisis through all of the decades of this project. The NAEP is always (discreetly) the mother of the literacy revolution.

Implications for Literacy Policy and Pedagogy: So Many Uncertain Futures

The world is a different place than it was when I first began this research project. The "unprecedented times" of a fractured political landscape coupled with effects of the Covid-19 pandemic - social, emotional, economic, and academic - continue to inform ways of our everyday. There is no way to know at this point in time, in the spring of 2023, the extent of these effects on the ways we imagine education and, correspondingly, literacy in the transition to college. But these effects as understood and experienced at this moment in time - coupled with the rhetorical/historical evidence in this project - do present distinctive implications for the ways we imagine literacy in the transition from secondary to postsecondary spaces. Unlike the performed literacy crises, the crises of the pandemic forces a critical consideration of what should happen with our engagements:

In a time of so many crises in what it means to belong, the task of cohabitation should no longer be simplified too much. So many other entities are now knocking on the door of our collectives. Is it absurd to

want to retool our disciplines to become sensitive again to the noise they make and to try to find a place for them? (Latour, *Reassembling* 262)

My answer to Latour's question is a hard "no." Our disciplines, literacy and otherwise, have to be retooled to survive and advance. This moment, in its uncertainty, also presents opportunity.

One implication of this project is that rhetoric and composition has an opportunity to expand its authority through intentional collaborative engagements with both secondary literacy spaces as well as public engagements with policy makers. I often think it strange that rhetoric and composition, a discipline seemingly defined by the structure and power of arguments in different publics, seems so absent from public conversations about literacy, particularly literacy in the university. I understand that the politics of literacy policy, accountability, assessment, and institutions plays a big role in this absence.

Rhetoric and composition cannot assume that authority is automatically carried through affiliations with the university or through what the field considers to be legitimate research and scholarship. For example, a document like the *Framework* seems to represent rhetoric and composition's disciplinary identity as firmly based in matters attached to college composition and, relatedly, literacy for college readiness. But the document itself seems only to circulate internally without any established engagements with spaces outside of the discipline, including cooperative spaces in secondary schools. The *Framework*, for all of its pedagogical functionality, does not engage outside of the discipline in any meaningful way. This lack of engagement and circulation means that no

one in secondary schools or state-level departments of education knows that this text even exists.

Literacy studies in rhetoric and composition should consider some of the collaborative opportunities with state policy makers and departments of education as tactical moves enabling engagement. Additionally, the recognition of difference – in terms of expectations, of accountability, of institutional constraints – between secondary and college contexts must occur in order to allow a true, collaborative vision of literacy for college readiness to take shape. Like our many students, we as instructors and scholars work within spaces governed by policies that often compete and conflict with our understandings of literacy. Knowing this, we still need to find a productive way forward.

Another implication of this project is that there should be better and more critical consideration of the ways literacy for college readiness (or transition readiness or postsecondary readiness) is articulated in secondary contexts. A quick observation of three 12th grade English classrooms - one English 4, one AP, one Dual Credit - gives very different representations of literacy in the transition to postsecondary spaces, and the curricula dictating these courses are quite arbitrary. Why is British literature still the focus of so many 12th grade English courses? Why does literature persist as the focus for AP Language and Composition courses? What criteria is now used to determine access to Dual Credit courses in a post-pandemic (and, to some degree, a post admissions testing/test optional) world? Literacy teachers in secondary spaces have a great deal of work to do themselves in considering what it means to prepare students for the university,

particularly now that the ACT, that once (and still pretty) mighty immutable mobile, is not afforded its same power as before the pandemic.

Limitations of Research and Locations for Further Investigation

Though I tried my best to remain (relatively) objective in my approach to literacy for college readiness, I am fully aware that this objectivity was sometimes limited by my work as a secondary literacy specialist in a Title 1 school in Louisville. My peasant rage would flare as I would read so much composition scholarship about what happens (or doesn't happen or should happen) in high school classrooms in terms of literacy instruction. Being a teacher and literacy specialist for close to two decades, I can't help but shake my head at some of the scholarship generated in rhetoric and composition regarding literacy, particularly by scholars who have no teeth in the game. This sustained suspicion of so much literacy scholarship no doubt informed my ways of seeing (or not seeing) in parts of my research in spite of my best efforts to keep things in an observational ANT mode.

With regard to locations for further investigation related to literacy for college readiness, I think there is still a great deal of research that should be done in articulating the function and value of a university education. Like secondary spaces beholden to expectations for standards and outcomes, the university is in a moment when its role in a functional society needs to be explained, particularly in terms of return on investment. Is the purpose of the university to foster informed, participatory citizens or something else? And at what cost?

And finally, there must be mention of ChatGPT as I write these final lines of this project. The realization that this project could have been written by a bot gives me tremendous anxiety, so much so that I decided to contact my former student Curtis Northcutt, MIT PhD and AI expert, about the influence of ChatGPT on literacy and learning. Curtis told me that it was too late to unbreak the egg of ChatGPT in public use. He also went on to write a short LinkedIn piece about our conversation in which he echoed the advice he gave me about approaches to literacy and learning in this post-pandemic moment of the bots:

So what can we do better? A daily emphasis on encouraging students to pursue growth opportunities in place of comfort is a good start. Even better, executives at high impact technology companies must meet directly with everyday parents and teachers annually to evaluate the impact of their impact on kids and teenagers.

The way forward is a call for collaboration and engagement based on growth rather than comfort. This sounds like the logical next step for research related not only to my project but any critical project worth its salt.

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Discourse. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2007. Print.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education:

2011-2023 **University of Louisville** **Louisville, KY**

PhD in Rhetoric and Composition

Dissertation Title: *Author(iz)ing Literacy:*

A Rhetorical/ Historical Analysis of Literacy for College

Readiness from KERA to the Common Core (And Beyond)

Research Interests: community literacy and engagement, digital literacies, the essay genre, literacy policy and assessment, and writing pedagogy

Research Projects: Digital Media Academy Co-Facilitator for summer instructional program introducing middle school girls to digital media production platforms; college readiness publication collaboration with two other college composition instructors

Summer 2007- Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury College **Middlebury, VT**

Summer 2011 **MA in English Literature**

Class Co-President and Commencement Speaker (Santa Fe Campus)

2004-2005 **University of Kentucky** **Lexington, KY**

MA in Curriculum and Instruction

English Education Certification

1993-1997 **Centre College** **Danville, KY**

BA in English and Religion (Double Majors)

Regents College London, Centre-in-London Program

Experience – Instruction, Administration, and Curriculum Development:

2018-Present **Academic Interventionist** **Louisville, KY**

Fern Creek High School

Implemented school-based, multi-tiered system of support for academic intervention.

Provided professional development to teachers regarding intervention strategies, literacy disability identification, progress monitoring resources, and college readiness practices.

Served as member and primary academic lead for Academic Intervention Team.

Established Tier 2 intervention and supports across all core content areas.

Helped to create the school literacy team in support of equity goals.

Served as member of Leadership Team.

Served as member of Guiding Coalition Committee and helped to compose school vision plan and corresponding expectations.

Administered MAP and KYOTE exams.

2011-2018 **Literacy Coordinator/Interventionist** **Lexington, KY**
Lafayette High School

Provided advisory support for seniors in scholarship/college application essays.
Served as member of collaborative instructional team responsible for intervention strategies.
Organized progress monitoring system based on grade-level skills proficiency. Worked with district officials in the implementation of Common Core Academic Standards.
Created literacy intervention support structure for all students through the implementation of college readiness framework.. Assisted teachers in the use of project-based learning models as systems for standards-aligned assessment. Administered Saturday literacy support and remediation sessions for seniors in pursuit of graduation.

2005-Present **English Teacher, Lafayette High School** **Lexington, KY**

Designed and implemented comprehensive unit plans for all levels of secondary English including AP English Language and Composition, College Writing, and Credit Recovery.
Served as reading tutor with emphasis on literacy strategies for students with autism.
Collaborated with other content-area teachers to construct school writing plan and digital portfolios. Supervised senior independent study projects in digital media and critical theory.
Composed documentation of professional learning community meetings for Junior English.

2013-2014 **University Supervisor,**
University of Kentucky College of Education **Lexington, KY**

Served as professional observer and advisor for student teachers in the English education program. Maintained formal standards-based professional assessment documentation.
Provided instruction in professionalization and pedagogical approaches.

2013-2014 **Composition Instructor, University of Louisville** **Louisville, KY**

Developed and implemented instructional framework for introductory and intermediate university writing courses. Provided individualized support for international students entering the college writing classroom.

2012-2014 **Writing Center Coordinator,**
Summer Term Bread Loaf School of English,
Lincoln College, Oxford **Oxford, UK**

Established writing support structure for graduate-level English program. Provided training and administrative supervision for writing center tutors. Conducted one-to-one tutoring sessions, research support, and digital conferences with graduate students.

Awards, Presentations, and Publications:

- 2017** **Bread Loaf School of English News –**
“Shakespeare in Restoration: Shakespeare Behind Bars”
- 2015** **NCTE Conference Co-Presenter –** “Responding to ‘College Readiness’:
Literacy Practices and Pedagogies in the Space between High School
and College”
- 2015** **Bread Loaf Vermont Composition Teachers/Scholars Conference**
- 2015** **Reconsidering Donne International Conference Presenter -**
Lincoln College, Oxford
Paper Title: “Donne’s Rhetoric of the Hourglass:
Writing Kairos in *Death’s Duell*”
- 2014** **Contributing Writer for *Field Notes***
University of Kentucky College of Education
- 2013** **NCTE Conference Co-Presenter**
“A Common Core: Bread Loaf Teacher Network, English, and
Ethics in the Classroom”

- 2013 **University of Kentucky Teacher Who Made a Difference Award**
- 2013 **God's Pantry Food Bank Food Drive Grant Winner (in collaboration with the Youth Service Center)**
Project Title: "The Community Engagement and the Public Work of Rhetoric"
- 2013 ***The New York Times* Lens "My Hometown" Photography Project – Official Selections for Lexington, KY**
- 2007-2014 **Bread Loaf Kentucky Teacher Fellowship, C.E.&S. Foundation and Middlebury College**
- 2012 **Kentucky Society for Technology in Education Conference Co-Presenter – "Project-Based Learning with Technology: A Genuine Experience"**
Presented professional development session on the implementation of collaborative, project-centered instructional framework through the use of digital communication platforms.
- 2011 **Bread Loaf Co-Presenter – "What's Funny Anyway?: Satire and the Service of Language"**
Presented culminating project and accompanying resource materials with five AP Language students.
- 2010 **Bread Loaf Co-Presenter – "Heroic Couplings: Decoding Jay-Z and Pope"**
Presented digital poetry projects with four high school seniors.
- 2010-2014 **Write to Change Professional Development Grant**
Constructed a writer-center plan proposal including an overview for effective use of electronic portfolios and interactive digital writing processes.
- 2009 **Kentucky Technology Conference Presenter - "Beyond the Test: Engaging Students in Innovative Literacies"**
Presented the potential of the digital classroom through the use of wikis, blogs, podcasts, and digital conferencing technologies.

Professional Organizations, Offices, and Appointments:

- 2014 **Bread Loaf Teachers Network Coordinator**
Bread Loaf School of English Oxford
- 2010-2012 **Appointed Member, Fayette County Public Schools High School Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction Team**
- 2014-Present **Member, Modern Language Association**
- 2009-2010 **Faculty Liaison for Lafayette High School**
University of Kentucky School of Education
- 2007-Present **Member, Bread Loaf Teachers Network**
- 2006-2011 **Elected Member, Lafayette High School Site-Based Decision Making Council**
- 2005-Present **Member, National Education Association and Kentucky Education Association**
- 2004-Present **Member, National Council for the Teachers of English**

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