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1890-1969—EARLY HISTORY OF THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM: AN  
ARGUMENT FOR REFORM OF THE AP LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION EXAM

by

ELIZABETH B. JAMISON

Under the Direction of Lynée Lewis Gaillet, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation identifies the need for change concerning standardized assessment and Advanced Placement testing. Although society continues to advance technologically, the area of homogenous assessments – specifically Advanced Placement tests – has become stagnant, with the AP English exam remaining nearly the same as it was over fifty years ago. Although the last sixty years of scholarship suggests that our present systems of standardized assessment do not reflect real-world application, the populace becomes more dependent on test scores each year. This work also examines the pivotal nature of education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the shift in a national demand for increased literacy, World War II and the mounting competition between the United States and other leading nations for dominance, and

the nature of standardized testing regarding the validity of Advanced Placement Language argument prompts. This dissertation examines several key points in history, including the *Committee of Ten*, Harvard's influence on educational practices, and the relationship to our recent, ever-changing national standards. Throughout the dissertation, I compare the needs of contemporary American students to students a hundred years ago, and I draw parallels from existing educational issues to those from a century past. I then posit reasons why we developed into such a standardized society and became dependent on the Advanced Placement testing system. I use archival research from the Educational Testing Service headquarters to analyze the AP Language prompts from 1980 to the present, and I evaluate them for purpose, context, and appropriateness of complexity considering the time limit. My results demonstrate that several of the prompts are culturally and socio-economically biased, are too complex to be answered in 40 minutes, and do not provide students with an authentic context. These findings lead to my conclusion, that AP tests should not carry the weight that they currently do.

INDEX WORDS: History of the Advanced Placement program, AP Language Exam, Educational Testing Service, Timed Writing, Standardized Testing, the College Board

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ELIZABETH B. JAMISON

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2015

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate the last seven years of work to my husband, Todd, who never questioned whether I could do it.

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There are so many people who have played a part in the creation of this dissertation and in my completion of the program, and I want to give each of them special recognition here.

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## PREFACE

I am a secondary English teacher specializing in Advanced Placement Language & Composition, a challenging course focusing on non-fiction, the rhetorical situation, argument, and rhetorical analysis. I appreciate the challenge of teaching a class that parallels the College English 1101-2 curricula, and I enjoy interacting with honors and gifted students. During my decade as a teacher, I have noticed a sharp increase in the stress levels of my students, due in part to standardized testing. Throughout my graduate studies in rhetoric and composition, and in my own publication experiences, never once did I write a timed essay. Most importantly, not one of my textbooks claimed that writing quickly was a necessary aspect of the writing process; in fact, all the scholarship in composition studies clearly states that writing well involves time, effort, revision, and critical thought.

Throughout the years, I have proctored many Advanced Placement assessments and have witnessed the frenetic atmosphere of the tests: hundreds of students, often tired from previous AP tests, forced to endure an hour of grueling multiple-choice questions followed by three essays that they must write in just two hours. Students have fifteen minutes of prewriting time to prepare for the essays. In my classes, I emphasize the writing process just as the scholarship suggests. I reward students who come to writing conferences and who take the time to rework their prose. Nevertheless, when the time comes to prepare my AP students for their College Board assessment, I feel like a hypocrite when I disregard sound composition theory and research and instead teach strategies for quick, and often formulaic, writing.

In the past few years, I have lost patience with the timed writing genre. I feel uncomfortable forcing my students to write an essay on an arbitrary topic, with one draft, in under an hour. All teachers of writing know that the “good stuff” comes from authentic issues,

not from random prompts. I chose to focus my dissertation on the early history of the AP program to discover the origins of the program, how our educational system became so standardized, and whether our current AP Language tests reflect a fair context for all students.

In this dissertation, I take a critical look at the history of Advance Placement testing, beginning with the 1890s cry for educational reform, continuing with the need for increased literacy after WWII, and concluding through the end of the 1960s. I examine the initial purpose behind the program, the details of its administration, the nuances of the AP Language argument prompts, and the overall efficacy of the AP testing system. The majority of my archival research comes from the headquarters of the Educational Testing Service (ETS), based in Princeton, New Jersey. Because ETS manages testing administration of the Advanced Placement exams, I needed documentation that would give me a clear picture of the AP Program's development.

I include a study of the argument test questions from the AP Language & Composition exam prompts from 1980 to the present, the correlation between standardized testing and the scholarship about composition theory, and the subsequent current state of our "standardized nation." I offer several suggestions for a modified AP assessment, one that better aligns with our shifting culture. Because my dissertation focuses on the early years (1890-1969) of Advanced Placement and the relationship to current education, my *Implications* section suggests avenues for further study that are not included within the individual chapters.

In the Introduction and Chapter 1, I identify the need for change in our standardized assessments and in our educational system as a whole. Although society continues to advance technologically, the area of homogenous assessments – especially concerning Advanced Placement tests – has become stagnant, with the AP English exam remaining nearly the same as it was over fifty years ago. America has embraced technology; however, education has not



adapted enough to serve the needs of our contemporary students, many of whom are digital natives. Although scholarship in the last sixty years strongly suggests that our present systems of standardized assessment neither reflect the curricula taught in schools nor real-world application, the populace becomes more dependent on test scores each year. Overworked students increasingly suffer from anxiety, and teachers must simultaneously “teach to the test” and provide differentiated, rigorous instruction as per the Common Core Standards. Even state universities, traditionally accessible to most learners, now require a resume that boasts AP courses, a 4.0, community service, and high AP, SAT, and ACT test scores.

My research focuses on Advanced Placement testing and the history of the AP Program. If the educational community wants to find alternatives to the now outdated standardized test, we must understand circumstances that gave rise to the AP program, why the test does not correspond to technological shifts, and how high-stakes testing will need to be adapted if we are to adjust to the Web culture.

Chapter 2 examines the pivotal nature of education during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. With the influx of immigrants, post-war veterans, and increase in population, secondary and post-secondary schools witnessed burgeoning enrollment. As more people sought to further their education, teachers and professors recognized deficiencies in literacy that threatened to cripple our nation and put us behind other world powers. In response to the call for improved reading and writing skills, educators focused on replacing oral assessments with written tests. Accordingly, the need for standardized writing assessments grew alongside enrollment in both high schools and colleges. This chapter examines the educational system during the turn of the twentieth century and scholars’ responses to the needs of a growing technological culture. I examine several key points in history, including the *Committee of Ten*,

Harvard's influence on educational practices, and the relationship to our recent, ever-changing national standards. Throughout the chapter, I compare the needs of contemporary American students to students a hundred years ago, and I draw parallels from existing educational issues to those from a century past. I then posit possible reasons why we developed into such a standardized society and became dependent on the Advanced Placement testing system. At the end of the chapter, I analyze the AP Language prompts from 1980 to the present and evaluate them for purpose, context and appropriateness of complexity considering the time limit of the test. My findings demonstrate that several of the prompts are culturally and socio-economically biased and are too complex to be answered in 40 minutes or less. I also show that most prompts do not provide students with an authentic context, and thus do not allow for quality writing. These findings lead to my conclusion, that AP tests should not carry the weight that they currently do.

Chapter three transitions from the shift in a national and cultural need for increased literacy to World War II and the mounting competition between the United States and other leading nations for dominance in all matters – including education. Based on documents from the Educational Testing Service and College Board archives, this chapter demonstrates how education became a matter of public and political interest, and how the spotlight on student growth and conformity necessitated the development of standardized achievement tests. Subsequently, scholars developed the Advanced Placement Program with several end-goals: to help motivated students reach a higher level of scholarship than had previously been possible, to give high school students an opportunity to prepare for college, and to raise the rigor of our secondary educational system in order to become more competitive with other nations.

The final chapter examines the 1960s and the growing pressure for testing administrators to demonstrate a positive correlation between standardized test scores and collegiate success, a task which proved difficult then and still does today. As student scoring and measurement became more important, teachers worried about the focus of their lessons: should they create curricula for the high performing students, hoping everyone else could keep up, or should they cater to the lower performing students, to help them “meet” standards? Today, administrators evaluate teachers in part on their ability to differentiate in the classroom, or to design different lessons, activities, and assessments depending on students’ learning styles and abilities. To show the weight of testing and the roll that economics plays in education, I provide a snapshot of trends in university enrollment and costs from the 1960s to the present. I then cite issues that the Conference on College Composition & Communication (CCCC), recognized with timed essays and objective testing. Throughout the chapter, I identify similarities between the problems in the 1960s and issues still inherent in our educational system today. The rapid growth of the AP Program in the ‘60s also brought about logistical and financial concerns for ETS and the College Board, and I demonstrate how those issues in part led to the student “waive” process and the apprehension that both students and parents feel when they consider college admissions. Finally, I explore the AP reading process as it developed in the 1960s, and I make suggestions for current change in our AP program (as it pertains to AP English Language & Composition). In the *Implications* section that follows the chapter, I suggest the need for future study of the 1970s-1990s in the Advanced Placement program. I also recommend that future scholars research facets of standardized testing, timed writing philosophy, and Advanced Placement reform. The AP Program began with a specific goal: to allow students the opportunity to improve their education with upper-level classes. Taking an AP class was an honor – a stepping stone towards more

opportunities for advanced scholarship in college. Now, AP serves as a way for students to opt out of college classes, enhance their resume, and save money. If we continue with the Advanced Placement program in the future, we must consider the original goals of the program and rethink the current purpose of Advanced Placement.

As educators, we have to remember that through our students, we have an opportunity to shape the future. We must create a world in which our students have the opportunity for true enrichment and life-long, authentic learning and creativity. Right now, testing takes precedence over creativity, and if we expect current students to become the innovators of tomorrow, we must reexamine our values surrounding standardized testing.

# 1 THE CULTURAL SHIFT AND THE NEED FOR CHANGE

## 1.1 Abstract

In the Introduction and Chapter 1, I identify the need for change in our standardized assessments and in our educational system as a whole. Although society continues to advance technologically, the area of homogenous assessments – especially concerning Advanced Placement tests – has become stagnant, with the AP English exam remaining nearly the same as it was over fifty years ago. America has embraced technology; however, education has not adapted enough to serve the needs of our contemporary students, most of whom are digital natives. Although scholarship in the last sixty years strongly suggests that our present systems of standardized assessment neither reflect the curricula taught in schools nor real-world application, the populace becomes more dependent on test scores each year. Overworked students increasingly suffer from anxiety, and teachers must simultaneously “teach to the test” and provide differentiated, rigorous instruction as per the Common Core Standards. Even state universities, traditionally accessible to most learners, now require a resume that boasts AP courses, a 4.0, community service, and high AP, SAT, and ACT test scores.

My research focuses on Advanced Placement testing and the history of the AP Program. If the educational community wants to find alternatives to the now outdated standardized test, we must understand circumstances that gave rise to the AP program, why the test does not correspond to technological shifts, and how high-stakes testing will need to be adapted if we are to adjust to the Web culture.

## 1.2 Introduction: Background of the College Board and the Educational Testing Service

Headquartered in New York, the College Board (CB), a privately owned, not-for-profit company formed in 1900, develops tests, provides financial assistance, and offers educational programs for students and teachers. The primary intention of the CB was to help high school pupils prepare for a rigorous college education and to give gifted students the opportunity to take college-level classes in high school. The CB contains over 6,000 two and four-year institutions and secondary schools, each providing a delegate who serves on one of three primary

committees: Academic, College Scholarship, and Guidance and Admission. The CB Advocacy Board mission statement claims that members are “Guided by the College Board’s principles of excellence and equity in education, and [they] work to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in college and beyond”. The CB also trains members to “make critical connections between policy, research and real-world practice to develop innovative solutions to the most pressing challenges in education today” (Collegeboard.com). I contend that those connections between real-world practice and research are not apparent in the tests administered each year. Although the CB has begun redesigning several of their tests, the AP English Language and Literature tests remain the same. Considering how much our youth’s communicative skills have altered because of the Internet, it makes sense that tests of reading and writing would change. The English tests should have been among the first group of exams to be reexamined.

On its website, the CB claims that the AP Language course is “equivalent to a two-semester introductory college course in rhetoric and composition”; therefore, students who get a high passing score (4-5) are able to exempt either one or both of their English 1101-2 courses. Of course, parents and students appreciate the money and time saved, but the power of one test to allow students to bypass an entire year of college English creates misguided educational values. Students should want to take AP courses for the learning experience and for the opportunity to take advanced college courses, not to avoid work. Although I teach AP Language, I do not agree with the claim that one AP class parallels a two-semester college course. I am not saying that my class is not “college level” – I assign as much or more writing than many English 1101 professors do and I teach from college textbooks. However, my classes, with the emphasis on the AP exam in May, do not mirror a real college class as much as I wish they did. In English 1101-

2, students continue to learn a true writing and editing process in which drafting, rewriting, and editing are central to the course. Most importantly, the research paper serves as the final assessment of most college English courses, not a timed essay or multiple-choice test. The AP English standards require a complex drafting process that teachers must forgo for the timed essay well before the AP exams in May.

Ironically, many of the writing objectives of the AP Language course and the college board standards require students to “move effectively through the stages of the writing process, with careful attention to inquiry and research, drafting, revising, editing and review” (“AP In Higher Ed”). In my dissertation, I hope to answer why (if leading educators and creators of assessments stress the *process* of writing) we insist on making our students write timed essays. How can anyone – student or adult – write well on a random topic in forty minutes? Nowhere in the Common Core or College Board standards does it state that students should be able to write quickly and produce a finished product after just one draft, but secondary teachers expect their students to do so.

Since 1980, the College Board has administered two AP English tests: AP Language & Composition, and AP Literature & Composition. My dissertation focuses on the AP Language exam, because I teach AP Language at the secondary level. In my course, I emphasize the researched argument paper, and we read many works of non-fiction from a period spanning the last five-hundred years. The AP Literature course centers on literature and poetry. Therefore, the AP Literature test requires students to write a clear literary analysis using terms and concepts from the course; the AP Language test emphasizes the argument and rhetorical analysis of non-fiction. Both exams contain 54 multiple-choice questions and three timed essays.

The College Entrance Examination Board, the Carnegie Foundation, and the American Council on Education founded the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 1947. Each group provided money, employees, and resources to ETS for research and testing. Since its launch, ETS has managed the logistics of AP Testing, SAT, ACT, and other standardized, national tests. The majority of my archival research comes from the headquarters of the Educational Testing Service, based in Princeton, New Jersey. Because ETS manages testing administration of the Advanced Placement exams, I wanted to find documentation that would give me a clear picture of the development and growth of the program.

Originally, I had hoped to find AP Language essay prompts for every year since the beginning of the program, but unfortunately, I was unable to access those materials. According to personnel at ETS headquarters, thirty years ago, a fire destroyed several boxes of key archival materials that I needed (boxes that included records of all prompts). I contacted NCTE, the WPA list serve, and many other avenues, all of which informed me that there were no records – soft or hard copy – of the prompts I sought. Consequently, my dissertation provides an analysis of a selection of prompts from the last thirty years but lacks examples before 1980. I still want to find that collection – I believe it exists somewhere.

My ETS research was still fruitful. I found a rich store of documents – from memos, reports, and essays, to conference proceedings and studies – which tell a compelling story about the Advanced Placement program and the students, teachers, and administrators who were involved over the years. This dissertation encompasses a recounting of those documents, along with secondary sources, composition theory, my own classroom experiences, and my personal analysis of AP Language prompts.



I chose to tackle this topic because as an AP Language teacher and as a mother, I often feel divided and hypocritical. I embrace the AP Language curriculum, with its focus on non-fiction, argument, rhetorical analysis, and research. I regret that I must force my students to practice timed writing and multiple-choice in a high-stress environment to prepare them for the end-of-year AP exam. As a mother, I want my son to have every opportunity to succeed. I know that if his teachers do not recommend him for AP courses, I will attempt to “waive” him in. Today, if students do not have a certain number of AP courses on their resumes, then they will not be considered for college acceptance. As a teacher, I wish my students could NOT waive into my AP Language class; instead of teaching the “college class” that I want to teach, I have had to lower my expectations to accommodate the half of my class that was unprepared for an Advanced Placement class.

The College Board’s Equity and Access Initiative, originally implemented to encourage diversity in AP courses, has “driven the inclusion of lower ability students. That initiative, coupled with the fact that public schools are now being rated by Newsweek and USN&WR based on their AP participation (and little else), and a resulting push for more AP participation at every school for possible financial incentives, has created a situation where we have students in AP courses who have no business being there (League, Joseph). The Equity and Access Initiative states the following:

AP® Access and Equity Initiatives The College Board and the Advanced Placement Program® encourage teachers, AP Coordinators, and school administrators to make equitable access a guiding principle for their AP programs. The College Board is committed to the principle that all students deserve an opportunity to participate in rigorous and academically challenging courses and programs. All students who are willing to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum should be considered for admission to AP courses. The Board encourages the elimination of

barriers that restrict access to AP courses for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in the AP Program. Schools should make every effort to ensure that their AP classes reflect the diversity of their student population. ("Equity Policy Statement.")

At my school, we do not have an official “waive” rule, but instead, parents may simply sign a form and place their children in the AP course of their choice. Our administrators allow most students to waive in, because ultimately, money drives the program. More AP students equal more AP test fees for the College Board and higher prestige for individual schools. At my school, we even have an incentive that allows students to exempt a final exam if they sign up for the AP test. Ten years ago, students who knew they would not pass the test did not pay the money for it. Today, everyone signs up. Despite the current revolving doorway in AP, the actual exam remains the same, so test scores vary according to learning style. Whereas one student may write well, he or she might not have a knowledge base on the particular subject given. Likewise, another student may be a good writer with the knowledge, but may take longer to process information and transform thoughts into a coherent essay. Unfortunately, many parents are paying hundreds of dollars for tests that their child cannot hope to pass. Our AP classes continue to degrade year by year, and it gets harder to maintain my course standards. The gifted, motivated students are also frustrated, because those who do not meet AP standards hold back the progress of the class. What can we, as an educational system, do to try to turn around this seemingly impossible cycle? I hope that my dissertation will uncover some answers.

Our culture has experienced a pivotal shift in literacy. Younger generations who have grown up with the Internet, iPhones, Smartphones, iPads, Tablets, Apps, and Social Media process information differently than those who are a decade older. These contemporary information consumers read in spurts, write texts, emails, and blogs, communicate via *Vine* and

*Instagram*, and have rarely navigated a dictionary or a newspaper. They expect data to appear instantaneously and cannot fathom a time when one had to wait for information. Patricia Edwards highlighted the shift on educational practices in her 2010 essay, *Re-conceptualizing Literacy*: “The transformation of our culture from an Industrial Age to an Information Age is why a new kind of literacy, coupled with a new way of learning, is critical for today’s classroom teacher, who need[s] to be culturally responsive to our diverse learning population...and [should be] connected to new forms of literacy” (1). Unfortunately, the need for a “new way of learning” has already occurred and many educators have a lot of catching up to do.

Students need to feel connected to a topic in order to do their best writing. Extensive research identifies the key components necessary to “engage students in debates that echo the controversies and discussions in their daily lives” (Newell et al 271), and yet children must take high stakes tests that require them to answer questions – often abstract concepts – that mean very little to them. Composition scholars claim that “educators do not work with abstractions; they work with students. Teachers need an interactive vision of the reading and writing arguments that can address the hurdles that students often face...that [are] adequately fine-grained and situated in that experience” (Newell et al 278). Teachers work with students who have concrete, tangible needs, and so each semester, teaching writing makes more sense if we shape each assignment to match contemporary contexts. For instance, during election years, I design part of my semester’s writing assignments around the campaign speeches, so that students can bring their real-world knowledge into their conversations and writing. For instance, during the 2012 presidential debates, I based a unit on the rhetoric of politics. Students watched and evaluated speeches and debates, comparing the argument and delivery of several candidates. They engaged in the unit because it was happening in their personal social context.

When my students write a researched argument paper, they must determine a problem within their community that they would like to solve. Thus, the research they conduct will be for a reason, not just for a grade. My students write much better if there is a “social context” and “task-specific knowledge” that “frame[s] the argument” (Newell et al 278). When they do not have the context, they are writing from nothing but a hypothetical, meaningless idea.

Politicians and parents may think that a high score on an SAT or AP exam (another “abstract” number that does not reflect real-world skills like work-ethic) equals proficient writing, but although today’s “Net Gen, Google Gen, or Digital residents” (Yakel et al 23) have grown up with the Internet, many lack communication skills necessary to make a cogent argument. Of course, every classroom contains students who find a way, through their own volition, to discover how to best navigate the vast sea of information available. Nonetheless, many students do not know how use the resources available to them and cannot conduct deep and meaningful research – not because they lack the motivation to, but because technology has progressed at a faster rate than has student Internet proficiency: “Even though technology is intertwined in our students’ lives, many do not possess the information literacy skills or strategies for learning with technology or learning how to learn new technologies” (Yakel 23). For this dissertation, I use a definition of *information literacy skills* created by Plattsburgh State University and developed by the Suny Council of Library Directors: “Information literacy is the ability to recognize the extent and nature of an information need, then to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information” (Heller-Ross). Currently, because of the unfathomable amounts of data available to students via the Internet, research is much more complex than even ten years ago. The researchers of today will become the entrepreneurs and scholars of tomorrow, and they will need to be “comfortable working in hybrid (digital and analog) environments and

capable of managing media-neutral information throughout its lifecycle” (Yakel 23). To prepare students for a challenging digital workplace, teachers must create technological lessons that reflect how businesses use technology. Likewise, national assessments should mirror our complex, technological ethnicity. Teachers must also encourage collaborative writing – both online and in class – that supports students’ need for an authentic purpose and encourages process writing and reflection. Finally, they must help students develop necessary literacy skills needed for success in the workplace. Educators should not consider technology a “supplemental teaching tool” and should instead realize that incorporating technological lessons in everyday curricula “is essential to successful performance outcomes” (Ertmer, Peggy and Anne Ottenbreit-Leftwich 256). Standardized tests like the AP exam and the SAT fulfill only a fraction, if any, of these contemporary requirements.

Political leaders, test administrators, and educators might ask whether standardized tests should fulfill the contemporary demands of technologically savvy pupils. Edward White, a leading authority on testing, aptly discusses the purpose of assessment:

Any assessment is, in one sense, a means of gathering information. That suggests we should be clear about what information we need and how we will use it before we decide about the means of gathering it. Another way to conceptualize the issue is to think of an assessment as providing answers to questions; the questions need to be well formulated before we seek the answers. These ways of thinking about any assessment seem obvious enough, but very few assessment programs of any kind actually follow them. In most cases, the method of testing is the first issue decided instead of the last; the answer is sought before the question has become clear. (White 32-33)

A national test which has the power to alter a student’s future should reflect real life, real values, and real expectations that echo the “well-formulated questions” that White mentions. The purpose for college entrance assessments should be to “gather information” that will accurately

predict a student's ability to succeed in college. For this dissertation I offer my own definition of "real life, real values, and real expectations" as the terms relate to composition pedagogy. *Real Life* stands for what students will encounter after high school. In college, they will take many courses offering a wide array of project-based assessments that combine the portfolio, group presentation, the Internet, and collaborative writing. Rarely, if ever, will students write a timed essay. *Real Life* also indicates life in the corporate arena. In most jobs, employees are given time to flesh out ideas, to work together, to make mistakes, and to rethink. Even in the fast-paced world of digital publishing, freelance writers have editors who check their work, make changes, and want an improved product before publication. The timed essay format does not represent real life; therefore, standardized tests should not rely on the timed essay.

*Real Values* and expectations signify what the public deems important and what it wants out of its professionals. Most corporations appreciate employees who work towards goals, ask smart questions, and refine and perfect until they produce a superior product. A good supervisor knows that the key to success involves employees who are willing to learn from their mistakes. No one expects perfection the first time; corporations allow new employees months of training before they demand results. For instance, in most sales and marketing positions, new hires do not have to bring in customers for at least three-six months. Why? They must learn the language of the job, the customers, and the product. Telling a student to write a decent essay on a random topic in 40 minutes is like demanding new sales associates to close a deal before they understand their product and customer base.

Teachers teach *process writing*, in which students go through several steps before they turn in the final draft. In my class, I encourage discovering the right question to answer before beginning the writing process. Then, we move into brainstorming, researching possible topics,

discussing pros, cons, and relevance and context of the issue. After they have conducted significant preliminary research, my students choose a subject. Next, we complete each stage of the essay, including several drafts, until the end product reflects the student's best writing. If it were not for the demands of standardized testing, I would never ask my students to read a random prompt, think of an argument, and write an essay in forty minutes. And yet, our students are often expected to write quickly, on demand. Their academic future depends on it. Standardized tests assess certain skill sets and do not mirror real life expectations. There is nothing wrong with testing separate skill sets, but the test should not have the power to limit a student's future or to label a student as proficient in an entire area of study.

The vast amounts of free knowledge available online has transformed the nature of research. Scholars recognize a new kind of learner, one who doesn't mind sharing and expects to give as well as take: "In the web 2.0 era, learners are regarded as cooperative and altruistic actors who refuse to take on the role of a passive consumer and are transformed into active contributors, authors with a disposition to innovate, share, and form communities of interest, communities of practice, and networks (Palaiogeorgiou et al 146). How students get, perceive, and share data has changed dramatically in the twenty-first century. For instance, many people blog (I am one of those people) and gladly share resources online. Most bloggers do not mind if they get re-blogged, because that means that more people read their posts. Our students have grown up in a society where people get and share knowledge with the click of a button. In the past, documents were carefully guarded – even teachers locked their files inside gray cabinets so colleagues could not "steal" their lessons. Today, many secondary teachers post their materials online and download other lessons as needed.

And yet, the massive array of “open source” websites, blogs, and other social media has not eradicated the need for writers to protect their work. On the contrary. Blogs, websites, and online resources gain credibility every day and are becoming possible sources for researchers, journalists, and students to incorporate into their work; thus, the blogger or web editor must be cited. As a blogger, I have spent countless hours writing for my blog on WordPress, which focuses on the field of composition and rhetoric, writing, teaching, and my dissertation process. I own my material and consider the Internet one big arena for publication, and although my blog is free to read, I expect people to give me credit if they re-blog or quote from my posts. On [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com), users often re-blog posts that they like, but they always give credit to the original author.

In the last two decades, teachers have been encouraged to incorporate in their composition classrooms new technologies such as Smart Boards, doc-cams, online databases, word-processing, web-design, blogging, I-Respond systems, automated essay scoring software, Edmodo, and other online platforms for instruction. Many teachers have embraced technology, but others have been more hesitant to accept the “pervasiveness of computers in everyday life ...and the increasing role of digital technology in defining and assessing writing” (Chen et al 50). Although most teachers are willing to learn new technologies, what many in the world of education have failed to see is the effect of technology on the way that students process information. Because students know that they can access whatever fact, figure, statistic, image, or video that they need in an instant, their memorization skills have declined, making the recollection of data for timed essays and multiple-choice questions very difficult. The following excerpt from a 2008 essay in *Atlantic Magazine* demonstrates one scholar’s concern:



Over the past few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn't going—so far as I can tell—but it's changing. I'm not thinking the way I used to think. I can feel it most strongly when I'm reading. Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy. My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument, and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel as if I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle. (Carr 1)

While scholars have been predicting the ramifications of an Internet culture for years, the speed that our students have progressed far surpasses existing teaching and assessment processes. Many freshmen enter the English classroom (in both secondary and post-secondary institutions) unprepared to read texts longer than a paragraph, and they have little experience reading nonfiction. Our “text-message generation” views reading and writing in a context unlike the one their parents and teachers did as teens. Moreover, if a scholar has more trouble (because of the Internet) concentrating on long prose passages and keeping his attention focused, then what challenges do contemporary students face?

In an attempt to keep up with technological growth, the Department of Education mandated through state and national standards that teachers incorporate more technology within the classroom. For the first few years of the 2000s, “incorporating technology” was no more than simply using a computer, overhead projector, Smart Board, or the Internet to teach the same concepts that had been taught for years. When the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC's) became the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and the GPS morphed into the Common Core Standards (CCS), using technology to teach did not suffice: teachers had to demonstrate the intrinsic nature

of technology within assignment and projects, which meant combining computers and writing. Even today, teachers struggle with some students who do not have access to the Internet, a computer that is compatible with those at school, or sufficient knowledge of computers to work with new programs. In my classes, I often have to teach the rudiments of Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, MovieMaker, and other programs before my students can complete their assignments. Despite the challenges, most school systems have answered the call to incorporate technology within their everyday curriculum; and yet, the standardized testing industry has not developed at a rate to match the advances in technology. To borrow from Martin Luther King, standardized assessments have “[crept] at a horse and buggy pace” while technology has “move[d] with jet-like speed”. Although research demonstrates the many flaws in an educational system in which learners must conform while assessments remain virtually static, national testing systems appear to have ignored that educational scholarship.

So what does all this have to do with AP and the history of AP testing?

If the educational community wants to create a less-standardized, more authentic system of assessment, we need to know how, when and why the AP program began, why it is not reacting to the shift, and how high stakes testing needs to change if we are to adapt to our ever-increasing Internet culture.

I am not writing this dissertation to condemn our children, the Internet, the AP Program, ETS, teachers, or standardized testing. I am writing to incite change so that our educational system can adapt to the shift that has already occurred. We must consider the ethics behind forcing our students to take such mechanical, worn-out tests, which create, according to Carol Dweck, author of *Mindset: How You Can Fill Your Potential* a “fixed” mindset, or an attitude in which someone believes that he or she contains a certain amount of intelligence that cannot be

surpassed. People with fixed mindsets fear that they will become “found out,” or that people will discover that they are not really that smart. Thus, they do not feel comfortable with challenges that take them out of their comfort zones. Society claims to want its students to be critical thinkers so they can become the leaders of tomorrow, but we continue to force students to take assessments that reinforce a fixed mindset – a belief in a one-size-fits-all mentality – which does not encourage students or teachers to try new strategies and engage in unique ways of learning. For years, teachers lamented students’ apathetic attitudes and their aversion to reading and writing. I imagine that one of the main reasons for students’ overall lack of motivation is the inherent futility of our systematized assessments. Why force labels, the very quintessence of a “fixed” mindset, onto our students?

This dissertation focuses on the Advanced Placement program, with its antiquated writing tests that are essentially the same today as they were thirty years ago. I teach AP Language, and I love the curriculum. However, I dislike the format of the AP test that comes in May, and I question whether the AP program is in the best interest of young learners. We cannot expect contemporary students to think in the same way that they did in the fifties, sixties, seventies, or eighties; likewise, we should not test them in the same manner that we did so many years ago.

College admissions value Advanced Placement courses. With several AP classes on their transcript (six-eight for most universities), students have a much better chance of gaining admission to most universities. In the past ten years, the standards for secondary education have changed three times, each change calling for increased rigor in the classroom and more accountability for the teacher. As a result, students must have at least two Advanced Placement classes on their transcript to enroll into average state universities, but most students on the college track take more than two AP classes during their high school tenure. According to the

University of Georgia's Admissions department, "A student with a 4.0 GPA in a superior curriculum of Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses might be admitted with an SAT score at or below 1000. Yet, another student with a 3.0 GPA and an SAT score of 1400 might not be admitted, if the student opts for no more than a standard college prep curriculum with few if any Honors, AP or IB courses" (1). Other state schools similar to The University of Georgia, (which now requires seven-eight AP courses for acceptance), have the same belief about AP classes. Students who take the courses and complete the AP tests are more likely to get accepted than applicants who got straight A's without taking AP classes. I have no argument with the AP Language curriculum, with its rich mix of process writing and critical reading, but the final test, which fails to encompass the breadth of the class, must change.

The AP English Language & Composition test consists of two elements: a 54-question multiple-choice exercise on several diverse prose passages and a three-essay written response (essays include rhetorical analysis, argument, and synthesis). The exam lasts three hours and fifteen minutes (one hour for the multiple choice, two hours & fifteen minutes for the writing). Both the argument and the synthesis require students to write on a topic unfamiliar to most, resulting in an inequitable system in which some students might be experts on a random question while the majority flounders. For instance, the Synthesis question (argument with sources) from 2008 required students to decide whether the government should cease production of the penny coin, since so many people have stopped using physical currency. Most students were flummoxed by this question. One student, however, had a distinct advantage: her father, a lawyer, had clients who dealt with that very question. In fact, the student's family had discussed the "penny coin" issue several times, which gave her a great advantage over other students who were much better writers than she. So what does the AP Language & Composition test actually

assess? Is it a true test of intelligence, reading, and writing prowess, or is it a test of quick thinking and luck? We have a serious discrepancy: the Common Core standards require challenging lessons, process writing, researching, and critical reading; the AP test in Language and Composition requires students to write three short, one-draft essays in one hundred and thirty-five minutes on random topics in a sterile environment.

While contemporary composition textbooks claim to align with current writing philosophies, many of these *new* texts are based on older theories and obsolete goals. Often, the Classical argument that Aristotle imparted translates into formulaic writing (even when teachers *think* they are avoiding the “formula”). Aristotle’s culture was primarily oral, so the goals of rhetors 2000 years ago varied from those of today’s writers. Older theories often inform contemporary ones, and knowledge of the history of teaching composition can composition teachers know what drives their philosophies, curricula, and assessments.

Flower and Hayes recognized that a good writing process looks different for each individual. In their 1981 study, they emphasize the importance of being honest with ourselves about our true writing process instead of teaching writing according to a prescription. They define the writing process as one of making decisions based on “one’s purpose” which “guides these choices [in writing]” (365). People set goals for their writing, which can change with each project, depending on the scope of the writing assignment.

In my classes, I have heard students say that unless they *care* about the topic, they cannot effectively write about it. They struggle finding the motivation to explore hypothetical topics that have no basis in their world. In her 2008 qualitative study about the process of writing, Julia Colyar delves into the “whys” behind writing and how knowing the answer to the “why” can help writers produce a better product. Colyar defines the writing process as a form of “inquiry”

by which writers write in order to solidify what they know and discover what they need to find out. If “writing is a learning tool that enables what we know about our research topics and ourselves” (Colyar 423-424), how can students learn through their writing if the prompt they answer is one created by a corporate entity and not one that connects with their current curriculum and cultural context?

It does no good to force students to write without giving them a backdrop for a complete writing process. Imagine telling a math student to solve complex equations without going through the steps, or telling a science class to hypothesize without conducting an experiment. Invention requires time and thought, and professional writers carve out time in their schedule to think, to process, to understand. In his 1972 essay *Teach Writing as a Process Not a Product*, Donald Murray implores teachers to teach “the process of discovery through language” (4). He further claims that “instead of teaching finished writing, [teachers] should teach unfinished writing, and glory in its unfinishedness” (4). He divides writing into three sections: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. He claims that pre-writing, when a writer does the majority of his or her discovery and learning, should take the longest amount of time for a student. He further asserts that the writing itself is the quickest process, followed by the arduous rewriting. For Murray, the prewriting and rewriting should take almost ninety-nine percent of the time spent in the writing process. The actual *writing* takes one percent of the total time (4). AP tests do not allow sufficient time for pre-writing, thinking, processing, and redrafting. How can such a test determine whether or not a student should exempt two years of college English? And more importantly, why should a test limit a hard-working, good writer’s college choices?

Many creators of the Advanced Placement tests are not a part of the “text-message” generation. Even worse, a large number of the researchers and writers who design standardized

tests have never taught a high school class. ETS is trying to remedy the situation, however, and is constantly on the lookout for teachers who want to move into the research and assessment field. And yet, there is still a dearth of people educated in research, validity, and testing who also have teaching experience (especially in Advanced Placement courses). Thus, testing engineers, often unfamiliar with high school students, might not have recognized the educational shift in culture.

In this dissertation, I take a critical look at the history of Advance Placement testing, beginning with the 1890s cry for educational reform, continuing with the need for increased literacy after WWII, and concluding through the end of the 1960s. Using archival research from the Educational Testing Service headquarters, I examine the initial purpose behind the program, the details of its administration, and the reaction from the public. Included is a study of the argument test questions from the AP Language & Composition exam from 1980 to the present, the correlation between standardized testing and the scholarship about composition theory, and the subsequent current state of our “standardized nation”. I then offer several suggestions for a modified AP assessment, one that better aligns with our current shifting culture. Because my dissertation focuses on the early years of Advanced Placement and the relationship to present-day, my *Implications* section suggests avenues for further study that are not included here.

### **1.3 The Need for Change**

What makes some writing “good” while other pieces fall flat? I believe that when we remove the obvious elements of effective writing (clarity, correct grammar, relevant evidence, etc.) we find that readers tend to enjoy a piece more if they detect authentic, or genuine voice, in the prose. Secondary composition teachers face the daunting challenge of helping their students find their voice while simultaneously training them to take standardized, formulaic writing tests. Paradoxically, innumerable students feel comfortable writing and communicating online but

struggle to write in class, and standardized writing assessments are not helping them become better writers. Society must find a way to reconsider the existing paradigm of high stakes testing; our educational system places too much emphasis on timed essay tests, the antithesis of a true writing process. In any writing situation that is timed or forced, writers must stifle their natural flair in “compliance [to specific] criteria to be met” (Elbow 18, 2000). In his book *Everyone Can Write*, Elbow examines this coerced “compliance” and the subsequent “pressure to give in” when writing begins. He also acknowledges the less-common “release from that pressure when we *don’t* have to give in” (19). When I read blogs, I often notice a common element that I rarely encounter in classroom writing. I get to see authentic voice and passion. For instance, I subscribe to [Shannon Thompson’s](#) blog, which focuses on both the creative writing process and her journey as a novelist. Thompson’s blog intrigues me because the author, a college student, writes with such love for the craft that her posts are always engaging and useful for other writers. Thompson has a passion for writing, and she enjoys helping other aspiring writers avoid common pitfalls in their own publishing process. Shannon focuses on one theme: writing. Therefore, she creates an authentic tone in each blog post, which helps to develop her ethos as a serious, professional writer.

Another blog I enjoy reading belongs to a photographer, [Seth Snap](#). Snap has a day job, but whenever he can, he hikes and takes pictures of elements of nature, whether an old barn, a series of birds or clouds, the night sky, or a gnarled tree. He also offers unique and witty captions with creative titles that tell possible stories behind the pictures. I admire that he combines writing and photography. My students engage in a similar variation of the exercise in class when they write stories and poems inspired by famous art. In their final portfolios, they often recount that they enjoyed the chance to write about whatever inspires them, not about a set prompt or idea.



Seth Snap is not a “writer,” but his blog shows creativity and enthusiasm that our assessments do not encourage and that most students’ writings subsequently lack.

#### **1.4 Technological Deterministic Theory and the Social Construction of Technologies**

Primary theories related to the influence the Internet has on adolescent culture include Technological Deterministic (TD) and The Social Construction of Technologies (SCT). Proponents of TD believe that technology – especially the Internet – constantly changes how people act, think, develop, work, and communicate. TD theorists “view technology as an independent force that drives social change” and that “exercises causal influence on social practices...regardless of the social desirability of the change” (Mesch 51). SCT scholars believe that “social groups differ in the extent of their access to technology” and that certain groups will use technology differently than others. Therefore, technology itself cannot be an all-powerful entity that changes society as a whole; technology serves as a resource that people use according to their beliefs, careers, social status, and education (Mesch 53). For the purpose of this dissertation I take a stance somewhere in the middle of the two extremes. Internet technology has affected everyone to a certain degree, but the extent of change on individuals depends on many social, economic, environmental, and biological factors. However, the majority of my students (Advanced and Honors level, upper-middle class) fall into the technological deterministic category. Each day, I observe the way that my students interact with each other. I see how they solve problems, read, research, and react to the world. On any given day in my AP Language class, students, when finished with an assignment, will choose to look at their smart phones to check Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, Tumblr, Vine, email, texts, and Google. Then, they either play games on their phones or start the social media cycle all over again. Every semester, the number of students who choose to read in print during downtime diminishes. Last semester,

only one of my students (out of 110) opened a book when he had time. The others chose to look at their phones and occasionally talk with friends (usually about something they were looking at on the phone). Another of my AP students did a self-case study for her research paper in which she did not use her smart phone (except to make calls) for one week. Her findings were eye opening. Although \*Megan is a high-achieving student with several extra-curricular responsibilities, she averaged about four hours a day on her phone. When she took the phone away, she completed homework expeditiously, spent more time with family, and even read books for pleasure.

Proponents of TD assert that technology affects the way that people work and communicate. My students are addicted to technology: the girl who researched her use of the smart phone failed to enlist others to participate because her peers were unwilling to relinquish their phones for a week. Other students feel uncomfortable if their phone is not in view, and of course, learners today “Google” their questions instead of using a book. They would rather communicate via their phones than in a face-to-face encounter. Students even engage in “text” relationships. *These* are the students who must take the same tests given before personal computers were invented. And, what about the workplace? My students will be in the workforce in less than ten years. How productive are they going to be? How has the corporate world had to adapt to meet the needs of younger personnel? That is a different topic, one that begs to be explored.

Students are not the only ones who face challenges adapting to the technological shift. Teachers have trouble as well, because they have one point of reference: their own high school experience that took place before the shift or in the middle of it. A new teacher, fresh out of college, would have gone to high school from approximately 2005-2010. In 2005, *My Space* had

gained popularity, *Facebook* had just taken off, and *Twitter*, *Vine*, *Reddit*, and *Instagram* did not exist. Students had some distractions through social media, but nothing like they do now.

In *Writing New Media* (2004), Johnson-Eilola pinpoints a problem many current teachers encounter at their schools and inside their classrooms: “[Teachers] tend, despite all of our sophisticated theorizing, to teach writing much as [they] have long taught it: the creative production of original words in linear streams” (200). Most of America’s standardized assessments contain timed essays, which students must write from beginning to end. As a result, many high school classrooms continue to use the five-paragraph method as their primary assessment in order to prepare students for testing. In fact, the SAT test-prep course teaches students to use the formula so they can finish the essay.

Students do not read or write *on their own* in a linear fashion nearly as much as they used to before the Internet. When they click on a URL, they may read a few lines of text and then explore another link that brings them to an external website. Later, they may find that they have read parts of a dozen web sites and blogs before they find what they wanted. Additionally, while students are searching, they multitask: checking email, social media sites, and texts. Rarely does today’s student find an article or essay online and read it in its entirety. Many children still read books, of course, but in their everyday lives, their thinking, reading, and writing is primarily non-linear. It makes little sense that standardized writing assessments require students to write with a formula with none of the fluidity of the Internet. What must concern test writers is that by the time current students become teachers, they will find linearity a foreign concept – uncomfortable and wrong.

While testing certainly plays an important part in students’ lives, what about the real life that comes after the test? Innovative problem solvers are usually the ones who get ahead in the

workforce. Parker and Chao assert that “collaborative creativity promises to be a key business skill in upcoming years” (67), and if teachers want to prepare students to achieve, their lessons should start modeling that creativity. Grant Wiggins, one of the premier scholars on composition theory, “maintains [that standardized tests] lack authenticity [and] argues that students should be engaged in deep, meaningful activities that make use of their constructed understanding of the world around them” (Zwaagstra et al 33). Most writers know that writing takes time and involves a “process of arrangement and connection” necessary for an effective product (Johnson-Eilola 202). And yet, timed writing assessments are a universal form of writing evaluation. Students rely on their essay scores to get into advanced classes, complete Advanced Placement exams, graduate from high school, pass the SAT, and enter college. While some people excel in timed writing, most do not write nearly as well as they would with opportunities for pre-writing, editing, and re-writing. Other scholars assert that timed essays do offer students the opportunities to problem-solve, and the method that a student uses to go about the writing process could be considered “creativity” in some instances. However, in any standardized test, the primary goal must be to test skills and knowledge in the subject area being tested, not the creative methods a student develops to “beat the system.”

### **1.5 Composition Theory as a Social Construct**

One cannot ignore the social aspect of composition theory in conjunction with the Internet, which is itself a social network of blogs, websites, message-boards, wikis, podcasts, social media, e-books, Vines, Tweets, online journals and newspapers, and the vast world of Google. Bizzell stated in 1982 that, “if [teachers] were to go on teaching academic discourse, two things would have to change: [their] understanding of the students' writing processes; and the relationship between the academic discourse community and the students' discourse

communities” (193). Blogging, emailing, texting, You Tube, and social networking have created a culture in which writing and socializing have become intertwined. Nevertheless, many writers claim that they do their best writing alone and thus reject the idea that writing is social.

Numerous composition teachers, however, encourage students to discuss their ideas with others in order to go through the entire writing process together. Vojak et al. describe the writing process as being a “socially situated activity, functionally and formally diverse,” and “meaning making, [which] can be conveyed in multiple modalities” (99-100). For instance, in my classroom I have seen students fail at writing timed essays but master the same key ideas when they write in another mode. In other words, with a slight difference in mode of production and critique, students are often able to master the required skill in a course or on an assessment. One of my students could not understand how to identify satire – he got frustrated because every time we would read a satirical essay, he would find too many elements of truth that made the piece seem believable. When I gave students the option to choose another mode in which to express examples of satire, he chose to create an entire “Home” page of a website. Every element, down to the pictures, contact information, hash-tags, key words, and links, parodied real websites and got his classmates laughing. I asked him why he felt so comfortable with the idea of a satirical website but had so much trouble with essays, and he replied that he would rather fill in the pieces of a webpage in random order instead of writing something from beginning to end. Thus, a student who failed at the “linear” type of writing assignment excelled when he was given a choice of genre. If teachers are to accommodate the students of the future, they must be willing to offer choice in genre, topic, audience, purpose, and collaboration. The rhetorical triangle has never been more important than it is now, simply because of the abundance of sources of information that flood our students.

In academia, just as many publications are collaboratively written as by a single author; however, although many professional writers feel that they produce a better product when they view editing as a social, multi-layer process, most students of writing do not agree and instead would claim that they write better alone. And, while most teachers encourage peer-editing and collaborative writing in the classroom, logic dictates that students would want to write alone, since they will be tested on a piece of writing that they create by themselves. So although most composition theories encourage some element of social interaction from invention to publication, whether it be a simple brainstorming discussion, peer editing, or collaborative authorship, getting students to subscribe to that philosophy is hard when they know that for the test there will be no collaborative approach.

### **1.6 Defining *Finished***

Many teachers claim that when students type their papers in a traditional essay format – first writing the introduction, then the body, then the conclusion – they believe the paper is finished after only one draft. When students’ writing “looks like an essay, [the student] seem[s] less likely to want to make changes to it” (Costello 151). Because of time constraints during state or national writing assessments, students have no choice but to submit their first attempt as a final draft. While some people may think quickly and write well under pressure, standardized test scores can be misleading. Test graders understand that the writing standards for timed essays cannot be as strict as standards for formal writing; however, when students become accustomed to the “A” they receive on timed essays, they tend to believe that they have produced their best writing, and that causes problems. When students are rewarded for a superficial quality of writing because they were simply able to finish the test on time, they often come to expect less of themselves as writers. Subsequently, many do not edit their own papers because they have

difficulty understanding what they should change, since they believe that what they have is “A” quality.

Of course, teachers can attempt to avoid the above scenario with differentiated strategies created to help students learn to recognize “good” writing. An adequate timed essay cannot possibly be as well written as an essay (by the same student) that has been edited and reworked for clarity, depth, grammar and organization. The task of the teacher becomes problematic though, because writing styles and abilities vary for everyone. Teachers of composition need to observe students’ growth in writing: not all students have to be great writers, but assessments that allow for writing conferences and peer-editing sessions can help them reach their full potential. When peers edit each other’s work, they offer creative solutions to problems that perhaps the writer never recognized. Educators owe it to students to give writing assessments that accurately assess critical thinking and process writing. At the very least, if we must give a timed essay, we should give equal time to prewriting, writing, and editing.

Standardized testing does not allow for improvement through process writing. How can we expect students to buy into an authentic writing process when they know that they will not be able to implement that strategy on the exam? Vojak et al. recognize the problem of meaning making when writing assignments become too homogeneous and “the drive for writing standards in schools [becomes] interpreted as the need for standardization” (100). Starting with the formulaic composition classes for incoming freshmen in the early 1900s, the words “standards” and “composition” have gone hand in hand. In the second half of the twentieth century, the need to mandate a prescribed format for writing in composition classes became necessary because of open admission policies and the flood of war veterans into colleges across America; thus, the Writing Standard evolved. Educators should have high standards for their students and for

themselves, but the process of writing should not be standardized. Good writing exists in many forms, much like art and music. Standardized writing assessments hoodwink students into thinking that effective writing can be achieved by following a formula or computer program. In 1996, Brian Huot made a claim about writing pedagogy pre-1990's, and I find it quite startling that almost twenty years later our writing assessments are just as, if not more, systematized:

For the last two or three decades writing pedagogy has moved toward process-oriented and context-specific approaches that focus on students' individual cognitive energies and their socially positioned identities as members of culturally bound groups. On the contrary, writing assessment has remained a contextless activity emphasizing standardization and an ideal version of writing quality. (Huot 561)

We have become a nation addicted to numbers: we need numbers to compare grades, averages, scores, intelligence, writing skill, and even creativity. In Georgia, students begin their normalized educational journey as early as the first grade. From first through eighth grade, children must take tests to assess their English, Mathematics, science and social studies abilities. They are also required to take a test in grades one and three that determines their eligibility for the gifted program. The Advanced Placement program contains a mix of "gifted" and non-gifted students, but can a score on a gifted test accurately predict a student's future collegiate success? In my decade as a high school teacher and nine years teaching gifted students, I have seen many extraordinary students who lack the drive to complete assignments. They usually score very well on standardized tests, but their grade falls in the C-D range. The lack of work ethic makes me worry about how the student will fare in college. I rarely use test scores as an indicator of college success.

Once students reach high school, they continue taking normed, high-stakes tests. These include the EOCT (End of Course Tests, replaced by the "Georgia Milestones" in 2014-15) for



all literature, math, social studies, and science classes. These tests count for 20% of students' grades, and are one of the reasons why teachers feel pressured to teach to the test. Those subjected to standardization are not just high achievers hoping to get into elite universities; they are the average, the challenged, and the learning-disabled students. I have seen many students in my school who are encumbered with either learning disabilities, health issues, or both. Often, they turn out to be the hardest workers in their class. Unfortunately, work ethic ceases to matter when they fail to pass standardized tests. They are unable to take Advanced Placement courses, and so their chances of getting accepted into a university are much lower than children without disabilities. Students with Dyslexia or Attention Deficit Disorder may be highly intelligent and still unable to pass a standardized test. If we could lessen the emphasis on "the test," we might discover a wealth of overlooked and talented students.

In addition to the graduation and promotion tests (in which students advance from one grade to the next), students who take Advanced Placement classes must take the AP tests each year in order to get college credit, thereby exempting the equivalent college courses. While the AP tests are optional, students in many schools are encouraged to take the tests with promises of exam exemptions and the potential of saving thousands of dollars in college. The College Board administers AP tests during a fixed time period of two weeks; as a consequence, students must perform their best on days that may not be optimal for them. Some take more than one AP class and often must complete *two* tests in one day. Each test takes approximately four hours to complete. How can students possibly do their best work if they have already been reading and writing for over four hours?

Despite the challenges surrounding AP testing, the College Board's program continues to thrive as it has for the last sixty years. College admissions officials will frequently overlook

students who choose not to take Advanced Placement classes (unless the student has an outstanding talent in another field, like music or athletics); consequently, the number of students taking AP tests has escalated. According to the Eighth Annual College Board National Report for the 2011-12 academic year, “903,630 US high school graduates took at least one AP exam, 128,568 U.S. high school teachers taught an AP course, 21,328 AP counselors and principals administered AP exams, and 5,808 college faculty participated in reviewing AP teachers’ syllabi, developing curricula, or scoring AP exams” (3). In the 2012-13 school year, a staggering 14.8 million students enrolled in high school, with half of them (appx. 7.4 million) at AP test-taking age (Fast Facts). As per the College Board, 2,218,578 students took at least one AP exam in 2013; therefore, approximately 13% of all juniors and seniors in high school have taken at least one AP test. Each test costs \$105 (paid for by the student), so the College Board made well over 232 million dollars last year on tests alone, and that does not include money from students who took more than one test. Funded by parents’ hard-earned money and students’ need for college admittance, AP testing is Big Business.

Why has society become so standardized? Why does the College Board allow students to exempt two semesters of English based on one writing test that is more about performance and quick thinking than it is about true writing skill? An in-depth study of the history of the AP Testing program and an analysis of the tests themselves can help reveal why we place such trust in the current Advanced Placement program.

In a 1995 Conference on College Composition and Communication position statement, members of the CCCC committee asserted that “...in all situations calling for writing assessment in both two-year and four-year institutions, the primary purpose of the specific assessment should govern its design, its implementation, and the generation and dissemination of its results”

(431). Tests that determine whether a student can exempt classes in two and four-year institutions should follow the same fundamental design as college course assessments, which culminate in an end-of-semester term paper and/or a collaborative project, both which take time, revisions, collaboration, peer editing, and teacher feedback. Educators and testing administrators might also consider revisiting the ‘primary purpose’ of the AP test.

I am not claiming that the AP system should go away. In fact, children receive many benefits when they pass AP classes. AP students get a depth and variety in the curriculum that they would not get from on-level high school courses; nevertheless, the format of the AP exam does not do justice to the full complexity and breadth of instruction that students receive in the course. In the table below, I list the complex and diverse composition standards that the College Board expects students to master, and then I compare them with the fundamental skills inherent in the AP English exam. I have highlighted several keywords that demonstrate aspects of a complete writing process, one that the timed essay genre does not allow. According to the College Board, the learning goals (standards) for AP Language are as follows (see my commentary beside each standard):

**Table 1: College Board Standards**

College Board Standards	Correlation with AP Examination
The course teaches and requires students to write in <b>several forms</b> (e.g., narrative, expository, analytical, and argumentative essays) about a variety of subjects (e.g., public policies, popular culture, personal experiences).	<b>LOW/POSITIVE:</b> The AP Language test requires students to write in one genre (the essay); however, students have the opportunity to write in several modes for their argument essay, depending on the prompt. The argument and synthesis essays tend to fall under one of the three subjects (public policies, popular culture, and personal experience).
The course requires students to write essays that proceed through several stages or <b>drafts</b> , with <b>revision</b> aided by teacher and peers.	<b>NEGATIVE:</b> Because of the limited time allotted to write three essays, students must turn in their first drafts. Students are not allowed peer editing.
The course requires students to write in <b>informal contexts</b> (e.g. Imitation exercises, journal keeping, collaborative writing, and in-class responses) designed to help them become increasingly aware of themselves as writers and of the techniques employed by the writers they read.	<b>NEGATIVE:</b> The AP Examination context is comprised of a fixed, formal setting. Students must write on topics chosen for them and have little time to reflect on who they are as writers.
The course requires expository, analytical, and argumentative writing assignments that are based on readings representing a wide variety of prose styles and genres.	<b>POSITIVE:</b> The AP Exam consists of readings, for both the multiple choice section and the essay section, from a variety of authors and time-periods.
The course requires nonfiction readings (e.g. essays, journalism, political writing, science writing, nature writing, autobiographies/biographies, diaries, history, and criticism) that are selected to give students opportunities to identify and explain an author’s use of rhetorical strategies and techniques. Some fiction and poetry will be assigned to help students understand how various effects are achieved by writers’ linguistic and rhetorical choices.	<b>POSITIVE:</b> The excerpts in the synthesis essay are comprised of a variety of genres, and the rhetorical analysis piece could be anything from an autobiography to a political cartoon.
The course teaches students to analyze how graphics and visual images both relate to written texts and serve as alternative forms of text themselves.	<b>POSITIVE:</b> The synthesis essay contains 1-2 visuals, which may be in the form of a chart, graph, cartoon, portrait, painting, etc. Students are expected to understand how the visual contributes to the overall argument.
The course teaches <b>research skills</b> , and in particular, the ability to evaluate, use, and cite primary and secondary sources. The course assigns projects such as the researched argument paper, which goes beyond the parameters of a traditional research paper by asking students to present an argument of their own that includes the analysis and synthesis of ideas from	<b>NEGATIVE:</b> Students do not use research skills on the AP Test. They are expected to be able to evaluate each source used on the Synthesis essay, however. The synthesis essay was implemented in 2007 to try to achieve the research standard; however, with the time limits and arbitrary topic choices, most students wind up summarizing the points in the sources instead of

an array of sources.	“synthesizing” them into their own unique argument.
The course teaches students how to cite sources using a recognized editorial style (e.g. modern Language Association, The Chicago Manual of Style, etc.).	<b>LOW/POSITIVE:</b> Students must cite their sources when they incorporate quotes from the excerpts within their synthesis essays. However, they are not required to follow MLA entirely, but instead can place the source number in the parentheses, not the author and page number.

Clearly, some aspects of the AP Language test do not support the curriculum standards, but our nation is firmly mired in our current system – the very fulcrum of our national assessments rests on the theory of standardization. Also, the lack of a time limit (or quick writing) in the standards undermines each of the positive correlations between standard and test: the skills expected of students are nearly impossible to effectively achieve in 40 minutes. So how should we alter our path? Should we alter it? A close look at the history of the Advanced Placement program will help to determine answers to those pressing questions.

## 2 LITERACY ON A NATIONAL SCALE

### 2.1 Abstract

Chapter 2 examines the pivotal nature of education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the influx of immigrants, post-war veterans, and increase in population, secondary and post-secondary schools witnessed burgeoning enrollment. As more people sought to further their education, teachers and professors recognized deficiencies in literacy that threatened to cripple our nation and put us behind other world powers. In response to the call for improved reading and writing skills, educators focused on replacing oral assessments with written tests. Accordingly, the need for standardized writing assessments grew alongside enrollment in both high schools and colleges. This chapter examines the educational system during the turn of the twentieth century and scholars’ responses to the needs of a growing technological culture. I examine several key points in history, including the *Committee of Ten*, Harvard’s influence on educational practices, and the relationship to our recent, ever-changing national standards. Throughout the chapter, I compare the needs of contemporary American students to students a hundred years ago, and I draw parallels from existing educational issues to those from a century past. I then posit possible reasons why we developed into such a standardized society and became dependent on the

Advanced Placement testing system. At the end of the chapter, I analyze the AP Language prompts from 1980 to the present and evaluate them for purpose, context and appropriateness of complexity considering the time limit of the test. My findings demonstrate that several of the prompts are culturally and socio-economically biased and are too complex to be answered in 40 minutes or less. I also show that most prompts do not provide students with an authentic context, and thus do not allow for quality writing. These findings lead to my conclusion, that AP tests should not carry the weight that they currently do.

## **2.2 Literacy on a National Scale: Americans Value Reading and Writing**

In the late 1800s, most university English department curricula focused on literature, not rhetoric and composition, and although students were learning the classics, “there was no methodical instruction in rhetoric and composition” (Elliot 16). And yet, with writings from Thoreau and Whately, Americans began to see the value of critical reading and competent writing. Thoreau alleged that everyone could benefit from reading and writing, but little did he know how prophetic his philosophy would become. Before the 1870s, college instruction mainly involved recitation taught by people “who were rarely professional educators or scholars” but instead were often “Protestant clergymen” (Brereton 3). From 1870 to 1900, the American educational system saw one of its largest transformations in history. During this time, the focus in the classroom changed from one of “orality” to one of “literacy”; written tests and compositions quickly (within the space of a generation) replaced oral exams and recitation (Brereton 4). Although educators before the latter nineteenth century paid scrupulous attention to grammar and detail, the focus on memorization, delivery of speeches, and debate fell to the wayside after 1860 when the concentration in English shifted to literary studies and composition (Brereton 4).

Educational pioneers like Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard University in the late nineteenth century, believed the teaching of composition and literature to be just as important as

other areas of study. His primary challenge, and that of other university administrators, was finding a way to assess writing ability for incoming college freshmen. Eliot was a "great believer in admission to higher education on the basis of examination" (Elliot 11), and with the rising number of college students, the growth of the sciences, and the necessity for efficient assessments, scholars needed to replace time-consuming oral exams with written tests. Although professors often preferred to give verbal examinations, written tests were easier to give in bulk, albeit the grading load for teachers increased exponentially. Standardized tests, one answer to the shift in educational needs, were a smart solution in Eliot's day; however, just because a solution to an immediate problem proves effective does not mean that it will work forever. Educators saw the success of normalized entrance exams and since then have continued to use the same testing methods, despite their ever-decreasing effectiveness.

As written literacy replaced the oral tradition, students started relying on notes and transcription from lectures, books, and seminars. Thus, the "day was carried by the page" and not by the spoken word (Elliot 11). Teaching concise writing became a priority in the English curriculum because of the staggering number of new college students who were not adept at writing and thus recorded incomplete and/or inaccurate lecture transcripts and notes. As a result, the quality of student notes became an important issue of discussion among university faculty, and there developed new purposes for teaching composition, ones that would ultimately help students understand lectures, write papers, complete projects, and make decisions. If we look at today's students, we can see a similar degradation of lecture transcription and note-taking.

Ironically, students in the early twenty-first century have come full-circle regarding their ability to assimilate concepts taught in class and transfer them to thorough and accurate lecture notes. As the use of technology has increased in education, the need, and often the ability, for

students to summarize lectures, directions, and methodology has decreased at an alarming rate. In my classes, students rarely take notes because they know that my lectures will be on my teacher blog. Consequently, they do not listen carefully to directions and frequently ask me to repeat myself. Even when I give detailed instructions, they have trouble reading the entire assignment handout—teachers often feel like they have to make their directions as short as a *Tweet* (140 characters) so students will read from start to finish.

Some may ask then, “Why do teachers put everything on their blog? Aren’t they just enabling students instead of helping them?” By the start of the new millennium, the Internet evolved into a primary method of communication for all; concurrently, schools decided to incorporate technology into their grading and administrative systems. Teachers were required to use Internet blogs to display lessons and standards, and online platforms like Blackboard and Edmodo to administer assessments. Administrators began evaluating teachers via online platforms, and email became the central mode of interoffice/school communication. I enjoy using a blog to communicate with students and parents. If my students are sick, they should be able to access the day’s lessons with ease. Unfortunately, like standardized testing, we took a good idea and went too far with it. Whereas a simple wiki or web page with daily handouts used to suffice, most blogs in my school system are required to go into minute detail: standards, differentiation, mini-lessons, minute-by-minute plans, links to information, and all handouts. Teachers have less space in their day to be creative, to veer from the lesson based on the needs of their students, and students no longer feel the need to take notes and write down directions, because they know that with the click of a button they can access that day’s lesson. My blog is a perfect example. Recent research has shown that “students who are experts in multiple literacies, especially those involving use of technology, are often labeled as struggling readers in school”



(O'Brien, Beach, & Scharber). While the issue may not seem critical to contemporary students, they will be in for a rude awakening when their college professors, colleagues, and supervisors expect them to listen, write it down, and *get it* the first time.

Educators often mention the “pendulum” swing of pedagogic trends: one decade a certain practice will be popular, and the next it is considered out-of-date and ineffective. This dissertation takes a critical look at teaching philosophies from the 1800s to the twenty-first century in order to demonstrate those areas that have come full-circle and thus have not improved at all. How can educators believe they are moving in the right direction if students currently struggle with the same skills that they were a hundred years ago?

Educators are still trying to find a balance between written and verbal assessment. I have found through teaching AP Language & Composition that often, a strategic use of language ensues when students are required to speak in front of their peers. Although I am passionate about teaching composition and a staunch believer in the theory that “composition can be taught” (Gaillet), I also appreciate the value in a spoken delivery. In past semesters when my students have given speeches, rhetorical strategies that for so long had remained a mystery suddenly became cogent within their prose. For most people, public speaking proves difficult, but when a teacher assigns students the task of writing with the purpose of speaking to a specific audience, the words become powerful, indicative of the student and unaffected. Nevertheless, the need for students to be able to pen their thoughts on paper has never been more important. The “iY” generation as a whole, or those students who have grown up knowing *nothing but* the latest technology, lacks many basic communicative skills that previous generations take for granted. My students do not know the correct way to address an envelope (most of them have never sent a “real” letter), they cannot navigate a newspaper and have never used a real dictionary, they do

not understand pronunciation keys and have trouble reading aloud, they no longer hear and use proper grammar in their everyday lives (especially in texting and social media), and they want information fast and get frustrated if they cannot find what they are looking for with one “Google” search.

Conversely, the standards for writing—whether in business, college, or high school—keep increasing. Internet content (blogs, online journals, newspapers and websites) have had to raise their bar for online submissions simply because of the universal transition from print to online media. Even questionable sources like Wikipedia are improving through peer and professional editing. As expectations and international competition in academia continue to rise, it makes sense that our educational leaders would want all school systems to unite with a set of standards that would guide them towards a more competitive curriculum: “The movement toward Common Core Curriculum Standards is a good example of this desire to get everyone in the educational system on the same page” (Conley & Wise 94). All states but Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia have been implementing the Common Core Standards (CCS) since its inception a few years ago, and I have seen in my school a significant change in what we teach, how we teach, and how we assess. Ninth graders must write at a more sophisticated level than ever expected of their age group so they “meet expectations” set by the CCS. The ability to write proficiently is not enough; now, students must also synthesize several sources (a skill first introduced on the 2007 AP Language exam), read and annotate them, and make an argument using evidence from what they read. Advanced placement students struggle with it, and the high school freshmen I teach are even less prepared to write at the synthesis level.

### 2.3 The Ability to Synthesize

To “synthesize” information means that students should be able to read a variety of media on one topic and create their own unique argument using specific evidence from those sources. Consider entering a conversation in which ten people are discussing a current issue. There are a number of factors regarding the problem, so each person represents a shade of the argument. When listeners join the dialogue, they ponder each person’s opinion, think about their own experiences regarding the issue, and then make a claim. To be marketable in the business world, people need know how to synthesize information to solve problems. Even within the context of everyday life, *synthesis* happens all the time. When people make decisions regarding which home or car to buy, most of them will scrutinize all their options before making a final decision. They will talk with a variety of knowledgeable people, listen to diverse opinions, and conduct research from several sources. Coming up with the best solution requires that the consumer has a thorough understanding of the market.

We use synthesis skills in all aspects of lifestyles, trades, educational courses, and careers. For instance, teens need to understand advanced technology if they hope to be competitive in tomorrow’s workplace. Most adults would see no problem with the high tech standards, but many current high school students feel like they have missed a crucial opportunity for technical training at an advanced level. Last semester, I heard one of my juniors, who hopes to have a career in computer science, lamenting the fact that her younger brother, age eleven, already knew more about programming and computers than she did. She felt that her school was behind in their offerings of technical courses like computer programming and web design, and she worried that she would not have the time to teach herself what she needed to know to compete in the job market. I have also often heard my advanced students say that although they

did well in their AP classes and “aced” the tests, they had no idea how to put their knowledge to practical use. Instead, they quickly forgot what they learned and replaced it with new information. It does no good to teach a mathematical or scientific concept without showing students several examples, different ways to come to an answer, and then practical uses for that answer. I look at the term “synthesis” as an all-encompassing skill, one that educators should foster. Instead, however, secondary education teachers must spend significant time on test prep, racing through the material, not on real-life applications for knowledge acquired. Our students are the products of a major shift in culture similar to the one that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, and if we do not answer that call soon, we will find ourselves with a generation of young adults who can theorize but cannot create.

Unfortunately, our learning communities have continually failed to evolve quickly enough to meet the needs of students. Some scholars claim that it is more important to teach “skills needed to create success at [students’ levels],” while others claim that “the job of schooling [is to] build reading and comprehension skills sufficient for readiness for future education in college and the workplace” (Conley & Wise 94). Because of increasing systematization of our educational policies, the majority of students and teachers are more concerned about the skills necessary to pass national and state tests than on the essential abilities for success in the workforce. I have frequently heard students complain that they will “never use *this* in real life.” I do not fault them, however. They did not create the testing society in which they live. The methodology we employ to assess our students should emulate real-life scenarios that call for critical thinking and application, so the modes of writing that we teach should change with the end goal of the assessment. Unfortunately, the focus on testing makes it difficult to help students in the areas where they will need it the most.

The Synthesis essay is a key component of the AP Language exam, and some readers might wonder why I am writing about the necessity of improving synthesis skills while simultaneously rejecting aspects of standardization. The problem with the AP exam, even the synthesis question, involves the inherent factors surrounding timed writing: arbitrary topics, a fixed test-taking environment, which is the same for everyone (except students who may have special accommodations due to a learning or physical disability), and an unrealistic time limit. On the AP exam, synthesis topics have ranged from environmental issues, locavores, monuments, museums, science and the effects of migrating organisms, the U.S. Postal Service, the penny coin, and others. I feel that these topics are “arbitrary” and that for a high-stakes test, each student must have an equal opportunity to succeed. For instance, if a student enjoys science, then the science question would be fine for him or her; however, if I had to write an essay about an obscure scientific topic in 40 minutes, I would not be able to demonstrate my best writing skills because of my limited, scientific knowledge.

#### **2.4 Educational Issues: Now and Then**

My issues with the AP testing program resulted, in part, from the problems in education over a century ago. In the late eighteenth hundreds, educators found themselves hampered by their own set of student issues, most involving an overall lack of writing and communication skills. Many scholars wanted to adopt the German model of teaching, which encouraged students to research about an issue that interested them and to create new knowledge based on their findings. Instead of professors disseminating information and pupils regurgitating it back, students made original discoveries through the research process and wrote about their findings in a clear, scholarly manner. The Germans preferred lectures to recitation, and their model, which emphasized “freedom of inquiry” and fostered a high degree of specialization, included more

philology than classical rhetoric. Philology involves teaching grammar, language, and the history and etymology of languages in the context of literature, with the assumption that knowledge of grammatical rules, writing, and critical thinking skills would naturally follow. American universities admired Germany's high level of educational standards and began to rethink their teaching methods and philosophies (Brereton 5). In a 1924 essay by Lindsey Blayney, the problem in America's educational performance was clear:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that in spite of many very real achievements in the field of education in recent years, the output of our colleges and universities in human material is not measuring up in many cases to the legitimate expectations of many of the most intelligent and generous supporters of higher education in America. There seems to be a growing feeling in the mind of the thoughtful public that too many of those, in whom the undergraduate course should stimulate the faculty of vision, lack, all too frequently, even the most necessary foundations of that intellectual and spiritual background which, heretofore, has been considered the distinguishing mark of the college and university trained mind. (Blayney 95)

Most teachers wanted to teach grammar and writing through literature and fought teaching grammar and composition in isolation, but as the number of illiterate college students grew, so did those students who lacked the "intellectual and spiritual background" expected of a college student. So, although educators recognized the need for change, it became increasingly difficult for them to teach to the level that would foster the "distinguishing mark of the college and university trained mind" because new students were so literacy-challenged. For many immigrants, skills including advanced literary analysis, research, and scholarship were beyond the scope of possibility until the students became proficient in English. Teachers in both the secondary and post-secondary systems faced a unique challenge: how to increase the rigor akin to the German system of education while serving the flood of immigrants who simply wanted to

learn how read and write. Presently, we can draw a distinct parallel between our Common Core criteria combined with the changing (and some would say deteriorating) literacy of our youth.

As a teacher, I *live* the dichotomy of teaching writing in the context of a literary work vs. teaching composition or grammar in isolation. My students must learn how to write in varied genres so they can understand the need to modify “voice” for a particular audience; and of course, they need to understand the fundamentals of grammar. However, on the SAT and AP exams, there exists one genre of writing assessment: the timed essay. We should not judge students’ writing ability solely on one mode of writing. One student might be scientifically inclined, another might enjoy literary analysis, and still another may speak English as a second language. At my school, there is a girl (I will call her Becky) from the Ukraine who epitomizes a child with potential: she is amiable, loves to design clothing, and has a personal work ethic that I rarely see in students. Recently, she had to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), a test that prepares students for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and affords them eligibility for certain national scholarships. Because she has such a difficult time with the language, she asked if she could use her translator on the test. Unfortunately, the rules specifically state that students may not use any devices to enhance their performance. Becky is 18 years old and still technically a high school freshman. Because she struggles with the language, she will probably remain in high school for the maximum time-period (until age 21). Our school does not have an “English as a Second Language” (ESL) specialist, so there is no one who can help Becky speed up her acquisition of English. We do, however, have many SAT, AP, and testing experts in my county who train students in the skill of taking a test that holds enough weight to determine their future career. Ironically, the educational community continues to focus on homogenized testing instead of on services like ESL, which a growing number of students

like Becky desperately need. Why do we neglect the essentials (like ESL services) in favor of standardized assessments that perpetuate the issues our teachers are trying to eliminate within their classrooms?

A century ago, we faced a similar discord in education. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the conflict of interest between the traditional literary education and the need for a new curriculum designed to accommodate the growing number of illiterate students was increasing at an alarming rate, so scholars faced the challenge of incorporating the German model of teaching while simultaneously integrating the basics of composition. To promote the German model, Charles Eliot, President of Harvard University, wrote two articles in the *Atlantic Magazine* that outlined his vision of an ideal, modern university. The magazine published the first one in February, 1869 and the next in March of that same year. Eliot's first piece, "The New Education," sought to answer the question "How can I give my boy a practical education?" (Eliot February, 1869 2). Eliot examined the American educational system, claiming that colleges and classical schools did not adequately prepare students for an "active calling" in business pursuits. As an educator, I find it ironic that a majority of technical, specialized courses designed to prepare students for the "real" world, whether in a business or in a trade, have been eliminated from most secondary school programs. My school used to have a thriving horticulture program and its own auto mechanics department, and those classes served as the lifeline for many students who did not feel like they were "college material." Countless people in my school wish that we offered more trade-based programs to prepare students for careers other than traditional white-collar business.

The course I teach will help students to communicate for the rest of their lives; it will help them to become thoughtful consumers, logical thinkers, and clear writers. The skills they



learn with me will be a great benefit to them in whatever career they choose, but most students do not think about the reason they are learning or how they might use their classes in the future – they focus on test scores and college acceptance. They do not see the possibilities for expansion of the core concepts they learn today into developed, new ideas for tomorrow. In short, they have lost the curiosity and love for learning. Yes, I have heard my students complain that they would enjoy their classes more if the teachers taught the concepts using authentic scenarios; however, if given a chance at real-life application, would my students recognize the learning possibilities, or would they continue to focus on the test score? A standardized mindset has taken over society, and I can see it clearly in my own community. Now, it appears that many teens feel that high school is a waste of their time and simply a bridge to college. Our educational system spends too much time on assessments that do not represent the future of our students.

Part of the reason that we rely on testing stems from the belief that all students should go to college. In 2014, North Carolina policy makers and business leaders deemed it a “crisis in public education” when data reported that of “every 100 students who enter ninth grade in public high school in North Carolina, only 70 percent graduate within five years...[and] 42 [of the 100] enroll in college” (Edmunds et al 349). More than ever before, students are pressured to attend college immediately after high school (even if they are not ready for college, cannot afford college, or do not want to go to college). Adults tell students that they must have a college degree in order to be “successful,” and so students do whatever they can to pass the tests that will help gain them admittance to a university. As a proponent of higher education, I concede that most business employers will not consider interviewing an applicant without a college diploma. However, what our society fails to address are the numerous career possibilities for those without a post-secondary degree. Students believe that “success” means working in a professional field

that requires a college diploma, but I know several successful entrepreneurs, mechanics, home-renovation specialists, cleaning personnel, electricians, plumbers, and computer programmers who did not need a college education to start their own business or to make a successful living. Unfortunately, we do not advertise *those* opportunities in the public school system. Instead, when students do not choose to attend college we proclaim it a *crisis* and try to figure out more ways to increase test scores.

During the last century, there have been pressing issues with American education: the urgent need to change at the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, WWI and II, the lack of real “lessons of experience” in most common textbooks, and the *mélange* of school systems. As a result, numerous American students were unprepared to enter college and later to become members of a growing workforce. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars disagreed about education much as they still do. Harvard academics claimed that it would be ridiculous to assume that the teaching methods used 50 years ago would be applicable in the present (Eliot February, 1869 1). Eliot recommended an hour of manual labor, or exercise, a day, but he warned that pursuing a job in “digging potatoes, sawing wood, laying brick, or setting type” was a waste of time and energy, and that a young man should spend his time “catching butterflies, sharpening his wits in [conversation], experimenting in a chemical laboratory, etc.” (February, 1869 14). A little over a quarter of a century later, scholars worried that there would be no laborers left to take care of the necessities of life. Before the twentieth century, education—especially specialized programs—was designed for an elite group of Americans preparing for leadership. The relatively low number of college students made Federal standards unnecessary, but this pre-1900s *laissez-faire* attitude would change with the turn of the century (Murphy 249).

Researchers continued to ponder Eliot's initial question ("how can I give my boy a practical education?") while asking what the best course of action would be to prepare students for technical school. English teachers debated about the proper way to teach grammar: should students study grammar in context or in isolation? Harvard scholars felt that students should first learn their "mother tongue" by listening to selected passages and verses, and that by the time they had read a wide variety of works authored by Shakespeare, Milton, and Napier, they would have also started to study the concepts of grammar in another language (Eliot, March 1869 358-359). Conley and Wise make several suggestions in their 2011 essay, which addresses teaching a skill in isolation or in context: "Throughout schooling and in life, comprehension never occurs in a vacuum. Comprehension is almost always used purposefully and in different ways to solve a problem" (96). Standardization is one big vacuum, and students spend the majority of their time learning within that void without having a practical way to apply the knowledge later. Today, educational programs focus so much on test-taking skills that students often forget the purpose behind the material they study. They just want to learn how to pass the test.

One can answer the question of grammar in isolation or in context by looking at student performance on the PSAT, SAT, and on everyday writing assignments. To gain college acceptance, students must do well on the SAT, so teachers in most schools are expected to teach test preparation skills that mimic those on the PSAT and SAT. There are tricks to taking the test: process of elimination, logic, recognizing the obvious "trick" answer, and getting used to the formatting. I have repeatedly seen students do well on the PSAT and SAT, but when I ask them to name the parts of speech or to explain the rhetorical choice for using a semi-colon, most of them cannot give me an answer. When I teach test prep and ideas in isolation, students are not required to relate those skills to real life and thus do not truly understand what they are learning

and why they are learning it. Additionally, they feel that the priority is to do well on the test, not to learn how to master reading or writing. Conversely, when I give one of my most popular assignments, the “Apologia” or apology speech, students must apologize about a real issue in front of their classmates, so they want the speech to be compelling. The assignment requires students to incorporate ten rhetorical devices into the speech and to employ purposeful punctuation. For my students, using language for a rhetorical purpose and an audience teaches them more about communication than taking multiple-choice tests that require analysis of rhetorical devices. As they practice their speech and read it to their peers, they start to see the power of certain words and phrases, and they begin to understand why some parts of their speeches do not “work.” Thus, they learn about making rhetorical choices. Just as Conley and Wise posited, students do not learn unless the skills taught have a real-life application.

Test creators may claim that standardized testing exists to teach critical thinking, reading, writing, discipline, and endurance. While students must demonstrate some elements of the aforementioned skills to pass multiple choice and writing tests, they will not be able to transfer those skills to real-world challenges because the test, homogenous in nature, does not require students to “select and apply strategies for different purposes” (Conley and Wise 96). In most cases, students memorize what they need to know for the test and then forget the majority of what they learned to make room for the next assessment. If we must continue with a standardized testing system, the tests we create should – at the very least – reflect several aspects of real-world application. Students would begin to see purpose in the tests that would go beyond the basic need to gain acceptance into a college.

Another controversy that secondary educators face involves the requirement of world language courses. Many schools have stopped teaching Latin; however, a hundred years ago,

Latin served as a primary educational focus. Scholars maintained that Latin helped students learn “distinctions between different moods and tenses, the various connections to time and place, the relations of dependence, sequence, and contingency...and the subject, predicate, and object” (Eliot, March 1869 359). If young men understood proper literature and the language of Latin, the elements of grammar would develop naturally. They would also grow up with the ability to express their ideas with “clearness, conciseness, and vigor...[when describing] material resources, industrial processes, public works, mining enterprises, and ...finance” (Eliot, March 1869 359). Eliot accurately foreshadowed the importance that literacy would have on future generations of professionals, albeit blue-collar ones (by nineteenth century consideration). In existing curricula, rarely do students take Latin. When they do, they often enter my class with a richer vocabulary and a deeper understanding of the etymology of words.

With the twentieth century came more industry, technology, and jobs, and as the working force grew, so did the need for literate professionals. From 1865-1920, the “Gross Domestic Product (GDP) multiplied more than seven times...and [the] Real Per Capita Product more than doubled” (Lamoreaux 2). When the Morrill Federal Land Grant Act (1862), which made it possible for western states to build colleges and schools, was renewed in 1890, the government provided educational funding for new technical institutions and colleges, which were opening their classrooms to varied races and to women. These changes filtered down to the secondary level, which helped bring about the need for increased rigor and a better means of assessment.

Harvard, one of the first universities that allowed students to shape their own curriculum instead of requiring them to take classes that did not appeal to them, encouraged students to choose a profession that interested them and to move on if they were unhappy in their job. In fact, in an 1881 report, Charles Eliot claimed that students should only attend lectures if they

were motivated to study the content, if they felt that they needed daily help on the material, and if they found the material “indispensable” for their chosen profession. Professors at Harvard increasingly tried to make their lessons interesting and relevant for the students so that they would want to attend (Eliot 1881, 92). If only Eliot’s vision had come true. Students rarely feel like they have much choice in high school; they take the classes to graduate and to gain college acceptance.

Late nineteenth century scholars witnessed rising hurdles along their path to an evolving educational system. The 1890 “Report on Secondary Education,” delivered for the *National Council of Education* by Professor Canfield from the University of Kansas, exposed the “undeveloped condition of secondary education throughout the country” (Eliot 1890, 24). As expectations at the college level rose along with the need for a literate working class, teachers and professors across the nation were becoming more vocal about the unorganized and inconsistently structured public school systems. Scholars wanted “common standards” to guide teachers and motivate students in both the university and secondary levels, and they sensed that a more rigorous curriculum would help close the widening gap between secondary and post-secondary schools (Eliot 1890, 24).

There were many drawbacks to the public school system, mainly because secondary and elementary schools were not accountable to a higher authority. School boards could choose their own curricula, standards, and rules based on the opinions of a select few. Additionally, school systems were tied to local committees and boards that “rarely look[ed] beyond the immediate interests of the particular region which support[ed] each school” (Eliot 1890, 24). Most school systems did not communicate their curricula to other secondary school systems and certainly not to neighboring universities. Without communication, teachers had no way of knowing how their

school compared with those in other districts and how effectively their curricula prepared students for college. To make matters worse, many schools were not concerned with college prep; they did what they had to do to keep their community thriving.

As composition pedagogy developed in the early twentieth century, the difficulties that arose grew as well. Professors, many of whom were overworked and underqualified, struggled to teach the vast number of diverse, unprepared students. The first issue of *English Journal*, published in 1912, discussed the problems inherent in teaching composition. In his essay titled “Can Good Composition Teaching Be Done under Present Conditions?” Edwin M. Hopkins, from the University of Kansas, wrote about his concerns within the field of composition pedagogy:

A single statement will explain the fundamental trouble. Not very many years ago, when effort was made to apply the principle that pupils should learn to write by writing, English composition, previously known as rhetoric, became ostensibly a laboratory subject, but without any material addition to the personnel of its teaching force; there was merely a gratuitous increase in the labor of teachers who were already doing full duty. (xviii)

Ironically, teachers of composition were lamenting the inequities of their field much as they do now: the lower prestige inherent to the discipline of English, the extra time grading papers and giving writing conferences, the low pay scale, the uneven ratio between composition students and teachers. Because there were so many new students learning how to read and write and so few composition teachers, those teachers were overworked, tired, underpaid, and frustrated. Hopkins also noted that although the need for composition classes had skyrocketed, additional composition teachers were not hired, which left the already overbooked literature teachers struggling to take on a second job. To add to the inequity of the situation, most professorial salaries in other departments were higher than in English, even though composition

teachers were expected to grade papers during their “off” hours. The issues within the academy regarding composition courses led to the failure of students to write adequately, and thus the need for change multiplied. No wonder that the United States began to search for standardized writing assessments that teachers could easily grade.

Another factor that held back public education had more to do with geography than rigor. Near the turn of the nineteenth century, cities contained the majority of public schools; therefore, students who lived in rural locations had limited access to schooling opportunities. Colleges had some options, none of which were particularly appealing: they could refuse all candidates who were not sufficiently prepared and watch enrollment dwindle, lower admissions requirements to allow lower-level freshmen to enroll, and/or provide incoming freshmen with a preparatory curriculum that would sufficiently catch them up to the university’s minimum standards. Eliot proposed two solutions: More schools—especially in rural areas—and higher standards for existing schools (Eliot 1890, 28). This demand for higher standards in order to prepare students for college served as the catalyst for the Advanced Placement program.

By 1895, the subject of educational values was ubiquitous in academia. *The Dial*, a literary journal founded in 1890, recognized that the tide had turned, claiming “the very fact that educational values [were] being everywhere earnestly discussed [was] itself of the highest significance” (229). Yet, as late as 1910, despite the ever-increasing demand for a literate workforce, scholars worried about the implications of an educated society. They wondered who would do the “rough work” (American Educational Review XXXI 4). College was a relatively new concept for the middle classes, and parents would send their kids to the university if they were perceived as being lazy or unable to contribute to the family business or farm. A hundred years ago, the middle class valued hard work and frowned upon leaving an honest job or family



business to attend college classes in Literature and Latin. In response, educators sought to expunge negative attitudes about college so that America would become more competitive as a progressive world power. They would spend the next several decades building up the importance of a high school and college education. Accordingly, in the 22 years between 1890 and 1912, enrollment in high school soared from 202,963 students to one million (Murphy 250). The importance of education grew along with the pressure to create competitive curricula, and the changes in English assessment complied with the cultural need for educational and career advancement. This “movement to prepare students for economic and social life [resulted in] English courses that ignored literature altogether, offering instruction in current traditional rhetoric...including units on salesmanship, advertising, and printing” (Murphy 257). Teachers welcomed higher standards: they wanted to offer their students the most effective and informed education possible. In the early 1900s, the idea of an educational yardstick on a national scale was just beginning. In the 1920s and ‘30s as the need for literacy grew, so did the need to focus on standard methods of assessment. During WWII and then afterwards in the Cold War, competition with other countries necessitated a push for improvement and educational parameters. But with the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the new millennium, the pressing need was not for conformity, but for adaptation to ever-increasing and exciting technological possibilities. In 2015, however, our country feels the weight of the Common Core Standards and remains more regulated than ever before.

I have nothing against standards. I agree that in any profession, there must be guidelines to help employees achieve their best potential. In an educational system already immersed in regulations, changing those rules and adding new ones serves about as much as putting a pair of horn-rimmed glasses on a student and claiming that he is “smart.” What we need to be changing

is far more than just verbiage on a national rubric. We need to reconsider the way that we think about education, about grades, about assessment, and about achievement, and we need to do it now, before it is too late for our students.

## **2.5 The Beginning of Educational Reform and the *Committee of Ten***

Large-scale educational reform began with the implementation of Harvard's new writing-based entrance exams in the 1870s. Students were required to demonstrate their writing ability coupled with a broad understanding of the literary classics. Because Harvard's reading list changed each year, high school English teachers had difficulty choosing which texts to teach and worried that they were not adequately preparing their students for the entrance exam. In order to help restructure the secondary educational system, the National Education Association created the *Committee of Ten*, a consortium of established scholars headed by Harvard president Charles W. Eliot (Murphy 252). The conference grew out of a need for cohesion in education, and after an extensive session, the members decided on the following broad recommendations:

1. A separate conference should be held for teachers and professors of every subject so that high schools and universities could better understand each other's standards and goals.
2. A committee should be selected with authority to select the members of each academic committee and its meeting times.
3. The members of the initial *Committee of Ten* should be Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., Chairman. William T. Harris, Commissioner of Education, Washington, D. C., James B. Angell, President of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., John Tetlow, Head Master of the Girls' High School and the Girls' Latin School, Boston, Mass., James M. Taylor, President of Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, N. Y., Oscar D. Robinson, Principal of the High School, Albany, N. Y., James H. Baker, President of the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colo., Richard H. Jesse, President of the University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo., James C. Mackenzie, Head Master of the Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, N. J., Henry C. King, Professor in Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

4. The academic sub-groups would include Latin, Greek, English, other modern languages, Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy and Chemistry, Natural History, History, Civil Government, Political Economy and Geography.

**The following list of questions would guide each conference:**

1. In the school course of study extending approximately from the age of six years to eighteen years — a course including the periods of both elementary and secondary instruction — at what age should the study which is the subject of the Conference be first introduced?
2. After it is introduced, how many hours a week for how many years should be devoted to it?
3. How many hours a week for how many years should be devoted to it during the last four years of the complete course; that is, during the ordinary high school period?
4. What topics, or parts, of the subject may best be reserved for the last four years?
5. In what form and to what extent should the subject enter into college requirements for admission? Such questions as the sufficiency of translation at sight as a test of knowledge of a language, or the superiority of a laboratory examination in a scientific subject to a written examination on a textbook, are intended to be suggested under this head by the phrase “in what form”.
6. Should the subject be treated differently for pupils who are going to college, for those who are going to a scientific school, and for those who, presumably, are going to neither?
7. At what stage should this differentiation begin, if any be recommended?
8. Can any description be given of the best method of teaching this subject throughout the school course?
9. Can any description be given of the best mode of testing attainments in this subject at college admission examinations?
10. For those cases in which colleges and universities permit a division of the admission examination into a preliminary and a final examination, separated by at least a year, can the best limit between the preliminary and final examinations be approximately defined? (Eliot, Charles W. et al 5-7)

As an educator, I appreciate the value of the Committee's recommendations and questions and would like to present commentary regarding our current educational system. I will refer to each observation by Rec. 1 or Rec. 2, etc. \* *Commentary is limited to my personal experience in my school system.*

Table 2 Committee Recommendations and Commentary

Rec. #	Summary of Recommendation	Commentary
1	Separate vertical teaming/collaborative conferences held for teachers and professors.	<p><b>The Issue:</b> Although I have been a part of several vertical team conferences, both for professors/secondary and secondary/middle school, there is still a wide disconnect between groups. I have met for the last several years with middle school teachers, and we have shared our requirements for incoming ninth graders. The middle school teachers discussed their challenges and needs for incoming sixth graders. Although we expressed our that incoming freshmen must understand grammar (at least on a basic level) and must write more frequently, the majority of my high school freshmen have not mastered basic grammatical concepts and wrote very little in their middle school English classes. I have also met with college professors, and they state that college freshmen struggle with the basics of writing, of MLA or APA formatting, of research, and of the writing process as a whole. My past AP students tell me that their English 1101-2 classes are often easier than my class, but we have to consider that the majority of students in an Eng. 1101 course did not take an AP-level English class in high school.</p> <p>One reason students may be so “lost” in college is that when they finally have to apply real-world solutions to everyday problems, they cannot because they have spent so much time on the “test”.</p>
2	Committees should be selected with authority.	<p><b>The Issue:</b> While it may seem like an obvious recommendation, the Committee identified a crucial element of educational reform that we lack. In my county, our administrators, board members, and professionals constantly form committees to “improve” education. For instance, in June, 2014, a group of English teachers met to write the new Student Learning Outcome (SLO) questions. The SLOs are designed to be the “EOCT” (end-of-course-test) for non-EOCT classes. Teachers did not have to apply for the position of writing the questions; they were asked to contribute by colleagues and in some cases, friends.</p> <p><b>The Result:</b> The questions were sub-standard. In many cases, they were copied and pasted from the Internet or from past AP tests. If we expect to improve our educational system, we must establish higher standards for our committees.</p>

<p><b>5.a</b></p>	<p>In grades k-12, at what age should certain subjects/concepts be introduced?</p>	<p><b>The Issue:</b></p> <p>There are so many new concepts being introduced to younger students that numerous fundamental skills are being thrown out or rushed. For instance, students in elementary school are indoctrinated by the standardized testing system, yet rarely are they taught how to write in cursive. Middle school students must synthesize seven sources and write an essay that answers the questions (document-based question/DBQ); however, teachers are neglecting to teach the basics of writing and grammar. High school students are bombarded with upper-level AP courses and college prep courses, but they do not know how to navigate a newspaper, look up words in a dictionary, or mail a letter. Our educational system must take a step back from the rigorous demands of Common Core and Standardized tests. Our students still need to learn the basics.</p> <p><b>The Result:</b> Because of the focus on assessments including the SAT, PSAT, ACT, and AP, students are under more pressure than ever to perform. Ninth graders practice difficult, SAT/AP strategies to prepare. In addition, I have several students who travel an hour to Atlanta to attend an SAT class <i>after school!</i> It is difficult to give homework or to expect my students to proofread their papers and really spend some quality time on their prose when they are focused on those tests.</p>
<p><b>5.e</b></p>	<p>What do students have to produce to gain college admittance?</p>	<p><b>The Issue:</b> For the majority of schools, students have to write several essays to be accepted. They also have to score well on the SAT or ACT, and they must have on their resume several Advanced Placement courses. Because some students are not good test-takers, colleges are missing out on a lot of brilliant, hard workers who demonstrate all the skills necessary for future success. We should be focusing on work ethic and product, not just the scores on standardized tests.</p> <p>For college entrance essays, students have as much time as they need to proof read. However, I would like to see a more varied approach to the entrance “essay”—perhaps students could write in different genres and could choose their own topic?</p>

5.f	How should we differentiate for college-prep students, those who will attend a technical school, and those who choose neither?	<b>The Issue:</b> Out of all the issues I can identify, the fact that educational administrators assume that the right path for every student leads towards a college education is at the top of the list. How can teachers be expected to differentiate their lessons for students' varying abilities and learning styles when the very foundation of our educational system is "one size fits all"? Over a hundred years ago, the members of the <i>Committee of Ten</i> realized that all students have different needs. The educational system has now chosen to focus on professional jobs and has virtually ignored hands-on, "blue-collar" careers. Instead of differentiating secondary course options, they have removed most trade courses and chosen to disregard a need that is right in front of them. If there was a stigma about going to college in the early 1900s, today it is frowned upon if a child decides he or she wants to work, or take a gap year, or travel, or explore options. If we eliminate trade courses from high schools, who will do the practical work: construction, plumbing, painting, interior renovating, electronics and landscaping (to name a few)? Why does society frown upon those jobs, which often pay more than some white-collar careers?
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The English Conference, chaired by Professor Allen, Principal Thurber, and Professor Kittredge, launched on Wednesday, December 28, 1892. At the conclusion of the conference, members decided upon two "main direct objects of English in schools: 1) to enable the pupil to understand the expressed thoughts of others and to give expression to thoughts of his own; and 2) to cultivate a taste for reading, to give the pupil some acquaintance with good literature, and to furnish him with the means of extending that acquaintance" (Eliot, Charles W. et al 84).

Regarding college entrance writing assessments, the committee wrote the following:

The Conference doubts the wisdom of requiring, for admission to college, set essays whose chief purpose is to test the pupil's ability to write English. It believes that there are serious theoretical and practical objections to estimating a student's power to write a language on the basis of a theme composed not for the sake of expounding something that he knows or thinks, but merely for the sake of showing his ability to write.

Therefore, so long as the formal essay remains a part of the admission examination, it is recommended that the questions on topics of literary history or criticism, or on passages cited from prescribed works, be set as an alternative. These topics and passages should be such as 1) to bring out the knowledge of the pupil with regard to the subjects suggested and 2) to test his ability to methodize his knowledge and to write clearly and concisely. [\\* See link for original document.](#) (Eliot, Charles W. et al 92)

Because a countless number of my students are frustrated with the endless timed essays they must write to get accepted into state schools, pass AP exams, and earn college credit, I would like to determine how our educational system aligns with the original ideals of the leading educational scholars of a century ago. First, the committee stated that they “doubted the wisdom” in requiring students to write an essay with the “chief purpose” of testing that student’s “ability to write in English.” They exposed the folly in writing something simply for the sake of writing and not for a more authentic purpose, such as “expounding” on something already known. Throughout the last fifty years of educational scholarship in the composition community, scholars have agreed that one essay test cannot accurately measure a student’s true writing ability. For example, Fulkerson asserted that “Good writing, the sort of writing that we hope to enable students to produce, is contextually adapted to, perhaps even controlled by, its audience (or discourse community), addressed or invoked, or both” (417). Students must understand the rhetorical situation of a prompt before they can write an informed essay about it, and composition teachers incorporate the aspects of the rhetorical triangle (speaker, subject, audience, purpose/intent) into the majority of their writing assignments. But, teaching students the rhetorical situation and expecting them to write their best work on a *hypothetical* issue, and then using that sample as an indicator of overall writing ability is like training pilots to fly by using a simulator and never allowing them to experience the real plane, air, height, and speed. Nothing can equal the reality. Likewise, to produce their best work, students must write with a

real purpose. Fulkerson claims that a piece of writing might be “controlled by its audience,” and so if a *real* audience does not exist for the writer, the writer will not display his or her best work. Near the time that Fulkerson published his essay, the *College Composition and Communication* journal issued the following statement about writing assessment:

Any individual’s writing ability is a sum of a variety of skills employed in a diversity of contexts, and individual ability fluctuates unevenly among these varieties. Consequently, one piece of writing—even if it is generated under the most desirable conditions—can never serve as an indicator of overall literacy, particularly for high-stakes decisions. (432)

A few years later, in 1999, the College Board “[echoed the sentiment] by stating: no single test can fully represent a universally accepted construct of writing ability” (Hardison and Sackett 230). Nevertheless, the results of the AP Language exam determine whether students can exempt all core English requirements for college. Our educational system places far too much weight on one test, especially since the research over the last half-century suggests that one test cannot accurately measure writing ability.

If leading scholars on educational reform grasped that good writing would develop when students discuss their own interests and choose their topic and audience, then logic dictates that educational leaders would have taken that advice and avoided the timed essay altogether (or at least not put so much weight on it). I can also see, however, the difficulty in allowing thousands of students to write about their own topic of choice. I imagine my classroom, filled with students who have a myriad of backgrounds, hobbies, strengths and weaknesses. I would love to let them each choose their own parallel novel to read; however, if I did that, there would be no practical way for me to read each book and create a matching assessment. Instead, I give my students the same novel to read and I offer choice within assessments. For instance, when we read the novel



*The Night Circus*, the final assessment contains a multi-faceted project designed to appeal to all abilities and learning styles. The project consists of several group members, each who have a very different task. One is the designer, who takes care of the visual planning for the decorations, costumes, and multi-media. The next is the concessionaire, who creates food that can be thematically traced back to the book. The leader manages the group and creates a multi-media map of their structure, and the reviewers must write professional reviews of their circus as well as rhetorical analyses of the reviews in the text. All tasks must relate thematically with the text, linking to the story with MLA citations. Even though I have such large, diverse classes, students are never unhappy with these projects because they get to choose their role and dictate their work schedule.

## **2.6 Looking Back: How Influential was the Committee?**

Ten years after the *Committee of Ten* published their comprehensive report, Edwin G. Dexter, Director of the School of Education at the University of Illinois, analyzed just how much influence the Committee's recommendations had over the decade. Dexter conducted empirical research to examine the curricula of many high schools in the years directly preceding the publication of the report, then, he repeated the study a decade later to determine "how fully the changes that [had] taken place during the last ten years in the high-school curriculum coincided with the specific recommendations of the committee" (Dexter 255). He found that the English community as a whole did not follow the "specific recommendations" of the committee as diligently as did Mathematics and Science. The first recommendation, which was that English should be taught five hours a week for the entirety of high school, increased from 52% of schools at the beginning of the ten-year period to 68% of schools at the end. While sixteen percent growth may not seem like much, the number becomes significant when we consider that a

decade earlier, only 12% of schools were “offer[ing] more than three years and less than four years” (Dexter 258) of English in high school. The results demonstrated that educators were responding to the need for improved literacy with a significant increase in composition and reading courses.

The second recommendation, which was that three-fifths of the time studying English should focus on literature, was contrary to the actual data, which showed a decrease in literary studies from 30 to 19 percent. Dexter attributed the decrease to scheduling, not an unwillingness to study literature. Although there may have been issues with scheduling, what probably happened was that the committee wanted to emphasize literature, which up until then had been the primary focus of English classes, but the practical needs of students called for something else altogether. Young adults needed to know how to apply language to the real world, and because teachers faced the challenge of a rising number of illiterate students, they responded to the cultural demands of the time and taught students the skills necessary for success in the workforce.

The third, fourth, and fifth recommendations, which focused on rhetoric and grammar, were even less successful than the first two suggestions because of differing philosophies regarding grammar instruction. Dexter’s findings are not surprising; teaching English has always been much more difficult to define than a class like mathematics, in which specific skills build at certain times for everyone. English is different - - some students write better, read faster, and “get it,” while others do not. The *Committee of Ten* certainly did not make “wrong” recommendations; however, they might have been a bit too idealistic in their desire to focus primarily on literary studies when the need was elsewhere.

There may be another reason why the committee's recommendations were not followed as planned. I wonder, as Dexter did 114 years ago, "to what extent we teachers [are] willing to take advice" and how much time and energy we are willing to spend making changes (255). English teachers are often mandated to modify their teaching methods, grading styles, the technology they use, and the emphasis they place on certain aspects of the course such as fiction, nonfiction, and grammar. In my experience, I am more willing to make a change if there is a purpose to it that benefits the students. If those changes do not seem to help the instructional process and learning environment, it becomes very difficult to change a successful teaching method. For instance, right now in my school system, we are fighting the "grammar" battle much as teachers did a century ago: we keep vacillating between theories of grammar instruction. In the nineteen-eighties and nineties, teaching grammar in the context of literature assigned in class was thought to be the most effective method of grammatical instruction. I learned that way, and because I had a proclivity for writing, I felt (at the time) that learning grammar through reading and writing was sufficient. After becoming an English teacher, I realized how much I did not know, and upon entering graduate school, I felt that I had to learn to write from scratch. I would have benefited with a basic vocabulary for the elements of grammar instead of having to rely on my gut instinct.

In the early twenty-first century, educators concluded that they must teach the fundamentals of grammar, so for several years, they taught *Daily Grammar Practice* (DGP), in which students deconstructed one sentence per week. On Monday, students identify parts of speech, Tuesday, sentence parts, Wednesday, sentence type, Thursday, punctuation, and Friday, overall construction through diagramming. The DGP gave students the foundation they needed to understand the basics of English and the meaning of teacher commentary on papers; however,

after practicing one method for so long, teachers observed that students could master the daily exercises but were not incorporating what they learned into their everyday writing and test-taking (PSAT/SAT). Therefore, to raise test scores, teachers in my county eliminated DGP and now teach PSAT strategies (traditional “teaching to the test” in which students must identify sentence errors, which requires them to know the basics of grammar and punctuation). Often, I get frustrated because my students do not have a rudimentary understanding of grammar, which renders my teaching to the PSAT test a waste of time. In response, I have had to combine all three methods of teaching to accommodate the needs of my students. So am I “taking the advice” of my administration? Not quite. I am doing what I feel is necessary to help my students.

In 1906, Dexter concluded in his report that teachers, as a whole, were not “apt at taking advice” (269). I find it interesting and ironic that back then, educators did not follow scholarship and instead met the needs of students, and today, educators *cannot* follow the current research because of the weight of testing. We cannot blame teachers, however. We have to look at the pressure that the national standards places on teachers, the rigid structure of the classroom and teacher evaluation system that makes it so difficult for teachers to do their job<sup>1</sup>. The important factor in the *Committee of Ten* report and the subsequent study lies in educators’ willingness to change with the cultural need. We need another “Committee Report” to answer the call of our technologically-savvy youth.

## **2.7 AP Language Writing Prompts from 1981- 2014**

The next section of this chapter takes a critical look at the AP Language writing prompts from 1980 to the present. The primary questions I will answer include the following: 1. What do students need to know to address the prompts; 2. Do the prompts allow for a real context (that

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<sup>1</sup> \* See Appendix C: TKES Evaluation Tool for Teacher Assessment regarding the TKES evaluation system and the ways in which secondary teachers are assessed in my county.

reflects the year in which the test was administered) that will foster authentic writing from the student; and 3. Does the complexity of the prompts allow students to write a complete essay in the time allotted (40 minutes)? I chose question #1 because, in order to assess the validity and fairness of a prompt, we must look at the prior knowledge a student needs to answer the question thoroughly. Some questions may require familiarity with issues outside the realm of the student's experiences. In such cases, the questions may not be appropriate for a test that measures writing ability. I chose question #2 because I want to see if we can cull a real-life, authentic context from past prompts. Question #3 asks if the prompt is too difficult for high school students to answer in 40 minutes. To explore these questions, I outlined several prompts and timed myself on deconstructing the questions and on my idea/outline development. For objectivity, I am working with some prompts that I have never taught in my classroom. I am focusing on the argumentative essay prompts and not the rhetorical analysis questions.

**2.7.1 A Critical Look at the AP Language Test Prompts from 1981-2014 (Misc. Box/AP Reports and Files/ETS Archives).**<sup>2</sup>

**Table 3 Analysis of AP Language Argument Prompts**

Date	Question	Analysis
1980	<p><i>Public officials or individual citizens have frequently attacked or suppressed works that they consider harmful or offensive. Select a book, movie, play, or television program that some group could object to on the basis of its action, language, or theme.</i></p> <p><i>In a well-organized essay, discuss possible grounds for such an attack and then defend the work, arguing on the basis of its artistic merit or its value to the community, that it should not be suppressed.</i></p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b></p> <p>Students must be familiar with the idea of censorship and should be able to recall a certain book, movie, or TV show that garnered a lot of complaints and/or criticism.</p> <p>Students must be intimately familiar with a work that might be deemed inappropriate for those under twenty-one, which could be problematic. Some parents are strict about what their children can or cannot watch and read. I have had several students who are not allowed to watch anything that is even slightly suggestive, violent, or profane. Although this question might be easy for most students, it could be impossible (and unfair) for some.</p> <p>Students need to know the definition of “harmful” and “offensive.” For different cultural groups, what might be offensive to one would not be to another. This renders the question subjective, especially because the graders are not aware of the ethnic and moral backgrounds of students.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b></p> <p>To produce quality writing based on an authentic context, students must have personal experience with wanting to watch a show, movie or read a book that is deemed inappropriate by authorities. Then, students must be familiar enough with the work to be able to argue in detail. They also must understand the kinds of issues that would arise in a situation involving censorship. For these reasons, this question does not contain a valid context.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b></p> <p>Start time: 5:31 PM</p> <p>Brief brainstorm regarding one show, possible rough thesis: 5:39 PM</p> <p>Three possible topic sentences: 5:42 PM</p> <p>Total prewriting time, without details to back up claims: 11 minutes</p> <p>Because I am an adult, I have had the opportunity to watch and read many controversial TV shows, movies, and</p>

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed look at my prewriting notes, see [Appendix-B](#).

		books. However, because of parental supervision, many students have not been exposed to blatant examples of controversial or <i>offensive</i> material. Therefore, students would need a lot more time to think of sophisticated examples from more acceptable shows. If I took 11 minutes to outline for a basic essay, most students would need longer to brainstorm, and many would have absolutely no experience with censorship, inappropriate material, and how to argue for or against it.
1981	<p>Carefully read the following selection by Thomas Szasz. Then write an essay in which you argue for or against Szasz's position on the struggle for definition. Support and illustrate your argument with evidence drawn from your reading, study, or experience.</p> <p><i>"The struggle for definition is veritably the struggle for life itself. In the typical Western, two men fight desperately for the possession of a gun that has been thrown to the ground: whoever reaches the weapon first shoots and lives; his adversary is shot and dies. In ordinary life, the struggle is not for guns but for words: whoever first defines the situation is the victor; his adversary, the victim. For example, in the family, husband and wife, mother and child do not get along; who defines whom as troublesome or mentally sick? ... [the one] who first seizes the word imposes reality on the other: [the one] who defines thus dominates and lives; and [the one] who is defined is subjugated and may be killed.</i></p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b> Some students who are literal thinkers may have trouble with this philosophical and abstract question. For this prompt, students need to have experience with arguing a point and making a claim of definition. They must be able to take the Western and family analogies and turn them into a relevant idea (like spreading rumors in high school).</p> <p>My knowledge of the Rogerian argument and the Socratic seminar would help me enormously with this topic. If students did not know these strategies, they may not be able to answer the question.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> Although the question is rather difficult, it does allow for an authentic context. To inform their essay, students can use personal examples from arguments they have had, rumors they have heard, and family issues they have witnessed.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b> Start time: 6:24 PM Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 6:31 PM Rough intro, no topic sentences: 6:34 PM Two topic sentences: 6:36 PM Total prewriting time, without details: 12 minutes</p> <p>I felt that this question was difficult, and the time it took me tells me that a student who may not have thought about this issue before might struggle with the topic. I am not even sure that I could get through an entire essay in 28 minutes (subtracting 12 of my prewriting time from the original 40). I certainly would not have time to proofread.</p>
1983	<p><i>We live in an era of language inflation. Being a star is no longer significant because we have superstars; what is</i></p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b> Students need to be aware of the effects of language, labels, and stereotypes. They also need to have several</p>

	<p><i>normal is tremendous or fabulous (or extraordinary, excellent, superterrific, etc.) This wholesale distribution of highest rating defeats its own purpose. Everything is presented as something unique, unheard-of, outstanding. Thus, nothing is unique, unheard-of, outstanding. When everything is superlative, everything is mediocre.</i></p> <p>Write an essay in which you agree or disagree with the position taken in this passage by considering the ethical and social consequences of language inflation.</p>	<p>points of reference—either from the media or from their own experience.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> For an adult like myself, this question does allow for an authentic context. I can look back to my childhood, to my “label” as a prodigy violinist when really, I had talent but was not nearly good enough to be called a prodigy. I was simply a hard worker with discipline, which I feel should be applauded.</p> <p>Students are too young to understand this question in the personal context, because they are in the midst of being called “talented, super, etc.” and they need encouragement. They can hypothesize, but the result is just that: a guess, not an insight from personal, real knowledge. Depending on their familiarity with the media, students should be able to write about the inflation of terms regarding celebrities; however, only the most advanced writer would be able to extrapolate an authentic context from the media viewpoint.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b> Start time: 1:47 PM Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 1:53 PM Rough intro, no topic sentences: 1:56 PM Two topic sentences: 1:58 PM Total prewriting time: 11 minutes.</p> <p>This question would be relatively easy for me because of my experience, but it still took 11 minutes to pre-write, and I was rushing. The intro I produced is very rough, and so are the topic sentences. 29 minutes to write an entire essay is not enough time, considering that I would need to do major editing on the introduction and topic sentences. For me to tell my students to take no more than three minutes to prewrite seems unreasonable.</p>
1986	<p><i>“It is human nature to want patterns, standards, and a structure of behavior. A pattern to conform to is a kind of shelter.”</i></p> <p>In a well-written essay, evaluate the truth of the assertion above. Use evidence or examples from your reading</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b> Students need to be able to think in a philosophical manner when they consider our need for patterns. They could answer this question using personal experience and observations. Since there are so many contexts from which they could pull (school, church, sports, clothing, social events), they could probably write on the prompt without having read anything on the topic. Students might</p>



	<p>or experience to make your argument convincing.</p>	<p>even have a moment to edit, if they were able to get their thoughts on paper quickly.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> Yes. This question is one of the best ones, because anyone can answer it. The prewriting time would be minimal, and the topic is so universal that students might even write without prewriting.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b> Start time: 3:10 PM Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 3:13 PM Rough intro and topic sentences: 3:17 PM Total prewriting time: seven minutes.</p> <p>This topic was very easy for me because I have so much life experience to build upon in order to answer the question.</p>
1990	<p><i>Recently, the issue of how much freedom we should (or must) allow student newspapers was argued all the way to the Supreme Court. Read the following items carefully and then write an essay presenting a logical argument for or against the Supreme Court decision.</i></p> <p>*Because of length, please refer to appendix B for the complete question.</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b> Students should have experience with censorship, so they need to have wanted to read a book or paper that their parents or teachers did not allow them to read. With six snippets of information regarding a court case, the prompt requires critical thinking and quick reading. Students who had no experience reading nonfiction might find it difficult to recognize other shades of the argument. Students also need to understand the basic meaning behind <i>Freedom of Speech</i> and <i>Censorship</i>, something that many teens may not have considered.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> To fully answer this question, one would need experience from both perspectives: the censor (for professional reasons) and the censored. Students may not have any experience with the topic of censorship or with journalism. They might discuss their own high school newspaper, which could serve as a primary argument. Students who may not be involved in community issues or in school clubs will have trouble with this question.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b> This question has six small passages (about 1/3 page) that students must read and understand before they answer the question. Therefore, I am including <i>reading time</i>.</p>

		<p>With my teaching experience, I have come across many parents who do not want their children to read what I am teaching. I have to write letters of justification that explain our reasoning behind the literature. I could write an entire essay on the ways that certain people view literature and news, and those views are usually fear based. My students do not have that wealth of knowledge, however.</p> <p>As a teacher, I can also appreciate that in a high school setting, people have to be very careful what they say. Students are so sensitive, even volatile, at that age. I can understand the need to stop issues before they become crises. There are definitely situations that should be prevented, even if it means lack of freedom of speech for the children. My students do not have my perspective, however.</p> <p>I took 11 minutes to prewrite, and After writing this analysis and thinking even more (16 more minutes) I feel like I could write a pretty good essay. But, I haven't started it yet, and a total of 28 minutes has passed. That allows me 12 minutes to write the essay.</p> <p>Start time: 4:47 PM  Reading Time: 3 minutes 4:50 PM  Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 4:53 PM  Rough Outline: 4:58 PM  Topic Sentences: 4:58 PM</p> <p>I wrote two topic sentences and brainstormed for two good paragraphs; however, this topic might be harder for students to answer because they do not have the perspective of an adult. They also do not have the experience of having to stop something from being said, so their argument will most likely be one of the "repressed" teens who are silenced by the administration.</p>
1992	<p>In <i>The Spectator</i> for December 15, 1711, Joseph Addison wrote:</p> <p><i>If the talent of ridicule were employed to laugh men out of vice and folly, it might be of some use to the world; but instead of this, we find that it is generally made use of to laugh men out of virtue and good sense, by attacking everything that is solemn and serious, decent and praiseworthy in human life.</i></p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b></p> <p>First, the students would need to be familiar with somewhat archaic vocabulary: "folly, ridicule, vice, virtue," and even if they do know the definition, they might not be able to make the connection to the prose form of Satire. If they fail to make that connection, they will not pass the essay.</p> <p>If they make the connection to Satire, students then need to have a wide range of examples at their fingertips. I know many examples simply because I teach a unit on</p>

	<p>Write a carefully reasoned persuasive essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Addison’s assertion. Use evidence from your observation, experience, or reading to develop your position.</p>	<p>Satire; however, before I became a teacher I would have only been able to think of a couple. Ten years ago, my essay would have been lacking in depth and examples.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> No. I recently had a student who did not watch television and was unaware of the many satirical shows that aired each week. He also did not read much, unless it involved engineering or computer programming. His mind worked in a scientific, literal way, and he would not be successful in answering this question. I found this prompt extremely difficult.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b> Start time: 3:26 PM Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 3:31 PM Rough Outline: 3:36 PM Topic Sentences: 3:40 PM (I had to give up my third idea for lack of time). Total prewriting: 14 minutes.</p>
1996	<p>In his book <i>Money and Class in America</i>, Lewis Lapham makes the following observations about attitudes towards wealth in the United States. Drawing on your own knowledge and experience, write a carefully reasoned essay defending, challenging, or qualifying Lapham’s view of “the American faith in Money.”</p> <p>*Because of length, please refer to appendix B for the complete question.</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b> Students can easily see the power and impact that money has on society. They would not necessarily know about other countries. But the question is about American views, so other countries really don’t matter as much.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> I think it does. Teens are surrounded by the ever-present need for money, and when they have more money they get more respect. There is evidence everywhere of this fact.</p> <p>The reading, which took me three minutes (I was speed-reading and skimming as well) might be difficult for a teen. Also, even though I have vast world experience with this topic, I still took 12 minutes pre-writing time, and I was rushing.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b> Start time: 10:42 AM Reading Time: 5 minutes 10:47 AM Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 10:50 AM Rough Outline: 10:54 AM Topic Sentences: 10: 54 AM Total prewriting: 12 Minutes</p>

2000s	Question	Analysis
2005	<p>The passage below is from <i>The Medusa and the Snail</i> by biologist Lewis Thomas. Read the passage carefully. Then, drawing on your own reading and experience, write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Thomas's claims.</p> <p>*Because of length, please refer to appendix B for the complete question.</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b></p> <p>For me, this was one of the easiest prompts to answer. The issue was "trial and error" and that in order to succeed we first have to make mistakes. I could think of many examples.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b></p> <p>Students might draw from their own experiences with trial and error, and hopefully they could think of some of their favorite celebrities who had tried many times before succeeding. This question was relatively easy, but even with the eight minutes of prep-time (for me), thirty-two minutes would not be enough time to write a polished essay.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b></p> <p>Start time: 11:18 AM  Reading Time: 11:21 AM  Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 11:23 AM  Outline: 11:26 AM  Total Prewriting Time: 8 minutes</p>
2007	<p>A weekly feature of <i>The New York Times Magazine</i> is a column by Randy Cohen called "The Ethicist," in which people raise ethical questions to which Cohen provides answers. The question below is from the column that appeared on April 4, 2003.</p> <p><i>At my high school, various clubs and organizations sponsor charity drives, asking students to bring in money, food and clothing. Some teachers offer bonus points on tests and final averages as incentives to participate. Some parents believe that this sends a morally wrong message, undermining the value of charity as a selfless act. Is the exchange of donations for grades O.K.?</i></p> <p>The practice of offering incentives for charitable acts is widespread, from school projects to fund drives by organizations such as public television</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b></p> <p>Students need to have experience with charity, and they also need to be able to think critically about ethics. When I was in high school, I had no thoughts about charity. I was focused on one thing: violin. I would not have done well on this paper because I wasn't involved in clubs, my family didn't donate to charities, and I rarely watched the news.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b></p> <p>I consider this an unfair question geared toward students who are involved with clubs that require them to contribute to charity. Furthermore, students who are not "college-bound" may feel quite differently about the charity question, because they do not have the pressure from colleges to accrue community service hours.</p> <p><b>Length of time I took to deconstruct the prompt and write an outline:</b></p> <p><b>Start time:</b> 3:57 PM (Because I have been working on this paper for three hours right now, I am mentally tired and do not feel like tackling this topic. I also have to go to the bathroom, but I don't want to because it will take</p>

	<p>stations, to federal income tax deductions for contributions to charities. In a well-written essay, develop a position on the ethics of offering incentives for charitable acts. Support your position with evidence from your reading, observation, and/or experience.</p>	<p>valuable time. Students must go through these discomforts when they test. I have purposefully chosen to undertake the prewriting right now to demonstrate a difference in my performance when I am already tired. (AP students often take more than one test per day, which would mean that they are testing for over eight hours straight.)</p> <p><b>Brief brainstorm</b>, possible rough thesis: 4:08PM (<i>stop the clock for my commentary</i>) At this point, I am all over the place. I have read my students' essays on this topic many times, and they all seem to say the same thing. I find myself wondering what an incentive is, what it means to be ethical, when people cross the line, and how that line is defined. This topic seems easy, but it is really complex if you think about it. (<i>Clock back on 4:10 PM.</i>)</p> <p><b>Rough Outline (4:18)</b>: Our human nature demands that we react to everything that happens around us; therefore, if we define an "incentive" as any positive result that occurs after we give to charity, then an incentive cannot be wrong since it's an innate part of who we are as humans.</p> <p><b>Topic Sentences</b>: When we do something nice for someone, we feel good. An incentive, by definition, is a reason or a catalyst for doing something, so if charitable acts made us feel bad, we would never do them. Many colleges expect students to have a certain number of community service hours on their resume, so clubs often give "hours" in exchange for charitable acts, but we have to draw the ethical line when incentives involve grades. Some people would claim that the end result—that someone is benefitting from the charity—is worth any means, but if that were the case, we would have to examine ..... I am losing it. At this point I would just start writing.</p> <p><b>Total prewriting: 21 minutes.</b> This leaves me with 19 minutes to write a complete essay, and I'm already tired, and the overall quality of my writing is sub-par.</p>
2008	<p>Read the following excerpt from <i>the Decline of Radicalism</i> (1969) by Daniel J. Boorstin and consider the implications of the distinction Boorstin makes between dissent and disagreement. Then, using appropriate evidence, write a</p>	<p><i>Because I have taught the following essay prompts in my class, I am not going through the prewriting process. Instead, I am just analyzing the actual context.</i></p> <p><b>What do students need to know?</b></p> <p>This question involves a level of critical thinking that many students will have trouble with. As a result, it may</p>

	<p>carefully reasoned essay in which you defend, qualify, or challenge Boorstin's distinction.</p> <p><i>"Dissent is the great problem of America today. It overshadows all others. It is a symptom, an expression, a consequence, and a cause of all others. I say dissent and not disagreement. And it is the distinction between dissent and disagreement which I really want to make. Disagreement produces debate but dissent produces dissention. Dissent (which comes from the Latin, dis and sentire) means originally to feel apart from others.</i></p> <p><i>People who disagree have an argument, but people who dissent have a quarrel. People may disagree and both may count themselves in the majority. But a person who dissents is by definition in a minority. A liberal society thrives on disagreement but is killed by dissension. Disagreement is the life blood of democracy, dissention is its cancer."</i></p>	<p>take them several readings to even understand the prompt, and it will be very hard for them to write a complete essay in 40 minutes. Students need to know a little about the time period back in 1969, and they would also need to have read examples of dissention and disagreement.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> Some students will love this philosophical question, but most will be flummoxed by it. There are, however, modern-day examples that students can use, especially in light of the recent police race issues. The looters who "dissent" - - are they a "cancer" or are they exhibiting their right to freedom of speech? (Of course there is no freedom to "loot).</p> <p>Students need to be knowledgeable in history in order to prove that Boorstin's theory is correct or incorrect. No, this is not a workable topic, in my opinion.</p>
2010	<p>The first Buy Nothing Day—a day on which people are urged to purchase no goods—was organized in Canada in 1992 as a way to increase awareness of excessive consumerism. A Buy Nothing Day has been held yearly since then in many nations. An online article, "Buy Nothing Day: 2006 Press Release," urged worldwide acceptance of taking a "24-hour consumer detox as part of the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Buy Nothing Day" in order to "expose the environmental and ethical consequences of overconsumption" ("Buy Nothing Day," courtesy <i>Adbusters</i>, <a href="http://www.adbusters.org">www.adbusters.org</a>).</p> <p>Consider the implications of a day on which no goods are purchased. Then write an essay in which you develop a position on the establishment of an annual Buy Nothing Day. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b> Students need to be familiar with economy, with buying (things), with the market, and with money. They also need to be able to consider the deeper meaning behind the question. In my experience, most students will claim that one day of buying nothing will ruin the entire economy, but they fail to give examples. This question is difficult to substantiate with real proof because many teens have not taken economics, and they don't know the real implications of a "buy nothing" day - - they can only guess. When they guess, they end up resorting to logical fallacies and generalizations.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b> No. The question is too broad.</p>

2012	<p>Consider the distinct perspectives expressed in the following statements.</p> <p><i>If you develop the absolute sense of certainty that powerful beliefs provide, then you can get yourself to accomplish virtually anything, including those things that other people are certain are impossible.</i></p> <p><i>I think we ought always to entertain our opinions with some measure of doubt. I shouldn't wish people dogmatically to believe any philosophy, not even mine.</i></p> <p>In a well-organized essay, take a position on the relationship between certainty and doubt. Support your argument with appropriate evidence and examples.</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b></p> <p>This question reminds me of the broad question about trial and error. Students can use anything they have learned in the past to answer this prompt. Some students, however, have never felt “certainty.” They live in a world of doubt (as many teenagers do) and might be able to answer the question if they have an unshakable faith in their God, or if they have achieved something that others believed they could not.</p> <p>They may be able to draw from what they have seen others do, but it would be difficult to ascertain whether or not the person in question was “certain” or not.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b></p> <p>The question is broad enough that students can pull from any kind of example, but as stated above, I worry that some may not have felt “certainty” before.</p>
2014	<p>*Because of length, please refer to appendix B for the complete question.</p> <p>Summary: Students must write a letter to their school board that defines creativity and argues for or against a class that teaches students how to be creative.</p>	<p><b>What do students need to know?</b></p> <p>Students can pull from a variety of resources to answer this question. They can look at creative ways to complete school projects, and they might discuss clubs like Student Council and how to handle disputes. I think that students, if they are given enough time, can see the importance of creativity in their community. There is also a myriad of information regarding national and international policy: ISIS, Education, North Korea, Terrorism, Economy, Politics, etc. from which students can draw to show how creativity can help solve problems.</p> <p><b>Does the question allow for an authentic context?</b></p> <p>Yes, there can be an authentic context; however, students would need much more time to think of ideas and possible solutions. They would also need knowledge of past instances in which people did NOT act creatively.</p> <p>Students would also have to define the term “creative” and consider how that skill should be turned into a class. Then, students would have to write the essay. There is too much here for a 40-minute essay. I would enjoy assigning this question as a research project.</p>

### **2.7.2 Analysis of AP Language Argument Prompts**

The experiment above reveals that most of the AP Language prompts do not reflect realistic questions and do not allow students the opportunity to complete a thorough writing process. The majority of the prompts require more world knowledge than most teenagers have; in fact, I had to pull from many of my experiences as a teacher and mother to fully answer them. The prompts above also require, as shown by my own timed brainstorming, much more time for students to work the prompts, plan an argument, and write a full essay. The best prompts are the ones that ask a broad, universally-thematic question from which students may pull any of their life experiences for evidence. The least effective are those that require students to expand upon an issue that calls for more maturity and life experience, specialized knowledge, or socially relevant warrants that may not apply to certain nationalities and cultures.

#### **The Process of “Working the Prompts”:**

**Average prewriting time for me (for nine prompts):** 11.9 minutes. My prewriting ranged from seven to 21 minutes, and I shudder at the thought of getting two “hard” prompts in the same essay test. It would be extremely difficult to finish the test.

#### **Average Equity of Context and Topic Selection:**

Out of 13 prompts from 1980-2014, a couple would be “doable” for students if they had at least two hours to complete the writing process. Most of the prompts called for a deep level of thinking that requires life experiences that many teens would not have. Also, my pre-writing averaged 11.9 minutes, and I try to teach my own students to complete their prewriting in three-five minutes. These questions are too intricate for a timed essay.



### ***2.7.3 Suggestions for Changes on the AP Language Essay Section***

In an ideal learning community, the timed essay would cease to be a part of mandatory assessments; however, I realize that to suggest that we eliminate all timed essays right now would not be feasible. If we keep the timed essay on Advanced Placement tests, I have a few suggestions for future consideration.

- 1. Limit number of essays to one:** If we were to give students the kind of complex prompts shown above, and if students had two hours to write one essay, they would have the opportunity to process prompts, prewrite, outline, draft, write, and then edit. Two hours is still not enough time to complete a thorough rewriting process, but with just one essay, students would have a better chance of displaying their best writing. Additionally, teaching the writing process in class would feel (almost) commensurate with the final assessment, since students would have to go through the drafting process. I would also suggest that the drafts and notes be included with the students' test, so that exam graders could see a complete picture of each student's writing process and style.
- 2. Students write one essay and outline two:** In my AP Language course, I often assign students three prompts: one that they will answer in a full-length essay, and two that they will outline. I also give them a choice of essay/outlines, so that they can focus on the prompt in which they are the most secure. This way, the College Board could still use their traditional three essays on the tests. Also, the grading load for readers would be significantly lowered. With the outlines, graders would be able to ascertain the level of student understanding of each prompt. Although I feel that the first suggestion gives students more time for a complete writing process, having them write one essay and outline two gives them a bit more room to edit.

3. **Offer students a choice:** Testing writers should consider the vast differences in socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of test takers and should create a group of prompts from which students may choose. Several questions that I analyzed above would be appropriate, even relatively easy, for some students and nearly impossible for others. Prompts should exhibit a thorough ethnographic study that will determine which questions certain students might be better equipped to answer. Some might feel that this kind of choice promotes cultural stereotypes, but on the contrary: it celebrates cultural differences by offering students topics that they can answer from their own, personal knowledge and background.
4. **Reconsider context in prompts:** If we were to remain with the three-essay format, I would strongly suggest that each prompt is tested in a similar manner that I “worked” the questions above. Do the prompts allow for fairness for teenagers? Is the context realistic for teenagers? How long does a realistic, or even “fast” prewriting time take? To create equitable assessments, we need to take the tests ourselves, not just go by student samples.

In the next chapter, I examine the nineteen fifties and the growing need for improved literacy and the mounting competition between the United States and Russia. We start to see the reasons (very good ones) why the Advanced Placement program came into being and how the initial creators of the system saw it evolving. Before making changes in our current system, we must know why it was created and how it first developed. Present teachers would be shocked to read how diametrically opposite the goals of original testing creators were when compared with our current educational system.

### 3 STANDARDIZED TESTING AS A POLITICAL NECESSITY

#### 3.1 Abstract

Chapter three transitions from the shift in a national and cultural need for increased literacy to World War II and the mounting competition between the United States and other leading nations for dominance in all matters – including education. Based on documents from the ETS and College Board archives, this chapter demonstrates how education became a matter of public and political interest, and how the spotlight on student growth and conformity necessitated the development of standardized achievement tests. Subsequently, scholars developed the Advanced Placement Program with several end-goals: to help motivated students reach a higher level of scholarship than had previously been possible, to give high school students an opportunity to prepare for college, and to raise the rigor of our secondary educational system in order to become more competitive with other nations. The United States would encounter several cultural shifts throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but its willingness and ability to answer the national call seems to decrease with technological evolution.

#### 3.2 Education: A Matter of Public Interest

During World War II, American education needed reform to compete with Russia and other emergent superpowers. The National Education Association (NEA) responded to the call for change and published the groundbreaking text *Education for All American Youth* in 1944, which “stemm[ed] from a firm conviction ... that the extension, adaptation, and improvement of secondary education [was] essential both to the security of American institutions and to the economic well-being of [American] people” (Bacon et al v). The report addressed the standard learning styles of most students and emphasized five basic objectives for secondary education. As a whole, *Education for All American Youth* started a landslide of American educational change.

The NEA, which opposed a “federalized system of secondary education,” wanted local and state authorities to drive educational decisions. To speak out against federal control of education, the report described a futuristic, government-centric dystopia to avoid. In the scenario, war

efforts had driven educational curricula, and America was unprepared to accommodate returning soldiers and students, whose career goals shifted when the war ended. Inadequate local funds rendered rising college admission a moot point, because although: “enrollment [in secondary schools] doubled, redoubled, and redoubled again during the first four decades of [the twentieth century],” the changes that would need to occur to educate the rising number of students never took place (Bacon et al 6). To prevent an unprepared educational system, the report suggested that educators would be able to adapt to a new age and provide an “education for all American youth” if it recognized wide-ranging learning styles among children, noticed the commonalities of students, and then “devised educational programs and organizations that provid[ed] for the common needs of all youth and the special needs of each individual” (Bacon et al 14-15). The committee defined the following five objectives for educational reform and then determined eight primary differences in youth.

### 3.3 NEA Committee Report: Education for All American Youth

#### **Five basic objectives for educational reform:**

1. Personal growth
2. Social usefulness
3. The right to the pursuit of happiness
4. Intellectual curiosity
5. Teaching students to think rationally

#### **Eight Primary Differences in Youth:**

1. Intelligence and aptitude
2. Occupational interests and outlooks
3. Availability of educational facilities
4. Types of communities in which youth reside
5. Social and economic status
6. Parental attitudes and cultural backgrounds
7. Personal and vocational interests
8. Mental health, emotional stability, and physical well-being

### ***3.3.1 Five Objectives for Educational Reform***

**Personal Growth:** Considering the urgent requirement for proficient reading and writing in both education and business, the five primary goals of the *National Education Administration* seemed to be in students' best interest. Students should feel success if they have worked hard, followed the teacher's suggestions, and improved over the term. Composition theorists from Aristotle to Elbow have advocated a complete writing and editing process that includes several drafts. When students practice writing, they gradually advance – just as an athlete or musician learns through repetition. When teachers offer students chances to write authentic pieces, students have a unique ability to grow personally and educationally. I have seen many students make self-discoveries through process writing. One of my students \*Linda, who suffered a head injury as a child, had a cognitive processing disability. She struggled with writing, and her past teachers reported that her writing quality was middle-school level, at best. Demonstrating work ethic and drive, Linda attended over ten writing conferences with me and revised until she produced an AP-level term paper. Without having the opportunity to rewrite, she never would have gotten an A on her paper. Another student, \*Julie, wondered whether to seek out her birth parents, from China. After writing her paper and conducting action research, she determined that it would be too dangerous for all involved. Julie wrote an excellent paper because she cared about the topic. Composition teachers have the distinct opportunity to nurture personal growth within their classroom, but often, test prep does not allow time for self-discovery.

**Social Usefulness:** How can writing program administrators and test writers create a socially useful writing assessment? In the WWII era, social usefulness was a patriotic duty: help your country by being resourceful and economical. Create educational materials that would relate

thematically to the goals of the nation. AP exam writers should create assessments that address current cultural issues and relevant problem-solving tasks.

**The Right to the Pursuit of Happiness:** Standardized testing often causes stress, anxiety, and fear for our youth. How did our educational system retrogress from the wonderful goal of pursuit of happiness to the present, in which data and test scores are more important than the actual learning and self-fulfillment of students?

**Intellectual Curiosity:** Without a sense of curiosity about the topic, students will not perform their best on writing assignments. Just a few years after the publication of *Education for All American Youth*, the College Board created writing assessments still extant today. Ironically, AP students often complain that they were not interested in the prompt topic and thus had trouble writing an in-depth essay with strong claims, reasons, and details.

**Teaching Students to Think Rationally:** Timed writing prompts require students to think clearly and quickly. Prompts can go too far, however, with the idea of the rational: consider the five-paragraph essay. By the 1980s, this form, (known as the Jane Schaeffer method) would become ubiquitous in secondary and elementary composition, so most writing on standardized tests became structured, formulaic, and superficial. In the AP composition classroom, teachers encourage students to deviate from the five-paragraph template and demonstrate their ability to quickly piece together scholarly diction, wit, world knowledge, and style into a unique essay. And yet, the AP English exam forces the majority of students to resort to the prescribed writing that they cannot practice in class. When Harvard first began its push towards increased literacy, a “formula” would have been considered a necessary evil that average-to-low students needed to write coherently. Today, students with advanced writing potential still use the formula because the test often necessitates it.

Educators should consider questions they were asking seventy years ago: are our national assessments meeting the needs of today's youth, or are they a function of bureaucratic economy and practicality? In addition, if the National Education Association desired to fulfill the needs of all youth based on the list of student variances, how did we let our educational system's means of assessment become so standardized and non-differentiated? To answer these questions, I will examine each factor for learning styles identified by the NEA and discuss the implications of the AP testing system, with its standardized time, location, objective tests, and essays, on our ability to meet the needs of today's youth. *My assessment is limited to the AP Language exam and does not include other standardized tests like the SAT, ACT, or other AP tests.*

### **3.3.2 Eight Primary Differences in Youth**

1. **Intelligence and Aptitude:** The College Board created the AP English exam to meet the needs of exceptional students who wanted the chance to get ahead in college. Unfortunately, times have changed. Students with multifarious learning styles and abilities fill AP classes in order to enhance their resumes, and because parents are able to waive their children into AP courses, almost anyone can take an Advanced Placement class (even those who have not yet reached "AP" level). Despite the current revolving doorway in AP, the actual exam remains the same for everyone, so test scores vary according to learning style. Whereas one student may write well, he or she might not have a knowledge base on the particular subject given. Likewise, another student may be a good writer with the knowledge sufficient to answer a prompt, but may take longer to process information and transform thoughts into a coherent essay.
2. **Occupational Interests and Outlooks:** There exist as many occupational interests and outlooks as there do people, but if an outsider were to look at the way we train our students,

he or she might see a reality in which success and thus educational expectations are homogenous for all youth, which of course sounds ridiculous. Across the nation, the majority of schools have one primary purpose: to prepare students to enter college immediately after high school. Success often means a white-collar job that requires a college education, and in order to get into colleges, students must pass the same assessments. How could we have the same expectations for millions of distinctive children?

3. **Availability of Educational Facilities:** A hundred years ago, rural students generally had fewer educational opportunities than urban students. Today, however, with the vast array of online educational programs, the availability of facilities has ceased to be an issue. I might change the wording today to availability of types of trade classes, since those have been, for the most part, expunged from high school programs.
4. **Types of Communities in which Youth Reside/Social and Economic Status:** In my county, there are diverse communities consisting of all levels of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, some high schools have had to place day-care centers within the schools to accommodate the many students with children. In those same areas, gang-related violence occurs on a daily basis, and many students do not have both (or even one) parent in the home. At my school, most students are financially well off, and they often have a sense of entitlement. They expect to get high-paying jobs immediately after college, and they feel the tremendous pressure from peers and parents to succeed. Of course, there are many schools that fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum.
5. **Parental Attitudes and Cultural Backgrounds:** A century ago, college was not the choice for all parents, many of whom wanted their children to stay at home and work with the family farm or business. Now, for the most part, parents stress college attendance to students



and the pressure for students to attend a university immediately following high school has grown exponentially.

6. **Personal and Vocational Interests:** As I have mentioned previously, a focus on standardization does not work with all students, who have varying interests and aptitudes.
7. **Mental Health, Emotional Stability, and Physical Well-Being:** I have seen, in the last ten years alone, an alarming growth in the number of students diagnosed with anxiety, depression, TMJ, chronic headaches, and many other stress-related disorders. Students today do not have time to be kids, and their health suffers because of the pressure to succeed.

The eight categories of learning groups that the NEA identified still pertain today, and I assert that our national assessments, with a focus on the AP Language tests, are not meeting the needs of current high school students. We need to change more than just our final assessments, however. We need to change our entire way of thinking, our goals, focus, values, and expectations for our students. I further assert that we created this mess for ourselves because of money and bureaucracy. I will show in the following pages of this chapter and in chapter four how the AP program, which started for all the right reasons, continues today for all the wrong ones.

In the 1950s, educators needed to create more rigorous standards, so they transitioned from a Dewey-esque philosophy in which “society [was expected to] adjust to the ways of the children in hopes of creating a socialist society” to one in which “the child was to be mentally adjusted to the decidedly un-socialist society already in existence” (Hartman 56). In the 1950s, the study of psychology and socialization (and therefore of culture), were important aspects of education. Students were molded into people who were to take care of their physical being and who were supposed to “wan[t] to do what society considers good” (Ryans 433). For the first time

on such a large scale, teachers were mandated to teach students to become like other students, to conform, to do what was deemed “right” by society’s leaders: “Within the broad field of educational psychology the shifting interests and biases of instructors and researchers lead to varying degrees of emphasis on the several content areas from time to time” (Ryans 431). The ‘50s were a time of significant shifts in thinking, and many changing attitudes resulted in the need to conform and to be good enough. Several experiments conducted in the last seventy-five years suggest that going against type is harder than one might think. In the 1950s, two studies revealed how “difficult it has always been for people to stand up for what they believe” (Crain 4). Both tests, the first conducted by Solomon Asch in 1952 and the second by his student, Stanley Milgram (1965) demonstrated that even when faced with a question that had an obvious “right” answer, participants would often state the wrong answer to go along with the crowd. Deviating from the norm was so uncomfortable for most people that they would either lie, or in some cases inflict pain on others, in order to avoid becoming the “odd man out.” So what does this have to do with the College Board and Advanced Placement testing? Everything.

### **3.4 Conformity and Educational Achievement**

Along with conformity came the need for achievement; or perhaps, the need for achievement probably came first and caused the “solution” of mass conformity. From elementary to high school to post-secondary institutions, scholars collected and compared data to those of other nations. As America immersed herself in surpassing Russian defenses, economics, education, and scientific research, there was no longer time to wait for children to develop the skills needed for the task. Education became a mission alongside the nuclear arms race – a mission that called for increased complexity in curriculum, better teachers, and focused restructuring of curriculum and assessment. With a strong sense of patriotism and drive,

American leaders believed that the only way to reach the top was to mold the next generation accordingly, with the expectations that each child (and parent) would willingly comply with the new standards of “relevance, instrumentalism, social order, and patriotism” (Hartman 57). Conformity and standardization thus became the norm in post-WWII American education.

Post WWII, another trend changed the way Americans viewed education: for the first time in history, most American teenagers enrolled in high school. On March 12, 1947, Harry S. Truman gave a speech in which he requested that Congress “grant economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey to help those countries resist Communism” (“March 12, 1947 Truman Doctrine Announced”). His groundbreaking call to action, known as the *Truman Doctrine*, helped prepare Americans for their role as a leading power of the world. Secondary school systems preached patriotism and the American way of life, and high school teachers groomed our youth for capitalism, economic supremacy, and the fight against Communism. Education had become more than just about the kids: it had become a political agenda meant to “secure individual freedom” (Eliot 122).

As the importance of secondary education amplified, society started to recognize problems with post-war education. Between 1945 and 1960, America saw an exponential growth in population that went from “139.9 million in 1945 to 180.6 million in 1960” and that made it impossible for the country to build schools fast enough (Eliot 122). Likewise, college enrollment exploded, increasing 120% by the late 1940s. When the College Board was founded in 1900, only “2% of those aged eighteen to twenty-four were in college classrooms; by [the late 1940s], 35% of the population aged eighteen to twenty-four enrolled in college” (Eliot 122). Working for the war effort had also created a “severe shortage of teachers” (Hartman 57). Whereas there are more teachers than jobs today, during the war, most able-bodied men and women were working

for the government, and the consistency of school curricula suffered. In 1941, the administrators at Beverly Hills High School in California began conducting an annual survey of past students to determine how well their secondary education had prepared them for college. Year after year, students said that they should have had “more writing of compositions, more note-taking, more essay tests, more research in the library, and [more rigorous and intense work]” (Grommon 123). Many students reported that their college English courses were much harder than their high school classes, and that they would have been better prepared for the university if their secondary education had been more demanding. In response, educators sought to create a challenging curriculum that would produce the next generation of engineers, scientists, and innovators.

### ***3.4.1 Achievement Testing and Academic Pressure***

With academic pressure came a flurry of new achievement tests. Educators were eager to use the new assessments, but before they could administer the tests, they had to ascertain how to gauge student aptitude. Although the Committee of Ten on the Curriculum of Secondary School reported in 1892 that, “the worst obstacle to the progress of modern language study is the lack of properly equipped instructors,” the issue was at the forefront of academic conversations fifty years later (Freeman 255). After WWII, educators focused on the “organization of curriculum, techniques, implementation [of lessons]” and on the skills of students. There was little conversation about the plight of teachers: how prepared they were, their salaries and working conditions, and their professional learning; thus, the “recruiting, the training, and the placement of good teachers” suffered (Freeman 255). The 1950s was a time of change, of exceptional growth and of a new cultural warrant that should have caused a tremendous response in teacher training and education, but that did not happen. However, teachers were not all to blame. The “old standards [had been] discarded [and] the new [had] not yet been formulated” (Gucker 23).

The time was ripe for a new type of teacher training and student assessment, which led nicely into the development of the AP program.

National testing programs quickly developed to eliminate "overlapping of effort" and to maximize the amount of resources available. They created many varieties of achievement tests: reading comprehension, generalization in mathematics, diagram and chart reading, symbol interpretation, cause & effect, and argument and reasoning (Schrader 449). In 1947, "the Education Testing Service was incorporated to bring together the testing activities of the American Council on Education, the College Entrance Examination Board, and the Carnegie Corporation and Foundation (Schrader 459).

### ***3.4.2 A Dichotomy between Standardization and Curriculum***

The years immediately after WWII were dichotomous; as ETS developed new standardized assessments, scholars called for a "renovation of the high school" and a method of instruction that would "hope to teach simultaneously and satisfactorily such different human beings" (Pooley 284). As the importance of assessment amplified, scholars began to "place increasing emphasis upon socially meaningful statements about performance" alongside test scores. In essence, test scores meant more than just a grade – they symbolized student success and ability (Schrader 453). But because of the growing importance on scoring, scholars began to question the efficacy of essay tests and whether they reflected students' true abilities in reading and writing.

Teachers were recognizing that to place students with diverse skill sets and abilities in the same classes and to give them unvarying assessments just "imped[ed] the bright student[s] and discouraged the dull one[s]...by forcing all students into the same pattern of studies" (Pooley 285). Thus, teachers wanted reform that would involve a comprehensive overhaul of curriculum

and turn it from homogeneous to heterogeneous. There was not only a lack of structure in the educational system, but a misunderstanding about the diverse needs of students. It was clear that more sophisticated learners needed a “rapid channel of advance” (Pooley 285) that would allow them to reach their fullest potential.

Scholars acknowledged that students had a vast array of learning styles and that a “one-size-fits-all” career path was unrealistic. In 1948, Pooley claimed that students should not “be expected to do the same things or to pursue the same path through high school” (286). With the widespread desire for curriculum reform and the recognition that students needed different courses of study to follow separate career paths, standardized tests, ironically, became ubiquitous as a primary means of assessment. The mass influx of students demanded manageable assessments and placement testing. Likewise, it would have been difficult for testing administrators to foresee the long-term results that placing such emphasis on the need for a grade would cause. However, objective tests and timed essays were relatively easy to manage – they were convenient for those in charge of testing and they were “doable” on a national scale. Yet, as we adapted and learned, we should have harkened back to what our scholars in composition knew well before we became a standardized nation: one size does not fit all.

### **3.5 Problems in Composition Curriculum**

Although national secondary education was coming together, college approaches to teaching English differed from university to university, which caused a rift between scholars. There were two schools of thought in most American university English departments: some schools incorporated remedial English classes in their curriculum to help students who lagged behind in reading comprehension and writing skills. Other universities believed that secondary schools held the responsibility of teaching basic composition and grammar.

Scholars have long debated whether universities should provide remedial English classes. In 1945, Charlotte Crawford dubbed the English required course the “problem child” that everyone dreaded (70). Post war educators had to start from scratch with new students, many former soldiers, who entered college with the honor of a warrior and the literacy skills of a child. It must have been hard for professors, who were used to teaching literary studies to upperclassmen, and for the veterans, who were used to giving orders on the battlefield and not taking orders in the classroom.

At the 1927 NCTE Council Meeting, scholars reached the troubling conclusion that although they believed English was the most important subject taught to students, “Beautiful and correct language [was] not always the most effective means of communication” (The Philadelphia Council Meeting 43). Meeting participants understood the statement’s efficacy in the case of physical and emotional communication (smiling, crying, hitting, grimacing), but overall, they still agreed that in life, one must be able to communicate clearly. In the mid-twentieth century, when the world was facing a tremendous growth in communications, technology, industry, economics and population, America couldn’t afford to ease up on English curricula. Even in the late 1920s, scholars knew that “Industry need[ed] better [and more exact] English” (The Philadelphia Council Meeting 44). By the end of WWII, the business world was desperate to find literate employees and agreed to make education a priority.

College students needed to communicate on many levels to succeed in their university courses, so responsibility to produce better writers trickled down to the secondary educational system. With the integration of reading and writing in most college English programs, students needed to enter college knowing more than just the rudiments of grammar. Other basic skills necessary for collegiate success were writing in several genres including essays, critical reports

and term papers. A majority of incoming college students were not prepared to write effectively, and the reasoning in many university English departments was that secondary schools should teach basic writing, so students reached the university level prepared.

Today, I still hear from many composition professors that their incoming freshmen struggle to pass the required college English 1101-2. I find this disappointing, because secondary schools are required, in accordance with the 12<sup>th</sup> grade Common Core Writing Standards, to write on a level much more complex than some might think. Upon examination of the goals that the Common Core Standards have mandated for teachers of high school English, we can see that incoming college students should (ideally) have the following skills (see the Common Core Standards on the next page):



**Table 4 Common Core Standards**

<b>Text Types and Purposes:</b>
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.B Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.D Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.E Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.A Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.B Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.C Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.D Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.E Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.F Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.A Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.B Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.C Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.E Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
<b>Production and Distribution of Writing:</b>
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and

audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12 here.)
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
<b>Research to Build and Present Knowledge:</b>
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9.A Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., "Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics").
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9.B Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., <i>The Federalist</i> , presidential addresses]").
<b>Range of Writing:</b>
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10 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.

(<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/#CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4>)

The answer to the question above (why are college professors still claiming that students cannot write if high school writing standards have gotten so demanding?) may lie in the nature of our testing environment. When students get a reward for certain writing, they will naturally (not knowing otherwise) believe that their work serves as an exemplary model for their future in college. In 2001, scholarship on the dangers of perceiving the AP class as the end of English instruction began to surface:

We must ask...whether what the examinations teach is really what we want students to learn about writing and literature. Moreover...former AP students need to overcome the message of the AP course that they were finished developing as writers – a message that the decisiveness of the AP exams and the subsequent waivers from college writing requirements unfortunately reinforce. (Spear and Flesher 47)

Although the Advanced Placement program was created with a noble goal (to allow bright students to succeed at heights previously unimagined), that original ideal faded in the shadow of scoring. Often, high school AP teachers (including myself, unfortunately) “sell” AP classes as a means to exempt future English 1101-2 courses in college. We talk about the money and time that students can save by participating in AP, and so most students view the entire Advanced Placement program as a way to eliminate classes, not as an opportunity for more challenging courses of study. Many students have the false impression that if they exempt a class in college, they are “experts” at the material or skill taught in the course. I am a perfect example: when I was in high school, I took AP Literature. After many practice sessions and essay assignments that were based on the five-paragraph model, I was able to master the timed essay, and so I exempted both my English 1101-2 courses. At the time, I was thrilled to avoid all the writing that my friends had to complete; however, upon entering graduate school I had to reteach myself the basics of writing, something I should have learned in those core English classes. I was so far behind my classmates, many of whom were much younger, because I did not have that foundation. The AP English class I took in high school did not prepare me for graduate work. It prepared me to write a timed essay. In the 1950s, leaders in education could not have foreseen these problems – they were just trying to give students a chance to get ahead before college.

In 1951, “administrators, professors and teachers from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Andover, Exeter, and Lawrenceville met in October” (Rothschild 177) to devise a plan for student advancement in college before finishing high school. The result of the meeting, their final committee report, was titled *General Education in School and College: A Committee Report by Members of the Faculties of Andover, Exeter, Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton and Yale*. Committee members voiced a concern that was probably surprising to a society that had

started to value high school and education: “While we have tried to outline a program of study which would offer all students of college caliber a better education, *we have been particularly concerned about the superior students*. This concern is partly the result of our belief that standards can be pulled up from the top more easily than they can be pushed up from the bottom” (Rothschild 177). The statement brought about a paradigm shift that would continue, albeit controversially, until the present. Whereas teachers tended to direct their primary efforts on students who struggled, the committee asserted that the best way to raise the bar for performance was to focus on the superior students, the ones who would one day lead the nation in research, technology and economic growth. Thus, educators needed assessments that would challenge gifted students and provide them with opportunities for rapid progress through college.

Concurrently to the committee meeting, Keith Chalmers, President of Kenyon College, established a list of freshmen-level college courses that “faculty would accept even if taught in high schools” (Rothschild 178). Ten secondary schools agreed to teach those courses, and so “Advanced Placement” was born. These “pioneer” schools attacked the process differently during the beginning, but they all faced similar problems. Choosing which students to allow in the program was problematic. For some institutions who already had upper-level and honors classes it was relatively easy: IQ scores and grades determined entry into AP classes. Some schools that lacked honors classes, however, were at a disadvantage. In those cases, the department chair or administrator would handpick students who showed promise. Either way, by late May of 1954, the “first common AP examinations were administered” (Rothschild 179). The Educational Testing Service (ETS) was contracted to “administer exams in the experimental schools” and the College Board, which “assumed leadership of Advanced Placement in 1995, retained ETS to design and grade examinations” (Rothschild 179).

In 1955, Charles R. Keller “became the first director of the Advanced Placement Program for the College Board” (Rothschild 180). Later in his career, he directed the *John Hays Fellows Program* in liberal arts, and received an award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals "for distinguished service to American secondary education at the national level in 1971" (Cook). Along with Keller, John R. Valley became the first ETS Program Director for Advanced Placement and was honored by the Educational Testing Service in 1965 for his long years of exemplary work. During the first AP season, 959 AP examinations were administered to eighteen secondary schools. The first English Language test was composed of three writing sections, each an hour long. The scale for scoring consisted of four grades: 3.0/Good, 2.0/Adequate, 1.0/No credit, and 0.0/Remedial. Testing administrators considered students who earned a 2.0 skilled enough in English to exempt three hours of college composition. Tests that scored a 1.0 did not clearly demonstrate adequate skills, and the 0.0 showed the need for remediation. Scoring of the English Literature test consisted of a five-point scale: 5.0/Excellent, 4.0/ Very Good, 3.0/Fair, 2.0/ Poor, and 0.0/No Credit. The following table indicates the three parts of the test, including number of students scoring in each category and their subsequent percentile.

(English Composition: Distributions of Scores of 209 Secondary Candidates. 1954. Raw data. Educational Testing Service, Princeton, 1-2).

### English Composition: Distributions of Scores of 209 Secondary Candidates

**Table 5 English Composition Distribution of Scores of 209 Secondary Candidates**

Part I Score	Number	Percentile
3.0	1	99
2.0	33	84
1.5	19	75
1.0	155	1
0.0	1	1
Part II Score	Number	Percentile
3.0	4	98
2.0	69	65
1.0	124	6
0.0	12	1
Part III Score	Number	Percentile
3.0	21	90
2.0	73	55
1.0	111	2

0.0	4	1
Composite Score	Number	Percentile
9.0	1	99
8.0	1	99
7.0	3	98
6.0	14	91
5.5	11	86
5.0	38	67
4.5	2	66
4.0	60	38
3.5	6	35
3.0	59	7
2.0	13	1
1.0	1	1
0.0	-	-

Based on the above scores, it appears that Part III was significantly easier than the first two, and it was extraordinary for students to score a 9.0 (thereby showing mastery of all three questions). In Part I, .005% of students scored a 3.0, 16% scored a 2.0, .1% scored a 1.5, and a large majority scored a 1.0, at 74%. Part II results were similar, with .02% scoring a 3.0, 33% at a 2.0, 59% at a failing 1, and .06% demonstrating the need for remediation. Interestingly, in Part I, an additional .5 was given to a score of 1.0 if the student's "response to the question was inadequate but...the writing itself showed considerable steadiness" (English Composition: Distributions of Scores of 209 Secondary Candidates 1954, 2). Rewarding quality of writing lends objectivity to an exam and helps dull the sting of a low score. I would prefer that we practiced a similar method now.

Part III scores suggest that the third section was the easiest for students. Out of 209 students, 21 earned a 3.0, 73 a 2.0 and 115 did not pass. Composite scores demonstrate the following: 33% of the 209 students passed with a score of 5.0 or above, and 67% did not pass. Several of the colleges involved tried to get an adequate supply of samples from existing college Freshmen, but in many cases they were unable to administer all the tests and they even had trouble finding adequate writers to supply exemplary papers. As a result, the first-year AP data collected was somewhat skewed. However, the results definitely verified a dearth of writing ability in both secondary and post-secondary English students. Therefore, the leaders of the Advanced Placement program had a valid justification for increased rigor in the classroom via the AP program.

The report for the March 31, 1955 test administration meeting, chaired by Mr. John Valley, addressed several issues regarding logistics of the test. In May of the same year, Valley added a supplement, which answered many of the questions proposed in March. These first memos demonstrate the complexity in deciding how to manage an equitable system of reading and scoring essays. In the first memo, several attendees wanted to know more about the “appointment of chief readers,” and when there was no apparent solution, Mr. Valley stated that more information would be “forthcoming shortly” (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*: TPB06.5 AP General ETS Archives). Two months later, he determined the following defined criteria regarding reading the exams:

Samples of papers written by college students are to be provided for all reader groups. These papers are to be scored by readers without being identified as college papers. However, after all papers have been read, the college papers will serve as one means for readers to establish standards for the evaluation of examinations written by actual candidates. The performance of college students will be reported in interpretive materials without disclosing identity of college to enable some comparison to be

made of the school candidate group. Reading of papers is to be so scheduled that reading of exams will be concluded in time to enable chief readers to report the reading and the performance of the candidate groups to the evaluation conferences to be scheduled by the College Board late in June. (Valley, May 10, 1955 TPB06.5 2 AP General ETS Archives ETS)

Members agreed that ETS needed as much time as possible from the testing date to the summer to grade, and they suggested a July deadline for score reports. Valley wanted readers to understand the levels of writing ability inherent in college students so they could grade AP tests, so new readers were “calibrated” by evaluating samples from unknown college students. The blind grading probably helped with objectivity, but Valley and his team did not consider that the average “sample” from assorted colleges probably was not going to meet the high standards of the AP program, which included the most talented high school students. When the program began, college English classes contained a vast mix of learners ranging in ability. Average sample papers would have been well below what the readers were expecting out of “AP” level writing. Using college papers as anchors for grading was like putting the cart before the horse: the students needed time to be “trained” in the proper writing techniques before they could create accurate sample papers. It makes sense that the College Board would stop using college sample papers in the future. Now, ironically, we have indoctrinated middle and high school students in the formulaic five-paragraph construction, so most incoming college students struggle to write in any other style. I would appreciate the opportunity to use sample papers written by upper level college English students. That way, writing samples would display literacy skills that college professors require in their courses.

Looking back, the Advanced Placement program grew considerably in the years following its inception. In 1955, the College Board administered 337 AP language tests and 315



AP Literature tests. By 1956, this number more than doubled, with 784 AP Language and 675 AP Literature. French, German, Latin, Spanish, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics indicated comparable progress, which propelled funding, teacher training and more testing. The 1956 English Composition readers included scholars from various colleges and universities, demonstrating AP's growing prestige. The actual reading took place at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ. (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*: TPB06.5 – 2AP General ETS Archives).

### **3.6 Programs Designed to Enhance Literacy**

While the Advanced Placement Program created its curricula to improve composition pedagogy, several institutions implemented other unique programs to enhance literacy. Some included the “College Preview” program at the State University of New York Teachers College, and Harvard’s “early admittance” program for promising high school students, both which offered exceptional high school students the chance to experience college life. In the summer of 1957, Harvard selected six high school students to live on campus and sample a variety of college courses. The following year they admitted 26 students. The chance to experience university life at the top school in the country gave students the tools they needed to prepare for their academic career; however, because the program was so elitist – the “Harvard” name and demographic excluded most students from regions other than the Northeast and was primarily for the upper class, and it lasted for only two years.

The Ford Foundation created the “Fund for the Advancement of Education (FAE),” designed to let promising high school sophomores attend college for two years before they joined the draft (Rothschild 176). Although most people welcomed a new opportunity for young adults to further their education before going to war, superintendents and principals of

secondary schools eschewed the initiative, which stole many of their most capable students. As a result, the Ford Foundation discontinued the “pre-induction scholarships.” In their place, a program that would “move students ahead in college after they had been admitted” arose (Rothschild 177). Administrators had to find a way to raise curricula expectations, accommodate gifted students, and keep high schools thriving. To remove most high-achieving students from secondary schools would have destroyed the public school system from the top down.

Despite intense opposition from critics, Humboldt State College, in California, created a remedial English course for incoming freshmen who did not meet college literacy expectations. While some writing program administrators thought secondary schools held responsibility for teaching students the principles of composition, other university scholars believed that colleges should offer remedial English to help students succeed, and they allowed high school seniors to take the college English placement test to determine their need for remediation. Overall test scores determined which classes universities would offer (Grommon 126). Students had three convenient options depending on scores: remediation through a Spring college English class, regular college English, or Honors College English.

Another potential solution that scholars developed to help prepare high school students for an authentic college experience was *The College Preview*. Held at the State University of New York Teachers’ College in 1957 and ‘58, the preview allowed over 200 high school juniors to visit the campus and preview college life, arduous course expectations, and the “nature of college English” (Grommon 126). Students lived in dorm rooms and experienced life as a college student would. Professors, who wanted to communicate best practices with surrounding high school teachers, had the opportunity to ascertain the educational needs of high school students. Many universities would follow one or more of these programs for years to come;

however, the only one that reached success on a national scale was Advanced Placement. At a time of explosive growth in enrollment and the urgent need for competitive education to help win the cold war, the United States had to raise the bar for everyone, and AP administrators felt that their system offered the right solution.

Although I believe that Advanced Placement created higher standards for certain curricula, it was not intended to “raise the bar for everyone.” As teachers learned the curriculum, it was natural that some pedagogics would trickle down to honors and on-level courses. Yet, the students who most benefitted were those at the top of their class, and everyone else continued through the same curriculum and often struggled in college. Today, we see the same occurrence. AP students often exempt college English courses and for the most part do fine, until they take upper-level English; regular-level students enter the University woefully unprepared, despite increased national standards of writing. As assessments become more “standardized,” students have less opportunities to produce the “real-world” writing that colleges expect of them. Even AP students have the same problem learning how to write for a real purpose, because teachers have been prepping them for the AP-style exams, in many cases, since middle school. Most students write to pass the exam, not to discover something or effect change. We have missed the point on “raising the bar for everyone” and instead have chained it to the ground.

### **3.7 1950s Correspondence from the College Board to Participating Colleges**

Past educational leaders worked hard to improve the quality of education. Numerous details in testing, admissions, and reading had to be managed, and Charles Keller, the first AP Program Director, worked hard to foster the successful growth of Advanced Placement. Beginning with the first Advanced Placement tests, Keller ensured that college admissions officers received thorough testing reports. After AP test administration from May 7-11, 1956,

secondary school and college teachers collaborated in June to read the essays (Keller, 1956 Letter TP B06.5 – 2 AP General). In a letter, Keller informed Buchanan, a registrar for Youngstown College, of the materials the university received regarding test scores for prospective freshmen. The following information reveals much about early AP administration:

1. Keller was careful to market his new AP Program to universities, and with reports similar to the Youngstown college report, he suggested that registrars “give careful attention to the school report” even though not all secondary schools were offering college-level classes at that time. He praised the hard work of secondary schools who were “offering challenging experiences to able students” in order to increase university registrar awareness. Enrollment in AP classes multiplied in the program’s early years, and Keller’s marketing prowess proved instrumental in the increase (Keller, 1956 Letter TP B06.5 – 2 AP General).
2. The materials that the CEEB sent university registrars included four primary pieces of data, which include the following:
  - a. A school report which contain[ed] a description of the special advanced course which the student took in school or of the advanced work that he did, together with the school grade and the school recommendation;
  - b. The examination books for each subject in which the student took an advanced placement examination and the examination questions, prepared ...by a committee of four college teachers and two secondary school teachers;
  - c. The examination grade as given by the readers in Princeton and an interpretive leaflet prepared by the Educational Testing Service; and,
  - d. A list of students who took one or more examinations but did not designate [that particular university] (Keller, 1956 Letter TP B06.5 – 2 AP General).

Keller asserted that he and several of the 1956 readers “believe[d] that the examinations [were] harder than those which many colleges give to students at the end of similar courses” (Keller, 1956 Letter). One primary complaint that colleges had with incoming freshmen was their lack of

college-readiness; therefore, Keller's explicit claim that many AP tests were harder than college-level exams was sure to have gotten the attention of many a college registrar and admissions officer.

Advanced Placement courses were offered to students in grades 10-12; subsequently, if students passed the classes and the AP test at the end of the year, they could receive credit for the equivalent core college class. Because there was so much to gain from taking the Advanced Placement classes, the curriculum had to be as demanding as an actual college course. By May of 1957, "212 schools, 2,068 students and 201 colleges" were involved in the AP program, which was a staggering amount considering that the program had begun less than five years previously (Grommon 126).

By 1957, The College Board needed feedback from colleges and local schools regarding AP tests, number of students tested, and the weight that high-scoring tests would receive. CEEB administrators corresponded regularly with colleges and schools to gather data and to reaffirm the importance of the AP program. CEEB also started writing letters to participating colleges requesting "report[s] on how the ...advanced placement students [had] fared" in college so that the Board could "assess the program" and determine if there was a correlation between Advanced Placement secondary students and subsequent high achieving college students. Enclosed with each letter was a detailed form asking for information regarding each candidate. See the table (created to match the handwritten letter from 1957) for categories and requested information. Note the level of detail that went into the form below. There were many more path options – depending on performance, grade, and ability – that colleges could choose for AP level students in 1957 than today. In a way, the early test administrators were trying to differentiate a homogenous test.

**Table 6 1957 Candidate Form**

Examination grade (5 is the highest)	English Lang	English Lit	French	German	Latin	Spanish	Biology	Chemistry	Physics	Math
<b>Action taken by colleges and the reasons for the action in the spaces below:</b>										
A) Students given advanced placement and credit (no further questions if this line is checked)										
B) Students given advanced placement only: Reason(s):										
a. giving of credit is contrary to college policy										
b. examination grade not high enough										
c. school course not good enough for college credit										
d. the examination is an inadequate measure of what the college needs to know [about the student's ability] before placement can be granted										
e. other (use back of sheet for further explanation if you desire)										
C) Students given credit only: Reason(s):										
a. Student is not continuing subject										
b. Although school course was satisfactory, it did not duplicate college course										
c. Other (use back of sheet for further explanation if you desire)										
D) Students given neither advanced placement nor credit: Reason(s):										
a. Advanced placement and credit are contrary to school policy										
b. Advanced placement grade too low										
c. Student did not apply for advanced placement or credit										
d. School course was unsatisfactory										
e. School course was satisfactory but did not duplicate college course										
f. School did not recommend										
g. Student took CEEB Achievement Test as well as Advanced placement test, and the achievement test score was too low										
h. The examination is an inadequate measure of what the college needs to know before placement or credit can be granted										
i. Other (use back of sheet for further explanation if you desire)										

(Dudley, David A. "Nassan College." Letter to John Valley. 24 Oct. 1957/TPBO6.5 AP General File/ETS Archives).

The many hours of marketing, letter-writing, and sales calls for the College Board paid off, because by 1957, many participating colleges embraced the program and trusted that students who did well in their advanced classes and on AP tests deserved to be “advanced” in

college. In fact, many universities gave high-scoring students enough credit to enter college as a sophomore.

The same day he wrote his letter to John Valley, Dudley wrote another that appeared curious secondary schools. His letter contained a preliminary report of colleges who had already provided CEEB data detailing advanced standing. In a letter to Center School, Dudley reported that “colleges [were] paying serious and increased attention to the Advanced Placement students” and “...a very large number of the colleges have given advanced placement ungrudgingly to those able and ambitious students who had established good grades in advanced, college level courses and in the Advanced Placement examinations” (Dudley Center School Letter TPBO6.5 AP General File/ETS Archives). Secondary and post-secondary school systems were ready for the Advanced Program to work and agreed that secondary schools needed more sophisticated class options.

### **3.8 Fiscal Issues in Advanced Placement**

Only a year after the launch of the AP program, Valley and other leaders of the CEEB were searching for ways to cut costs, and so they met at the annual program planning meeting on August 15, 1957 in order to discuss fiscal restructuring. After less than five years, money, of course, became a primary concern as AP continued to grow. In a memo to those who attended the meeting, John Valley summarized his suggestions, some of which were followed and some that did not see fruition.

Students, teachers and administrators often complain about the inconvenience of AP testing sites and the paperwork involved in registering students and keeping track of tests. Valley’s first suggestion helped ETS’s logistical issues, but ironically would become the proverbial thorn in every secondary school administrator’s side. During the first year of the AP

Program, ETS managed all aspects of the test, including payment, enrollment, testing sites, test security, and administration. Taking care of these details for a “national” program was very expensive and time-consuming, so Valley suggested that the ETS “modify the Advanced Placement Program from a national to an institutional program.” He concluded that the secondary schools should “order tests, collect fees, register candidates, provide the facilities and personnel for administering the tests, and send the tests to ETS for scoring and reporting to colleges” (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91). Valley determined that ETS would be able to deal with schools as a “unit” and not as “individual candidates” and that it would prove convenient for students because they would not need to travel great distances to take the test. Valley identified several possible disadvantages: 1. Candidates who had prepared for the tests on their own and not through the school system would be eliminated; 2. College transfer students might be difficult or “impossible to accommodate under the proposal”; and 3. Schools might “object to having to take on the added burden inherent in operating [AP examinations] as an institutional program” (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91). Regarding Valley’s reservations, I have often wondered if students should be allowed to take an AP test without taking the course. Some of my gifted students could easily pass the AP Language test with independent study. College transfer students still have to adhere to the differing standards of each school – often, one school will accept a “4” for exemption while another might not. Transferring students must take that into consideration.

Valley’s first suggestion, stated above, did happen and still holds today. Secondary schools are responsible for administering the AP tests and for managing all aspects of testing. I see this each year at my school, an affluent high school that prides itself on its superior test



scores. My school employs an AP administrator (one of our assistant principals) who is bound by College Board rules to conduct training for teachers. There is also an AP test incentive at my school – students who pre-register for the test can exempt their final exam in that particular AP class. Teachers of Advanced Placement classes are expected to prepare their students, give extra review sessions, and proctor at least a full day of AP testing (usually two complete tests). Because teachers are absent on the day they must proctor tests, the school pays for substitutes, which can get expensive. Nevertheless, Valley was correct in hoping that it would cut costs for ETS. I find it interesting that a change that occurred in policy so long ago still affects us to the degree that it does today.

In Part B of his plan, Valley discussed the time-consuming task of reading essays and the need for a policy change at ETS. In the early years of the Advanced Placement program, “all essays [were] centrally read by committees of readers appointed by ETS” and “grades [were] reported to colleges” (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91). To save ETS time and money, Valley suggested that ETS readers review only a sample of model papers, which would be copied and sent to colleges to prepare local faculty for the job of scoring the papers. Valley listed two advantages (which centered mostly on cost and convenience) and four disadvantages to his proposal. The two advantages to his proposal are as follows:

1. Reduction in reading expenses: In 1957, 60 readers had been required to read a total of 3,772 high school papers and 761 college papers, which resulted in a costly two-week reading period. Valley estimated that ETS would save about \$10,000 if the colleges took on the burden of grading incoming essays.
  2. It would eliminate issues regarding finding a convenient reading site.
- (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91)

Of course, today it would be chaotic for colleges to have to read and evaluate the many thousands of AP exams for incoming freshmen. Professors would inevitably delegate the reading to assistants who might not know the material as well as an expert would. But in 1957, the number of test-takers was still small enough for ETS to consider localizing the scoring. By 1958, however, a whopping “3,500 high school and 200 college candidates” (Project 180; Study A0A. AP Tabulating Procedure, 1958) took AP exams, which, when translated into numbers, means that there were over 11,000 essays to grade (assuming that each student took only one exam). Each year the number would increase dramatically, so Valley’s suggestion became impossible as the AP program grew.

Valley listed several disadvantages to his proposal that foreshadowed the future weight of standardized testing. Although I have always been “against” an over standardized educational system, Valley offers several reasons why having national consistency and “standards” can be a source of security for students. His first drawback to the proposal involved the sense of security that schools had knowing that one central entity had the power of the grading, not the colleges: “Schools [had] tended to regard central reading of papers as a protection for their candidates” since the colleges had the power to make “the decision to grant advanced placement or credit” (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91). If college personnel were to control every aspect of the evaluation, grading, and placement procedures, the chances of an arbitrary decision based on personal bias would rise, creating inequities for students who invested the time and money to take the tests. Valley understood that standardizing how the tests were graded would help protect students. Ironically, the idea of being “just a number” – so repugnant in many educational conversations today – was the only way to protect the individual test-taker.

Other weaknesses in Valley's suggestion that colleges read their own AP exams involved factors such as data collection, variability of standards and grading, and the social and educational value inherent to a centralized reading conference. Without data, it would be impossible for researchers like myself to study trends in educational practices. Valley was looking forward when he observed that if colleges were to grade their own AP exams, "no data would be available on the performance of the entire candidate group, [which] would reduce the amount of information which [could] be channeled back into future test development work" (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/ AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91).

ETS thrives on data; in fact, they have an entire department dedicated to ongoing research and test development. Throughout the fifty-eight years of the continuing Advanced Placement program, ETS has produced a wide array of reports and studies using national data.

If colleges had the dual power of grading AP exams and giving credit to students, each college would inevitably score tests using a rubric created within that institution. As a result, students across the nation would be graded with a myriad of rubrics and with varying levels of expectancies, and secondary school teachers "would be unable to determine what standards of competency they should try to develop in their students" (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91). As an AP Language teacher, I find comfort in the College Board standards because I know what level my students are expected to reach in order to pass the test. And yet, as someone who has been fighting the growing normalization of our school system, I wonder what our other options are for grading. Could we rely on colleges to grade their own papers? Do students need standardization in order to feel secure in their understanding of educational expectations? We are still asking the same questions today that Valley was facing in the '50s.

Valley's last reservation in allowing colleges to handle AP grading did not center on the students; rather, it focused on the teachers and professors involved in the grading process. In his memo, Valley recognized that without a central reading conference, "the vehicles of communication between school and college teachers [would] largely be lost" (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91). From meeting with my fellow AP Language colleagues, I have learned so much about teaching the course and grading the tests. Teachers must constantly "recalibrate" themselves to give students a fair grade consistent with national standards. Calibration happens by meeting with other teachers, discussing expectations, and comparing grading practices. I have experienced a recalibration on numerous occasions – whether in my own high school classroom with colleagues, in a countywide meeting, or at a National Advanced Placement conference. I need collaboration on a county and national level to enhance my development as a teacher, and I agree whole-heartedly with Valley's assertion concerning the "values of a central reading conference."

Part C of Valley's proposal, to "offer a single examination in Composition and Literature which would yield two scores," worked for a few years but ultimately failed. In the first year of the AP Program, "412 candidates took the examination in Literature, [and] 446 candidates took the examination in Composition; [those] examinations had 329 candidates in common" (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91). Valley deduced from the data that secondary schools were preparing students for both skills (literature and composition) in their classes and that it would make sense to combine the tests to save time and money. The disadvantage of the proposal sparked the philosophical controversy behind the traditional composition and literature classes. Not until later in the twentieth century did universities begin to recognize composition on a commensurate level as the traditional

literature course; but even in the '50s, many teachers believed that “the objectives of Composition and Literature courses [were] different” (*Memorandum from John R. Valley*, Sept. 12, 1957/AP General 1957-1958 TP B06.5-3 92-91).

Today, the AP Composition and Literature courses are dramatically different in curriculum; and yet, the objectives of the two classes are to teach similar skills. Table 7, below, outlines the current standards of the AP Literature and AP Language courses. Note that both courses stress the process of writing and not the ability to write quickly. (See AP English Standards and my commentary on the next page.)

Table 7 AP English Standards

	AP Literature	AP Language	Commentary
<b>Standards:</b>			
Reading: 1	The student reads works from several genres and periods – from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century.	The student comprehends the meaning of words and sentences, elements of literary texts, and organizational patterns, textual features, graphical representations and ideas in literary and informational texts.	In both courses, students must learn how to read works in varying genres and from past time-periods.
R2	The student understands a work's complexity.	The student uses prior knowledge, context, and knowledge of the evolution, diversity, and effects of language to comprehend and elaborate the meaning of texts.	These skills are virtually the same. The Language standard, however, states that students must “use prior knowledge, context, and knowledge of the evolution, diversity, and effects of language to comprehend and elaborate the meaning of texts” to understand a work's complexity. In both courses, students must learn how to read works in varying genres and from past time-periods.
R3	The student analyzes how meaning is embodied in literary form.	The student rhetorically analyzes author's purpose, intended audience, and goals; the student interprets, analyzes, and critiques author's use of literary and rhetorical devices, language, and style.	Authors write with a rhetorical purpose, and they choose their genre based on that purpose. Both standards ask students to recognize the rhetorical situation of a piece.
R4	The student engages in close reading involving the experience of literature (pre-critical impressions and emotional responses), the interpretation of literature (analysis to arrive at multiple meanings), and the evaluation of literature (assessment of the quality and artistic achievement as well as consideration of their social and cultural values).	The student uses strategies to prepare to read, to interpret the meaning of words, sentences, and ideas in texts, to go beyond the text, to organize, restructure, and synthesize text content. The student monitors comprehension and reading strategies throughout the reading process.	Students are required to understand the skill of close reading, inference, synthesis, and nuances of denotation and connotation. Both courses require those same skills.
R5	The student makes careful observations of textual detail, establishes connections among observations, and draws from those connections a series	None (Implied in R 3-4)	

	of inferences leading to an interpretive conclusion about a piece of writing's meaning and value.		
R6	The student demonstrates an understanding of Biblical and Classical mythology and how the concepts and stories have influenced and informed Western literary creation.	None	
Writing: 1	The student produces writing that focuses on the critical analysis of literature and includes expository, analytical, and argumentative essays.	The student analyzes components of purpose, goals, audience, and genres: the student considers his or her purposes and goals for writing, identifies possible audiences, and understands how genre guides decision making.	These standards go hand in hand. For students to produce effective writing, they must analyze purpose, goals, audience, and genre. They should define their rhetorical purpose and decide what genre would suit their end-goal.
2	The student composes pieces in response to well-constructed creative writing assignments that allow students to see from the inside how literature is written.	The student takes inventory of what he or she knows and needs to know to guide additional research. <u>W2.2:</u> The student generates, selects, connects, and organizes information and ideas by activating prior knowledge and by using outside source materials and develops a system for tracking materials.	Process writing: Invention involves using prior knowledge and research. The complex process of invention takes time, especially when detailed in the standard: the students "generates, selects, connects, and organizes information and ideas by activating prior knowledge and by using outside source materials."
3	The student develops and organizes ideas in clear, coherent, and persuasive language; the student attends to matters of precision and correctness in writing; the student produces writing with stylistic maturity.	Drafting: The student generates texts to develop points within the preliminary organizational structure; the student makes stylistic choices with language to achieve intended effects.	Without a process of writing, rewriting, editing, and editing again, students cannot produce the kind of writing that standard 3 literature asks for. Both standards require process writing.
4	The student engages in numerous opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that involves	Evaluating and Revising Texts: Student evaluates drafted text for development, organization, and	Process writing, drafting, revising, and evaluation of stylistic choices comprise these two standards. In a timed writing, students do not have an opportunity to complete this process.

	research, perhaps negotiating differing critical perspectives.	focus; evaluates drafted text to determine the effectiveness of stylistic choices.	
5	The student engages in numerous opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that entails extended discourse in which students present an argument or analysis at length.	<i>Further standards include research and drafting standards that focus on a long and thorough process of writing and researching.</i>	
6	The student engages in numerous opportunities to write and rewrite, producing writing that encourages students to write effectively under the time constraints they encounter on essay exams in college courses and in many disciplines.	N/A	In this standard in AP Literature, we find the only reference to a timed situation in writing. While some college courses may include essay exams, most (especially English) do not. If they do, the grade for the class does not hinge on that one essay – it rests on the cumulative writing that students do throughout the semester. Additionally, “many disciplines” do not require students to write an essay-length piece in under 40 minutes.

In the current College Board Standards for Advanced Placement Language &

Composition, the writers include a paragraph at the beginning of the writing portion that outlines the CEEB’s general stance on the writing process:

Writing is a recursive process. Although teachers sometimes teach writing as a linear process to scaffold writing instruction, experienced writers do not usually follow a linear progression of stages as they compose a text. Rather, research reveals that experienced writers are flexible in how they approach a writing situation, drawing on a variety of strategies to carry out and manage the numerous complex tasks involved in composing. There are no set formulas for making these decisions; experienced writers adjust their processes according to particular tasks, genres, and purposes. They follow an internalized sense of what is working and what is not working to guide their writing. (College Board Standards for College Success 37)

Even though one standard mentions a time limit, the primary definition and goal of writing for the College Board in its very nature contradicts the timed essay format as a final assessment.



## 4 MOVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

### 4.1 Abstract

Chapter 4 examines the 1960s and the growing pressure for testing administrators to demonstrate a positive correlation between standardized test scores and collegiate success, a task which proved difficult then and still does today. As student scoring and measurement became more important, teachers worried about the focus of their lessons: should they create curricula for the high performing students, hoping everyone else could keep up, or should they cater to the lower performing students, to help them “meet” standards? Today, administrators evaluate teachers in part on their ability to differentiate in the classroom – to design different lessons, activities, and assessments depending on students’ learning styles and abilities. To show the weight of testing and the roll that economics plays in education, I provide a snapshot of trends in university enrollment and costs from the 1960s to the present. I then cite complications that the Conference on College Composition & Communication (CCCC) recognized with timed essays and objective testing. Throughout the chapter, I identify similarities between the problems in the 1960s and those still inherent in our educational system today. The rapid growth of the AP Program in the ‘60s also brought about logistical and financial concerns for ETS and the College Board, which led, in part, to the student “waive” process and the apprehension that both students and parents feel when they consider college admissions. Finally, I explore the AP reading process as it developed in the 1960s, and I make suggestions for current change in our AP program (as it pertains to AP English Language & Composition). In the *Implications* section that follows the chapter, I suggest areas for further study, including facets of standardized testing, timed writing philosophy, and Advanced Placement reform. The AP Program began with a specific goal: to allow students the opportunity to improve their education with upper-level classes. Taking an AP class was an honor – a stepping stone towards more opportunities for advanced scholarship in college. Now, AP serves as a way for students to opt out of college classes, enhance their resume, and save money. If we continue with the Advanced Placement program in the future, we must consider the original goals of the program and rethink the current purpose of Advanced Placement.

### 4.2 Mounting Pressure to Perform

Although the U.S. Department of Education did not develop national standards until the late twentieth century, by the early nineteen sixties, scholars felt pressured to show a significant positive correlation between entrance tests, AP tests, and placement exams as “indicator[s] of

probable college success of incoming freshmen” (“Entrance and Placement Tests: Their Value and Limitations”). However, establishing the causal relationship between testing and scholastic achievement would prove difficult (and still does) for educators. University size played a key role in testing philosophy: smaller universities, most which drew students from “nearby communities whose high schools [were] of a known character” felt that a student’s performance in high school better predicted future collegiate success than a placement exam. Large universities disagreed. Because they recruited students from a much wider radius, university admissions could not possibly determine the quality of every secondary institution; therefore, they opted to use “some kind of objective test plus an impromptu theme, not only for entrance but for placement (“Entrance and Placement Tests: Their Value and Limitations”). While colleges may have clashed over standardized tests as indicators of success, most agreed that almost any test given could accurately determine the bottom 20% of students. Subsequently, our national thought processes began shifting in a dangerous direction. Almost “any test given” can determine the lower-level students, because students of a limited intelligence level will do poorly on most assessments. Thus, standardized tests can help educators identify at-risk students, which can be beneficial. While skill-based tests can easily detect deficiencies in a knowledge base, however, those same tests cannot determine work ethic, creativity, drive, and potential. As the United States educational testing systems became more standardized, people started to believe that homogenous tests served as indicators of ability and motivation and work ethic, which has never been true.

### **4.3 Differentiation, Remediation, and Standardization**

But why did the ability to measure the bottom percentage of a student population become important? There has been an ongoing debate about focus in the classroom: should a teacher

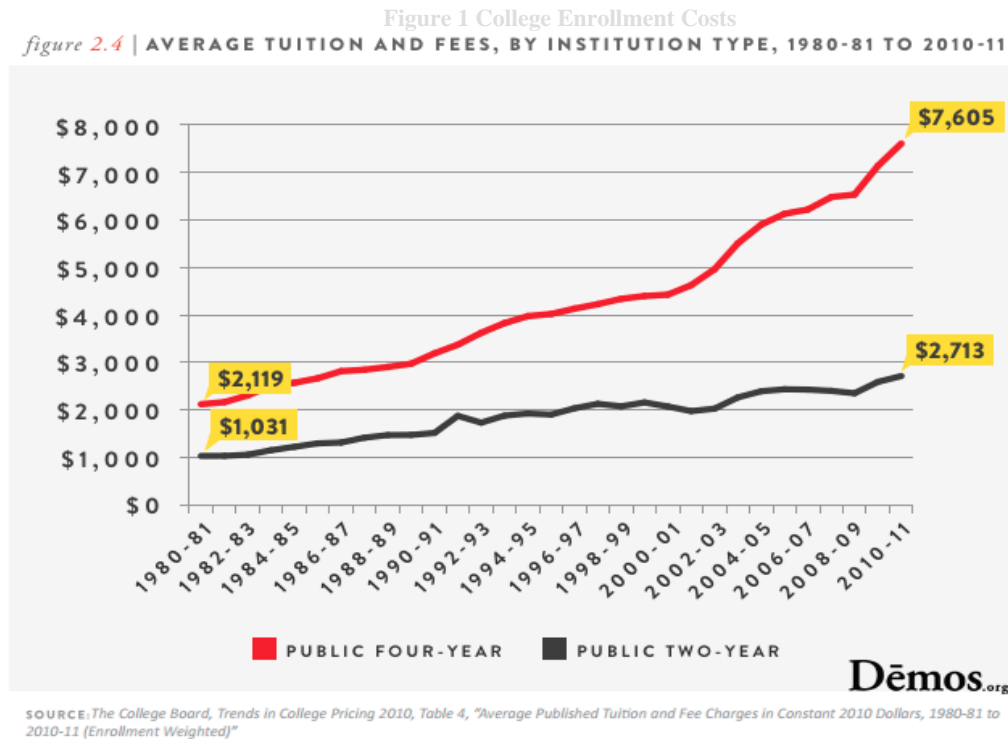
create curricula for the upper echelon of students and hope that the middle will keep up (and risk neglecting the bottom), or should teachers cater to the lower half and watch as the top grows bored and restless? Educators could also choose to focus on the middle, and hope that the lower and upper level students would seek out extra help or more challenging work. Today, secondary education teachers strive to *differentiate*, or teach to a diverse selection of students by planning a different activity to accommodate varying abilities. Ideally, these activities should occur simultaneously in the classroom, so that all students remain engaged. The average classroom at my school has from 30-35 students, and strategic grouping requires time and data analysis. If I want students to peer edit each other's work, I usually pair them according to their overall writing grade so that students with equal abilities will be able to help each other. I also like to group according to ability when I assign rhetorical analysis projects, because if I pair low with high, the higher students will often carry the weight for the lower ones. Although teachers must constantly differentiate their daily lessons, the Advanced Placement exam stays the same for everyone, with no regard for learning style or ability. As I observe today, my students have two goals in my course: to pass the AP test at the end of the semester and to get an "A" in my class. For classroom success, students' individual goals vary: some students struggle with writing and so must invest time attending writing conferences and reworking their papers. Other students feel uncomfortable with research, or rhetorical analysis, or a combination of the two. In the classroom, students should have individual goals based on need (hence the call for differentiation). But at the end of the year, students' objectives, challenges, and accomplishments become overshadowed by the all-important data from the AP exam.

In the nineteen sixties, college professors continued to see a growing need for remedial English classes for students who did not have the skills to enter a college-level course. (Today

students can get “waived” in to an AP course by their parents.) In the ‘60s however, as the high-achieving AP population grew, the number of students who just barely passed the entrance requirements for college and were unprepared for the rigors of post-secondary coursework continued to rise as well, which began one of the “puzzling problems [of] entry examinations” (Rivenburgh 219). Despite the increasing number of students taking entry exams, standardized assessments, and AP tests, “differing regional or high school background requirements” (Rivenburgh 218-220) caused many academic issues. Veterans, immigrants, and rural Americans comprised a large number of incoming college students; consequently, in the early nineteen sixties, academics like Rivenburgh fought to create quality remedial classes throughout universities. Administrators wanted qualified professors to teach those courses, not “teaching fellows...with little or no teaching background” (Rivenburgh 219). Problems surfaced because established professors felt slighted when given the task of teaching core or remedial classes. They (understandably) wanted to teach upper-level courses to students who would appreciate their advanced scholarship. Perhaps a distaste for teaching remedial university courses may be one of the reasons why so many university faculty bought into the Advanced Placement program: the more “college ready” students were before college, the less need for remediation.

In the almost seven decades since the beginning of the AP program, enrollment in post-secondary institutions has skyrocketed. From 1950-1960, matriculation in regular public and private schools increased by about 13.5 million students. By 1960, about 3.5 million students enrolled in colleges or universities, and the numbers continued to climb. By the fall of 1969, over eight million students registered in colleges, and that number rose to a little over twelve million by 1980. College registration slowed in the nineteen eighties, with an increase of about 1.7 million by 1990 due to an overall lower earnings differential between college and high school

graduates. In 1980, “a college graduate earned 50 percent more than a high school graduate; by 2008, college graduates earned nearly twice as much as those with only a high school diploma” (The United States 5). Although 50 percent may seem significant, it might not have been enough to offset the high costs of college tuition.



As figure 1 states, the average yearly cost of tuition in a public 4-year institution was \$2,119 from 1980-81. In 1995, the cost rose to just \$4,000 (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center). In 1980, the nominal household income averaged \$16,354; therefore, a college education in 1980 would have cost about 13% of the average income. In 1995, a college education cost a bit less, making the average yearly tuition expense a 12% burden. As the nineteen nineties progressed and disposable income increased, the percent of graduating high school seniors who went to college climbed to 55.6%. In 2000, the percentage soared to 60.4 and then to 68.2% in 2006 (Kelly and Jones).

The high inflation rate, that would ease up by the late 1980s and mid-90s, also caused college enrollment to drop. \$2,000 in 1980 would have been worth \$5,734 in 2014, or 34%. \$2,000 in 1990 would equal \$3,623 in 2014, or 55%. By 1995, as enrollment started to rise again, the same \$2,000 would have a net value of \$3,105 in 2014, or 64% (The United States, 2012). In the 1980s, inflation escalated, and it took almost a decade for the economy to turn around and inflation to decrease, which made it possible for more students to afford a college degree.

In addition to the lower differential in the 1980s and higher inflation rates, government funding was scarce. More financial aid became available for students beginning in 1990, and simultaneously, the earnings differential began to rise. By 2008, college graduates earned almost twice as much as high school graduates (The United States 5). As a result, by 2000, registration numbers improved, with over fifteen million, and that number would rise to about 21 million by 2010 (Enrollment in Educational Institutions 2013; "Fast Facts"; "Enrollment in Postsecondary Education 2010). Because size of colleges and number of students already governed testing in the 1960s, our educational system grew dependent on standardized testing as our nation expanded. Many people assert that colleges would not be able to assess so many students upon entry into college (either for admission, scholarship, or honors courses) without using standardized examinations like the SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement tests. While I concede that we need certain uniform assessments to accommodate everyone, we might consider taking some of the weight off those tests in order to give hard-working students who may not test well an equal opportunity for a quality education.

The current dependency on standardization began, in part, at the 1958 *College Composition and Communication* conference, in which members failed to discuss “questions

relating specifically to [the entrance or placement tests]”; however, they did admit that all standardized tests posed certain problems for schools and students. In the early nineteen sixties, the disparity between the essay and the objective test amplified, and the fledgling AP program encountered issues regarding validity and fairness in grading. School systems struggled with the idea of a five-year program vs. a three-year college program, and College Board grappled with the methods of grading the essay tests and the goals of timed essay prompts in general, especially those in the AP English test (“Common Problems in the Teaching of High School and College English” 1960).

By 1960, Advanced Placement personnel began identifying administrative problems with the AP program. The sheer growth from 1956-1960 overwhelmed university staff members, many of whom felt “inundated” and forced to “reassess traditional premises, prejudices, and practices” (Wilcox 15). The new generation of freshmen with AP experience combined with a significant rise in secondary teacher scholarship served as impetus for colleges to rethink their objectives in the courses they taught.

Secondary and post-secondary schools were not the only changing institutions, however. In 1960, Jean Reiss, Assistant Principal of Horton Watkins High School in St. Louis, MO., delivered a paper titled, “The Future of the Advanced Placement Program in Terms of Administration,” in which he predicted that “the future [of the AP Program] may...begin with the education of four-year-olds” (Reiss 1). In his paper, Reiss aptly claimed that an effective AP program cannot begin at the senior high school level; it must develop with increased rigor beginning in kindergarten. Many educators mistakenly placed sole responsibility for preparing students for college on AP teachers; however, the qualified student (according to Reiss) would have previously taken rigorous classes and would have demonstrated a “love for learning”

throughout the years. Those students, claimed Reiss, deserved to be in the program. Today, Georgia tests students for “gifted” characteristics in elementary school, and those recognized as “gifted” move forward on the honors and Advanced Placement track.

Reiss foreshadowed concerns that would occur over fifty years later, especially regarding students’ acceptance into Advanced Placement programs. He claimed that the only way an educational program “perform[ed its] real intellectual function” was if students continued to appreciate – and look forward – to life-long learning as adults. But, one of the most disturbing problems that arose near the turn of the century involved the watering down of the Advanced Placement programs to earn more money for schools, appease parents, and offer all students the chance to have AP credits on their transcripts. From the 1960s to the 1990s, the AP program accepted only 10-25% of students who applied for the classes (Reiss 3). By the early 2000s, administrators would start allowing students to “waive” into the program with parental approval. We now have an AP program filled with diversity and controversy. Parents want the best for their children, and they believe that “the best” includes having AP courses on their transcript. AP teachers teach college-level classes, but must adapt for those students who may not demonstrate the academic ability intrinsic in most AP students. As an AP teacher, I get frustrated when half my class should be taking an honors – and in many cases an on-level class – instead of an AP course. With growing pressure from college admissions departments to show evidence of AP classes on transcripts, students often opt to take AP Language because they feel like they have no choice. And yet, the reading and writing required by the College Board parallels college English 1101-2, and lower level students find it hard to keep up. Advanced Placement teachers have a challenging time differentiating their classes without diluting the content, and each year gets more difficult as a higher number of students waive into AP classes. As a teacher, I would prefer



to teach only those students who qualify academically to take AP courses. And yet, as a mother, I might attempt to waive my son (12) into AP classes if a teacher does not recommend him. I shudder at the thought of creating more hardship for AP teachers, but I am just as concerned for my son's chances for future college entry as the next parent, which I find hypocritical on my part. My personal example demonstrates an escalating, nationwide problem that began in the 1960s.

Other options for collegiate acceptance and scholarship exist besides the AP program, but only under special circumstances. If a student has an outstanding talent in the arts or in athletics, he or she might be able to get a specialized scholarship without taking a full AP course load. The competition for those rewards continues to rise; even the best athletes and artists feel that they must have AP courses on their transcript – just in case.

#### **4.4 The “Ideal” AP Student, the “Waive” Process, and Worried Parents**

The early pioneers of the College Board had a clear vision of the kind of student who should take AP courses. In the 1960s, AP program administrators considered the following desirable traits for a prospective AP student: “stability [and freedom] from emotional disturbances, the maturity necessary to fulfill responsibilities, intellectual curious[ity], the ability to work rapidly and efficiently, whole-hearted interest in the course, student grades, prerequisites, extra-curricular activities, ambition and parental approval” (Reiss 4). On the other side, people tended to look at remedial students as having “feelings of inferiority or frustration” and encouraged professors to use “working” psychology to deal with those lower-level pupils (Rivenburgh 219). How ironic that today our advanced students comprise the most highly medicated, anxious group of young adults yet. Additionally, students today seem to have lost “intellectual curiosity, stability, and whole-hearted interest” in the AP classes that they take.

Teens today are overworked, anxiety-ridden, and plagued with a myriad of “emotional disturbances” that would have ruled them out of the program in the 1960s. I believe that our youth’s current plight stems from a combination of fear, conformity (driven by standardization), obsession with money, and skewed values. As I discuss these causes, I use my own experience as a parent and the parents in my community as examples. I realize that families from certain socioeconomic demographics have completely separate worries.

Today, parents feel afraid for their children. For the first time in a long time, we wonder how our children will survive and thrive in the future. With mounting evidence that suggests that today’s youth will be the first generation of adults to make less money than their parents, parents wonder if their children will be amongst those unfortunate educated who are book smart but unemployed. The number of unknowns: political strife within our country, a struggling economy, the Middle East, terrorism, North Korea, Biological weapons and Ebola to name a few, keeps rising along with anxiety levels. Today, several of my grown, highly educated younger cousins (in their twenties) struggle to find jobs and instead work as waiters or bartenders. Education remains a requirement for jobs, and yet no longer guarantees a career. I can understand the disquiet that my students’ parents feel when they imagine life in five or ten or twenty years. What will become of their children? In order to alleviate that fear, parents subscribe to the “put many irons in the fire” philosophy, and so they enroll their children in music lessons, academic tutoring, athletics, clubs, church, community service, and any other activity that may help to build a resume. In return, their children have become overextended, anxious, confused with so many options, and just plain tired.

People become uneasy when they perceive themselves as “sub-standard.” Today, my students and parents constantly patrol the online gradebook and test scores, average the numbers,

and calculate the likelihood of a college acceptance. Numbers rule us: who made the highest grade, what did they get on the SAT, how many points do you need to get the “A,” which colleges will accept AP scores, etc. The love of learning has long since been replaced by a fear of failing. Failing means not making enough money; therefore, students feel pressured to attend a good college to amass the wealth they want. Conversely, education no longer guarantees a job, so parents worry more about their children and put pressure on them to get high test scores. Money and prestige take precedence over true learning, and standardized test scores control, in many cases, the opportunity for money and prestige. When we combine the two, we get a skewed value system that tears our educational community apart and creates a population of unhappy young adults. Needless to say, the Advanced Placement program began with high expectations, ones that would seem unfair to many in the future and that would be eradicated by the 2000s “waive” allowance.

In conjunction with student requirements, the 1960s brought with it controversy centered on three ideas that would need to be debated, hashed out, and defined: “enrichment, acceleration,” and “exemption” (Wilcox 15). The rapid growth of the AP program forced universities to take a critical look at their own programs. There was no time to sit back and “wait and see” what kind of students those secondary, “college-level” classes would produce. Administrators needed to take immediate action to serve their current (and growing) student body (Wilcox 15). With the steep increase in post “AP” students entering college, the university system felt the pressure to perform. In a 1959 essay warning professors to prepare for the rush of a new breed of students, Edward Wilcox warned that professors should change their traditional curricula to accommodate a new kind of student:

I wish to serve fair warning that those young Turks are gathering their legions; they are being selected and girded with special training as early as grammar school, and they soon will be pouring over the wall that has separated school and college for so many years and will arrive at your gates and slide into your offices to bedevil your traditional course structure and demand reassessment, traditional premises, prejudices, and practices. (Wilcox 15)

College professors carried the weight of AP expectations alongside the deluged university systems and secondary educators who rushed to reform. They had to re-evaluate their teaching philosophies and practices, many of which had been in place for years. The entire paradigm of the “English Department” shifted as instructors placed more emphasis on composition skills and less on literary studies in order to prepare for the “young Turks” who were “gathering their legions.” Wilcox claimed that those new students would “bedevil” traditional course structures, and he was right. Professors probably did see the swarm of new, demanding students as a continuous nuisance that destroyed the peace and stability of the university.

In the late 1950s, many scholars still believed that the primary goal of writing was to demonstrate what students had learned in their reading. Professors believed that students could not write until they “under[stood] the implications and ... profoundness of the material [they] read” (“Writing Assignments in Literature Courses” 169). As composition classes became essential for the improvement of literacy, teachers faced the necessity of teaching writing for the sake of fostering literacy, not just to show comprehension of a work of literature. The issues surrounding writing skills became more central by the day. By 1960, scholars recommended that both high school and college teachers lead by example and “write their own assignments” to clearly communicate expectations to students. By the early 1960s, mastering literature was not enough for English teachers; they had to show competence in the “technicalities of style in prose,

both amateur and professional” (“Common Problems in the Teaching of High School and College English” 141). Expecting a composition teacher to *write* does not seem unreasonable, yet even today, many secondary English teachers will admit that they struggle with writing. I know only a handful of teachers at the secondary level who write for publication. But still, today it is much harder than it was even ten years ago to secure a job as an English teacher at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Often, the educational process necessary to complete a M.Ed., gifted training, certificate upgrades, etc. proves that a teacher has more than enough ability to write well. Just as the AP program placed rigorous demands on students and professors, it served as the catalyst for harder entrance exams and graduate programs for new teachers.

With the challenges of an increasingly demanding English program came problems on both the secondary and university levels. For the secondary teacher, the most common issue was time, or the lack thereof (and English teachers will probably continue to need more time if they expect to give students quality feedback). A 1960 article identified many of the difficulties with writing programs: the top time-related challenges for secondary teachers revolved around the ability to double check students’ writing, time for multiple writing conferences and thoughtful lesson planning, and time to grade papers. Teachers had a greater responsibility to “eliminate mechanical errors [in student writing]” and to teach students how to produce “meaningful writing” (“Common Problems in the Teaching of High School and College English” 141-2). Although time was at a premium, teachers spent many more hours than they had been in order to fulfill all the demands of a literary and a composition instructor. Yet even so, one of the primary complaints of college English professors involved the numerous, unprepared incoming freshmen. ETS and College Board members also found themselves grappling with the educational mindset of students and teachers. The College Board wanted more than just “smart” students taking AP

classes for credit and exemptions: testing administrators wanted the program to grow in prestige, and they wanted honors and AP students to strive for the opportunity to take AP level classes for the sake of learning. Scholars like Wilcox envisioned a type of student suited for the program: “For psychological and...political reasons, Advanced Placement must be conceived and executed in an atmosphere which speaks of placement *into* and not *out of* a course” (Wilcox 17). Administrators set high expectations for the Advanced Placement program, and it continued to grow expeditiously. <sup>See table 8</sup> With an added almost 28,000 students, 1,200 secondary institutions, and about 750 colleges in the first ten years of the program, the College Board successfully promoted the burgeoning program.

**Table 8 Growth of AP Program**

	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Examinations</b>	<b>Readers</b>	<b>Colleges Entered</b>
1955-1956	104	1,229	2,199	80	130
1957-1958	335	3,715	6,800	91	279
1959-1960	890	10,531	14,158	155	567
1961-1962	1,358	16,255	21,451	224	683
1963-1964	2,086	28,874	37,829	396	888
<b>Change since 1955</b>	<b>(+1196)</b>	<b>(+27,645)</b>			<b>(+758)</b>

(Jameson Raw Data 1964)

Contemporary attitudes surrounding AP classes do not reflect those of fifty years ago. When students sign up for an AP class, they do so most often for what they can exempt, not for the opportunity to learn at an advanced level. I have seen throughout the years how teachers (myself included) have promoted the course. They advertise it by highlighting the benefits students will get as far as college credit; as a result, students take AP classes so they do not have to study as much in college. A 4-5 AP test score allows students to “CLEP” out of an entire semester of that course, which means less studying and less tuition costs. The original AP program sought advanced students who *wanted* harder classes for the challenge, and who aspired

to take upper-level college courses in the university. I rarely see students take AP classes for the sake of learning.

If we continue to advertise the AP Program through the lens of what students will not *have to do* instead of what they will *have the opportunity to do*, the intrinsic value of the program will diminish. In fact, many people today claim that the College Board has become a moneymaker, not an intelligence builder, and understandably, students, parents and even teachers of AP feel dissatisfaction with the program. Each year that I teach AP language, it becomes harder for me to force students to write timed essays and take endless multiple-choice practice tests week after week. How does that kind of drill promote real learning and discovery? Instead of fostering a love for reading and writing, my class seems to be perpetuating an endless cycle of rote, standardized testing, and the students definitely lack inspiration on the days we practice testing skills. ETS and College Board should reevaluate the original purpose of the AP program. Next, they should redesign the English test to mirror the true writing process encouraged in composition theory and in the College Board standards.

#### **4.5 The Evolution of AP Grading**

Meanwhile, the process of reading the AP tests continued to evolve with the vast growth of the program. In 1957, Valley suggested that local faculty hold most of the responsibility for grading, but by 1960, the sheer number of test takers ruled out that possibility. In March of 1961, Robert Jameson, Director of AP Reading, wrote an extensive report titled “Grading of the College Board Advanced Placement Examinations” in which he outlined the entire grading process and the challenges inherent in such a young program. The report included five sections:

- The Grading Scale
- Setting and Maintaining Standards
- Weighting
- The Cut off of Grades for Reporting Scores to Colleges
- Miscellaneous Matters

At the launch of the program, the grading system was erratic, with each committee of readers “setting up its own system” of minimum scores, conversion of raw scores, depth of grading, and error-marking. Some groups decided on a maximum raw score of 24, and others made it possible for students to score up to a whopping 3,000 points on the raw score. With that many points to grade, however, the readers had to scrutinize every aspect of the composition – a time-consuming, impractical process. On the other hand, the lower raw score of 24 (or a similar number) did not allow the readers to produce a detailed, sustainable grade. Consequently, a “uniform system of grading” developed in the spring of 1957 and was incorporated into the program for the 1957 examinations (Jameson 1, 1961).

Jameson also made a critical distinction in grading that AP Readers still discuss today: the variations of a score, or “the many kinds of a 4” (Jameson, 1 1961). Some readers viewed the 1-5 scale as inadequate. They worried that most readers would avoid granting a “1” or a “5” because of the tendency to avoid extremes. However, Jameson outlined various ways that a student’s writing could earn a certain score, and so the 1-5 scale was defined, with layers, from 1-15 (as seen on the next page).



**Table 9 1961 AP Scale**

1961 Scale as defined for Readers: (Jameson 1961)		
5	15	All three demonstrate unusual competence, or mastery
	14 13	The 15 = 5+; 14=5; 13=5-
4	12	All three demonstrate competence
	11 10	
3	9	
	8 7	All three suggest competence
2	6	
	5 4	All three suggest incompetence
1	3 2	All three demonstrate incompetence
	1 0	The zero has various uses. In some examinations, it is automatically awarded only for a missing answer or a complete non sequitur. On the other hand, history readers award the zero to an answer which, while ostensibly on the topic, is so empty as to be considered worse than a failure.

The English Literature and Composition exam of 1960 was the only test graded with a slight variation. Instead of scoring the eight answers from 1-15, graders looked at question #1 and then “prepared a list of legitimate statements which might be made on each question. Each answer was then given the number of points it earned” and, graders added and converted those scores to the 15-point scale (Jameson 3, 1961). Contemporary AP English tests contain three essay questions scored on a 1-9 scale, but the mantra of AP trainers remains similar: “there are many rooms in the house of 6” (adage within the AP readers’ community). It can be difficult to realize that good writing comes in many forms and “voices.” One student may have exceptional command of the language but may lack in grammar. Another may write beautiful prose but then could misread a prompt. The need for the detailed statements makes sense, especially for an accurate evaluation of eight questions.

AP tests that contained both objective (multiple choice) questions and essay prompts had to be weighted in an equitable, logical manner. According to Jameson's 1961 report, the examination committee determined the weights based on three factors:

1. The time allotted to each section and to each question;
2. The importance, in the opinion of the committee, of one section of the essay section as against another in defining qualities of performance in areas of particular significance for advanced placement students;
3. The coverage of the objective section in comparison with that of the essay section.

The 1961 English Examination contained "three essays, of equal final value, except that the grade on I and the literature grade on III made up the literature mark reported to the colleges; the grade on II and the writing grade on III made up the composition grade reported to colleges" (Jameson 7, 1961). Because there was only one English exam at the time, the test questions had to be divided into two categories: Composition and Literature. Thus, essay #III appears to count for twice as much as the other two because of its literature and composition points. The English sub-scores resembled the history sub-scores, presented on the following page:

**Figure 2 English Sub-Scores**

**1960 American History**

Objective Section – 25%

Essay Section – 75%

**In the Essay Section:**

Part I (25 minutes) – 15%

Part II (two questions, total of 1 hour 40 minutes) – 60%

**Each Question in the Essay Section:**

Presentation and Mechanics – Weight 1

Facts – Weight 2

Generalization, Interpretation – Weight 3

Thus, for each question, in final scoring (essay section) the raw score for facts and for generalization are multiplied by factors which give the proper weights:

Presentation & Mechanics: 15 (max) times 1=15

Facts: 15 (max) times 2=30

Generalization/Interpretation: 15 (max) times 3=45

**Maximum Raw Score: 90** (Jameson 7, 1961)

Jameson also noted that the weighting of sub-parts would differ from year to year depending on the committee of graders. Of course, so much has changed in the College Board's

grading system. Today, the objective section of the English tests counts for 45% and the essays for 55%. Graders employ a scale of 1-9, and in place of sub-categories, they use a detailed rubric for each awarded score. In his report, Jameson recognized those scholars who thought that evaluating the essays on a three-point scale would expedite the grading process. While it would make the process seem faster, he asserted that the “haziness” of such a broad scale would be a cause of dissention among graders and would ultimately make it more difficult to come to an agreement. Also, with only three groups, (the top getting AP placement, the middle taking regular freshman English, and the bottom taking a remedial English course), students would inevitably find themselves placed in the wrong category. Although the 15-point sub-scores might have seemed complicated to some, he assured participants that the sub-scores were “something a reading committee can be taught to get hold of and use . . . .confidently” (11). As someone who has graded many AP essays, I agree wholeheartedly. In order to justify the grades I award, I must be able to back up each decision with a specific reason, and if I cannot do that, I am going to ultimately have to deal with confused students and dissatisfied parents who demand an accurate prediction of future AP test scores.

In the sixties and up to today, maintaining consistent standards for the examinations fell in large part to the Chief Reader, who had an active role in the testing process from the creation of the test to its administration. Upon construction of each question, the Chief Reader had the responsibility of organizing data for each answer (although the data varied in type depending on the subject: English data might include broad statements, whereas European History would require many pages of specific terms, dates, and events that would constitute the answers). Table leaders, first established in 1961 to assist the chief readers, have been an integral part of the reading process ever since. In sum, with many steps to ensure that the readers met the College

Board's high standards, the actual "standards for grading [were] developed from the very beginning – from the committee meetings in the fall" (Jameson 5, 1961). For the current test, I do not have an issue with the way AP readers grade the English exam. In my experience, we "calibrate" our definition of a 1-5 score based on student samples, we familiarize ourselves with the prompt and with possible passing answers, and we grade holistically, looking for what "works" and not for what doesn't. In other words, we do not take many points off for a missed comma or misspelling unless the grammatical error hinders the clarity of the paper. When I grade sample papers from the College Board, my grades reflect the grades given by the actual AP graders. Likewise, when my colleagues and I get together to discuss scoring methods, we usually find that we are "calibrated" together. If we do not agree on a grade for a paper, we discuss the reasons and adjust our philosophy accordingly.

#### **4.6 Alternative Grading Systems**

In my earlier chapters, I suggested ways that The College Board might change the AP English exam to make it less standardized and more reflective of an authentic writing process. If the test changes, the grading process would need to adjust as well. Below, I will review my suggestions from chapter 2 (abridged; in a different font) and will briefly discuss possible grading solutions:

**Limit number of essays to one:** If students had two hours to write one essay, they would have the opportunity to think, prewrite, outline, draft, write, and then edit. Drafts and notes should be included with the students' test, so that exam graders could see a complete picture of each student's writing process and style.

With only one essay to grade, graders can take more time evaluating several aspects of the essay. I would suggest that evaluators give the essay three grades on a scale from 1-5. The

first grade would be a replica of the holistic grade – based on understanding, depth, overall organization, and evidence – currently used to evaluate the AP English Language and Literature exams. The second grade would include the prewriting process into the holistic score. Does the student show critical thinking and growth from beginning to end? Does the final essay reflect changes made in the first draft? Students would be required to underline or highlight their changes to help expedite the process for evaluators. The third grade would be a “conventions” grade that would evaluate, on the same 1-5 scale, students’ general mastery of proper English grammar. Some people might be concerned about the time factor in my 3-part grading schema, but consider that there would be just one prompt to grade.

**Students write one essay and outline two:** Students would have a choice of essay/outlines, so that they could focus on their prompt of choice.

With one complete essay and two outlines, students demonstrate their understanding of three prompts but get to show their best writing ability in one essay. Graders would still have to prepare for three prompts, but they would be able to ascertain the level of student understanding of each prompt with two outlines and one essay. Today, each grader scores only one of the three essays, so if that system remained, certain graders would be in charge of the outlines, and others of the essay – therefore, grading time would decrease for everyone. Additionally, I would add one element to the essay portion of the grade: conventions. Much like my first suggestion, graders would grade the completed essay on a 5-point holistic scale for both conventions and overall quality of writing. Then, the two outlines would be combined for a 1-5 score. Readers would focus on thesis statements and topic sentences in the outlines.

**Offer Students a Choice:** Testing writers should consider the vast differences in socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of test takers and should create a group of prompts

from which students may choose. Students would write one essay and would include drafts and prewriting. Prompts should reflect a thorough ethnographic study that will determine to what kinds of questions certain students might better respond.

This third solution will take a lot of initial planning, but if we keep timed essays on standardized tests, I like this one the best. Graders will grade in the same way as my first option, with one difference. They will study one of the prompt choices, and essay answers will be divided between readers accordingly, saving them time and energy and allowing students to produce their best, most authentic writing.

**Reconsider Context in Prompts:** If we keep the three-essay format, I would strongly suggest that test writers write prompts with a strong focus on both contextual appropriateness and socioeconomic factors. Do the prompts allow for fairness for teenagers? Is the context realistic for teenagers? How long does a realistic, or even “fast” prewriting time take? In order to create good tests, we need to take the tests ourselves, not just go by student samples.

Grading of these essays could remain the same; however, the entire collection and creation of prompts would have to be revisited.

I have one final suggestion regarding grading. If students exempt college courses, then readers should be limited to college professors who teach the material being tested. It makes no sense to have high school teachers (even ones who are experts at the test, like me) grade the essays. I do not know how composition professors measure writing or what level of writing they expect. Of course, with careful vertical teaming, the situation might be different. As we stand today, however, many secondary teachers are not familiar with college courses. In order to transition from a mixed cohort of graders to university graders, more college professors must be willing to spend a week reading and grading. I understand that talented secondary teachers who have been AP readers in the past will balk at this

suggestion, but if we continue to allow one test score to release students from an entire college course, then a college professor should grade the test.

By 1964, Jameson declared that because of the rise in AP participation, the AP program, which previously had been the most common in the northeast, had become a “truly national” program based on the “public school [system]” (Jameson 2, 1964). His research found that the top ten states that sent AP students to college in 1964 included “New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio, California, New Jersey, Connecticut, Michigan, and Virginia.” Because of the flourishing popularity of the program, he expressed concerns that the readers of the tests should “represent the geography of the program and the character of the schools and colleges which [were] a part of it” (2). Today, we can see why AP readers represent all reaches of the United States – it would not be fair to our nation’s students if the readers came from one demographic. Jameson also recapped the “ground rules” previously established in the first decade of AP reading.

#### 1964 Ground Rules:

1. An effective day of reading should be no more than 7.5 hours.
2. The reading schedule, honoraria and travel arrangements are predicated on a session of six 7 ½ hour days; but the honoraria are calculated for the job to be done: hence there may be an occasional eight-hour day.
3. Nobody reads at the same pace, and although the number of examinations called for a “production line” approach, the most important aspects of the reading process were care, reliability, and willingness to grade according to group standards.

#### **4.7 Traits Looked for in AP Readers**

1. Readers must be actively engaged in teaching.
2. Secondary school teachers should be working with advanced, or “honors” groups.
3. College teachers should have at least some active contact with undergraduates and with courses for which AP candidates may receive credit.

4. Readers should have an interest in Advanced Placement before they arrive to grade an examination. The reading session is not designed as a week in which to convert the unbelievers.
5. Readers should be competent in the academic field in which they will be working.

(Jameson 1-4, 1964)

I find it interesting that the 1964 ground rules and the traits for readers for the most part reflect today's attitudes and standards. After talking with several current AP English Literature and Language readers, I learned that most people who offer to read thoroughly enjoy the process and feel like their teaching of the AP class improves drastically as a result of reading. (Despite my grading recommendations, here we have one important reason to consider allowing secondary teachers to grade AP tests.) One of my colleagues informed me that only after she read for a couple summers in a row did she truly understand the *right* way to grade AP essays. She also appreciated the camaraderie and scholarship among the readers, and she felt validated as a teacher and professional after the process.

#### **4.8 Change in the Late 1960s**

From 1965-66, the number of participating public schools in the AP program rose from 2,086 to 2,511, with a mean of 15.2 students per school taking advanced placement examinations. Out of an impressive 50,104 students who took examinations in 1966, 16,217 of tests taken were in English, 8,916 in American History, 3,064 in Biology, 3,525 in Chemistry, 2,894 in European History, 2,103 in French, 304 in German, 984 in Latin, 9,677 in Mathematics, 1,295 in Physics, and 1,125 in Spanish. Today, the English examinations remain the most commonly taken tests (Advanced Placement Summary Program Report), and I claim that a primary reason so many students want to exempt English – as opposed to a science or mathematics class – is ignorance of the scope and purpose of English composition. High school



students cannot understand the breadth and depth of a college English course, and so when they score well on the AP exam they tend to believe that they do not need to continue composition studies.

The AP program continued to grow at a healthy rate, and by 1968, advancements in technology started to inch their way into the testing system. With the increase in the number of AP tests came the logistical problems of keeping track of all the scores. ETS sought to accommodate colleges through “IBM grade report cards,” which could be “matched with other data via a student identification number system, [and could] provide benefits in record keeping for currently enrolled students, in permanent records, and in research projects” (Withers). In January of 1968, Anita Withers, the Assistant Program Director for the Advanced Placement program, sent participating colleges a memo informing them of the new IBM service and provided them with a packet of IBM data cards. Throughout the history of the AP program, ETS endeavored to make the testing process as streamlined and technologically advanced as possible, as evidenced by the many examples of correspondence regarding changes from different ETS members. When I spoke with the head archivist from ETS in February 2014, he stated that ETS always tried to provide an equitable and rigorous testing system, one that provided a safe and fair environment for students. He also spoke about exciting new technological advancements in the world of standardized testing, including remote delivery (distance communication) of tests in the locale of the students’ choosing. I find it promising that ETS has been working to make testing more convenient for students, and I can only hope that there will be many more changes to come.

In 1967, the AP English Exam underwent improvements, changes, and challenges. In a report from the chief reader, from the “Conference on the Advanced Placement English Program” in June of 1967, several scholars contributed to the conference with detailed papers on

topics ranging from questions and logistics on the AP exam, rhetorical techniques, status and goals of the AP program, and input from individual universities. Frank Bliss, the Chief Reader of the AP Exam in English (head of the AP Program grading system, in charge of organizing reading tables, keeping readers “calibrated,” and working from the beginning of test creation to the end of grading), began his report by addressing a concern that would foreshadow the future mass-standardization of the nation. Bliss astutely noted that some people came “perilously close to identifying the Program with the examination,” which was not the aim of the AP Program. Bliss wanted people involved to understand that the exam at the end comprised just one element of a rich, multi-faceted program, including the “course description, all the Advanced Placement courses throughout the country, the teachers who teach the courses, conferences, [and] college professors and school teachers who serve as consultants” (Bliss 1). I find it alarming that after a little more than a decade, most people involved with the AP program considered it in terms of the test at the end and what they would “win” if they passed the test, not the learning opportunities of the AP course. Although forward thinkers like Bliss saw the subsequent problems that would inevitably arise, the importance of the AP Exam would continue to grow, and students’ desire to take AP courses simply for the love of learning would diminish. So what could have been done then, at the early stages of the program, to reduce the focus on the test? The grade on the exam should not have been given the full weight of a future college course; instead, students’ grades in AP classes and their work ethic should also have been a determining factor in course exemption. Also, the findings of AP conferences should be more public, perhaps distributed throughout a PTA newsletter or a local community publication, so that parents, non-participating teachers, and students can inform themselves about their AP program. As a parent, I

would like to see how much time and effort teachers put into the program so that I would appreciate it for the curriculum, not for the test at the end and the possible money I could save.

Bliss further explained the differences between a national and a local test, which pointed logically to the need to make the AP exam grades less substantial. The most obvious aspect of a national test is that test takers and test graders do not know each other, eliminating the subjectivity in grading due to a students' work ethic, relationship with the teacher, academic history, or circumstances. However, this lack of partiality also means that graders cannot know whether a student has the appropriate work ethic and motivation to exempt a course – or an entire year – from their college core classes. Bliss asserted that “A 5 on the Advanced Placement Examination...is not an A in your class, although it identifies, as does a 4 or a 3—perhaps even a 2, the students who, were he in your class, probably would make an A on a local exam” (2). He advocated using AP test scores to identify students' test-taking ability, not their need for the class, their desire to learn, or even their ability. As a teacher, I have seen students who studied diligently each day and who led the class in discussion and presentations, but who could not seem to parlay that work into a grade on a standardized test. And yet, despite Bliss's statement about grades vs. test scores, we developed into a society that allows test scores to determine students' futures.

The 1967 AP Exam process took much longer than many people would have realized; the exam was in the making for at least two years before test administration. First, committee members submitted assorted questions for review, many of which got rejected. Questions that remained had to go through a pre-testing process in which college students completed the test at the end of their freshman year. Bliss admitted that most “advanced placement candidates [were] abler than college students...at good colleges” (Bliss 3). Out of one hundred college students

who took the AP English exam, “there were no 5’s, no 4’s, a couple of 3’s, and all the rest 1’s and 2’s” (3). I see the same trend today, as evidenced by the many students who have visited me from college and reported that their introductory composition courses, which contain a mix of students from all levels, not just honors or advanced placement, were easier than my AP Language course. Still, most high school and undergraduate students do not realize the scope and importance of composition across fields, and so they do not take full advantage of the classes.

After college students took the pretests, the committee members carefully read each test, one question at a time. They then edited and revised each question so that the test fulfilled its main goal, which was to “test the candidates’ ability to work with what they know about literature” and “to express themselves in writing” (Bliss 3). The 1967 Chief Reader’s Report contains interesting commentary regarding skillsets required to answer each question. For instance, some of the questions assessed students’ ability to recognize an author’s tone, while other questions focused on students’ capacity for coming to an original conclusion based on the author’s choice of detail. Certainly, the pressure to adhere to national standards did not exist in the ‘60s, so it might have been easier for testing administrators to create a test based on skills and not on national expectations. And yet, as we became mandated to adhere to complex sets of national standards throughout the years, the process of test creation, especially the AP test, did not change in accordance with the different standards in play.

After the readers scored the pretests, the Chief Reader, expected to be an expert on each question, would receive over a hundred possible answers to prompts. He would then use those examples to write a rubric for each prompt. The Chief Reader also made sure that his team was “reading according to the agreed-upon standards, and not according to local standards” (4). The AP program was supposed to create stronger national standards for incoming college students,

and with those standards, a more defined curriculum for the secondary institutions. Despite the arduous care that went into the creation of advanced placement tests and curricula and the intense training of teachers at both the secondary and post-secondary level, many colleges, especially larger state schools, questioned the program. The all-inclusive AP English exam of the 1960s covered the traditional three course hours of composition and three of literature, which worked well for colleges who required a year of Freshman English, or six credit hours. Many larger schools, however, required students to take a total of twelve hours – six of composition and six of literature; thus, it became difficult to find an obvious correlation between the requirements and assessments of college English and an AP course.

Unfortunately, as we progressed into the 1970s-2000s, the actual Advanced Placement test and the National Standards would have little meaning for university professors, who have their own set of expectations and constantly rebuild their programs to reflect the latest research that they themselves conduct. Now, the AP program's importance rests in the secondary educational system and college admissions departments, not within the university English faculty.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

Whether or not the College Board keeps its current system of testing, teachers, students, and parents become more divided by the day. Secondary teachers must teach to the test and yet pass their professional evaluations, which call for significant differentiation in everyday lessons. How ironic for teachers that no matter how much differentiation they incorporate into their class, on the days that they must prepare students for standardized tests, they cannot pass their evaluation on differentiation, because the test, of course, is a one-size-fits-all. The tools by which teachers are being evaluated and the tests they must prepare students for are incompatible.

As the pressure to perform on high-stakes, standardized tests increases each year, students grow more anxious, disillusioned, and frustrated. I have several students this year who have chosen to write about the inequities of the advanced placement system and the lack of true “college preparation” they are getting in their high school classes. They want something else – a new way to look at classes that breathes life into the act of learning and growing. They don’t feel excited to discover; they feel tired and burnt out. 16-year-old children should feel eager for the future, not numbed by the present.

The original architects of the Advanced Placement program had a noble vision: they were intent on accommodating the upper-level students with more opportunities to learn; however, I do not believe that they planned on barring students who were not AP material from a college degree at a respectable university. I also doubt that they foresaw the dependency on testing that would occur – they did not create AP as the center of all education; they created it to enhance learning for gifted students.

So what do we do now? There are many things that we cannot change: the sheer number of incoming college students, the need to assess ability in core skills before allowing college entry, and the necessity for America to keep up educationally with other countries (who are also mired in standardized testing). There are, however, many small steps we can take to create a better educational system for the students of tomorrow. In my *Implications* section, I suggest further areas of study that scholars in the field of education or composition might consider.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

My colleagues have often remarked that the research they perform for one project is often a gateway to future scholarship. I want my work to initiate a crucial dialogue among writing program administrators, secondary and post-secondary educators, and scholars in the field of composition. This study examines the groundwork that led to the inception of the Advanced Placement program, the need for literacy reform during a tumultuous time in American history, divergent composition theories and pedagogies, an analysis of AP Language argument prompts dating from 1980 to the present, and the efficacy of standardized assessment. My investigation has uncovered several ancillary concerns, beyond the scope of this discourse, that demand further consideration. To uncover how and why past educators created the Advanced Placement program, I have focused my historical and archival research on the early history of AP; however, I intend to return to the ETS headquarters to examine the later years of the program and the educational policies nearing the end of the millennium.

A pressing issue I was unable to resolve involved the historical AP English prompts dating from 1954-1979. Unfortunately, I could not access those materials. According to personnel at ETS headquarters, thirty years ago, an unexplained conflagration destroyed several boxes of key archival materials that I needed (boxes that included records of all prompts). I contacted NCTE, the WPA list serve, and many other avenues, all of which informed me that there were no records – soft or hard copy – of the prompts I sought. As a result, I have analyzed a selection of prompts from the last thirty years only.

I would encourage scholars to take my evaluation of recent essay questions and parlay that into an extensive investigation of all AP prompts in every discipline offered. How long does it take experienced educators to produce a proficient AP essay using an authentic writing

process? That data might assist scholars in determining the validity of our current Advanced Placement prompts. Perhaps with more action research involving the “working of the prompts,” test writers might be convinced to enhance the formatting of the tests to allow for freedom of time, flexibility of testing locations, and student choice of essay questions.

Innovators spent years developing and implementing the Advanced Placement program. Despite the risks, they responded to cultural demands by taking action. Now, we need a change – not a reinvention of the same tired wheel, but a new system altogether. My research offers suggestions for altering what we already have, and in the future, I will begin seeking alternative possibilities for testing. Before we change our current assessment model, however, the educational community requires further studies that analyze trends in collegiate achievement and extrapolate connections to the AP program. Years ago, the CEEB started asking participating colleges for “report[s] on how the ...advanced placement students [had] fared” in college so that the Board could “assess the program” and discover a correlation between Advanced Placement secondary students and subsequent high achieving college students. Today, we need focused research that not only seeks to discover the effectiveness of the AP program, but that questions the requirement for standardized testing at all.

Most students feel uncomfortable without their phone in view, and of course, learners today “Google” their questions instead of using library resources. They would rather communicate via their phones than in a face-to-face encounter, and some students even engage in “text” relationships. *These* are the students who must take the same tests given before the invention of personal computers and who will enter the workforce in less than ten years. How productive are they going to be? How has the corporate world had to adapt to meet the needs of younger personnel? That is a different topic, another one that begs to be explored.



The proverbial “Pendulum” in educational assessment stopped swinging a long time ago. Instead of just rewinding the clock, we might consider creating a new system of time-keeping, one that incorporates a variety of devices designed for individual preference. In the coming years, I aspire to explore innovative methods of testing, because just like time can be unpredictable and fluid, so too can the minds of our students. Additionally, I hope that academics who read my work will consider taking some of my ideas further. We need educational reform and dedicated researchers willing to answer that call.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Jamison Writing Notes during Prompt Analysis

\*Please note: prewriting has not been edited in order to show authentic drafting process.

#### 1980 Question Analysis:

Public officials or individual citizens have frequently attacked or suppressed works that they consider harmful or offensive. Select a book movie, play, or television program that some group could object to on the basis of its action, language or theme.

In a well-organized essay, discuss possible grounds for such an attack and then defend the work, arguing, on the basis of its artistic merit or its value to the community, that it should not be suppressed.

Start time: 5:31 PM

Brief brainstorm regarding one show, possible rough thesis: 5:39

Three possible topic sentences: 5:42

What I have seen, read, experienced:

Seen:

*Game of Thrones* – HBO

Action: death, graphic sex, violence, war, etc.

Possible grounds for attack:

1. Sex scenes: Game of Thrones (GOT) has incredibly graphic sex scenes, some with brutality, rape, lesbianism, homosexuality, full nudity, etc.
2. Zombies, witches, etc.
3. Themes: War, death, rape, murder

I can see many people objecting to this show because of the violence, sex and over-the-top story lines that verge on the fantastical. Some may say that a TV show does not have to have graphic violence or sex, but that it can *hint* at those actions without showing it. And yet, I believe that the cultural value and lessons that can be learned in GOT are too valuable to ignore.

GOT warns against losing one's life in favor of power, and there is a lot that people of all ages can learn from that theme.

Although the sex scenes and the violence is often difficult to watch, the reality is that throughout history, horrific events have occurred and are still happening today (take ISIS for instance). We must not take current crises lightly, and GOT thrones can help foster awareness of such issues.

Finally, people can choose to turn off the television or click to another channel, and if we were to censor GOT, what would come next? There is no definite line that can be drawn.

1981 Question Analysis:

*Carefully read the following selection by Thomas Szasz. Then write an essay in which you argue for or against Szasz's position on the struggle for definition. Support and illustrate your argument with evidence drawn from your reading, study, or experience.*

*"The struggle for definition is veritably the struggle for life itself. In the typical Western two men fight desperately for the possession of a gun that has been thrown to the ground: whoever reaches the weapon first shoots and lives; his adversary is shot and dies. In ordinary life, the struggle is not for guns but for words: whoever first defines the situation is the victor; his adversary, the victim. For example, in the family, husband and wife, mother and child do not get along; who defines whom as troublesome or mentally sick? ... [the one] who first seizes the word imposes reality on the other: [the one] who defines thus dominates and lives; and [the one] who is defined is subjugated and may be killed.*

Start time: 6:24 PM

Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 6:31

Rough intro, no topic sentences: 6:34

Two topic sentences: 6:36

What is his position on the struggle for definition? He says it is "the struggle for life." He then goes to say that the struggle is with words – if you define something first, that become the reality.

Ideas:

Divorce: If a wife starts talking about marriage and claims that her husband is a "bad Husband" it looks like it's his fault, regardless of the facts.

Rumors: when someone says something, others follow suit. It turns into a reality.

And yet, just because you define something doesn't mean that you are the "victor". What happened to Rogerian argument – finding the truth through talking it out? Being first to say something doesn't necessarily mean being right. You have to know how to argue a point, how to refute someone, how to back up what you say. It really isn't the first word. It's the last that you say!

He uses the Western as his example, but that is painting language as black and white, which it is not. I believe that if people communicate, there doesn't have to be a winner and a loser. Both can win.

In some ways, Szasz is correct when he claims that the struggle is for the words. Because it is. In everyday life, we have to know how to communicate with others, how to alter our voice and our words for a certain audience. We also have to know how to argue, to concede, to look at all the possibilities, and to reflect. Language is not black and white, like Szasz's Western analogy. Communication leaves room for many interpretations and infinite possibilities. Contrary to what Szasz claims, being the first one to define a concept does not a winner make; instead, the winner is the one who can reason through a conversation and logically back up his or her opinion with sound evidence.

Sometimes, the one who defines something first winds up being the one who gets hurt, or the one who is misunderstood. As a result, often it is better to hear all sides before stating your own opinion.

Communication is not black and white, and there does not have to be a winner and a loser in a discussion.

### **Question: 1983**

*We live in an era of language inflation. Being a star is no longer significant because we have superstars; what is normal is tremendous or fabulous (or extraordinary, excellent, superterrific, etc.) This wholesale distribution of highest rating defeats its own purpose. Everything is presented as something unique, unheard-of, outstanding. Thus, nothing is unique, unheard-of, outstanding. When everything is superlative, everything is mediocre.*

Write an essay in which you agree or disagree with the position taken in this passage by considering the ethical and social consequences of language inflation.

Brainstorm:

Ethical Consequences:

- Is it right to call our children superstars? To always say they are great? What about those kids who grow up being told they are awesome, and then they can't handle it when they have to have "normal" job and when they are not famous?
- Ethics in exaggeration. When you call someone a supermodel, you place her on a pedestal. That's not right...because it puts pressure on that person. Calling someone super puts a label on him.
- Thesis:

Today, society has a way of building people up to superhuman standards and thus forcing a persona on someone who may not be up to the task. Models who have to strive for beauty are

called “supermodels” and so must look that much better. Kids are told by their parents that they are extraordinary in sports, in school, only to grow up and find that they were merely average. What this language inflation has done is to demonize the “average” human being, making it unacceptable to be normal. Although the speaker claims that when we use language inflation nothing is special anymore, he fails to understand the other side of it: that some people or situations are falsely labeled as “super” thus putting an unfair amount of pressure on that person to be something he or she may not really be. Language inflation can be very dangerous for two reasons, making people believe that they are great when they really are not, and labeling others as “great” and thus putting them on a pedestal and excluding everyone else.

Topic Sentence #1:

Too often, children are told by their parents that they are “perfect,” or “super” or “brilliant” or “talented” or extraordinary,” and while well-meaning parents may believe that they are building the self-esteem of their children, what they are doing is building a false sense of self that will hold back the child later in life.

When stars and/or public figures are labeled as “super” they are turned into a type of “superhero,” and we all know that superheroes do not exist.

Start time: 1:47 PM

Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 1:53

Rough intro, no topic sentences: 1:56

Two topic sentences: 1:58

**1986 AP Language Prompt:**

*“It is human nature to want patterns, standards, and a structure of behavior. A pattern to conform to is a kind of shelter.”*

In a well-written essay, evaluate the truth of the assertion above. Use evidence or examples from your reading or experience to make your argument convincing.

What I have seen: in most aspects of life, there are rules and regulations that keep an organization functioning efficiently. Without those patterns or standards, chaos would ensue.

- Companies have start times, hours, pay standards, safety standards, unions, etc.
  - o My first job: United. The boss needed me to be there 7:30am every day.
  - o Routine meeting times/production.
  - o Without routine and structure, people get lazy. (use sales as an example.)
- Humans, by nature, want to fit in and be a part of the collective.

- Schools: We are totally situated around patterns and standards.
- CCS
- Bell schedule
- Student behavior
- Student performance
- Human nature to want to meet standards and fit in.
- Neighborhoods
- Socially
- Clothing
- Society! Everything we do shows that we want to fit in.
- Different places/different behavior
- Patterns: there is a sharp shooter fallacy that states that we will find a pattern where none exists, just because we feel the need to have a pattern.
  - Religion
  - Numerology
  - Coincidences
  - Love and relationships
  - “gut instincts”

Start time: 3:10 PM

Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 3:13

Rough intro and topic sentences: 3:17

### **1990 AP Language Question:**

*Recently the issue of how much freedom we should (or must) allow student newspapers was argued all the way to the Supreme Court. Read the following items carefully and then write an essay presenting a logical argument for or against the Supreme Court decision.*

This question has six small passages (about 1/3 page) that students must read and understand before they answer the question. Therefore, I am including *reading time*.

Start time: 4:47

Reading Time: 3 minutes (4:50)

Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 4:53

Rough Outline: 4:58

Topic Sentences: 4:58 I was able to come up with two topic sentences, and I think I might be able to have two complete paragraphs. However, **this topic might be harder for students to answer because they don't have the perspective of an adult. They also do not have the**

**experience of having to stop something from being said, so their argument will most likely be one of the “repressed” teens who are silenced by the admin.**

How much freedom should school newspapers have? Do students have freedom of speech like adults do? Are students logical thinkers like (some) adults are?

What is the goal of a journalism class? Is it to teach real-world journalistic skills, in which there is good news and bad?

In real journalism, you have to bet that it is slanted either right wing or left...therefore, there's a lot that is already censored in journalism. That's why journalism is so biased.

So, the supreme court decision might have actually been reflecting real world, albeit one that is practicing the wrong, unethical way of publishing the news. So I believe that the Supreme court was wrong, because we should teach our students to fight for their freedom of speech, even if it makes some people uncomfortable.

What I have seen:

- At my school, we cannot talk about religion, and we are not supposed to talk about politics in a way that sounds biased. This doesn't make sense to me because teachers are supposed to have brains and opinions. Freedom of speech!
- Some students tried to put up racist propaganda, and administration immediately took it down. The propaganda had to do with the “I can't breathe” case. In this kind of way, being able to say anything around a world of children (high school students are still children) could have detrimental effects. So in case of a riot, I would say censor it. But questions about divorce, or pregnancy rates, etc. can be used for the better.
- So I would qualify this argument. Censor if it's going to cause harm to the student body or if there may be potential rioting. Students do not have the logical thinking skills and the means of controlling their emotions that most adults should have.

More examples:

TS: Sometimes we have to be so politically correct that classroom conversation gets too watered down. Education means teaching kids what really happened, not a sugar coated version.

TS: Only in the case of potential harm or rioting should admin be allowed to censor.

Total prewriting: 14 minutes.

**1992 AP Language Question:**

In *The Spectator* for December 15, 1711, Joseph Addison wrote:

*If the **talent of ridicule** were employed to laugh men out of **vice** and **folly**, it might be of some use to the world; but instead of this, we find that it is generally made use of to laugh men*



*out of virtue and good sense, by attacking everything that is solemn and serious, decent and praiseworthy in human life.*

Write a carefully reasoned persuasive essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Addison's assertion. Use evidence from your observation, experience, or reading to develop your position.

Addison is claiming that people use satire not for the right reasons (to shine a light on something that is wrong) but to make fun of those who would stick to their moral ground and not give in to their "vices".

In 1711, Joseph Addison claimed that people use the "talent of ridicule," or satire, to "laugh men out of virtue and good sense." While there are certainly times that people laugh at others in order to hurt or offend, for the most part, satirists, who are known for their "talent of ridicule," use the technique to effect a positive change in the world or to expose a pressing issue or concern.

Writers throughout history have used satire in order to present an argument, to make a change, and to "laugh men out of vice and folly."

- Past Writing: Two older examples of literary satire that served to shine a light on the failings of society include Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and Jane Austen's "Pride & Prejudice."
  - o A Modest Proposal
  - o Pride and Prejudice
- Modern TV and Publications: Many television shows and publications including SNL, Family Guy, A Modern Family, The Onion.com, and the Colbert Report, poke fun at the ridiculousness of our society in order to either inform or make changes.
  - o Saturday Night Live
  - o Family Guy
  - o The Colbert Report
  - o The Onion
- Comedians
  - o Bill Cosby
  - o Ellen
  - o Can't remember name!

Start time: 3:26 PM

Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 3:31

Rough Outline: 3:36

Topic Sentences: 3:40 (I had to give up my third idea for lack of time.

Total prewriting: 14 minutes.

### **1996 AP Language Question:**

In his book *Money and Class in America*, Lewis Lapham makes the following observations about attitudes towards wealth in the United States. Drawing on your own knowledge and experience write a carefully reasoned essay defending, challenging, or qualifying Lapham's view of "the American faith in Money."

Start time: 10:42 AM

Reading Time: 5 minutes (10:47)

Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 10:50

Rough Outline: 10:54

Topic Sentences: 10: 54

Total prewriting: 12 Minutes

Lapham observes that American's put all their faith in money, and they use it as the "Currency of the soul" and as a somewhat moral compass. He doesn't say that it's wrong to want to be rich, but he points out the logical fallacy in which Americans connect money with goodness and wisdom. One does not necessarily lead to another.

I agree with Lapham's observation, because in the United States, money seems to be valued above all else, even if the means to making the money were less than honorable.

In America, Money = Success. What used to seem like honorable values: God, home, family, education, health – have fallen to the wayside to be replaced by the one true God – Money.

- We cannot teach religion in school, but we are all about telling kids how to make \$
- Mothers who want to build their home and be "homemakers" are deemed lazy or worse, as people who are not successful. No one considers that a mother or father's choice to stay home and take care of kids and home is a a choice.
- My brother, who has never read a book and who did horribly in school, is a rich investment banker. He once told me (before I was working towards my Phd that college professors weren't successful. He looked down on them! Our country has everything backwards.

\*Because of length, please refer to appendix B for complete question.

### 2005 AP Language Prompt

The passage below is from *The Medusa and the Snail* by biologist Lewis Thomas. Read the passage carefully. Then, drawing on your own reading and experience, write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Thomas's claims.

Start time: 11:18 AM

Reading Time: 11:21

Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis: 11:23

Outline: 11:26

Total Prewriting Time: 8 minutes

Just like Thomas claims that “the wrong choices have to be made as frequently as the right ones”, we cannot possibly know what we want in life until we know what it is that we don't want.

- Jobs
- Majors/College
- Taking classes
- Relationships
- Clothes
- Food
- Every single decision we make hinges on trying things until we discover what we like, what doesn't work, and what we want.

Throughout history, inventors, athletes, actors, writers, and regular people have failed hundreds of times before they succeeded. There are no overnight successes.

- KFC.
- Michael Jordan
- Tiger Woods
- Writers (The Firm Author)
- Musicians (use my example)
- Teaching (use my teaching lessons, reflecting each semester).
- Babies: they fall, get up fall, etc.
- Riding a bike,
- Everything!!!!!!

According to Thomas, the only way to make a positive change is to first make mistakes. You cannot discover anything new unless you fail, and he is totally right.

Seen: KFC

Light Bulb

Science

As a teacher

Music and practicing

Sports

It's all about practice!

Even in decision making, you have to know what you don't want before you can be sure about what it is that you do want.

Rough Outline:

Topic Sentences:

**Total Prewriting Time:**

**2007 AP Language Question:**

\* A weekly feature of *The New York Times Magazine* is a column by Randy Cohen called "The Ethicist," in which people raise ethical questions to which Cohen provides answers. The question below is from the column that appeared on April 4, 2003.

The practice of offering incentives for charitable acts is widespread, from school projects to fund drives by organizations such as public television stations, to federal income tax deductions for contributions to charities. In a well-written essay, develop a position on the ethics of offering incentives for charitable acts. Support your position with evidence from your reading, observation, and/or experience.

**Charity:** Incentives. What is an incentive? Is it anything that you "get" in exchange for your donation? Can the incentive be intangible, like an emotion? I believe it can.

What do I need to answer? Is it ethical to offer incentives for charitable acts?

**What I have seen:**

Schools offering hours for clubs for community service. Students putting community service on their resume. Businesses getting their signs on our school walls when the "donate" their services. But they are really getting free advertising. *But is this wrong? It seems the way of Capitalism.*

What I have experienced: I give to Good Will, mostly to just get rid of extra stuff. I take the tax forms, but don't really pay attention. I am not giving to give. I am giving to get rid of....this sounds terrible. But as long as people benefit, isn't it all good?

I love giving gifts. It's the way I show love. But I do get that good feeling out of it, so is that feeling my "incentive?"

Offering incentives for charitable acts becomes a moot point when one considers that every action people take causes a reaction – both with the giver and with the receiver. Whether the giver gives and receives nothing in return, he still may have a feeling of pleasant accomplishment and pride at a job well done. I don't think even Mother Teresa did everything she did for no incentive: she knew that she was doing God's will, and in that she would have an everlasting life in Heaven. Isn't that the best incentive of all? The entire Christian religion is based on being good here, believing here, and being rewarded in Heaven. However, Jesus says it is not by Acts, but by Faith. Hmm.

I don't think it is wrong to give and receive a “good feeling” in return. I also feel that a tax break for giving \$1000's worth of clothing to Good Will is acceptable, and smart. The ethics are when teachers give good grades or points to students, when they manipulate a test score or grade, when the charity is offered. There is no correlation between a grade and giving; however, there is a correlation between an expensive donation and a tax break.

**Start time:** 3:57 PM (Because I have been working on this paper for three hours right now, I am mentally tired and do not feel like tackling this topic. I also have to go to the bathroom, but I don't want to because it will take valuable time. Students must go through these discomforts when they test. I have purposefully chosen to undertake the prewriting right now to demonstrate a difference in my performance when I am already tired. (AP Students often take more than one test per day, which would mean that they are testing for over 8 hours straight.)

**Brief brainstorm, possible rough thesis:** 4:08: (*stop the clock for my commentary*) At this point, I am all over the place. I have read my students' essay many times on this topic, and they all seem to say the same thing. I find myself wondering what an incentive is, what it means to be ethical, when people cross the line and how that line is even defined. This topic seems easy, but it is really complex if you think about it. (*Clock back on 4:10.*)

**Rough Outline (4:18):** Our human nature demands that we react to everything that happens around us; therefore, if we define an “incentive” as any positive result that occurs after we give to charity, then an incentive cannot be wrong since it's an innate part of who we are as humans.

**Topic Sentences:** When we do something nice for someone, we feel good. An incentive, by definition, is a reason or a catalyst for doing something, so if charitable acts made us feel bad, we would never do them.

Many colleges expect students to have a certain number of community service hours on their resume, so clubs often give “hours” in exchange for charitable acts, but we have to draw the ethical line when incentives involve grades.

Some people would claim that the end result – that someone is benefitting from the charity – is worth any means, but if that were the case, we would have to examine ..... I am losing it. At this point I would just start writing.

Total prewriting: **21 minutes.** This leaves me with 19 minutes to write a complete essay, and I’m already tired.

## Appendix B: Additional AP Language Argument Prompts

The links and prompts below will take the reader to the AP Language prompts in my analysis that were too long to type within the table.

### 1990 AP Language Argument Prompt Question:

*Recently, the issue of how much freedom we should (or must) allow student newspapers was argued all the way to the Supreme Court. Read the following items carefully and then write an essay presenting a logical argument for or against the Supreme Court decision.*

1. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceable to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”
2. In 1983 the principal of Hazelwood East High School objected to two articles in the proofs of the student newspaper (one story described three unnamed Hazelwood students’ experiences with pregnancy; the other discussed the impact of divorce on students). The principal instructed the faculty advisor to delete the two pages on which these articles appeared. The students sued the school district on the grounds that their First Amendment rights had been violated.
3. The district court concluded that school officials may impose restraints on students’ speech in activities that are “an integral part of the school’s educational function.”
4. The court of appeals reversed the district court’s decision, arguing that the school newspaper was not only “a part of the school-adopted curriculum” but also a public forum, “intended to be operated as a conduit for student viewpoint.”
5. The Supreme Court, in 1988, overruled the court of appeals, arguing in its majority opinion that a school need not tolerate student speech that is inconsistent with its “basic educational mission,” and that Journalism II (the class that produces the newspaper) is a “laboratory situation” in which students apply the skills that have learned in journalism. The Court concluded that educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control in school-sponsored activities as long as these actions are related to legitimate pedagogical concerns.
6. In the dissenting opinion, three of the justices argued that the principal had violated the First Amendment, as the deleted articles neither disrupted classwork nor invaded the rights of others. In addition, they pointed out that such censorship in no way furthers the curriculum purposes of a student newspaper, unless one believes that the purpose of the school newspaper is to teach students that the press ought never to report bad news, express unpopular views, or print a thought that might upset its sponsors.

### 1996 AP Language Argument Prompt Question

*In his book *Money and Class in America*, Lewis Lapham makes the following observations about attitudes towards wealth in the United States. Drawing on your own knowledge and experience,*

*write a carefully reasoned essay defending, challenging, or qualifying Lapham's view of "the American faith in Money."*

I think it fair to say that the current ardor of the American faith in money easily surpasses the degrees of intensity achieved by other societies in other times and places. Money means so many things to us – spiritual as well as temporal – that we are at a loss to know how to hold its majesty at bay. . . .

Henry Adams in his autobiography remarks that although the Americans weren't much good as materialists they had been so "deflected by the pursuit of money" that they could turn "in no other direction." The national distrust of the contemplative temperament arises less from an innate Philistinism than from a suspicion of anything that cannot be counted, stuffed, framed or mounted over the fireplace in the den. Men remain free to rise or fall in the world, and if they fail it must be because they willed it so. The visible signs of wealth testify to an inward state of grace, and without at least some of these talismans posted in one's house or on one's person an American loses all hope of demonstrating to himself the theorem of his happiness. Seeing is believing, and if an American success is to count for anything in the world it must be clothed in the raiment of property. As often as not it isn't the money itself that means anything; it is the use of money as the currently of the soul.

Against the faith in money, other men in other times and places have raised up countervailing faiths in family, honor, religion, intellect and social class. The merchant princes of medieval Europe would have looked upon the American devotion as sterile cupidity; the ancient Greeks would have regarded it as a form of insanity. Even now, in the last decades of a century commonly defined as American, a good many societies both in Europe and Asia manage to balance the desire for wealth against the other claims of the human spirit. An Englishman of modest means can remain more or less content with the distinction of an aristocratic name or the consolation of a flourishing garden; the Germans show to obscure university professors the deference accorded by Americans only to celebrity; the Soviets honor the holding of political power; in France a rich man is a rich man, to whom everybody grants the substantial powers that his riches command but to whom nobody grants the respect due to a member of the National Academy. But in the United States a rich man is perceived as being necessarily both good and wise, which is an absurdity that would be seen as such not only by a Frenchman but also by a Russian. Not that the Americans are greedier than the French, or less intellectual than the Germans, or more venal than the Russians, but to what other tribunal can an anxious and supposedly egalitarian people submit their definitions of the good, the true and the beautiful if not to the judgment of the bottom line?

AP Language 2005 Argument Prompt Question 3

AP Language 2014 Argument Prompt: Question 3



## Appendix C: TKES Evaluation Tool for Teacher Assessment

<b>Planning</b>	<b>Level IV</b>	<b>Level III</b>	<b>Level II</b>	<b>Level I</b>
1. Professional Knowledge - <i>The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.</i>				
2. Instructional Planning - <i>The teacher plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students.</i>				
<b>Instructional Delivery</b>	<b>Level IV</b>	<b>Level III</b>	<b>Level II</b>	<b>Level I</b>
3. Instructional Strategies - <i>The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content to engage students in active learning &amp; to facilitate the students' acquisition of key knowledge &amp; skills.</i>				
4. Differentiated Instruction - <i>The teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences.</i>				
<b>Assessment of and for Learning</b>	<b>Level IV</b>	<b>Level III</b>	<b>Level II</b>	<b>Level I</b>
5. Assessment Strategies - <i>The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population.</i>				
6. Assessment Uses - <i>The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students &amp; parents.</i>				
<b>Learning Environment</b>	<b>Level IV</b>	<b>Level III</b>	<b>Level II</b>	<b>Level I</b>
7. Positive Learning Environment - <i>The teacher provides a</i>				

*conducive to learning and encourages respect for all.*

8. Academically Challenging Environment - *The teacher creates a student-centered, academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners.*

<b>Professionalism and Communication</b>	<b>Level IV</b>	<b>Level III</b>	<b>Level II</b>	<b>Level I</b>
9. Professionalism - <i>The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school's mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession.</i>				
10. Communication - <i>The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning.</i>				