



# CEE-GS Newsletter

## December 2013

THE FUTURE IS NOW

IN THIS ISSUE

## Connecting and Growing

by Christy McDowell  
Western Michigan University

CEE-GS is a place for graduate students to connect with each other, share ideas and grow together as professionals.

The connections made among the CEE-GS community are priceless. I will never forget my first time attending the CEE conference. Nobody from my department was able to attend, so I was a bit apprehensive about this journey. Then I met the CEE-GS group. Our first meeting carried into dinner where we talked about making the jump from teacher to student. We discussed the various forms of programs and how institutions vary. We shared personal stories and professional experiences. In short, we bonded. After a scary first year of graduate school I realized that I was not alone. I had a group of peers across the nation that could empathize and relate to the stress of comprehensive exams, course work, and fellowship demands while sharing the joy and excitement of surpassing each hurdle. No matter where the CEE conference may take us, I always feel at home when I'm with the Graduate Strand.

As membership continues to grow so do the opportunities for its members. At my first conference, July 2011, the group met during committee sessions. During NCTE 2012 the

group had its own roundtable session in which graduate students could share their work with professors across the field. By CEE 2013 we had a whole day of sessions geared specifically towards us. The same year at NCTE we had multiple sessions and grew to include pre-service teachers. Each year the Graduate Student group evolves. We have amazing sessions in which to connect, work, and grow with each other as well as key players in the field of English Education.

If you haven't joined our cohort, what are you waiting for? Connect and grow with us! We'd love to meet you.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.ncte.org/cee/graduate>

For access to our Facebook page send an email to [christymcd36@gmail.com](mailto:christymcd36@gmail.com).

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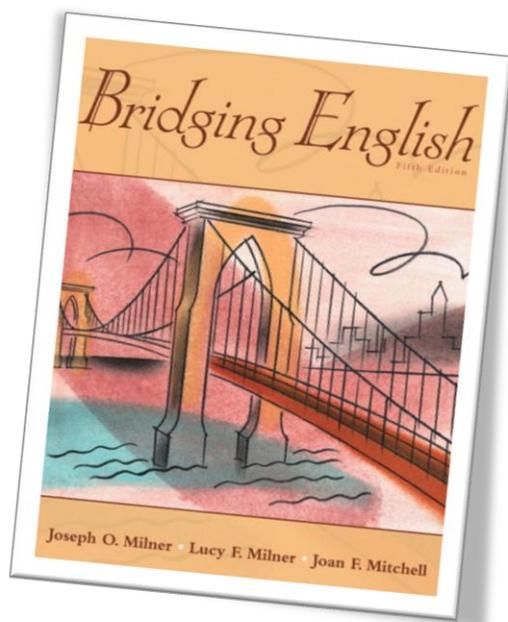
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## Review of *Bridging English* (5th ed.) and Interview with Dr. Joan Mitchell

By: Jordan Daniels and Kate Youngblood  
Master Teacher Associates  
Wake Forest University  
Department of Education

*Bridging English*, now in its 5<sup>th</sup> edition, is a heralded methods textbook that provides readers with creative and practical lessons alongside pedagogical philosophies. Milner, Milner, & Mitchell (2012) have compiled a guide for all teachers regardless of their years of experience; indeed, their work is something that should be an oft-consulted fixture on the desk of every secondary English teacher. From innovative ways of teaching basic grammar and vocabulary all the way to incorporating literary criticism, *Bridging English* covers the breadth of content found within contemporary English Language Arts classrooms. New to the 5<sup>th</sup> edition is the feature "Effective Practice in Today's Classroom," which illustrates how a practicing teacher has solved a common classroom dilemma using specific methods outlined in the book.

Dr. Joan Mitchell, a recent graduate from The University of Alabama with an Ed.D. in English Education, played an integral role in updating and co-authoring the latest edition of *Bridging English*. Collaborating on such a widely-used textbook is especially notable considering Dr. Mitchell accomplished this feat while completing her doctoral coursework. Mitchell used Milner & Milner's earlier editions of this text both as a master's student at Wake Forest University and later as a high school English teacher in North Carolina and Colorado. It is unique to find a working professional who has occupied the position of both reader and co-author of the same book. Dr. Mitchell, who now works as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Education at Wake Forest University, is an expert in the field of writing pedagogy, a regular presenter at NCTE and NCETA conferences, and a former member of CEE Graduate Strand. In the following interview, we asked Dr. Mitchell to elaborate on her multiple experiences with *Bridging English*.

1. How has *Bridging English* evolved for you as you have progressed from student to teacher to author?

When I was a student, I found *Bridging English* to be different from any textbook I had ever encountered because it was beautifully written (a rarity in the world of textbooks), and it compelled me to think intellectually, creatively, and practically about my teaching. Its focus on student-centered pedagogy challenged all of the norms I had encountered as a secondary student and pushed me to interrogate my own beliefs about best practices. I was especially spoiled because not only did I benefit from the wisdom contained in the pages of the text, but I was taught and mentored by one of its authors, Joe Milner. Joe's teaching was *Bridging English* come to life as he awakened my imagination to what English teaching *could* be and convinced all of his students that we were already star teachers.

I was only weeks into my first teaching job when I realized that the student-centered pedagogy promoted in Joe's class and through *Bridging English* were the exception rather than the rule. I was surrounded by gifted, hardworking teachers, but traditional pedagogy still prevailed in the majority of classrooms that I observed. During those early years, *Bridging English* served as a constant reminder for me to swim against the current and maintain a student-centered

classroom at all costs. As many past readers have suggested, the text became my teaching "bible," with numerous pages dog-eared, highlighted, and copied. I sought opportunities to share ideas with colleagues who also found the book's activities to be refreshing and revitalizing. My most successful teaching moments in the classroom almost always emerged from the pages of *Bridging English*.

You can imagine my shock when, as a doctoral student, Joe and his wife Lucy asked me to help them revise the text for the 5<sup>th</sup> edition and serve as their co-author. I do not remember even consulting my husband before I said yes. I could not pass up the opportunity to contribute to a book that had fundamentally influenced my role as a teacher or to work with a mentor who had given me the conviction to close the door and teach the way that I knew was best for my students. Although I had met Lucy on several occasions as a graduate student, it was not until she and I began collaborating that I realized how much her voice (through her powerful prose in *Bridging English*) had influenced my teaching as well. As we worked through the revision, my sense of admiration for the text evolved into a sense of responsibility to keep it as relevant, deep, and vibrant for future readers as it had been for me as a student and teacher.

2. Describe the experience of working on the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of this textbook while simultaneously finishing your Ed.D.

To be honest, the entire experience is a bit of a sleep-deprived blur because I also had my first child that year, so my husband and I were in a constant state of juggling. At the time, I was finishing my coursework and commuting an hour each way to Tuscaloosa, so I do remember that a few of my professors graciously allowed me to complete some independent studies to reduce the time burden. Otherwise, my husband was a tremendous help from the beginning because he knew how much *Bridging English* meant to me. Despite the chaos, however, I truly enjoyed the process of revising the book, in part because I found in Lucy a kindred spirit whose approach to writing and revising sharpened my own. Joe's vision and encouragement kept us focused, and our shared conviction for the ideals of the book made the "work" gratifying and meaningful.

3. How has being a co-author of *Bridging English* informed your practice as an educator?

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## Dr. Mitchell Continued

The beauty and challenge of working on a comprehensive English methods textbook is that it has to be *comprehensive*, covering topics ranging from reaching English language learners to incorporating technology to teaching novels to creating assessments. As an author, this means that with each revision, I must research a plethora of different areas related to English education to incorporate the newest and best pedagogical approaches. My own teaching clearly benefits from reading the great work of other researchers, educators, and colleagues who are figuring out new ways to improve teaching every day. At the same time, *Bridging English* remains grounded in the theories of seminal thinkers such as James Moffett and Lev Vygotsky, so I am reminded that we must hold tightly to

these pedagogical convictions despite torrents of educational trends that sweep through public schools every few years. My work on *Bridging English* keeps me rooted in sound pedagogical theories while giving me an excellent excuse to explore new ideas and incorporate them into my own practice.

4. What do you envision for your future as a teacher educator and author in the field of English?

I chose to pursue a doctorate in part because my work in secondary schools highlighted what I perceived as a writing instruction crisis. I dove into research on effective writing pedagogy to determine why those “best practices” were not showing up in the majority of classrooms. Although researchers identified numerous obstacles, inadequate writing pedagogy coursework in teacher education emerged as one of the most prominent. All of the teachers that I

interviewed during my own doctoral research felt ill-equipped for writing instruction, an unacceptable fact in an age in which writing is more crucial than ever to students’ future success. While my initial goal is to establish a writing pedagogy course at my own university, I hope to become an advocate for improving and expanding these courses in teacher preparation programs across the nation. *Bridging English* has two excellent chapters about teaching writing, so I would also love to enhance these chapters as I revise future editions or possibly write a separate writing pedagogy text to accompany *Bridging English*. While there is much work to be done before writing instruction assumes its prominent role in English classrooms, I believe we are moving in the right direction, and I am grateful to take part in this invigorating work.

## Just a Different Brand of Crazy

by Meghan B. Thornton  
University of Georgia

A year ago, this time, I spent my days with twelve and thirteen year olds. Attempting to balance lessons on simile and metaphor with my duties as a bathroom monitor was just another day in the life. It was a world where conversations about alliteration and newly sprouted armpit hair comfortably fit into the same sentence. When I ultimately made the decision to pursue my PhD and neared the end of my last year teaching middle school, I grew nostalgic and worried. How would I navigate a land of adults? For five years I had spent more time with adolescents than my own husband or adult-aged friends. I had gotten to a point where meeting a new person who went by the nickname “Dick” caused under-my-breath giggles and made my cheeks turn red. Not only was I worried about how I would function in the grownup world, I was sad to leave the kids I had come to regard as my own.

In the summer after my final year teaching and before my first semester as a doctoral student, I would catch myself wondering how Anna was enjoying her family trip to New Mexico, if Modesto’s brother had been released from the hospital after having his leg amputated, if Will’s summer baseball league had made the playoffs, and which

book in the *Twilight* series Ashtynn was currently reading after her mother thought she had gone to sleep. Even now, three months into my own classes, I have days where I miss my students so deeply that I question my decision to return to school. I find myself talking to middle school-age children waiting in the grocery line with their parents about what they’re learning in language arts, and checking my last school’s website to see what I’ve missed since leaving.

Perhaps the most difficult, and unanticipated, challenge I’m facing is the question: Who am I? For the past five years I’ve been a teacher. I’ve spent endless nights grading persuasive essays about community needs and poems about ketchup. I’ve administered high stakes end-of-grade tests and hoola-hooped with students as we waited for the carpool names to be called.

I’ve given detention to students who skipped class to hang out in the bathroom and called in local reporters to interview students who created their own community service projects. These quirky, infuriating, surprising, hilarious, and heart-warming moments established my identity for the past five years.

And then I left.

Now, I wake up to my sweet golden retriever who looks at me with eyes that say: it’s only been three hours since you turned that light off! I spend most of my day in solitude,

staring at a computer screen, reading endlessly with no hope of ever being “finished.” I go to classes where I am amazed and overwhelmed by the intelligence that surrounds me – both in my fellow classmates and my professors. I write paper upon paper and feel that there’s nothing new for me to say; I question what I can add to this world of academia, what new insight I can bring, and how I can make even a tiny ripple of change. I feel as if someone tied a bandana around my eyes, turned me in a circle three times, and then said: “go.”

And then I open the refrigerator door to this:



And I realize that while my life has changed in so many ways, my identity has not. The eccentricities that make me, me, are still there, and they have a place in academia, just as they did in middle school. Last year I may have helped my seventh graders create a music video during morning carpool, but this year I’m pressing my tofu with my library  
**Continued p. 4**

## Crazy Continued

books. It's just a slightly altered world of crazy. In so many ways, I'm beginning to realize just how similar the life of a first year doctoral student is to my life as a teacher. I still learn something new every day, I'm still motivated by the people who surround me, I still don't have enough time to do everything I want and need to do, and I still want to make this world a better place for the children who already inhabit it. I'm learning that the pen can be as powerful as my daily presence in the classroom, and I'm hoping to find ways to make my words inspire action.

Five years ago, I graduated from an MAT program with the intention of teaching high school English for a year or two until I had kids of my own. Now, five years later, I have dogs for children, taught middle school (and absolutely loved every second of it) without ever stepping foot into a high school classroom, and have moved even deeper into the world of education. After three months as a doctoral student, I'm learning that my compulsion to define and label myself is frivolous.

Going to graduate school isn't too different from teaching middle school, after all. Just as I had to do with the hormones of twelve year olds, I am learning to embrace the unexpected, welcome states of confusion, and finally look myself in the mirror as I tout the maxim: I want you to become a lifelong learner.



## CEE MENTORING

**CEE AND CEE-GS offer a number of programs and events to support graduate students and early career scholars in English education.**

**Apply to participate in the CEE-GS sponsored roundtable sessions at NCTE. Look for a call for participants in early January 2014.**

**Apply to the L. Ramon Veal Research Roundtables Session at NCTE. Look for a call in CEE's Connected Community in Summer, 2014.**

**Apply to the *Mentoring Program for Early Career Scholars in English Education*.**

**CEE sponsors an online mentoring program for early career scholars—from advanced graduate students to pre-tenure faculty members—whose teaching and/or research pertains to English education the opportunity to be paired with an experienced CEE faculty member who will serve as an online mentor. Matches have been made for 2013-2014. If you're interested in the program for 2014-2015, look for the call in CEE's Connected Community in Summer 2014. For further information, email Tara Star Johnston tarastar@purdue.edu.**

### Join the Conference on English Education-Graduate Strand

(CEE-GS)

Membership in CEE-GS is open to graduate students who are members of the CEE.

1. Join CEE  
<http://www.ncte.org/cee>
2. Join the CEE-Graduate Strand (CEE-GS) on NCTE's Connected Community  
<http://www.ncte.org/cee/graduate>
3. For more information email CEE-GS Chair, Lindy Johnson, at [mj34@uga.edu](mailto:mj34@uga.edu)

### CEE-GS Leadership Team

Chair, Lindy Johnson  
The University of Georgia

Kelli Sowerbrower  
Georgia State University

Christy McDowell  
Western Michigan University

Amie Ohlmann  
University of Iowa

Stephanie Jones  
University of Georgia

Past-Chair, Luke Rodesiler  
University of South Florida



Conference on English Education

Shaping ELA teacher education since 1965.



## MSU reflection of undergraduate research presentations for NCTE conference, 2013

by Nigel Waterton, Montana State University

Montana State University's English education program works across two departments – Education and English. English education students experience a capstone research course in their senior year before they head into the classroom to student teach but after they've been in the classroom via a 60-hour practicum experience where they observe, team teach, and solo teach. When our program was invited to participate in an undergraduate research round table at this year's NCTE convention in Boston by Alan Brown, we decided to offer the opportunity to our 25 capstone students.

With the leadership of Rob Petrone and Allyson Wynhoff Olsen, we selected two students from research proposals early in the fall, based on a fairly subjective criteria of relevance and what I'll call do-ability – we tried to judge, based on the students' past academic performance and the proposed structure of the study, if the student could complete the work by the NCTE conference. We were lucky enough to receive a number of great proposals, so we felt we selected the best and most likely studies from an already-strong field. The process of selection was invigorating for me because it showed something I value in students, teachers, and researchers – the knack for asking good questions.

Elena Harriman and Abbie Bandstra were pretty excited about the opportunity to travel to a national conference and present their work. Neither really knew what they were getting into, so the opportunity for

learning seemed pretty high. Having never sponsored an undergraduate research selection committee, nor hosted undergraduate travel, I figured I was probably going to move up the learning curve, too.

Abbie wanted to know about the pedagogical strengths and weaknesses of Montana's Indian Education for All act, which requires all subjects to include components of Montana native cultures in instruction. She wondered how this worked and if it worked well. While clearly impressed and proud of Montana's inclusion of multiple cultural perspectives in our education system, Abbie wanted to know if a mandate was the best way include historically underrepresented groups in our curricula. A bold question, I think. And a question that could inform practice and investigations beyond Montana's borders.

Elena, who also majors in psychology, investigated narrative perspective on *correspondence bias* – the notion that when we see someone do, say, something dumb while they're driving, that the driver is, in fact, dumb. The resultant constructs tend toward generalized harmful stereotypes. Elena posited that students might have difficulty assuming the mantle of correspondence bias if they had to write a narrative from the perspective of the other

person. So in essence she wondered if students' biases would change if they put on another's skin and walked around in it a while.

Both students benefited tremendously from their presentation experiences. The round table format was friendly and collaborative in that they were warmly received and had the benefit of hearing others' work, too. Personally, I was proud of both their efforts, such that I immediately tweeted "Montana State undergrads represent at NCTE!" Each expressed to me that the peripheral benefits of being at a conference like NCTE were stunning – being able to hear great presentations from professional teachers and academic researchers, not to mention a little author gawking, was great. I experience the same thing when I travel to NCTE – my invigoration by formal presentations and the fabulously generative nature of all the conversations that take place on our way to and from place to place. The last issue was the most surprising to my students, but I think the informal times to visit and debrief about what we'd seen and heard are perhaps the strength of a national conference experience. We are enriched by our relationships with one another.

Thank you, Alan Brown for concocting such a scheme. My university is very interested in undergraduate research and showed its support by funding the majority of our expenses. It seemed particularly good that the funding came from multiple sources – from the university's undergraduate research program, which was pretty pleased to have non-science majors looking for research support, and from our own Department of Education and College of Education, Health and Human Development. Their support gave me the feeling that this endeavor was pretty important. I look forward to repeating it.

Warmest regards,

Nigel Waterton  
Montana State University



## Spotlight Series: Dr. Nicole Sieben

by Kelli Sowerbrower,  
Georgia State University

Dr. Nicole Sieben has been a huge supporter of the CEE-graduate strand, its leadership team, and for me, personally. She is a cheerleader for all of us, and CEE is fortunate to have her drive, passion, and positivity, as well, as her scholarly insights in "Writing Hope." I have seen her fight for equality, create conference sessions that bring a call for a positive change, and, at the same time, be a genuine friend to those in need. While grading portfolios, wrapping up a semester of teaching, and pursuing a job search, Dr. Sieben managed to find the time to answer a few questions that each of us will learn from. Her responses are insightful, passionate, and motivating to each of us on our own doctoral journeys.

Kelli: Why did you want to pursue a Ed.D.?

Nicole: *Earning a doctorate became a personal and professional goal of mine after I graduated from college. I have always considered teaching to be a noble profession because I truly believe it is the work of teachers that encourages systemic societal change. When I was in college, my professors opened my eyes to a new way of seeing the world and a new way of being in the world. I was also raised to believe that if I wanted to see changes in society, I needed to "be the change" that I wanted to see in the world and build hope in strategic ways. For me, earning my doctorate is a way to be active on this journey of change in a way that I feel is most authentic to who I am as a person—an educator. On a college campus, I feel at home, and I realize that in order to do the work that we do, we have to be passionate about being a part of the national conversations that take place in our content areas as well.*

*As a high school English teacher, I was always doing my own action research, as classroom teachers often do. I would constantly take notes and journal about what worked and what did not each day, and I would transcribe quotes from my students that really pushed my thinking and understanding about what it means to be a teacher and what it means to be a*

*learner. Because these observations and "field notes" led me further into inquiry, I realized that I wanted to pursue a doctorate in learning and teaching in order to gain research skills and knowledge with which to explore relationships between various factors that influence the learning and teaching process, for both students and teachers.*

Kelli: What was the most difficult part of the journey? The best or most favorable (finishing does not count)?

Nicole: *The most difficult part of the journey for me really was finding the right work-life balance. As a full-time doctoral student and part-time college instructor, I went into my doctoral program with the goal of completing my degree in four years: two years of course work; one year of qualifying exams, data collection, and writing; and one year of analyzing data, writing the final copy of my dissertation, defending, and revising. In order to stay on track to graduate in four years, I had to make sacrifices in my personal life, like missing family events I would have normally been at. While I still attended most milestone events, there were those I had to miss due to hard deadlines. Those who know me know that I am extremely close with my family, so missing those moments with everyone and hoping people understood my absence were difficult challenges for me. Fortunately, the people in my life understood that everyone has her own path to follow, and this was mine.*

*There were so many incredible moments along the way to finishing my doctoral degree, that it is difficult to pinpoint the best part; however, I can probably categorize my "bests" into two areas: people and ideas. First, the people that I met along the way during this journey are by far some of the most incredibly beautiful and inspiringly intelligent people I have ever had the good fortune to meet. Some of these people I met in my doctoral program at Hofstra University, and others*

*I met at NCTE and CEE conferences and events. So many of these talented, generous individuals have become some of my closest friends and favorite collaborators. Through our mutual interests and shared experiences, we have been able to lean on each other and cheer each other on along the way. The other CEE graduate students that I've met along this journey have been an invaluable support system, which has provided me with a camaraderie that I will always be thankful for. The scholars that I've met through NCTE and CEE have been extremely generous with their time and advice, and I am extremely grateful for their mentorship. The other "best" that I have gained in this journey is a dissertation topic that I am truly in love with and passionate about pursuing for years to come. "Writing hope" is not only my dissertation topic, but it has become, in part, a way of life for me now. I see it in everything that I do and everything that I am. It puts a positive spin on my interactions with words, with writing, and with people.*

Kelli: A) What is your dissertation topic, and b) how did you find that topic?

Nicole: *My dissertation topic is dispositional predictors of writing ability. My topic emerged from the intersections of my interests in teacher education, composition studies, positive psychology, critical literacy, and social justice pedagogies. In my qualitative methods course during my doctoral program, I conducted a study of students' beliefs about their development as writers and found that, upon coding students' interview responses and their writing artifacts, the themes that continuously emerged had to do with students' motivations and strategies knowledge they possessed for pursuing their writing goals. Based on those findings, I noticed that student responses paralleled certain dispositions in positive psychology—*  
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## Spotlight Continued

namely self-efficacy, self-regulation, and hope—that could be applied to writing and writing skill development. From my development of the newly established and validated Writing Hope Scale, the use of formerly established dispositional writing scales, and the analysis of student writing and students' motivations, perceptions, and emotions about their writing, writing hope was born.

Kelli: Writing hope? What does that mean?

Nicole: "Writing hope" is a new domain-specific, dispositional construct that I created through my doctoral research. It is grounded in positive psychology, rationalized in social justice theory and critical pedagogy, and is validated through constructs in composition studies. Put simply, writing hope is the will and the ways to accomplish writing goals. In more specific terms, writing hope is a derivative of the general hope construct conceptualized by positive psychologist C. R. Snyder (1991). The general hope construct contains pathways and agency components that reciprocally work together to assist people in accomplishing their goals. Writing hope incorporates this construct while also taking into account writing pedagogy and practice. Through my doctoral research, I found that people with high writing hope have agency about their writing abilities and also contain ample knowledge of writing strategies to pursue writing goals. The motivational and cognitive components of the writing hope construct work together to create a disposition that is predictive of writing ability. Through my research, I have been able to create specific, intentional writing hope interventions that can be taught to build students' writing hope and writing competency levels.

Kelli: What is next for Dr. Nicole Sieben?

Nicole: Currently, I am working on a few articles and a book proposal that detail my research and experiences teaching writing hope. While I have been teaching part-time at Adelphi University in the School of Education and General Studies for the past 6 years, I am now on the job

market, pursuing full-time professor positions. Ideally, I would love to work at an institution teaching and researching so that I can continue to work with pre-service and in-service teachers on their development as reflective teacher-leaders and conduct research on the intersections of teacher education, positive psychology, social justice, and writing education. I am excited about the future of writing hope development and have already started on some follow-up studies to my dissertation work. I have started to conduct writing hope professional development trainings for secondary school teachers and students, and I am researching which writing hope interventions are the most effective for increasing students' writing hope levels and writing abilities.

Kelli: Fifty years from now, how do you want to be remembered in the field of academia?

Nicole: Fifty years from now, I still hope to be involved in academia in some capacity—teaching, writing, and still learning from and with my students. My grandmother did not retire from her work in education until she was 94-years-old, and I'm hoping my longevity in education is like hers. Ultimately, I'd love to be remembered as a person who not only believed that hope could be an action plan in English education but also as a person who helped to make that goal a reality. I want to be remembered as a person who brought writing hope to students and communities considered to be at-risk. Writing hope gives power to those whose voices have typically been underrepresented in society, and I believe it could be an equalizing factor in creating increased access to educational and career opportunities to frequently marginalized groups. I'd love to be remembered as a hope scholar who worked for and with the hope-building system in education that increases access to education and employment opportunities by developing "writing hope capital" in students and communities.

Kelli: What else should we know about Dr. Sieben?

Nicole: I thought about many ways to answer this question, and there are a lot of random facts that I could share. For

example, I could share that I play fantasy football and am in the championship game for the second season in a row in my league or that I enjoyed playing lacrosse in high school and college and still play in alumni games from time to time today. But, a lot of my CEE-GS friends already know those facts about me. So, I thought I'd share something that people probably don't know. This "something" was a big part of my life a long time ago, but it is not a "something" that I talk much about anymore, even though it exemplifies the importance that I have always placed on education and schooling. In 2000, I left a recording contract with a girl band that I was a part of in New York City to pursue my college education. As the oldest of three girls in the singing group, I was told by producers that I needed to choose between going to college and staying in NY to pursue my singing career. Though my year as a "singer" taught me a lot about who I am and who I wanted to be in this world, I know that choosing my education was the right path for me. Thirteen years later, I am still confident in my decision to leave the music industry to pursue my academic goals and know that while music is still a big part of my life, education and hope are my life. 😊

My work in education really is my greatest passion (second to my family and friends, of course), and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to work in a profession that is full of people with immeasurable amounts of passion, creativity, heart, dedication, and intelligence. The people in this profession and the students and communities that I work with inspire me each day. No other industry could ever produce that same feeling for me.

Not only is Nicole one of the busiest women I know, her enthusiasm is contagious. I have found myself looking for and finding hope in all walks of life because of her. If you have not met Nicole Sieben, attend one of her sessions and read her articles. Whether you are interested in equality, sports, or "writing hope", Dr. Sieben has something for each of us to learn from. I want to thank Nicole for all that she does and for responding with her honesty and genuineness. The CEE-graduate strand continues to wish her luck as she continues to make a difference for teachers and students.

## Book Review: Composition's Roots in English Education

by Becky A. De Oliveira  
Western Michigan University

*"Clearly the forgetting of English education has much to do with the forgetting of women's work: teaching, like cooking, seems to leave no history."*  
— Charles Moran

A few years ago, I covered an ophthalmology conference as a medical writer, responsible for producing a written summary of the contents of the various lectures and presentations. One hotly debated topic was the *phacotrabeculectomy*—a surgery, apparently, in which the doctor repairs both the patient's cataracts and his or her glaucoma simultaneously. Within the field, this procedure is controversial with doctors strongly aligning themselves either for or against the surgery, and defending their position with heated arguments and endless PowerPoint slides. For an outsider such as myself—not only clueless about the human eye but about most things scientific and medical—this controversy seemed oddly irrelevant. Who cares? I have no dog in this particular race. I have to confess to initially feeling largely the same way about the dispute over the origins of English composition that inform *Composition's Roots in English Education* (Stock 2012). While I have taught English composition at the university level for several years, I taught based on my experience as a working writer and am only now entering the field of English education as a scholar with anything more than a rudimentary grasp of the literature in any discipline. Does it really matter, I found myself wondering, who gets the *credit*? That a group of scholars would write a book arguing for *credit* struck me initially as analogous to the frog in a joke my mother loves to tell—who falls to his death because he can't resist shouting, "It was my idea!"

There's a reason we call them "knee-jerk" reactions—because they occur naturally and without any sort of premeditated thought. And usually these kinds of judgments are the first to be rescinded once we get more information or think more deeply about the topic. That was certainly the case for me as I proceeded through *Composition's Roots*. As Anne Ruggles Gere (xii) points out in her chapter titled "What's in a Name?" the history of a field matters in many ways. In fact, "it is not just the history of an individual; it is a portion of our collective identity that is

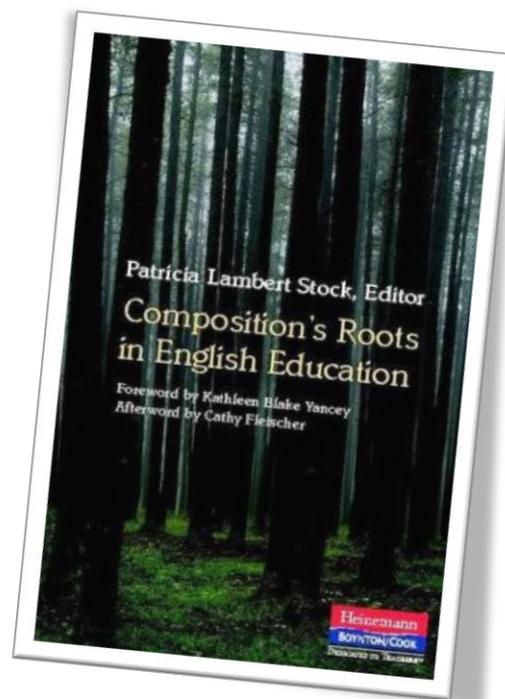
at risk of disappearing from our concept of the field and its work" (xii). It really is important for someone such as myself—newly entering the field of English Education and hoping to continue teaching English composition into my old age—to know something of how the two disciplines have evolved and of both who and what has shaped them.

The book appears to have two primary goals: 1) to give credit to those individuals whose contributions to the field of composition studies—because of their overlooked role as English educators—seems likely to disappear from history, in the same way that American Indian history has faded from the collective consciousness; and 2) to analyze the reasons for English education's marginalization within the field—which appear to be primarily class and status related. It is a fascinating look at a complex set of characters and problems—and helps to highlight the reasons for some of the continuing issues in teaching writing that continue into the present. Gere points out the "increasing number of concerns raised about current directions within composition studies"—especially a "growing division between practice and theory" (78) that perhaps a return to some of the earlier focus on education might help to address.

I learned a tremendous amount of history from reading this book—having been formerly clueless about everything from the origins of NCTE to the role of the University of Michigan in establishing composition studies as a discipline. As the editor points out, while rhetoric and composition scholars tend to behave as if composition studies has a very old history—dating back to the Greeks—even the field of English literature itself is a relative newcomer to the academy, having only been established at the top universities (Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge) in the past couple of hundred years. And it was sneered at then by the older disciplines of religion and classical Greek and Latin. Composition itself, argues James Zebrowski, did not establish itself as a discipline until around 1980, a fact that "goes against the grain of conventional historiography" (28)—but a point of view he depends based on his position that disciplines must be "preceded by social formations, loose informal collectives that address needs—in this case, writing and the teaching of writing—not seen worthy of

attention by existing social structures—in this case, college English departments" (29).

The contributions of particular big names in composition are outlined in several of the chapters, focusing on people such as Richard Braddock—who "emphasized pedagogy, but at the same time frequently articulated values that emphasized his connection to . . . English departments" (73). The point here seems to be that individuals such as Braddock, who were willing to straddle the line between the social sciences and humanities—classic English educators—have had a profound influence on the field. James Moffet is highlighted as one who "never had a graduate course in either composition or English education and came to both fields by stumbling into a secondary school teaching job" (81) who nonetheless developed a widely-used discourse theory and was highly influence at the Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 and in the development of the National Writing Project. Again, this information is highly informative—and it's hard to see why it would be overlooked in the telling of the history of composition's origins, why "the 'education' piece has largely



disappeared from view" and why scholars in composition are "less proud of our connection to schools of education, and more proud of our connections to English" (135). The apparent conflict in the telling of the story of teaching writing appears to be

Continued p. 9

## Book Review Continued

mostly class-based—centered around issues of status and pride, or what Zebrowski calls “Ruling class bourgeois meet the working class” (39). This conflict strikes at what we think teaching writing is all about, and centers around the basic “conflict between the college English professors and English educators with their advocacy for public school teachers and students” (45)—not to mention “between a teacher-centered and a student-centered approach to writing” (44-45) that Zebrowski labels “class conflicts” taking place “between those who spoke for the middle and privileged classes in university under the rubric of the ‘discipline’ of English and those who served the working classes, who spoke for students” (37). This conflict does appear to be at the heart of

much of the current dysfunction in teaching writing. It is low status work—even at the university—taught primarily by graduate students, adjuncts and non-tenure track faculty. As professors become more accomplished, they move away from teaching first-year composition and on to bigger and better things. Few professors with other options actually elect to teach basic writing courses. As Charles Moran puts it in his essay “Education: The E-Word in Composition Studies,” the field has “become increasingly professional” and have “adopted the values of English at the four-year research university (142), and as a result “have lost sight of a piece of our history, the close ties to the work in English education that is a substantial piece of our intellectual and social formation (143). In other words, teaching writing *matters*. How it is taught matters. Until there is a broad recognition of

the role that K-12 teachers have played in developing ways to enhance the skills of a wide range of students from diverse backgrounds in terms of race and socioeconomic status—which have necessarily influenced writing at the university, there is little chance that composition studies will receive the respect it needs to be taken seriously.

### Work Cited

Stock, Patricia Lambert (ed). *Composition's Roots in English Education*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2012. Print.

# NCTE 2014 CEE-GS Call for Proposals

We'd like to invite you to participate in the CEE-GS session at the 2014 NCTE Annual Convention in Washington DC.

Over 50 people took part in the CEE-GS session this year in Boston, and the feedback we've received has been quite positive. We will propose a session for 2014 that again showcases the work of doctoral students who are studying English education at various institutions across the country. If you are interested in facilitating a roundtable and sharing your work with others, we hope you'll consider joining us!

**To participate, please submit the following information to Lindy Johnson at [lindyljohnson@gmail.com](mailto:lindyljohnson@gmail.com):**

1. a title
2. a brief abstract (approximately 100 words)
3. your name as you'd like it to appear in the proposal
4. the name of your institution
5. your preferred mailing address
6. your preferred email address
7. Your phone number

With a proposal due date of Friday, January 15, we would appreciate it if you could submit your information by Friday, January 3. This will allow us ample time to organize, write, review, and submit the proposal.

From "The Conversation Continues:  
Integrating Common Core Standards"  
(NCTE 2013, Boston)

## Recommended Resources when Integrating Common Core

Compiled by Kelli Sowerbrower,  
Georgia State University

1. *With Rigor for All* (Jago). Again and again the Common Core Standards state that students must read "proficiently and independently" but how we achieve this when students are groaning about having to read demanding literature and looking for ways to pass the class without turning the pages? Carol Jago shows middle and high school teachers how to create English classrooms where students care about living literate lives and develop into proficient independent readers (from caroljago.com).

2. *The Common Core Guidebook, 6-8* (Linder) This book is about deconstructing the informational text standards in teacher-friendly language, providing fun think-alouds, anchor charts, and step-by-step lessons for each informational text reading standard. Linder spends full page deconstructing each informational text reading standard and providing several pages of instructional tips and ideas. There are hundreds of books and websites included to teach specific standards, along with work samples, and 4-6 reproducible charts and organizers for each standard. There is also an elementary version, *The Common Core Guidebook, 3-5*. Linder also has a up-to-date blog that is full of great ideas and comments as she continues to work with teachers through professional development sessions: <http://ontheweb.rozlinder.com/>

3. [AchievetheCore.org](http://AchievetheCore.org) This [website](http://AchievetheCore.org) has an easy to search database of lessons,

assessment questions, student work samples, and resources aligned to each standard. You can search by grade level and subject. This offers support for ELA and mathematics teachers.

4. *Fall in Love With Close Reading* (Lehman and Roberts) Close reading has definitely become a popular buzz phrase. The new standards demand a much closer (re)read of informational text and literature. The fact is that many teachers, parents, and administrators have no idea what that even means. There are multiple interpretations and ways to teach students to use close reading. This newly released book examines what close reading is, why students should use it, and practical ideas for the classroom. The key takeaway is that you use close reading to deconstruct the text—not as an activity or end goal for reading. Close reading is a process, not an outcome.

5. *Pathways to the Common Core* (Calkins, Enhrenworth, Lehman) This is another book co-authored by Chris Lehman. Are you noticing a trend? Check out his infinite wisdom by following him on Twitter [@iChrisLehman](https://twitter.com/iChrisLehman). This book is about the Common Core basics. What are the anchor standards about? How do teachers make sense and differentiate between the standards? How do we examine the differences in rigor and judge text complexity? This text is the overview and should be the entry point into any discussion about the standards.

6. [The Teaching Channel \(Common Core category\)](http://TheTeachingChannel.com) This section of The Teaching Channel is a great place to see real teachers implementing the standards into their classrooms. Organized by grade level and searchable by topic, this website is fun, engaging, and packed with supplemental resources, downloads, and discussion questions for each lesson.

7. *Notice and Note* (Beers and Probst) This book, developed for reading literature selections, is a great tool for grades 6-12. Beers and Probst use engaging lessons, commentary, and real work samples to provide readers with clear steps to follow to help students

engage with text. The book outlines specific signposts that students can look for in the text to help them make meaning and explain that meaning. This is a fabulous companion to the rigor of the Common Core standards.

8. [Edutopia \(Common Core Collection\)](http://Edutopia.org) Edutopia, a nonprofit funded by the George Lucas Educational foundation, does not represent just one source. What Edutopia has done is provide a teacher-vetted portal to a wide variety of reliable sources for Common Core. Links to EngageNY and ASCD's [webinar](http://www.ascd.org) series are just two powerful examples to begin learning about the standards and what others are doing to effectively implement them with fidelity.

9. *The Common Core Companion: The Standards Decoded, Grades 9-12: What They Say, What They Mean, How to Teach Them* (Burke). If you're a high school teacher, no need to despair. Jim Burke has created a Common Core Companion for you, too. This time positioning the grades 9-10 standards alongside 11-12. It's every bit the roadmap to what each standard says, what each standard means, and how to put that standard into practice across subjects (from amazon.com).

10. *Teaching to Exceed the English Language Arts common core state Standards: A Literacy Practices approach for 6-12 Classrooms* (Beach, Haerting-Thein, & Webb). The first 6-12 English language arts methods text to be aligned with the Standards, this book also addresses their limitations — formalist assumptions about literacy learning, limited attention to media/digital literacies, lack of attention to critical literacies, and questionable assumptions about linking standards and text complexity to specific grade levels. Specific examples of teachers using the literacy practices/critical engagement curriculum framework in their classrooms shows how these limitations can be surpassed (from amazon.com).



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