Advocacy Blogging: Writing & Editing for the Public

Leah A. Zuidema
Dordt College, leah.zuidema@dordt.edu
Advocacy Blogging: Writing & Editing for the Public

Abstract
Presentation given as part of a faculty workshop at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, on January 9, 2015, about advocacy blogging which is based on a previously published article (available at http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte/vol3/iss1/10/).

Keywords
advocacy blogging, authentic writing instruction

Disciplines
Curriculum and Instruction | Rhetoric and Composition | Teacher Education and Professional Development

This conference presentation is available at Digital Collections @ Dordt: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/137
Advocacy Blogging: Writing & Editing for the Public
Leah Zuidema, Ph.D.  ◦  Dordt College  ◦  January 9, 2015
Teachers, Profs, Parents: Writers Who Care

A blog advocating for authentic writing instruction

Proposed R

by Anne Elrod

the U.S. Dep... colleges,...

Writers Who Care: An Teachers - Professors - Ore.

Leah A. Zuidema, Dordt College
Sarah Hochstetler, Illinois State Uni.
Mark Letcher, Purdue University College
Kristen Hawley Turner, Fordham Uni.

We're writing teachers; we teach writing teachers. And educa... matters:

We have seen when a child abandons writing... to her.

We have seen the pride in a teenager's... the written word.

What we need to notice how writing... formulas given...
A presentation...about an article...about editing an advocacy blog...about authentic writing instruction

**Blog:**
Writers Who Care
(http://writerswhocare.wordpress.com/)

**Article:**
Teachers, Profs, Parents: Writers Who Care

A blog advocating for authentic writing instruction

Proposed Regulations Bad for Kids, Teachers, and Schools

by Anne Elrod Whitney, Ph.D. Report cards may sound simple and harmless. But the “report cards” for teacher education programs that were recently proposed by the U.S. Department of Education are a bad idea. They, and the proposed new federal rules of which they are a part, could do tremendous damage to schools, to colleges,...

Continue reading →
What is *authentic* writing?

1. Composed for **real purposes** and is shared with **real audiences**.

2. Enables students to **learn** by living the **effects** of their composing.

3. Can include any genre—so long as the purpose is more than merely “schoolish” (Whitney, 2011).

When writing instruction takes a reductive approach, students may:

1. **Misunderstand the purpose of writing**, seeing it primarily as a tool for testing or assessment—rather than a way to use God’s gift of language to give form to creative expression, to explore and develop ideas, to experience growth and transformation, to effect change, and ultimately, to praise the King and do kingdom work.

2. **Misunderstand the process of writing**, seeing it as a routines learned by rote—rather than a discernment process that draws upon rhetorical and creative insight.
The current education policy climate drives teaching practices away from authentic writing and toward reductive writing.

As WWC blog editors, we bring our expertise as *Teachers, Profs, Parents*:

- To contribute to the continued professional development of teachers across grade levels.
- To equip teachers, parents, and administrators as advocates for authentic writing in classrooms.
Who cares about the WWC blog’s purposes and practices?

Advocacy bloggers

Potential WWC authors

Writing teachers, researchers, & teacher educators

Writers Who Care: Advocacy Blogging as Teachers - Professors - Parents
Leah A. Zaidema, Dordt College
Sara Hochstetler, Illinois State University
Mark Letcher, Purdue University Calumet
Kirsten Hawley-Turner, Fordham University

We’re writing teachers; we teach writing teachers; and we’re parents of young writers. We can’t help but notice how writing education matters.

We have seen when a child abandons writing because she isn’t given the freedom to create beyond the formulas given to her.

We have seen the pride in a teenager’s face when his audience laughs at his absurdities and gets his message.

We have heard from countless college and graduate students who remember the teacher who had an incredible impact on their relationship to the written word.

From implicit curricula to planned pedagogies, writing classes make a difference—ever better, or for worse. We’ve committed that student writing—of all of them, and not just our joins and daughters—deserves the best possible writing education. We care how writing gets taught. Our personal experiences, our research, and the knowledge we’ve gained as parents, as teachers, and as teachers educators all compel us to believe that the best way for students to learn is through authentic writing.

Because we believe in strongly that writers develop through authentic writing instruction— and because we see policies that have practical every from these goals— we have decided to speak up and to speak out. The blog Teachers, Profess, Parents: Writers (teachingwriters.wordpress.com) was born from our frustration with current realities that limit teachers and students to reduce writing. We know what good writing instruction looks like, and we want to share that knowledge with an audience beyond academics. In doing so, we hope to redefine what it means to be an academic writer and to encourage others to continue their knowledgeable voices to a very public dialogue.

The development of Writers Who Care brought challenges that we document here with the following purposes:

- For those interested in leading or participating in other advocacy blogging efforts, the simulator that we offer into our classroom, decisions may become a teaching tool to teach us the variety and diversity of writing, so we, too, may potentially need to adapt.

- For those who wish to pay our collective efforts by increasing blog entries for possible publication on Writers Who Care, the behind-the-scenes background that we show may provide more nuanced insights about the financial considerations that can help us to shape an effective entry. We hope to inspire you to write submissions that fit well with the peer, audience, and purposes for our blog, so we would very much like to be joined by many others in effectively writing blogs, everyone, teacher, board members, administrators, and policymakers who need to be informed and motivated to advocate for authentic writing instruction.

- For those who are writing teachers, writing researchers, and writing teacher educators, our reflections about our composing class can be shared to both ones of the writing work that blog writing exists. We hope to emphasize that blogging is still an exciting form of writing that nurtures our attention, and to illustrate the complexity and potential power of blogging as a genre, as a recursive rhetorical process, and as an authentic means of creating and teaching audiences for advocacy writing.

Any piece, any form of writing begins with purpose. So too, too, begins with ours.

Authenticated Student Writing: It Matters
Student writing is authentic when it is composed for real audiences and real purposes. For example, asking students to write personal letters to celebrities they choose and to write the purpose of trying to bring about change that matters to them is more authentic than asking all students to write about poetry. Similarly, assigning faux “in-the-situation” with the teacher as the only audience. The purpose of the writing activity is that first, to practice the conventions of a specific genre and rhetorical appeals to a precise goal. However, the second activity is merely a practice exercise, whereas a high school senior in the first example knows there is real potential for action. In a response, a teacher can write to be persuaded to argue for more senior roles (e.g., additional opportunities for student leadership, options to become campus celebrity)
How do we “blog with care”? 

RHETORICAL G.A.P.S.  
AUDIENCE  
GENRE  
Writer’s PURPOSE

A RECURSIVE PROCESS  
(Re)Design  
Respond  
Curate  
Publicize  
Edit  
Publish
Does Bad “Grammar” Instruction Make Writing Worse?

By Patricia A. Dunn

Most students’ writing—in fact, most people’s writing—could use some improvement: in content, organization, coherence, style, and editing. However, many people continue to think that if only students received a dose of “grammar” instruction, their writing would be better. People can mean almost anything when talking about grammar: memorizing rules or perceived rules, reciting the parts of speech, punctuating someone else’s sentences, correcting spelling or usage errors on a handbook practice page, etc. In many cases the teacher drags out worksheets and instructs students to underline nouns and verbs or perform other tasks isolated from their own actual writing. These out-of-context exercises are not “writing” and, in fact, may even make writing worse.
My kid is creating YouTube videos?

By Jonathan Rochele

Within the past year, my 13-year-old son, Jeremy, started showing a deep interest in making videos. He was mostly inspired by other young talents he saw on YouTube and by a friend of his, who had started a business making videos for local sports and events.

When Jeremy jumped into online publication, I asked myself the same questions many parents do: If my kid starts a YouTube channel, or a blog, or some other creative outlet online, should I support it or kill it? Will it take time and attention away from school work, just increasing their already over-spent “screen time”?

My son’s experience with his YouTube channel that focuses on technology reviews and tutorials — Techspective — has been an eye opener for me, and I thought it would be worth sharing why I have become a strong supporter of his work.
What have the WWC editors learned?

**BENEFITS**

1. Shaping and engaging in a public conversation about education
2. Facilitating professional development

**CHALLENGES**

1. Creating an inclusive conversation (beyond academics, “the haves”)
2. Recognizing professional contributions
We ask: “What is scholarship?”


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Scholarship</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Build new knowledge through traditional research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Interpret the use of knowledge across disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Aid society and professions in addressing problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Study teaching models and practices to achieve optimal learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is *application* for a writing teacher educator?

**Writers Who Care: Advocacy Blogging as Teachers - Professors - Parents**

Leah A. Zuidema, Dordt College
Sarah Hochstedler, Illinois State University
Mark Latchner, Purdue University Calumet
Kristen Hawley Turner, Fordham University

We’re writing teachers, we teach writing teachers. And we’re parents of young writers. We can’t help but notice how writing education matters.

We have seen where child-student writing changes because the isn’t given the freedom to create beyond the demands given to her.

We have seen the pride in a mother’s face when her student shines in his creativity and pays his message.

We have heard from candidates college and graduate students who remember the teacher who had an incredible impact on their relationship to the written word.

From implicit curricular to planned pedagogy, writing becomes a difference-the better, or the worse. We’re committed that student teachers of all, not just one own and daughter, deserve the best possible writing education. We see how writing impacts the human personal experience, our research, our teaching, and the knowledge we’ve gained as parents, as teachers, and as teacher educators.

Because we believe so strongly that writers develop through authentic writing instruction—and because we care policies that drive practices away from these goals—we have decided to speak up and to speak out. The blog Teachers, Professors, Writers (Teachers, Professors, Writers, also known as T/W) was born from our conviction with current realities that treat teachers and students to collective writing. We know what good writing instruction looks like, and we want to share that knowledge with an audience beyond scholars. In doing so, we hope to redefine what it means to be an academic writer and to encourage others to contribute their knowledge voices to a very public dialogue.

The development of Writers Who Care brings challenges that we discuss here with the following purpose:

For those interested in learning or participating in other advocacy blogging efforts, the window that we offer into our theoretical decision may serve as a roadway to the kinds of change and decision points that you, too, may ultimately need to navigate. We hope that by sharing our rationale, our work may help you reflect or connect with your desired audience and the purpose you have in mind.

For those who wish to join our collective effort by submitting blog entries for possible publication on Writers Who Care, the balanced-access background that we share may provide some material about the current dynamic that can help you shape an effective entry. We hope to engage you as writers who need to work with peers, students, and purposes for our blog, as we honestly appreciate the potential of many voices in effectively reaching audiences,�finitions, teachers, board members, administrators, and politicians who need to be informed and motivated to advocate for authentic writing instruction.

For those who are writing teachers, writing researchers, and/or writing teacher educators, our commentary on our current realities is aimed at that base of the writing work that they teach and write. We seek to emphasize that blogging is indeed a significant form of writing and is crucial to our students and the viability and potential power of blogging as a voice in our academic dynamic processes, and as an authentic means of creating and reaching voices for the advocacy writing.

Any blog, any form of writing begins with purpose. So we, too, blog with ours.

**Authentic Student Writing: It Matters**

Student writing is authentic when it is composed for real audiences and real purposes. For example, asking middle

grade students to produce writing that is true and relevant for the purposes of engaging them about changes that relate to them in a common manner is engaging and valuable. For example, taking all middle grade students about personal experience that allows them to share their voices is effective. This whole purpose of the second writing activity, the first, is to practice the conventions of a specific grade and materials and appeals to a practical audience. However, the second activity is merely a practice exercise, whereas a high school setting is the first which engages the different purposes of action from a responsible, a high school writer who writes to be able to argue for more serious issues. The purpose again for student leadership options to serve campus is the purpose: an environment that allows

Winter/Spring 2014
1. How might application in your discipline be **connected** with the ideas discussed today?

2. Which communities should we connect with? What do you see as **challenges or areas for caution** with application and advocacy?

3. How could we better **equip and encourage** professors at Dordt College in application and advocacy?