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**Writing-About-Writing Curricula: Research on Effectiveness and Applications
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Introduction to the Second Edition

Description. In order to help students maximize learning transfer from secondary, college, and graduate level writing courses to new writing situations, writing-about-writing (WAW) curricula align a writing course's object of study—writing—with what students read and write, emphasizing reflection and metacognition. In a WAW course, students read research and other commentary about writing, discourse, literacy, rhetoric, and related subjects. Students explore these subjects in their writing assignments, such as studying their own writing processes and literacy experiences or conducting research, including original empirical studies, on questions taken up in the field. The resulting procedural and declarative knowledge about and experience with writing are said to help students (re)construct knowledge about writing and writers, which can in turn influence their understanding of (and process in) later writing situations. Scholarship in the mid-2000s (Dew 2003, DeJoy 2004, Downs and Wardle 2007, annotated below) began to describe contemporary approaches to WAW instruction, and new WAW research and designs have continued to emerge in the decade since the first edition of this bibliography in 2010.

Scope. Accommodating the expansion of WAW scholarship over the past decade, this second edition of CompPile's WAW bibliography shifts focus from the pedagogy's origins, theoretical roots, and initial research to now cover more extensive theoretical and empirical research on effectiveness as well as a wide range of applications in varied instructional settings.

While the original bibliography included several entries that initially grounded WAW approaches theoretically, such literature has now been incorporated in the scholarship of the past decade and is therefore no longer cited here. The second edition also omits earlier scholarship superseded by newer research. The first edition (<https://wac.colostate.edu/compPile/wpa/#12>) retains these original entries. As with the first edition, this one focuses only on the contemporary "writing about writing" discussion which emerged in the mid-2000s, rather than earlier approaches using either similar principles or the same name. A reasonably thorough history of such prior approaches is included in Bird et al. (2019), annotated below. While this bibliography does not include WAW textbooks (which, as is typical in our field, do significant scholarly work of their own), a listing is currently available at <https://writingaboutwriting.net/category/resources/teaching-resources/textbooks/>.

As there is now far more scholarship on WAW than space to discuss it all, this edition's two primary selective principles are significance and representation of breadth. Works that significantly open or move conversation on WAW approaches (e.g., Dew 2003 and Downs and Wardle 2007 on WAW in FYC, Read and Michaud 2015 on WAW in professional writing courses, Whicker and Stinson 2020 on

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an axiology of WAW approaches) are prioritized, as are pieces that provide highly usable research in various application and issue areas such as developmental writing (Bird 2013; Blaauw-Hara et al. 2020), multimodality (Dieterle and Vie 2015), reading (Downs 2010), anti-racist and multilingual approaches (Looker 2016; McCracken and Ortiz 2013), international applications (Johnson 2019), two year colleges (Ulmer 2018, Blaauw-Hara et al. 2020), and high schools (Wells 2011). To maximize space for a diversity of pieces, this list's sole edited collection (Bird et al. 2019), which contains many noteworthy chapters in their own right, is included as a single entry, with the strong recommendation that researchers seeking a sense of the current breadth of WAW applications and development of curricula and faculty consult it.

Trends in WAW Scholarship 2010-2020 and Needed Research

The dominant trend in literature reviewed for this edition is a wealth of reports of individual or programmatic implementations of WAW pedagogy. In this way, WAW development replicates a similar trend in composition scholarship broadly, both in the positive sense of impressive diversity and the less-ideal sense noted by Richard Haswell (2005) that we are better at individuation than at collaboration and disciplined replication.

This is particularly true when it comes to WAW's claims to facilitate transfer of learning. Reports of empirical assessment of learning transfer from WAW instruction remain uncomfortably limited (Bird 2013, Wardle 2007) for a pedagogy emphasizing transfer. Most evidence of outcomes for WAW curricula remains anecdotal or self-reported. That said, one evident trend related to transfer, though it does not entail direct transfer studies, is a growing body of empirical evidence that WAW courses do produce outcomes that transfer scholars have argued do help facilitate transfer, including a deep understanding of writing concepts that help students analyze new contexts, reflective writing practices, meta-cognition, and generative student dispositions (see Anson and Moore, 2017). *Next Steps* (Bird et. al 2019), in particular, offers numerous accounts, many from empirical studies, of students engaging in significant reflection and metacognition as well as demonstrating how WAW helps students develop sophisticated understanding of writing concepts and generative dispositions. Blaauw-Hara et al. (2020) and Bird (2013) find that WAW approaches help basic writing students both learn difficult threshold concepts and develop generative self-efficacy. Hayes et al. (2018) find in a cross-institutional transfer study that students in WAW courses demonstrate productive reflection and metacognition related to important writing concepts like audience and genre. These selections are the strongest we found of the mounting evidence that WAW courses do produce some outcomes deemed necessary for transfer, though few report on direct measurements of transfer itself. Whicker and Stinson (2020) identify a number of questions regarding how different WAW approaches attempt to facilitate transfer that might help guide researchers engaging in more direct transfer studies.

Another notable gap in the literature seems to be systematic discussion of professional development for instructors using WAW curricula. While Downs and Wardle (2007) initially identified deeper instructor knowledge of writing studies theory and research as a prerequisite for scaling WAW offerings to program-wide implementation, and while such scaling has clearly happened (as indicated by Bird et al. 2019, and textbook sales), few published reports explain or advocate for approaches to professional development that enable expanded use of WAW courses. Most of those our review identified appear in Bird et al. (2019) and treat not professional development specifically but institution-specific curriculum implementation or program-building.

The literature also offers no support for a commonly voiced (though rarely published) fear that students will be unable to engage with primary texts in the field as a result of difficulty, boredom, or irrelevance.

Rather, WAW scholarship uniformly and directly rebuts this concern. A number of sources in the bibliography demonstrate that even in developmental courses, students manage readings well and find them valuable (e.g. Bird, 2013 and Blaauw-Hara et al., 2020).

A final limitation in the literature appears to be a near complete lack of scholarship that both implements WAW approaches and substantially critiques them to the end of enhancing the pedagogy. Instead, we find an “all-or-nothing” profile to criticism of WAW approaches: either positive implementation reports with little constructive criticism, or broadside critiques that don’t describe versions or understandings of WAW curriculum recognizable to teachers and researchers who support its use. (Which therefore this bibliography does not include.) One excellent exception is Brown (2020), which powerfully but constructively critiques some typical WAW approaches from a translingual perspective, offering concrete proposals for strengthening WAW pedagogy. More such scholarship would be valuable.

Works Cited in the Introduction

Anson, Chris M. & Moore, Jessie L. (Eds.). (2017). *Critical transitions: Writing and the question of transfer*. University Press of Colorado and The WAC Clearinghouse.

<https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2016.0797>

Haswell, Richard B. (2005). “NCTE/CCCC’s Recent War on Scholarship,” *Written Communication* 22.2: 198-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741088305275367>

Bird, Barbara

“A Basic Writing Course Design to Promote Writer Identity: Three Analyses of Student Papers.” *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 32, no.1, 2013, pp. 62-96.

Bird shows that a WAW approach can be used effectively in developmental writing courses as well as FYC. She describes a basic writing course focused on helping students to connect their multiple identities to a developing academic writer identity. Reporting on three comparative analyses of forty-seven student papers, Bird argues that this course led to both significant writing development and some transfer of textual writer identity. Results also showed that the basic writing students performed better at developing and expressing their own ideas as intellectual contributions to scholarly conversations in their subsequent FYC courses than other first-year students. Bird argues that for such a focus to be effective, the course must also connect students’ home and scholarly identities and teach the features of academic discourse.

Keywords: WAW, basic writing, developmental writing, identity, academic discourse

Bird, Barbara, Doug Downs, I. Moriah McCracken, and Jan Rieman

Next Steps: New Directions for/in Writing about Writing. Utah State UP, 2019.

This edited collection demonstrates a wide variety of WAW pedagogies with twenty-three chapters detailing various assignments, pedagogies, curricula, and programs. Many of these brief chapters reflect on results from empirical research, while others offer insight into developing, implementing, and promoting WAW curricula, courses, or assignments. Those that do refer to results of empirical research (most often from one or a few course sections) relate evidence from qualitative methods ranging from case studies and focus groups to coded analysis of fairly large (100+ respondent) samples of reflections and other writing from students and instructors.

Authors argue that such studies show that WAW courses do improve students' understanding of writing concepts and rhetorical practices both in general and in the disciplines, develop increased mindfulness, reflection, and metacognitive awareness, and improve student self-efficacy and writer identity including for multilingual and international students. Other empirical evidence is used to support the use of WAW in undergraduate majors, professional writing courses, and in courses focused on multimodality and digital literacies. The collection includes the most comprehensive historical account of WAW to date (Bird, Downs, McCracken, & Rieman), as well as chapters theorizing the relation between WAW and both writing transfer (Nowacek) and threshold concepts (Wardle & Adler-Kassner). Student voices are also included not only as participants in empirical research but also as authors of their own reflections on the WAW courses they experienced (Gaier & Wallace; Sugimoto). *Next Steps* makes no attempt to promote any one approach to WAW nor to set out best practices, but it does present a rich and varied account of the many ways WAW has been implemented at a wide variety of institutions.

Keywords: WAW, threshold concepts, transfer, pedagogy, curricula

Blaauw-Hara, Mark, Carrie Strand Tebeau, Dominic Borowiak, and Jami Blaauw-Hara

"Is a Writing-about-Writing Approach Appropriate for Community College Developmental Writers in a Corequisite Class?" *Composition Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2020, pp. 54-73.

The authors report on using a WAW approach for corequisite-based developmental writing and, in particular, address the challenge of asking such students to read difficult academic scholarship. Based on a study of ten randomly selected students from four different sections of a corequisite developmental writing course at a two-year college, the authors conclude that developmental students not only can learn to read difficult scholarly texts but also substantially benefit from doing so, provided they receive adequate support for learning effective reading strategies such as those the corequisite model supplied. The authors note that students developed a generative sense of self-efficacy and a sense of ownership over their writing from the ideas they learned about and their ability to seek deeper levels of meaning from the readings. The authors conclude that "the WAW curriculum itself did what it was supposed to do: help students develop a much deeper understanding of writers and writing that was at once personal and portable to different writing contexts" (p. 67).

Keywords: WAW, basic writing, developmental writing, corequisite, reading, self-efficacy

Brown, Tessa

"What Else Do We Know? Translingualism and the History of SRTOL as Threshold Concepts in Our Field." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 71, no. 4, 2020, pp. 591-619.

Brown critiques WAW approaches that have excluded multilingual, diverse writers via colorblind, neoliberal pedagogies and suggests a translingual WAW pedagogy to address these problems. For her analysis, Brown draws on the scholarship of hip-hop literacy, "Students' Rights to Their Own Language," and translingualism, and she both employs and defends humanistic methods of storytelling, historicizing, and rhetorical analysis, which "when brought together" she calls "a constellation: the work of connecting the dots" (593). The main objects of Brown's critique are Wardle and Downs's *Writing about Writing* textbook (1st-3rd editions) and Adler-Kassner and Wardle's *Naming What We Know*, which Brown posits as "the writing studies

movement's two key texts" (591). Both books, she argues, "ghettoize the knowledge produced by reflection" and "frame identity as a learning opportunity" by hierarchizing research-based knowledge over experiential writerly knowledge and relegating identity to "prior experience," "not essential and ongoing facets of communicative context" (608). Brown then proposes four translingual threshold concepts that could form the basis of WAW approaches: language rights and privileges are political, "English Only" is political rather than a linguistic reality, literacy educators have held prescriptivism and descriptivism in tension, and students have a right to learn and communicate in all their languages.

Keywords: WAW, translingual, SRTOL, hip-hop, writing studies

DeJoy, Nancy C.

Process This: Undergraduate Writing in Composition Studies. Utah State UP, 2004.

DeJoy's theorization and model of undergraduates contributing to scholarship in composition articulates well many of the hypotheses and rationales that drive WAW pedagogy. DeJoy starts with the theorized assertion that traditional "process" pedagogy has grown oversimplified and stale, positioning students as objects upon which composition pedagogy is worked. Emphasizing participation and conversation, she asks why we don't imagine writing students as (and make them) contributors to the field. Using the example of a "Theories of Grammar and Composition" course taught to English/secondary-education students, DeJoy details how composition content should be as much the focus of composition instruction as writing processes themselves. Providing an early articulation of one of the main themes of writing-about-writing instruction, DeJoy distinguishes between "mastery" of how-to process instruction and "identification with" the material of the field and those who study it, arguing that the latter goal is ultimately more effective for both writing instruction and participation in critical literacy because such identification helps students build declarative knowledge and learn more expansively than traditional skills-based instruction has.

KEYWORDS; composition-studies, undergraduate, discourse-analysis, process, theory, research-practice, student-publication, WAW, engagement, critical-literacy, mastery, identification

Dew, Debra Frank

"Language Matters: Rhetoric and Writing I as Content Course." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2003, pp. 87-104.

Dew walks readers through theory underlying a program-wide WAW curriculum and its initial results for faculty, students, and the standing of Rhetoric & Composition (as a field) in her institution. She theorizes the shift to a WAW curriculum as movement from writing "with no content in particular" to writing "with specific content" where the content is the language practices of a specific community, in this case the community of rhetoric and writing studies. This "relinking of language and content" (88) helps FYC instructors regain control of writing curricula by focusing on rhetorically contingent form and sentence structure and aligns FYC with content courses in other disciplines. Dew writes from the perspective of a WPA, detailing the previous curriculum, the program review and assessment which led to the new "Language Matters" curriculum, the institutional core goals and WPA Outcomes that molded it, and its

shape and effects. Dew particularly attends to the growth of disciplinary identity and the professionalization of writing faculty that the curriculum brought about in her institution, demonstrating how the curricular shift “reconstitute[ed instructors’] labor as scholarly teaching” (97).

KEYWORDS: FYC, curriculum, program, program-design, rhetoric, WPA, Outcomes Statement, administration, WAW, reconceptualization, teacher-training, disciplinary, professionalization

Dieterle, Brandy, and Stephanie Vie

“Digital First-Year Composition: Integrating Multimodality into a Writing about Writing Approach.” *Journal of Global Literacies, Technologies, and Emerging Pedagogies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2015, pp. 276-289.

Dieterle and Vie advocate for the integration of multimodality into WAW curricula, for example by having students study writing in online communities and compose webtexts. The authors include rich reviews of literature on multimodal approaches to composition courses as well as WAW approaches. They argue that WAW courses that incorporate multimodality align well with established goals for WAW approaches, such as exploring threshold concepts in order to help students build transferable knowledge. To demonstrate the point, they review the threshold concepts outlined in Wardle and Downs’s textbook, *Writing about Writing* (2nd ed.) and point out how scholarship in multimodality links to each. The article then details a class test of a WAW curriculum incorporating readings and assignments emphasizing multimodality. It closes by discussing challenges and pedagogical implications for multimodally enhancing WAW curricula. For example, rather than learning writing studies scholarship *or* new modalities of writing, students must learn (and thus teachers must teach) both at the same time, along with, potentially, new tools and technologies.

KEYWORDS: Multimodal, multiliteracy, WAW, threshold concepts, FYC

Downs, Doug

“Teaching First-Year Writers to Use Texts: Scholarly Readings in Writing-about-Writing in First-Year Comp.” *Reader: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy*, vol. 60, 2010, pp. 19-50.

Based on a survey of current reading theory and his experience teaching first year students how to read scholarly articles in support of WAW curricula, Downs theorizes where students are as readers when they enter WAW FYC classes and how such classes can support students’ reading. The article frames reading instruction in FYC courses from an activity theory/situated learning perspective, examining how general education courses can teach reading using texts from specific activities—in the case of WAW curricula, the activity being the study of writing and rhetoric. After reviewing the challenges that typical student reading practices pose for WAW courses, the article takes up how to select readings for WAW instruction by ensuring their relevance to and accessibility for students, how to guide students in reconceiving reading as meaning-making rather than information-gathering, and how to model rhetorical reading in WAW classrooms and create situations in which students practice it.

KEYWORDS: WAW, FYC, readings, scholarly-article, pedagogy, activity-theory, situational, gen-ed, rhetorical, needs-analysis, teacher-training, meaning-making

Downs, Doug and Elizabeth Wardle

“Teaching About Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning FYC as Intro to Writing Studies.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 58, no.4, 2007, pp. 552-84.

Downs and Wardle describe WAW curricula that extend beyond students reading and writing about existing scholarship in rhetoric and composition (cf. Dew 2003) to having students conduct primary research on related topics. They frame the pedagogy as an “introduction to writing studies” that rejects the traditional FYC goal of teaching a universal academic discourse and instead seeks to teach (1) metacognition about writing via procedural and declarative knowledge of writing and (2) the activity of inquiry that centers universities and spans disciplines. The article theorizes shortcomings of traditional FYC courses in terms of genre and activity theory and describes WAW curricula that, the authors assert, better respond to these theories of how writing works and thus needs to be learned. It then reports on early results from the curriculum as taught in multiple sections at three institutions, illustrating effects through two particular student experiences in the course. The article concludes with challenges that the curriculum presents, including the challenging nature of the course for students, the resulting imperfections in student work, limited textbook support for the approach, and the need for extensive instructor preparation.

KEYWORDS: FYC, pedagogy, WAW, writing-studies, metacognition, activity-theory, genre-theory, curriculum, teacher training, academic, content-analysis, reflective, rhetorical, skill-transfer, WAC, WID

Hayes, Carol, Ed Jones, Gwen Gorzelsky, and Dana L. Driscoll

“Adapting Writing about Writing: Curricular implications of Cross-Institutional Data from the Writing Transfer Project.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2018, pp. 65–88.

In this report from part of their multi-institutional comparative transfer research, Hayes et al. conclude both that a WAW approach may be necessary to help students develop sophisticated understandings of concepts like genre and that not all WAW courses produce the same results. They code and compare student reflections from four courses across three institutions: two institutions use WAW curricula while the third institution, with data collected from two different theme-based courses, does not. In terms of frequency and sophistication of students’ reflections on audience, they found that the non-WAW students reflected more on target audiences than either WAW course and that students from one WAW course reflected on audience significantly more than those from the other. Concerning genre, however, they found that the non-WAW courses reflected on genre infrequently, and that when they did, their reflections revealed simplistic understandings of the concept. The WAW course that emphasized audience produced similar results. Only the genre-focused WAW course led students to reflect frequently and sophisticatedly about genre.

Keywords: WAW, genre, audience, transfer, metacognition, reflection

Johnson, Andrew

“On the Borderline: Writing about Writing, Threshold Concepts of Writing, and Credit-Bearing Academic Writing Subjects in Australia.” *Across the Disciplines*, vol. 16, 2019, no. 3, pp. 24–36. WAC Clearinghouse. <http://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/australasia/johnson2019.pdf>.

Johnson explores the applicability of WAW and threshold-concept approaches to reshaping Australian college writing instruction. With a tradition of linguistics-based scholarship including rhetorical genre studies, English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes, and disciplinary perspectives on literary learning, Australia has long preferred embedding literacy-learning support staff in disciplinary subject matter courses to the U.S. rhetoric and composition model of credit-bearing, stand-alone writing courses. The U.S. approach has historically presented the problems of 1) reducing literacy instruction to basic skills practice and 2) content—what students should write about while they practice skills. Using a case study of his own university’s experimental standalone writing course, Johnson demonstrates how these problems emerged there too, and theorizes that the value of a WAW approach lies not only in its ability to address these difficulties, but also in its reduction of the marginalization that skills- and transfer-oriented literacy instruction have encountered in both U.S. and Australian contexts.

KEYWORDS: Australian writing instruction, WAW, threshold concepts, FYC, WAC, WID

Looker, Samantha

“Writing about Language: Studying Language Diversity with First-Year Writers.” *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2016, pp. 176–198.

Looker describes an anti-racist WAW pedagogy focused on language diversity and an interrogation of language ideologies as important for all students, not just those whose Englishes tend to be seen as marked because of race, ethnicity, nationality, or class. Looker mixes a theoretical argument for anti-racist language-focused pedagogies with a description of her own course, which seeks to connect this interrogation of language ideologies with helping students develop deeper understandings of academic writing and make fuller use of all their linguistic resources in successfully navigating writing in the academy and beyond. Looker’s argument and description of her course demonstrates the adaptability and flexibility of WAW approaches and how WAW can be compatible with a more activist classroom agenda, in this case using a focus on language to counter white language hegemony.

Keywords: WAW, anti-racism, pedagogy, race, language, language ideology, white language hegemony, activism

McCracken, I. Moriah, and Valerie A. Ortiz

“Latino/a Student (Efficacy) Expectations: Reacting and Adjusting to a Writing-about-Writing Curriculum Change at an Hispanic Serving Institution.” *Composition Forum*, vol. 27, 2013. <https://compositionforum.com/issue/27/student-expectations.php>

McCracken and Ortiz explore a disparity between students' initially low self-efficacy in WAW courses and their ultimate success in them, as demonstrated in survey data and end-of-semester reflections. Framing their discussion as a refutation of the "rhetoric of lack" surrounding students at an HSI, the writers detail "how our WAW curriculum created discomfort for students by demanding they learn new procedures and practices for reading and writing, thereby challenging students' self-efficacy" (n.p.) but, in so doing, ultimately boosted that self-efficacy. The study addresses the concern that WAW approaches can bog students down in disciplinary minutiae unsuitable for FYC's general education mission, finding instead that their course positions students to "take themselves as readers and writers seriously" (n.p.). Survey and reflection data demonstrate that students in WAW classes were initially unsettled by the distance between what they'd come to expect of reading and writing in high school and what their college writing course in fact asked of them. The article draws from the study's datasets to recount student reactions to and strategies for success in WAW courses and demonstrate ways that the approach built student confidence and self-efficacy, even among "at-risk" populations.

KEYWORDS: WAW, Latino/a, self-efficacy, Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), academic writing

Read, Sarah, and Michael J. Michaud

"Writing about Writing and the Multimajor Professional Writing Course." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 66, no. 3, 2015, pp. 427-457.

Read and Michaud's germinal article re-examines the multi-major professional writing (MMPW) course in light of WAW pedagogical principles to articulate a "WAW-PW" pedagogy. The article is instrumental in framing the MMPW course as such, locating its specific role in university writing instruction as simultaneously ubiquitous and specialized, as well as in extending theorization of learning transfer ("transformation") of rhetorical knowledge in professional writing settings. Read and Michaud's framing of WAW-PW in a flagship composition journal (rather than a specialized tech comm journal) extends discussion of "composition" beyond academic and first-year writing to "professionals-as-writers" and workplaces. After taxonomizing existing MMPW approaches to fostering learning transformation as genre-based and client-based, Read and Michaud offer thorough case descriptions of their own instantiations of WAW-based MMPW course designs, "teaching workplace writing as a research(ed) activity" and "writing in a knowledge society." Ultimately, they argue, WAW-PW is "well suited to the exigency of the MMPW course" (453).

KEYWORDS: professional writing, writing about writing, multi-major professional writing, pedagogy, business-writing, knowledge-transfer, genre theory, knowledge

Ulmer, Jessica

"Writing about Writing at the Two-year College: Why Composition Instructors Need to Consider 'Introduction to Writing Studies' at the Two-year College." *The CEA Forum*, 47(2), 86-108, 2018.

Ulmer closely considers "the pedagogical appropriateness of WAW for two-year college students" (90) by arraying three discrete arguments for such appropriateness as well as a series of recommendations for implementation. Ulmer's arguments are that in the community-college context, a WAW approach can 1) help students with two of the greatest challenges they face,

understanding and then writing about challenging college-level texts (90); 2) help students reframe the ways in which they have come to think about writing, writing instruction, and themselves as writers (94); and 3) provide context that helps some students bridge a language gap with the conventions of academic writing and fluency with academic versions of English. She recommends particular implementations of WAW pedagogy, including prioritizing a two-course sequence and using assignments in which students can develop and work from their own data.

KEYWORDS: Two-year, WAW, Two-year-four-year, reading, analytical writing, analysis

Wardle, Elizabeth

“Understanding ‘Transfer’ from FYC: Preliminary results of a longitudinal study.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2007, pp. 65-85.

Wardle tracks seven students through two years of college courses after a WAW FYC course to investigate what knowledge they appear to be transferring to other college courses and how they did so. She begins by theorizing and reviewing evidence about transfer of knowledge (“generalization”) from composition courses, concluding that one reason that evidence of transfer may be difficult to find is that we’re looking for the “apples” students were taught when we need to be looking for the “apple pie” that they create in new settings (69). Her findings of self-reported transfer suggest that in their WAW course, students learned new textual features, management of research projects, how to read scholarly articles, and how to talk about writing in the university in disciplinary terms. At the same time, students in their first two years of college reported little need for their FYC learning, and generalization from it required “context-specific supports” (73).

KEYWORDS: skill-transfer, knowledge-transfer, FYC, longitudinal, data, WPA, case study, student-opinion, WAW, generalization, interview, textual feature, researching, scholarly-article, reading, disciplinary, academic, contextual

Wardle, Elizabeth, and Doug Downs

“Looking into Writing-about-Writing Classrooms.” *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice*, edited by Debora Coxwell-Teague and Ronald F. Lunsford, Parlor P, 2014, pp. 276-320.

In this chapter, Wardle and Downs update and extend their theorization of WAW. They highlight how WAW arises out of their understanding of writing as situated (in that it is afforded and constrained by the social environment in which it emerges), motivated (by writers’ purposes and therefore never fully objective), contingent (on the affordances and constraints of a particular situation rather than universal rules), always also afforded and constrained by its material reality, and epistemic (in that it generates rather than merely inscribes new knowledge). They reaffirm their position that the appropriate goal for a writing course is to teach students about this nature of writing rather than trying to teach them some general procedure for how to write. They conclude the theoretical portion of the chapter with a dialogue between the two co-authors that highlights some of the differences between them and provides sample syllabi for their most recent FYC courses.

Keywords: WAW, FYC, theory, pedagogy, genre, discourse community, activity

Wells, Jennifer

“They Can Get There from Here: Teaching for Transfer through a ‘Writing about Writing’ Course.” *The English Journal*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2011, pp. 57–63.

Wells describes a high-school English elective course, “Writing Studies,” which focused on teaching knowledge about literacy transferable from HS to college settings by preparing students as peer tutors in a high school writing center. The Writing Studies course used a WAW approach to guide student inquiry into “what is good writing?” and analysis of “purpose/audience/genre/stance/design” aspects of rhetorical situation, and then to exploration of discipline-specific writing via genre analysis and sample articles. Wells includes a range of student reactions to the curriculum. The article does not include data on whether students ultimately transferred resulting knowledge to college settings.

KEYWORDS: High-School, School-College, Secondary-School, Transferability, Knowledge-Transfer, Academic-Literacy, WAW, WCenter, Peer-Tutor

Whicker, John H. and Samuel Stinson

“Axiology and Transfer in Writing about Writing: Does It Matter Which Way We WAW?” *Composition Forum*, vol. 45, Fall 2020.

Whicker and Stinson review over 40 published accounts of WAW courses, curricula, and programs to map a typology and axiology of WAW approaches. From these, the authors consider likely results of varying approaches, with a particular eye toward the likelihood of transfer among WAW variations. By emphasizing different knowledge and values, WAW approaches’ results inevitably vary, including in terms of both what knowledge they seek to transfer and how that transfer is assumed to occur, but the inclusive spirit that has fostered rapid growth of a wide range of WAW curricula has not sufficiently attended to such differences. Whicker and Stinson develop a multi-axis heuristic, clustering designs according to which writing knowledge is emphasized (language/literacy, context analysis, process, and academic discourse) and plotting those designs and clusters on a three-axis frame (attention to the social, the political, and learning transfer). Thereby, they account not just for the subject matter of a given design but also the ways and degrees in which the subject matter is inflected by the values of transfer, writing as social, and writing as political. The article extensively analyzes published accounts of WAW instruction, revealing “evident differences in how each approach attempts to facilitate transfer that raise certain questions” (n.p.) for ongoing WAW research. The writers offer these questions as a research agenda for better understanding the relation between WAW approaches and learning transfer.

KEYWORDS: WAW, Knowledge-Transfer, Axiology

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