

EDITORS' COLUMN

The start and end of each academic year offer opportunities to step back and reflect on our experiences, professional priorities, and goals. We do our best to find moments to evaluate our wins and setbacks in the classroom, to reflect on the relationships we've formed with students and colleagues, and to reconnect with the values that steer us.

In this issue, all of the authors are engaged in processes of reflection and re-evaluation across a number of fronts. The inquiries they have embarked on in the pages that follow prompt questions about key practices and pillars of our work: what does true equity look like for developmental writers and for developmental educators? Are our placement practices equitable? What about our institutions and our hiring practices? Our authors reflect on the paths that lead developmental educators to and away from the profession, and the attitudes and expectations that encourage us to stay.

In "Bringing a Folding Chair to the Table: Building Towards Authentic Equity In Professional Conversations about Developmental Education," Emily K. Suh and Bethany E. Sweeney do a deep dive into what equity means in the context of basic writing by examining key documents of four organizations that have sought to articulate a relationship between developmental education, equity, and their organizational values. They urge us to become more engaged in a time of resistance to higher education more broadly, arguing that developmental educators can't sit back and wait for professional organizations to recognize and validate us. Their analysis offers insights that can be applied to our own contexts, encouraging us to examine what we ourselves mean by equity, and prodding us to become more involved in shaping professional discourse at our own institutions and beyond.

Jennifer Burke Reifman highlights challenges with student self-placement in "It's Not a Neutral Choice: Implications of Student Self-Placement in a Basic Writing Course." While self-placement is characterized in much existing scholarship as an equitable strategy, Burke Reifman argues that it places the burden of labor and proof on the students alone (53). She uses the concept of "Possible Academic Selves," or the way students imagine their future identities in college, including their ability and potential to succeed, to help explain some of the challenges with self-placement. Her analysis of the short essays students wrote to challenge their placement at the University of California Davis suggests that placement in basic writing can disrupt students' envisioned academic identities, even undermining

their sense of themselves as students who belong at the institution to which they have been admitted. She challenges us to consider how deeply academic placement can affect students' self-perceptions and the degree to which our placement processes can work against the equity they intend to promote.

Candace Chambers and Spencer Salas' article, "'I come from a different generation': Quare Dreaming and Career-Making in Basic Writing," looks at equity on a very personal level, examining the life and career decisions of "Deborah Welch" (a pseudonym). As a young Black woman from Little Rock, Arkansas, Welch came from a line of Black Southern school teachers and dreamed of becoming a professor, yet she ran headlong into the realities of the academic job market and contingent labor in higher education. Raised in an environment where she was surrounded by Black love and community, Welch nearly completed her PhD, but after teaching as an adjunct faculty member and starting an educational consulting firm, she ultimately chose a career working for Homeland Security. Using the concept of quareness, Chambers and Salas reframe her refusal of traditional teaching roles as a generational act of agency, reimagining of what it means to "be somebody" and challenging us to consider what equity means for our colleagues and ourselves.

Rounding out Issue 44.1 is William DeGenaro's "Errors & Excitations: William Steig's *The Bad Speller*." DeGenaro works in the vein of Mina Shaughnessy to reframe non-standard spelling as generative rather than as simply erroneous, not as a matter of convention but as a matter of style. DeGenaro extends Shaughnessy's inquiry into non-academic contexts, focusing on William Steig's 1970 children's book *The Bad Speller*, which features whimsical illustrations and captions with unconventional spellings, transforming error into playful expression. *Bad Speller* "embodies Shaughnessy's core argument about the internal logic and consistency of error" (105); in fact, DeGenaro characterizes it as "a companion piece to *Errors & Expectations*, a taxonomy of what we do when we stray from (or mock) convention" (112). DeGenaro argues that Steig's intentional misspellings demonstrate the aesthetic and affective potential of error, encouraging us to approach error and convention with a spirit of playfulness.

The articles in this issue showcase the range of research and storytelling that has defined *JBW* scholarship over the years. From compelling individual narratives that contextualize singular texts and experiences within larger questions facing our field to bird's eye views of our classrooms and professional organizations, these pieces are each calls to action in their own way. They urge us not to treat our professional choices as merely "neutral"; instead

they highlight opportunities to invite more power, agency, and playfulness into our professional lives.

This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the *Journal of Basic Writing* (1975-2025), which we will commemorate next year with a two-volume anniversary issue that looks back at our history and forward into our shared futures. At this pivotal moment, we are honored to serve as *JBW*'s latest editors and want to acknowledge the talented team we have working largely behind the scenes. Seth Graves has served as production editor for the journal for the past several years and stepped down this summer, handing the reins to Zach Muhlbauer. Following a long-running practice at *JBW*, both are English doctoral candidates at the CUNY Graduate Center. Seth has brought his keen eye to the role as a former magazine editor and journalist; his good humor and editing skills have kept the journal on an even keel, and we're indebted to him for it. Zach brings a wealth of design, teaching, and tech training from the Graduate Center's Teaching and Learning Center and Interactive Technology and Pedagogy (ITP) Certificate program; we're fortunate to have him join our team this year as we set out to create a more nimble, accessible, forward-looking feel and design. Since 2023, we have also welcomed two Assistant Editors, Charissa Che, Assistant Professor of English at John Jay College, and Mudiwa Pettus, Assistant Professor of English at Medgar Evers College. Charissa brings expertise in English language learning and translanguaging, and Mudiwa in rhetorical education and Black intellectual history. Beyond the scholarly range of their academic backgrounds, they both have brought new energy and insight to our broader vision for the journal, while helping us honor the journal's rich history.

Finally, in that vein, we acknowledge the amazing life and contributions of our late colleague Lynn Quitman Troyka, who passed away on September 11, 2024. Among her many notable roles in our field, Lynn served as editor of *JBW* from 1986-1988. Lynn was a changemaker at the journal, shepherding *JBW* into a formal peer review structure, broadening the journal's focus to engage with wider issues in the field, and publishing landmark articles, including David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University." Following her tenure as the journal's sole editor, the duties of editorship began to be shared by two people, which suggests the ways she expanded the responsibilities and vision of the editor's role. We are indebted to Lynn for the ways her contributions have shaped *JBW* for the last three decades.

—**Lisa Blankenship** and **Dominique Zino**