Bubbling vs. writing: Bridging the gap between fourth grade writing standards and composition theory

Pamela Lynn Dobbins

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BUBBLING VS. WRITING: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FOURTH GRADE WRITING STANDARDS AND COMPOSITION THEORY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Pamela Lynn Dobbins

September 2006
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ABSTRACT

As a fourth grade teacher in a public elementary school, I am very interested in negotiating the conflicts I see between the curriculum I am expected to teach and what I know about current composition pedagogy. Currently, fourth grade writing curricula in California public schools are dictated by the California State English Language Arts Standards, which are measured by the California Achievement Test. In this thesis, I explore the relationship between state standards and what compositionists identify as “meaningful” writing and learning. My exploration includes both textual scholarship and my ten years of teaching experience in a California public elementary school.

I begin with an overview of how the current fourth grade curriculum implicitly demands a pedagogy of teaching the discrete elements of writing apart from writing itself. I then consider the apparent mismatch between the implied pedagogy of the standards and current composition scholarship, which suggests that through the study of language, students learn about reading, writing, themselves, and the world around them. Finally, I show how collaboration pedagogy and its current application to
composition theory can under-gird fourth grade classroom pedagogies in ways that allow teachers to meet standards yet create meaningful learning and writing experiences for their students.

Based on my research, I developed a thematic schedule of topics that will guide reading, inquiry, discussions, and writing in "meaningful" ways. These projects include collaborative investigation assignments that offer an alternative to current standard-based pedagogy.

This thesis will contribute to the work a number of K-12 California educators are doing to bridge the chasm between state demands and current composition theory to provide meaningful and enjoyable writing and learning opportunities that will foster competent and confident fourth grade writers in ways that worksheets and multiple-choice questions cannot.
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Currently, fourth grade writing curricula in California public schools are dictated by the California State English Language Arts (ELA) Standards. Students, teachers, principals, districts, and counties are all held accountable to these state standards, which are measured by the California Achievement Test. This CAT-6 uses multiple-choice questions on language conventions and writing strategies coupled with an essay response to a short prompt to measure students' writing proficiencies. Proponents of the standards argue that higher CAT-6 scores are evidence of increased student achievement. Others argue that the scores may measure achievement but not necessarily the achievement of better writing. Thus they contend that students may be testing better, but not writing better.

As a fourth grade teacher in a public elementary school, I am very interested in negotiating the conflicts I see between the curriculum I am expected to teach and what I know about current composition pedagogy. Although the state guidelines and curriculum do not explicitly mandate a particular pedagogy, they imply a pedagogy that seems
counter to best practices advocated by composition scholars. In this thesis, I would like to explore the relationship between state standards and what compositionists identify as "meaningful" writing and learning. My exploration will include both textual scholarship and my ten years of teaching in one California public elementary school.

This thesis will contribute to the work a number of K-12 California educators are doing to bridge the chasm between state demands and current composition theory. Fourth grade is a pivotal year because students move from learning to read to reading to learn; they are curious and they want to make their own discoveries and connections. Thus writing pedagogies should provide students with opportunities for discovery about themselves, their language, and the world around them. My goal is to provide meaningful and enjoyable writing and learning opportunities that will foster competent and confident fourth grade writers in ways that worksheets and multiple-choice questions cannot.

I will begin by providing an overview of the current fourth grade curriculum, noting how it implicitly demands a pedagogy of teaching the discrete elements of writing apart
from writing itself. I will examine *The English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools*, *The Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools*, the Houghton Mifflin standard-based language arts curriculum that my school district mandates for teaching writing, and the California State Achievement test. In doing so, I show how these standards also imply a pedagogy directive that reduces writing to skill and drill and limits writing opportunities beyond completing worksheets and bubbling answers.

The English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools

The California Content Standards, adopted in November of 1997, were designed to create uniformity in the California public school education. The State Board of Education states that these standards support a "vision of a comprehensive language arts program" and "knowledge acquisition" as "a part of literacy development" (ELA Standards iv). Additionally, the state claims that these standards "describe what, not how, to teach" and "help insure equality and access for all" (iv). These visions are important to keep in focus when examining the writing
standards themselves.

The complete California English Language Arts writing standards for fourth grade are presented in Figure 1.

Fourth Grade Writing Standards

1.0 Writing Strategies

Students write clear, coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing successive versions).

Organization and Focus

1.1 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view based upon purpose, audience, length, and format requirements.

1.2 Create multiple-paragraph compositions:

a. Provide an introductory paragraph.

b. Establish and support a central idea with a topic sentence at or near the beginning of the first paragraph.

c. Include supporting paragraphs with simple facts, details, and explanations.

d. Conclude with a paragraph that summarizes the points.

e. Use correct indention.

1.3 Use traditional structures for conveying information (e.g., chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, posing and answering a question).

Penmanship

1.4 Write fluidly and legibly in cursive or joined italic.

Research and Technology

1.5 Quote or paraphrase information sources, citing them appropriately.

1.6 Locate information in reference texts by using organizational features (e.g., prefaces, appendixes).

1.7 Use various reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, card catalog, encyclopedia, online information) as an aid to writing.

1.8 Understand the organization of almanacs, newspapers, and periodicals and how to use those print materials.

1.9 Demonstrate basic keyboarding skills and familiarity with computer terminology (e.g., cursor, software, memory, disk drive, hard drive).
Evaluation and Revision

1.10 Edit and revise selected drafts to improve coherence and progression by adding, deleting, consolidating, and rearranging text.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students write compositions that describe and explain familiar objects, events, and experiences. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the drafting, research, and organizational strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0.

Using the writing strategies of grade four outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

2.1 Write narratives:
   a. Relate ideas, observations, or recollections of an event or experience.
   b. Provide a context to enable the reader to imagine the world of the event or experience.
   c. Use concrete sensory details.
   d. Provide insight into why the selected event or experience is memorable.

2.2 Write responses to literature:
   a. Demonstrate an understanding of the literary work.
   b. Support judgments through references to both the text and prior knowledge.

2.3 Write information reports:
   a. Frame a central question about an issue or situation.
   b. Include facts and details for focus.
   c. Draw from more than one source of information (e.g., speakers, books, newspapers, other media sources).

2.4 Write summaries that contain the main ideas of the reading selection and the most significant details.

Written and Oral English Language Conventions

The standards for written and oral English language conventions have been placed between those for writing and for listening and speaking because these conventions are essential to both sets of skills.

1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions
Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

Sentence Structure
1.1 Use simple and compound sentences in writing and speaking.
1.2 Combine short, related sentences with appositives, participial phrases, adjectives, ad-verbs, and prepositional phrases.

Grammar
1.3 Identify and use regular and irregular verbs, adverbs, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions in writing and speaking.

Punctuation
1.4 Use parentheses, commas in direct quotations, and apostrophes in the possessive case of nouns and in contractions.
1.5 Use underlining, quotation marks, or italics to identify titles of documents.

Capitalization
1.6 Capitalize names of magazines, newspapers, works of art, musical compositions, organizations, and the first word in quotations when appropriate.

Spelling
1.7 Spell correctly roots, inflections, suffixes and prefixes, and syllable constructions.

Figure 1. Fourth Grade Writing Standards

Even visually, the document points to a pedagogy of teaching discrete elements. Indeed, teachers often interpret the standards as a checklist, literally placing a checkmark next to the standard when they teach it. These standards are then tested as discrete elements, and students often score well. Thus, while assessment measure may offer evidence of mastery, this mastery in terms often fails to infiltrate student writing. For example, students may earn perfect scores on standards 1.1 and 1.2 in the
Written and Oral Language Conventions section yet write essays full of sentence fragments and comma splices.

Additionally, even though students may able to recognize and use standards 1.1 through 1.7 of Written and Oral English Language Conventions in worksheet and multiple choice format, they continue make many of these errors in their writing. Therefore, drilling students on the rules that they "already know" does not positively impact their writing.

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools K-12

The fourth grade writing standards discussed in the last section describe the writing content. The Framework then "elaborates on those standards and describes the curriculum and the instruction necessary to help students achieve the levels of mastery" (vi). The California State Board of Education asserts that the standards represent an "ambitious task" and that the framework "offers a blueprint for implementation of the language arts content standards" (iv). The blueprint includes researched-based strategies for presenting the curriculum. For each standard, the framework suggests instructional objectives, instructional designs, instructional delivery, assessment, universal
access, and the instructional materials. In addition to the curricular approaches to teaching each standard, the framework provides some overall suggestions for what effective language arts instruction should include.

Effective language arts instruction, according to the framework, should include a daily two hour block of instruction in the fourth grade. During this time, language arts instruction should include word-attack skills, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, text handling and strategic reading skills, writing skills and their application, listening and speaking skills and their application. These are all listed separately, suggesting that they be taught separately.

For example, the Framework provides instructional support for teaching Writing Standard 1.10 (Edit and revise selected drafts to improve coherence and progression by adding, deleting, consolidating, and rearranging text). The Framework has a “Note” at the beginning of the lesson: “Keep in mind the two related objectives in this standard—revising and editing. Students will need explicit instruction in both” (107). The Framework suggests that the lesson begin by introducing “a dimension for revision (e.g., adding)” (107). Next it suggests introducing
another dimension, and so on. The Framework suggests using multiple models. Although the Framework does not specifically spell out how to teach revision, it suggests a plan that places it away from the context of any genuine student writing. Thus revision is taught as an exercise without considering a real purpose or real audience.

Even in the framework's guidelines, each standard's guidelines for teaching are listed separately from any other language arts standard, implying no integration of language arts skills. Thus, to meet the suggested curricular guidelines of the framework, publishers produce textbooks and workbooks that provide assignments to practice these skills discretely as well.

Adopted Standards-Based Curriculum

Our district has adopted the Houghton Mifflin program to provide classroom lessons that support the state standards. However, teachers in our district have found the HM program insufficient in several areas. To begin, the program is fast paced. Each story takes about 5-7 days to cover. During that time, there are reading strategies, comprehension, spelling, grammar, study skills, vocabulary, and language skills to teach each day, again in isolated,
discrete units that consume most of the language arts block of time. Then, although the program includes daily writing assignments, these are also isolated, and do not build on prior knowledge. Most of the assignments produce no more than five sentences, and much of the writing is done as workbook fill-in like the other skills. Also, because grammar and spelling are taught in complete isolation, students do not make the connections between grammar, spelling, and writing. Finally, the pace leaves no time to discuss specific writing features with individual and small groups of students. Thus, although all of these language arts skills are essential elements in the California ELA standards and are tested on the CAT-6, the HM program offers them in such short and discrete packages that they rarely infiltrate students' independent writing.

Complicating these issues is the fact that writing seems to be the most difficult subject for many elementary school teachers to teach. Many teachers have complained about the lack of writing in the HM in addition to their own lack of knowledge of "how to" teach writing. To assist in this matter, our district adopted a supplemental writing resource, Learning Headquarters. The LHQ writing resource provides graphic organizers for students to use in planning
each step of the writing process, for each mode of writing. Many teachers feel comforted by this resource. They now feel that they have an effective tool to teach writing with. Even though these tools have helped some students, they often feel cumbersome, and more important, they support mode based processes that produce formulaic writing.

Unfortunately, also, students become so reliant on these graphic organizers and steps, that when confronted with a cold-write or timed-writing prompt, they are unsure of how to approach it. Although they had been producing "perfect" five-paragraph essays with all expected elements of writing (introductions, topic sentences, details, examples, and conclusions), they fail to apply even these formulaic approaches to the timed-writing prompts and instead write one long blurb that lacks organization and focus. Therefore, even this limited way of testing mastery suggests that students do not transfer learning from one scene to another.
Academic Testing of the Mastery of Standards

However, the ways that mastery is measured raises an additional and related concern. The State Board of Education has published a blueprint for the testing of the ELA standards. It is interesting to note that students' mastery of written and oral language conventions is determined by how many of the eighteen multiple choice questions are answered correctly. Specifically, for standards WC 1.1 and 1.2 that deal with sentence structure, there are five questions. Grammar is tested by four questions. Punctuation is tested by three items. Capitalization is tested by two questions and spelling by four. The standards and the Houghton Mifflin curriculum imply a pedagogy of teaching language as discrete skills that seem to mirror the way the skills are tested on the CAT. Actual writing is only examined by the state in fourth, seventh and eleventh grades and measures only one of the writing applications.

In fourth grade, the writing applications (genres) include four elements: narratives, response to literature, summaries, and informative reports; however, information report writing is never tested. Thus to prepare students for the state test, most classroom writing is limited to
narratives, responses to literature, and summaries.
Unfortunately, teachers end up teaching in ways that allow
students to test better, but too often they do not teach in
ways that help students learn to be critical thinkers,
readers, and writers.

Initial Criticism of the Writing Standards, Framework,
Curriculum, and Testing

The ELA standards are not inherently bad. The
standards themselves actually can be useful but not as
currently presented and interpreted. One reason is that
they are presented as a one-size-fits-all, and another is
that they are delivered as skill and drill format separate
from actual writing. Thus, the standards are not taught
consistently because teachers interpret them differently.
Most the time, an extreme isolation of standards is taught
in skill and drill format. Most often, textbooks and
accompanying practice books are followed virtually
verbatim. In some cases, a specific standard is chosen,
and the teacher selects a number of lessons and activities
to teach and practice the individual standard until it is
mastered. Regardless, the content is delivered void of
context and does not take into account the social nature of learning, reading, and writing as revealed through current composition theory.
CHAPTER TWO
IDENTIFYING THE GAP BETWEEN COMPOSITION SCHOLARSHIP AND THE
TRADITIONAL METHODS OF TEACHING THE FOURTH
GRADE STANDARDS

In this chapter, I will consider the apparent mismatch between the implied pedagogy of the standards and current composition scholarship. In particular, I will show how the "social turn" in composition scholarship recognizes writing as a complex social activity rather than as a set or sequence of isolated skills.

In the 1980’s, compositionists explored the "social nature of writing." As composition scholars continued to research cognitive processes in the 1980’s, they widened their interests to examine how these processes are informed by social circumstances. Studying all aspects of language use, they were interested in understanding the "creation of knowledge" not just the dissemination of it (Bedford 9). Thus they joined scholars in many fields to seek an "account of discourse—language in use—that acknowledges the power of rhetoric to help create a community’s worldview, knowledge, and interpretive practices" (9). Much of this research has "revealed and analyzed the social creation of
disciplinary knowledge through discourse” (10).
Scholarship placed an increased value on rhetoric in ways other than as a “stylistic prescription.” This research was the tipping point for the “social turn,” and from this point on, social construction was “widely accepted as a theoretical basis for understanding language use” (11). Brodkey’s statement is representative of current composition scholarship: “Writing is a social act. People write to and for other people” (Lunsford and Ede 20). This shift in scholarship and in the field of composition has also begun to infiltrate pedagogy as writing classrooms have moved “from teacher-centered to student-centered learning models” (112).

Thus the “social turn” was an important scholarly and pedagogical ideological shift for the field of composition. Scholarship shifted from trying to determine forms for teaching writing to understanding that writing emerges from social experiences for social audiences. Therefore, fostering “meaningful” writing does not emerge from teaching writing processes, but from eliciting discussions about topics to generate thoughts and inner conversations to produce writing. This turn suggests that for students to learn about reading, writing, themselves, and the world
around them, they must engage in contextualized discursive exchanges rather than the study of forms, contents, and contexts separated from each other and taught as discrete units. As Severino says, "skills cannot be taught, learned or practiced in a social vacuum or politically neutral environment...because skills are embedded in rhetorical situations with purposes, audiences, and exigencies" (France 145). Her work points to the collision between both the skills-based instruction and the mode-based instruction that the standards invite. This collision demands study through the lens of composition pedagogy. Bleich, for instance, advocates the idea that the writing classroom be one in which students engage in the complex study of language in use. In this study of language, students use and exchange language in an effort to notice what informs language choices and how language makes particular meanings in particular situations. Similarly, Foster and Salvatori's research on the reading and writing connection supports both Bleich's and Severino's theories, offering pedagogies that provide students with opportunities to learn about language through social interaction, thinking, reading, and writing. Their theories support the ongoing scholarship that continues to
explore cognition and epistemology to inform a pedagogy that supports the social act of writing.

The largest gap between current composition scholarship and the fourth grade writing standards is the separation of reading and writing. Composition scholars commonly justify using readings in their classrooms “on two principles—their modeling effect and their stimulative impact” (Foster 518). They argue that integrating reading and writing can encourage students “to adapt text structures and rhetorical strategies for their own writing (the modeling effect), and help stimulate students’ thinking about their roles as writers” (518). In contrast, when the Frameworks and Standards invite teaching reading and writing separately and broken down into discrete skills, a wide range of teaching and learning opportunities are lost.

Alternatively, carefully selected reading selections used in the language arts block can foster both reading and writing instruction “by enabling student writers to adapt textual strategies from their reading to their writing” (518). Research demonstrates that “because of the crossovers between the two processes’ of reading and writing, the ‘cognitive capacities of the students’ develop
best when teachers 'rejoin the teaching of reading and writing, and view one as a mechanism for developing the other" (518). These ideas are better explained by Salvatori’s work in which she:

[E]mphasizes not only the crossover effects of readings in a writing course, but also their stimulative effects on students’ thinking and planning. Mediating "about how one’s thinking ignites and is ignited by the thoughts of others" says Salvatori, "justifies the presence of reading in composition classrooms." Such stimulation means that "young readers and writers gradually develop a positive view of themselves as in control of the processes involved,... ‘to read with a 'writer's eye' and to write with a 'reader's eye.'" (Foster 519)

Teaching students to write with a "reader's eye" cannot be effectively taught in a fill in the blank or multiple choice fashion. It can, however, be taught in context and in conjunction with language study. She also states that "[w]hen students are encouraged to 'pay attention to the ways in which they read,... they will discover how readerly moves respond to writerly moves" (Foster 519). In other words, by paying attention to how they respond as readers,
interconnectedness[:... [f]irst ...reading is a form of thinking...[s]econd, learning to recapture in one’s writing that imperceptible moment when our reading of a text began to attribute to it—began to produce—a particular ‘meaning’ makes it possible to consider what leads us to adopt and to deploy certain interpretive practices (Salvatori 445). She also alludes to the fact that if teachers point out these connections, if they note explicitly what is going on in the thinking and connecting process, they can help students acquire the metacognitive practices that will allow them to make future such connections.

The Framework does suggest that readings be used to compose the same types of texts, but there is not a mention of generating thinking (Framework 104-105). Too often thus, texts are just read by students for superficial comprehension. Texts are not examined for how they make students think, not discussed for the purpose of thinking, and not discussed for how they can impact future readings and writings. Their readings do not shape their writings, because the climate for doing so is not induced.

If reading and writing are reciprocal acts, both informing thinking and conversation, then the ELA standards need to be considered as a whole and not just as separate
reading and writing standards. For example, instead of "covering" a text book by starting at the beginning of the text at the beginning of the year and working chronologically or sequentially through the book from cover to cover, fourth grade language arts students should read a variety of texts for different purposes. According to current composition scholarship, students need opportunities to learn about language through social interaction, thinking, reading, and writing.

Although some of the worksheet activities use the theme of the week’s story, the standard based curriculum presses teachers to teach spelling, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, reading, and writing as discrete skills instead of contextualizing them in writing. Thus, each skill is taught and practiced in isolation and tested by filling in blanks and bubbling answers, decreasing the likelihood that students will become better language users, thinkers, or readers.

For example, essentially, fourth grade students are expected to write multiple paragraph compositions, using secondary sources, for four specific genres of writing using grade level appropriate language conventions, with editing and revision occurring between drafts. On one
hand, these demands seem general enough to tackle in a variety of ways, yet on the other hand, they are presented in ways that invite greater attention to form and order than to rhetorical effectiveness. For example, Standard 1.2, "create multiple-paragraph compositions," lists five components that are to be included in the composition, and these components often become interpreted as a five-paragraph essay. In fact, "the five paragraph essay is entrenched in the language arts curriculum. It is assumed that students need it for future academic work, and it is assumed that it is a model of objectively good writing form" (Fairbrother 14). First introduced fifty years ago, the five paragraph essay was, in fact, "a model of the process of empirical science" (14). The aim was to not "waste" words. Conciseness was valued. In fact, in an effort to prescribe conciseness, teachers would "even prescribe a set number of sentences in each paragraph. Form controls, if not determines content" (14). Five-paragraph essays are not terrible; in fact, they certainly serve a purpose for some writing tasks. However, when practicing this organizing device becomes formulaic, when it trumps thinking about how different ideas might be organized differently for different audiences, it
constrains students' thought processes. Therefore, unless students also learn that this is a specific form that is prized in specific settings, teaching it could limit their thinking and writing at the fourth grade level and teach them that this is how they are expected to write for the rest of their academic lives.

Another large gap between current composition scholarship and traditional methods of teaching the fourth grade writing standards has to do with the writing applications. In fourth grade, students are required to master four forms of writing: narratives, summaries, responses to literature, and information reports. Although each of the four has value, they often become translated as modes and taught as discrete forms, again limiting students' abilities to think and write in a variety of contexts. Because instruction focuses on mastering forms, it slights teaching in terms of language and rhetorical effectiveness and provides students few ways to think about and write for a variety of rhetorical purposes.

In contrast, current composition scholarship emphasizes the study of language, through which students can learn how to think and write in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. Bleich informs us that "[t]o use the
language means to teach and learn it" (Bleich 117). As a pedagogy, he suggests that, "the teaching and learning of language is mutual, collective, and reciprocal, as well as individual. It is neither just reciprocal nor just individual but both" (117). This view of language use and instruction is counter to the standards directive of teaching a standard by means of direct instruction and having students complete worksheets for mastery. In current composition scholarship, it is understood that the direct teaching of skills does not positively impact writing. This view of composition theory is counter to the standard-based instruction as prescribed, for it teaches students about spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation by using language for particular rhetorical purposes, not by filling in blanks on worksheets. Following Bruffee, for example, teachers can see how fourth graders need to learn socially:

Reflective thought is public or social conversation internalized...[w]e first experience and learn "the skill and partnership of conversation" in the external arena of social exchange with other people. Only then do we learn to displace that "skill and partnership" by playing silently ourselves, in
imagination, the parts of all participants in the conversation. (Bruffee 639)

In other words, students need to interact with language by reading it, writing it, and talking about it in order to learn about it. It follows that:

Since what we experience as reflective thought is related causally to social conversation (we learn one from the other), the two are related functionally. That is, because that is internalized conversation, thought and conversation tend to work largely in the same way. (639)

There is very little conversation involved in skill and drill which makes me question the pedagogical implications of such activities and if they have any impact on students writing. According to current, postmodern composition theory, students need to have conversations about language in order to learn about language and for the language to inform their writing.

Furthermore, the research also points out that students need to have a wide range of writing opportunities to enjoy in order to grow as writers (Clark 68). Fourth grade standards, however, only focus on four modes of writing that the framework suggests should be taught in
isolation, one mode per trimester of the school year, which disallows choice and constrains positive learning experiences. Instead of learning only three modes of writing and separately reading thirty different texts, fourth grade students should study language and the reading and writing connection. According to current composition scholarship students need opportunities to learn about language through social interaction, thinking, reading, and writing. The next chapter will discuss collaboration as a means of creating this kind of social interaction.
CHAPTER THREE

COLLABORATION: A BRIEF HISTORY TO CONTEXTUALIZE TODAY’S WRITING CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY

The meaning of the term ‘collaborative writing’ is far from self-evident.

Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford

As the epigraph may suggest, collaboration pedagogy is not easy to define, and certainly it is not the only way to approach composition, but I would like to explore it as one way of enacting composition’s “social turn” as teachers implement California Frameworks and Standards in fourth grade curricula. First of all, it is useful to understand a bit of the history of collaboration pedagogy in order to have a better idea about how to implement it. In some ways, standardization seems to be a perpetual process at all levels of education as evidenced by the evolution of collaboration in classrooms. In addition, it seems necessary to sort out the terminology, discuss the meanings, and explain the pedagogical differences between, for example, collaborative writing, workshopping, and peer response. Finally, I will draw out some implications for
teaching. I will make some suggestions as to how I could put my new found knowledge, research, and theories into my own practice. I will fuse some of the approaches, assessments, and assignments from my readings together in a way that suggests some useful pedagogical approaches for me.

History of Collaboration Pedagogy

Traces of collaboration pedagogy can be found back to the 1930s. During the Depression Era, collaborative group work was seen as a way to foster the "individual." It was a time of "expressive and social rhetorics" (Holt. 540). It was believed that "knowledge [was] ...to be obtained by, people interacting" (542). The authority was removed from the teacher and placed onto the groups. In many cases, teachers were encouraged to leave the room. The true test of effective collaborative groups was that the students would not notice when the teacher reentered the room (547). "Interdependence" was the goal. The individual student relied on the group for his/her own growth. There was a constant pedagogical struggle to balance both the roles of the group and the individual (543). To this end, "[t]he attempts of some composition theorists in the 1930s to
posit pragmatic, socially-based epistemology were at odds with their simultaneously held Romantic notions of the individual as a separate, autonomous being" (543). There was a genuine fear of losing the "individual" by "privileging social values" (544). Some of the influential writers and proponents of the collaborative ventures at this time were John Dewey, Frank Earl Ward, Charles Rossier, Edith Jones, and B.J.R. Stopler. For the most part, they were working toward a progressive education. In other words, their goal was to promote a democratic society in which all citizens are informed participants in social, political, and economic decisions that will affect their lives. Towards the end of the 1930s, however, growing concern about the war left both teachers and students even more concerned about the "individual."

In the 1940's, progressive education continued to be the focus of education as well as vocational education. However amidst World War II and Cold War anticipation, very little was done in the way of collaboration. In fact, in "Collaborative Learning and Composition: Boon or Bane?" Donald C. Stewart informs us that:

Those of us who lived during that period and were old enough to be interested in what was going on
remember what ugly connotations attended the word collaborator. In the occupied countries, this was a person who assisted the Nazis, even to the point of betraying his or her countrymen. (66)

He further claims that "collaborator is a word which was relatively innocuous before the war, obscene during and after it" (66). From his perspective, we are able to see why there was such a shift in collaborative writing and learning pedagogy from the 1930s to the 1950s.

In the 1950s, positivism was the focus of education as progressive education started to lose credibility. There was growing interest in science, technology, and economic development. A "spectator view of knowledge" emerged (Holt 541). Teachers and textbooks were viewed as the authorities. With Cold War fears still prevalent, a lot of distrust still surrounded collaborative practices.

Charlton Laird, however, was promoting collaborative learning in his "Oregon Plan" (541), but it was quite differently defined collaboration. In fact, his plan actually promoted collaboration as competition and pitted the students against each other. Students took on the role of teacher and "scrutinized" each others' writing in peer groups (541). In other words, in Laird's classroom, "the
goal was discovering the weakness of individuals. Each student was held 'personally responsible for any ineptitudes that remain undetected [in the group], for any weaknesses not already observed'" (544). He was proud of the "adversarial" relationship among his students (544). Richard Rorty, Edwin Benjamin, and Charlton Laird were among the promoters of collaborative learning during the 1950s, but their focus shifted to having students work together in ways that would not disrupt the power structure in the classroom by having students practice less adversarial and competitive ways of collaborating. This emphasis worked to distribute power more evenly and to emphasize the importance of each group member's contribution. The 1960s, was considered a time of the "socially conscious" (Holt 551). During the late 1960s, Peter Elbow's "A Method for Teaching Writing" was published in College English. In this article, Elbow presents the problem of students who seemed to have a good grasp of the language, but this was not reflected in their writing. In order to solve this problem, he proposes a "criterion for judging the quality of writing: whether it produces the desired effect in the reader" (Elbow 115). The proposition is to ignore the ideas and style and judge writing based on
how well it produces an "overt behavior in a reader" (116). In this student led classroom, the teacher oversees the discussion, but students choose the writing assignments. Elbow reveals four reasons for the students to be the reader/judges of each others work: 1) "It means starting with skills students do possess;" 2) "students rarely believe what the teacher says" so they can be equally skeptical about what other students say or they may take their peers' suggestions up for further investigation; 3) "It is terrifically helpful for one's writing to read a stack of papers of very mixed quality on exactly the same subject;" and 4) "It is simply fun and interesting for the class to read and discuss its own papers" (117-118).

Throughout this process, by focusing on "effect" students will naturally end up talking about the aspects of good reasoning, style, and "correctness" (118). In Elbow's collaborative learning model, students are learning how to make their own texts better by receiving input on their own writing and providing input about others' writing.

In the 1970s, Open Admissions policies brought in a diverse new population of nontraditional university students. "Individualistic teaching methods proved ineffective" for this new population (Howard 54). Kenneth
A. Bruffee "brought collaborative learning to the conversation of composition studies" out of the necessity to meet students' needs (54). His article, "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" "articulates three principles of collaborative learning that have now become canonical in composition studies:" (54)

1. [B]ecause thought is internalized conversation, thought and conversation tend to work largely in the same way. (Howard 54/Bruffee 639)

2. If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized. (54/641)

3. To learn is to work collaboratively to establish and maintain knowledge among a community of knowledgeable peers through the process that Richard Rorty calls "socially justifying belief." (54/646)

Bruffee's model of collaboration has been cited and referenced in almost every reading that I have done on collaboration. Bruffee asserts that in the process of a group coming to consensus, learning is achieved. Although his notion of "consensus" has elicited critique from
scholars such as John Trimbur and David Foster to name a few, Bruffee’s work continues to be a cornerstone of collaboration pedagogy.

In the 1980s, a time of “cultural and political conservatism, collaborative practice proliferated” (Holt 551, and scholars continued to investigate collaboration in general and the element of consensus specifically. In “Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning,” Trimbur sets out to “explore one of the key terms in collaborative learning, consensus.” He continues, “This seems worth doing because the notion of consensus is one of the most misunderstood aspects of collaborative learning” (Trimbur 602). Throughout his article he dissects and sorts out what consensus means and connotes and the effect it has on collaborative ventures. He instead argues that “dissensus” is more effective. His overall message is to think of consensus in a different way: “A rehabilitated notion of consensus in collaborative learning can provide students with exemplary motives to imagine alternative worlds and transformations of social life and labor. In its deferred and utopian form, consensus offers a way to orchestrate dissensus and turn the conversation in the collaborative classroom into a heterotopia of voices—a
heterogeneity without hierarchy” (615). Another words, his pure form of collaborative learning involves seeing topics through multiple perspectives. Basically, he supports a pedagogy that encourages students to focus on differences that exist and to ask questions about why those differences exist and under what authority they exist, so that the power relations can be transformed to determine who “may speak and what counts as meaningful” to say (603).

Concerns about language and equality continue into the 1990s.

The 1990s marks a time of postmodernism, cultural studies, and social construction, which was “widely accepted as a theoretical basis for understanding language use” (Bedford 11). In “Collaboration and the Pedagogy of Disclosure,” David Bleich acknowledges the evolution of collaboration from “peer tutoring toward the idea of reconceiving scholarly work as a continuing ‘conversation’ among teachers, researchers, and students” (Bleich 43). In this vein, Scott Stevens suggests in “Serious Work: Students Learning from Students” that “Collaborative practice needs to actively promote a view knowledge in which it is understood that though power in the classroom is not always equal, everyone knows something from which we
may learn" (Stevens 3). This is important, because just having students work together does not change perceptions of knowledge, students, and teachers. The classroom experience itself accounts for most of the learning that occurs (4). The article brings an awareness of gender issues within collaborative ventures. More than promoting reciprocity, mutual respect, and tolerance, "sharing a classroom creates relationships and [awareness] that each member is bound up in the success or failure of others" (3). Therefore, there is an implied responsibility to the learning process. "Authority is often an issue in collaborative situations. In classrooms organized around principles of competitive self-interest, authority is challenged, never granted outright, making the academy hospitable to male discursive patterns. Seriousness among students implies the opposite: a presumption of contributory knowledge" (11). In other words, it is all students' expected responsibility. He refers to Louise Wetherbee Phelps term "geography of knowledge" in which "[i]dentifying one's communities of interest announces a new classroom context, one in which learning depends on inquiring of others about the sources of meaning and value each bring" (15).
Currently, in the 2000s, we seem to be expanding on the 1990s critiques of collaboration as we work on ways to bring collaboration pedagogy into the writing classrooms. In "Collaboration and Concepts of Authority," Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford question why collaboration remains in theory yet not widely in practice (Ede and Lunsford 356). They state, "The socially constructed nature of writing—its inherently collaborative foundation—functions as an enthymemiac grounding for much of contemporary research in the discipline" (355). Basically they are saying that collaboration and writing are inseparable. The article praises a good number of collaborative ventures already in practice. It also repeatedly pleads for more. Also querying this theory-practice gap is "Writing as Collaboration," by James A. Reither and Douglas Vipond. They maintain that writing is a social practice and an accepted theory but is not practiced for the most part in English classrooms (855). They suggest that some instructors tried to integrate "peer tutoring," "coauthoring," and "workshopping" into their curriculums but they didn’t change their curriculum, so it didn’t work. Also, they argue that understanding writing as a social activity does not really provide a "concrete" way to put
the "theoretical discussion in the literature" into practice and teaching of writing (855-856). The authors instead focus on writing and knowing as collaborative instead of social. Through their own collaborative writing and thinking projects, they identified three realms of collaboration: coauthoring, workshopping, and knowledge making. They assert that "writing is collaboration. It cannot be otherwise" (866). To better understand what is meant by putting collaboration theory into practice in the classroom, some terminology needs to be defined.

Collaboration Terminology

In researching, it was interesting to discover just how many different ways collaboration is defined. It is necessary to first sort some of these terms out to have a better understanding of collaboration pedagogy. First of all, Collaborative learning as defined by Kenneth Bruffee is "a form of indirect teaching in which the teacher sets the problem and organizes the students to work it out collaboratively" (Stewart 59). Stewart expands on this notion by quoting John Trimbur's "succinct yet complete" explanation:

Collaborative learning is a generic term, covering a
range of techniques that have become increasingly visible in the past ten years, practices such as reader response, peer critiques, small writing groups, joint writing projects, and peer tutoring in writing centers and classrooms. The term refers to a method of conducting business at hand—whether a freshman composition course or a workshop for writing teachers. By shifting initiative and responsibility from the group leader to the members of the group, collaborative learning offers a style of leadership that actively involves the participants in their own learning. (Stewart 59/Trimbur 87)

His explanation encompasses a broad range of possibilities. From this explanation, I will explore some of the possibilities. I will focus on three main categories: collaboration to improve writing; collaboration to produce a single text; and collaborative learning.

Collaboration to improve writing was evident in both Laird's and Elbow's classrooms. They used peer editing/peer response groups to "correct" and affect each others writing. Another example of this type of collaboration is in writing groups:
[Writing groups] are a locus for conversing, for thinking, and for writing—each activity mutually constituting the other. The writing group essentially becomes a microcosm of society, a kind of miniature community in which students learn to converse, internalize their conversation as dialectical thought, and reintroduce this thought into the social sphere by writing for their peer community. (Ashton-Jones 18)

The writing for their community is judged by their community for its effectiveness and correctness. A final example is "Collaboratively learning about writing involves interaction between writer and reader to help the writer improve her own abilities and produce her own text—though, of course, her final product is influenced by the collaboration with others" (Harris, M 369). Workshopping is the process of getting "colleagues to comment on drafts" of assignments "to guide revisions of the piece" (Reither and Vipond 858). In all of these cases, students' texts remain their own individual texts, but the texts are influenced by the feedback of the other group members.

Next in looking at collaborative writing for a single text, there are several perspectives to consider. First of
all, collaborative writing "is now identified as writing involving two or more writers working together to produce a joint product" (Harris, M 369) She continues, "[w]hen writing collaboratively, each may take responsibility for a different portion of the final text, and there may be group consensus of some sort of collective responsibility for the final product" (Harris, M 369). There is a distinction that needs to be made between collaboration and cooperation. These two different types of assignments are often confused. A useful distinction between cooperation and collaboration can be found in "A Single Good Mind: Collaboration, Cooperation, and the Writing Self" by Kathleen Blake Yancey and Michael Spooner:

Collaboration carries with it the expectation of a singular purpose and a seamless integration of the parts, as if the conceptual object were produced by a single good mind ... The reader is unable to tell from internal clues which chapters or sections were written by which authors. Cooperative work is less stringent in its demands for intellectual integration. It requires that the individuals that comprise a group ... carry out their individual tasks in accord with some larger plan.
However, in a cooperative structure, the different individuals ... are not required to know what goes on in the other parts of the project, so long as they carry out their own assigned tasks satisfactorily. (Yancey and Spooner 50)

In other words, in a collaborative project, all members of the group weave their threads together to create a one seamless piece of fabric. In a cooperative project, the group works with pieces of fabric and sews them together creating a quilt. Coauthoring most closely represents collaborative writing; however, it is even more precise. It is almost the spinning of the wool to make thread so that it is impossible to pin-point a specific sentence to a specific author. Coauthoring is the production of a single text in which the authors "were able to accomplish things together that neither could have accomplished alone" (Reither and Vipond 858). Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford are well known for their coauthoring in general and their text, *Singular Texts/ Plural Authors* specifically. "Coauthoring helps students experience the frustrations of cooperation but also the joys—the synergy that enables a small team to accomplish more than its members could acting individually" (Reither and Vipond 864). In all of these collaborative
writing ventures, students work with each other to produce a single text.

Finally, collaborative learning is the last term to discuss. Social constructionism "emphasizes human cooperation because it asserts that humans acquire their identities from groups and that their knowledge is a product of belief" (Stewart 74). The learning communities described in Lawrence W. Sherman’s article, "Postmodern Constructivist Pedagogy of Teaching and Learning Cooperatively on the Web," advocates, "a 'postmodern' assumption that students, within social context of cooperative peer influence, authentically construct knowledge from their experience" (Sherman 51). He also maintains that "we must also take advantage of media that allow our students to communicate and critically engage each others' minds in an authentic community of learners. Engaging each other’s minds may be an opportunity to practice critical thinking skills" (Sherman 54-55). CSUSB’s blackboard technology is an example of what he is talking about. Another way of looking at it is that knowledge making is a scholarly collaboration in which one contributes to the conversation of what has been written and said about the topic. It is the tossing of "thinking
into a pool of knowing" and making one's "own contribution to knowledge-already-existing" (Reither and Vipond 860). By adding a piece of one's own knowledge, one has "participated in the process of collaborative knowledge making" (Reither and Vipond 860). All of these tasks require students to interact with written and spoken language, discover what has been said and by who, and decide how they will contribute to the conversation either through written texts or spoken words.

Collaboration Theory in Practice

I am not going to suggest a curriculum at this point. Rather, I am going to set out some pedagogical implications that I found particularly relevant to fourth grade writing specifically and the teaching of writing at any level in general.

First of all, the power of talking and conversation is absolutely undeniable in most of the articles. Therefore, I will have to create some opportunities for structured conversations that foster learning and writing. Against my better judgment, I too often say, "quietly," "without any talking," and "by yourself" complete the assignment. I am stifling a vast of knowledge making skills and
opportunities. The research clearly states that writing and learning is social. The children in my class want to talk and work together. It is my obligation to create "Collaborative Investigations" in which they are able to learn and write what the standards require in collaborative ventures (Reither and Vipond 862).

Secondly, I need to build collaboration into all stages of the writing process. Before I even give a writing assignment, I should have the students collaboratively read and discuss the literature. Next they should collaboratively interrogate and come to understand the writing assignment. They then could collaboratively explore ways they might approach the assignment. After some initial writing, they could get back together and comment on each other's progress, and so on. Of course, every single step would have to be modeled and the entire process would not be revealed at once. I can see some real power in having students collaborate for both their own individual work and for coauthored projects.

Interestingly, I think that one of the single most influential realizations that I made, although seemingly common-sensical, was that collaborative learning and writing projects do not have to be huge, trimester long
projects. They can be short in or out of class assignments. In "The Range of Collaborative Writing Opportunities," Bruce Speck says that brief in-class writing assignments help foster learning and writing skills. He describes a procedure that he uses for either a "beginning-of-class recap" or an "end-of-class" recap. First, the students write up a summary on the topic that they covered. Second, they pair up and read each others summaries. Third, they make a new summary from the two original summaries. Finally, they share back with the class. Wow what a quick and easy way to assess learning and foster collaborative learning and writing skills.

In the next chapter, I will provide the implications of my findings for the specific fourth grade standards and curriculum that I teach. I will shift from assertion to exemplum. Based on my research, I will develop several collaborative assignments that will offer an alternative to current standard-based pedagogy.
CHAPTER FOUR
IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM WRITING INSTRUCTION

What we learn with pleasure, we never forget.
Alfred Merdier

At the outset of this project, I was convinced that the ELA writing standards were inherently bad and in opposition to composition theory. After much consideration and research, I have come to the realization that although both the way these standards are presented and the way the Framework is adopted invite counterproductive discrete skill teaching, my approach to teaching the standards was also not effective. Through the use of current composition theory and collaboration pedagogies, I now feel confident that I can more effectively teach a writing curriculum that produces "meaningful" writing that demonstrates an application of the mastery or near mastery of writing conventions and applications as the state standards demand. My research-informed pedagogy is based on the use of multiple readings on a single topic to discuss the content for critical thinking and discussions as well as the
rhetorical moves within the texts. I will use some of Bloom’s Taxonomy to engage critical thinking.

I present this sequence of assignments as illustrations (not prescriptive) of ways students might engage in a fourth grade language arts class. Taking this comprehensive approach to writing, I will present an outline of my thematic units that will scaffold a knowledge base that will inform reading, writing, and conversations. I will also explain two units in full detail: one on fiction and another on non-fiction.

Revision of the Writing Curriculum

In considering meaningful ways to devote to the two hour language arts block that include collaboration, effective language study, meaningful writing, and mastery of the ELA standards, I first reexamined our currently adopted language arts program, Houghton Mifflin. I also examined our previously adopted language arts curriculum, MacMillan/McGraw-Hill. In examining these texts, I was solely looking at the readings that I had easily available to me. I identified many common themes between the two programs. I listed and cross-referenced all of the common themes. Then, I looked for connections between the themes.
From these connections that I identified, I came up with a thematic plan for the school year. The plan does not include all of the reading texts in the two textbooks, but it is also not limited to the readings contained in them. The year-long thematic plan is as follows in Figure 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Language Arts Units</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinderella</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bears</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Fiction/Non-Fiction</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I arranged the units in this order to allow flow and to make continuous connections, scaffolding knowledge along the way. Each unit begins working from the known and moves toward the unknown. We will begin with personal narrative writing and discuss its purpose and applicability to writing in general. We will discuss academic language and rhetorical moves. We will discuss audience and purpose.
From there, we will work on summarizing and discuss its applicability to writing. Finally, we will discuss what it means to respond to literature.

I will teach students how to annotate and interact with the texts they are reading. Since students are not allowed to write in their textbooks at the fourth grade level, we will use “post-it” notes. This will allow us to write the direct quote, explain what it means, and use it in our writing. As we are working on these elements, we will constantly discuss how to effectively write to our readers. The readings will be used as springboards and not comprehension checks.

One of the most interesting discoveries I made in my research was noticing how I could cross-reference texts and topics so that succeeding references to them could build on already introduced ideas rather than seem to introduce everything as “new.”

At the outset of the school year, I will guide the students through the process of setting up their portfolio notebooks. We will make tabs for each of the thematic engagement units so that students will have a preview of the topics for discussion, reading, and writing for the school year. I will help them understand that because the
writing that they will be doing is significant for their own purposes and well as being a part of a school program, it deserves a space that validates its importance. Along with tabs, each student will receive an outlined world map. As we learn, we will record where things are taking place. Each student will also have a blank timeline to record when things are occurring. Each unit will cover a wide range of reading materials representing a variety of genres and cooperative and individual assignments with a culminating end project of various forms. In each unit, language development and vocabulary will be embedded in the literary experience. The final products and purpose for each unit will be included and discussed. Students will use "real" writing strategies. In other words, they will practice reading with a writer's eye and writing with a reader's eye. Collaboration and conversations will be ongoing throughout each unit and the school year. The students will maintain their notebooks/portfolios to track learning and writing progress, reminding them of the purpose behind reading and writing interactions in ways that worksheets do not. The students will maintain a sense of pride for their ongoing work and progress. Critical thinking embedded in the reading and writing interactions will help to not only
improve writing, but also improve test scores. I will describe in complete detail the Cinderella unit and the bear unit.

Cinderella Unit

For the Cinderella unit, students will interact with a variety of texts from around the world. (A complete listing of Cinderella books is listed in Appendix A.) Students will work collaboratively in groups and contribute to the whole class to create an even deeper understanding and to see the big picture. Each group will read through the book that is assigned to them. Each group will discover and record the information about their text. For each text, they will find and record the following information: title, author, characters, traits, problem, magical event, solution, and clothing/shoes. They will share and report their findings back to the class. Each group will also post their findings on a bulletin board chart so that we can look for patterns.

We will discuss the patterns as well as the discrepancies. Students will also have a smaller version of the chart in their notebooks. They can record the
appropriate information in their own notebooks as well as recording the geographical if available.

In the language study, we will discuss why the clothing, animals, and other story elements work, given the setting and other details of the story. We will discuss how the way that the story is presented gives us information about the culture in which it is written.

Their assignment will then be to write their own Cinderella story. They will select from one of the four regions of California and chose the time of a significant event in California’s history. For example, the story can take place along the coast, in the desert, in the central valley, or in the mountains. It can occur during the time of the first explorers, during the Spanish Explorers, during the time of the California Missions, during the Gold Rush, along the Transcontinental Railroad, or another historical event. This would be a way for students to make connections between what they are reading in language arts and what they are learning in social studies. Given the parameters and the choices, students would be able to create a meaningful narrative with a purpose of demonstrating and scaffolding knowledge. They would not
only be writing their own Cinderella story, but they would have a context in which to do it.

Bear Unit

For the bear unit, the culminating project will be a "bear" magazine that the students will create. Each student will create his/her own individual magazine, but the magazine will represent the collaborative work and social learning that occurs throughout the unit. The students will apply the knowledge of bears and what they know about magazines to create their own magazine.

To begin the unit, I will provide each table group with five or six different magazines. As a group, students will discuss the content, layout, format, features, and other relevant aspects of the magazines. They will write up what they notice about magazines. At the end of the class period, all groups will share out their findings with the rest of the class. From this, students will have the necessary background to start working on their own magazine.

The next lesson will focus on creating the title of the magazine. In creating the title, the students will work through a title forming exercise in a condensed
format. These exercises will be expanded for writing the titles for subsequent articles and features in the magazine.

Composition research demonstrates that paying attention and working on titles helps writers focus and organize their ideas to prepare them to write. Donald Murray "advocates searching for titles early, so they may be used as devices for focusing the writing, even before the first draft" (Leahy 516). Leahy also advocates working on titles as a creative tool not only to generate more interesting titles, but also to facilitate the writing of the whole text. He states,

In preparing students for the exercise, I tell them that the title often works in concert with the opening paragraph. The purpose of the opening paragraph is to get the reader interested and show where the essay is going. The title usually does the same (516).

This is especially useful to teach to fourth graders. It is not teaching a formula, but engaging students in a higher level thinking skill in addition to helping them sort, plan, and organize their ideas. In his essay, Leahy offers a list that he provides to students after they have
tried their hand at coming up with titles. He suggests not giving the list first, because it may cause the students to think ahead instead of focusing on each item as it comes up. He goes through each one and has the students try it. I will have to slightly modify the list to make it appropriate for fourth grade, and I will go for ten titles instead of twenty. The exercise provides students with common language and common ways to tackle the problem of coming up with a title. Leahy claims that the titles he receives now "are noticeably more precise and interesting than before" (518). Additionally, the exercise helps students focus, organize, and determine when more inventing is needed. Adding a more collaborative component will make the exercise even more rich and productive. In their groups, students will use this exercise throughout the bear unit to both aid in creative title writing and to assist in the article writing.

In addition to a creative title, the students will also create an enticing cover that makes readers want to read the magazine. The magazine will have the following features which are created from the discussions, conversations, reading, and writing that occurs throughout the unit: an informational article, an editorial, a
feature article on a famous bear, a cartoon, a map, an original piece of fiction, a book review, a word search, a crossword puzzle, a map, advertisements, a recipe (trail mix), and one additional feature of the student's choice.

The informational article will essentially report on one type of bear, for example, grizzly, black, brown, or polar.

The editorial will be an opinion piece in which students will argue for or against something pertaining to bears. For example, in our discussions about bears in the media, students may express an opinion about the killing of bears that roam into neighborhoods. They then could write an editorial that presents the facts surrounding the issue, both sides of the debate, and a strong argument for their opinion informed by the conversations, reading, research, and writing that has been occurring in class.

The feature article on a famous bear will be an expository essay about a famous bear of their choosing. Some possible famous bears include: Winnie-the-Pooh, Smokey the Bear, Paddington Bear, Yogi Bear, or The Berrenstein Bears.

The cartoon will be a comical perspective to one of the articles that the student writes. It may be a message
to accompany the editorial piece, or it could provide a
comic explanation to one of the other articles.

The original piece of fiction will be students' own
versions of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. We would re-
read the story that they probably had not heard for a
while. Then in small groups, students will brainstorm
possible settings, types of homes, character combinations
(at least one character has to be a bear), the three
events, and possible endings. After each group generates
lists of possible elements, these possible elements are
shared and discussed with the whole class. Then, the
students create their own story based on the ideas that
were generated. An example title that a student has come
up with in the past includes "The Fish and the Three Polar
Bears." The stories have varied greatly, from taking place
on the beach in a sandcastle, in an igloo in Alaska, and in
an underwater coral reef to one bear and three humans,
three polar bears and a goldfish, and three mermaids and a
sea-bear. The only parameters are that there has to be a
bear character, there has to be an intrusion, and there
must be three events.

The book review will be based on a book of the
students' own choosing. For example, students may find a
book in the library about bears that is very phonetically written. They will in their book review discuss the intended audience and how the book may be used to foster literacy in for the reader. They may explain how they would use the book with a younger sibling, for example.

The other features would also be generated by the discussions, idea sharing, reading, writing, and learning that occurs throughout the unit.

Some possible topics for their related article might be hibernation, Bear’s Day, Native American legends, constellations, teddy bears (how they got their name), mountains, caves, or berries.

Students will ultimately have to decide the layout of their “magazine.” They will be able to include any pictures or diagrams that they wish. They will have many choices to make as they create their own magazine. After choosing a title for their magazine and a thoroughly discussing the magazines in general and the requirements of their magazine specifically, we will start working on one of the articles.

For the first article that the students write, I will collect as many bear books as I can get my hands on to use as a springboard. (Appendix B includes a list of bear
books that are available in my school library.) From this, students will work in groups of three to write their informational articles. For the initial reports, they will share the same resource, but they may choose which topics they wish to include in the report.

These units represent the types of reading, writing, collaboration, and conversations that I envision in my fourth grade classroom. By placing the reading assignments into a larger context instead of just having students read a different story each week devoid of connections creates an opportunity to continue conversations orally and in their writing, which will allow them to make some concrete connections and apply their thoughts and ideas on the topics to "meaningful" writing and purposeful assignments. This approach work to support the research that asserts that reading and writing are connected and that the elements of reading and writing must be connected in order for writers to become engaged rhetorically purposeful. It also supports the idea that students learn about writing when they work on topics that matter to them and when they write and talk about writing they are producing.

In sum, then, this work does not pretend to rewrite the frameworks or standards or even to resolve all of the
collisions between them and current composition scholarship. However, it does offer possibilities for working with seemingly disparate but equally powerful forces in ways that produce meaningful writing experiences for fourth graders.
APPENDIX A

A LISTING OF CINDERELLA BOOKS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abadeha</td>
<td>Myrna J. De La Paz</td>
<td>Philippine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angkat: The Cambodian Cinderella</td>
<td>Jewell Rienhart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankle for a Princess: A Cinderella Story</td>
<td>Merideth-Babeaux</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>from India</td>
<td>Brucker</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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APPENDIX B

A LISTING OF BEAR BOOKS


Bears. Kevin J. Holmes, Capstone Press, Minnesota, 1998. An introduction to bears' physical characteristics, habits, prey, and relationships. (3.3)


illustrations and diagrams. Well written text with detailed explanations. (3.6)


Black Bears. Diana Star Helmer, The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., New York, 1997. Describes the physical characteristics, habitats, and interactions with humans of black bears. (3.3)

Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Retold by Armand Eisen, Ariel Books/ Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1989. Lost in the woods, a tired and hungry little girl finds the house of the three bears where she helps herself to food and goes to sleep. (Realistically illustrated and detailed bordered frames with regular story format.)


English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 1998 California Department of Education; i-vii and 21-27.


Fairbrother, Anne. "Critical Relativity: An Examination of Privileged Positions and Perspectives in the Teaching of English Language Arts." Multicultural


Foster, David. "Community and Cohesion in the Writing/Reading Classroom," JAC 17 No. 3; 1-23.

Foster, David. "Reading(s) in the Writing Classroom," CCC 48: 518-539.


Graham, Steve and Karen R. Harris. "Improving the Writing Performance of Young Struggling Writers: Theoretical


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Lane, Barry. After the End: Teaching and Learning


Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve. 1999 California Department of Education; 1-301.


Stewart, Donald C. "Collaborative Learning and Composition: Boon or Bane?" Rhetoric Review 7 (1998): 58-83.
Wiener, Harvey S. "Collaborative Learning in the