

2-28-2014

# Integrating Reading and Writing For Florida's ESOL Program

George Douglas McArthur

*University of South Florida*, [gmcarthu@mail.usf.edu](mailto:gmcarthu@mail.usf.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

---

## Scholar Commons Citation

McArthur, George Douglas, "Integrating Reading and Writing For Florida's ESOL Program" (2014). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.  
<https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/5070>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).

Integrating Reading and Writing For Florida's ESOL Program

by

Douglas McArthur

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English  
with a concentration in Rhetoric and Composition  
Department of English  
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Joseph Moxley, Ph.D.  
Elizabeth Metzger, Ph.D.  
Marc Santos, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:  
February 28, 2014

Keywords: separation, connection, assessment, theory, practice

Copyright © 2014, Douglas McArthur

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Abstract.....  | ii |
| Chapter One: Introduction .....  | 1  |
| Chapter Two: Florida’s ESOL/ABE Landscape.....                                     | 3  |
| Assessment and Promotion in ESOL.....  | 6  |
| Chapter Three: The Reading-Writing Relationship.....                               | 8  |
| Shouldn’t All This Be Called English?.....   | 9  |
| Transforming Theory into Practice; Fifty Years of Slow Motion .....                | 11 |
| What the Studies Have Shown.....   | 12 |
| Are the Results of these Studies Relevant to English Language Learners? .....      | 13 |
| After All Those Years, Is Writing Still the “Disinherited Stepson”? .....          | 15 |
| Chapter Four: The Reading-Writing Disconnect in Florida’s ESOL .....               | 18 |
| A Bit of Circumstantial Evidence .....   | 18 |
| The Need for a Writing Assessment .....  | 20 |
| Chapter Five: Writing Assessment Proposals For ESOL .....                          | 22 |
| The Challenge of Developing Writing Assessments Relevant to Each Skill Level ..... | 22 |
| <i>BEST Literacy</i> .....   | 24 |
| <i>BEST Literacy</i> for Low Beginning, High Beginning, and Low Intermediate ..... | 25 |
| FCAT Writing Assessments for High Intermediate and Advanced.....                   | 27 |
| Would the GED Assessment Tighten the Reading-Writing Connection? .....             | 29 |
| Should Writing Assessments Be a Factor in Promotion? .....                         | 31 |
| Chapter Six: Supplemental Proposals.....   | 33 |
| Create Lesson Plans that Integrate Reading and Writing .....                       | 33 |
| Why Not Conduct a Writing Lab in the Computer Lab?.....                            | 36 |
| Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....   | 39 |
| Bibliography .....   | 40 |
| Glossary of Terms.....   | 44 |

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines an incongruity that exists within Florida's ESOL program. While the curriculum standards direct teachers to "develop and integrate" skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, student promotions to higher fluency levels are based solely on reading assessments. Listening assessments are also required to "determine instructional needs," but writing assessments are not required and, in most cases, not given. As a result, reading is prioritized, writing is subordinated, the connection between the two skills is broken, and the mutual benefits of integration are lost.

Studies conducted during the last 50 years have consistently shown that the integration of reading and writing produces a symbiosis in which students learn to write from reading and learn to read from writing (Olson and Land pp 269, 289). Many educational programs have now adopted an integrated approach to instruction in reading and writing (Common Core 1). Others, like Florida's ESOL program, tout the idea of integration in the curriculum standards without promoting the practice of integration in the classroom. Without a program of de facto integration, curricular proclamations devolve into hollow platitudes.

To reconnect the two skills and restore integration, Florida must require a writing assessment system. This thesis proposes several writing assessments from *BEST Literacy*, FCAT and the GED program that could be adapted for use. Not only would a writing assessment promote balance and integration, it would better prepare ESOL students to succeed in a world that requires proficiency, not only in reading, but also in writing (Graham 31).

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“First, writing has been subordinated to reading and other language skills taught in schools. Second, reading has been isolated from writing.” (Clifford 3)

Long before reading Clifford’s statement, I got my first glimpse of the subordination of writing to reading. It happened several years ago, shortly after I started teaching ESOL classes. My school, like many others in Florida, uses the CASAS assessment system for promoting students to higher literacy levels. What caught my attention was that the assessment tested reading and listening but not writing. Writing was clearly being ignored and, consequently, subordinated to and separated from reading. But so what? Would ESOL students, or any students, actually benefit from instruction that integrates reading and writing or should writing instruction be deferred until students can read and converse?

The answer to that question lies in an evolution, spanning several centuries, that has moved reading and writing from a state of separation to a relationship of integration. Studies conducted during the last 50 years have consistently shown that that the integration of reading and writing produces a symbiosis where students learn to write by reading and learn to read by writing. While many educational programs now embrace this integrated approach, many others talk the talk without walking the walk. Integration is touted in the curriculum only to be ignored in practice.

Florida’s ESOL program exemplifies the second category. The curriculum standards, promulgated by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), direct teachers to develop and integrate listening, oral communication, reading, and writing. But despite this call for integration, assessment of student writing is not a factor in the promotion process. Although FLDOE does

authorize the use of a writing assessment known as *BEST Literacy*, it can only be used to place students in a class that matches their skill level, but it cannot be used as a criteria for promotion or graduation from the ESOL program. (FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper P. 12) Because of that, few, if any ESOL schools in Florida actually use *BEST Literacy*. The overwhelming majority of schools use CASAS, an assessment system that tests reading and listening but not writing. The guidelines in FLDOE's Technical Assistance Paper, which was released on July 1, 2012, eliminated the listening assessment as a requirement for promotion. The listening assessment would still be given, but only reading scores would determine student promotion (14).

This thesis will examine Florida's ESOL program to determine whether the objective of "integrating the four language skills," especially reading and writing, is actually being realized. Does the current system truly support a connection between the two, or does it produce a reading-writing disconnect that diminishes proficiency in both of those skills? If, in fact, the connection has been broken, what changes could be made to turn the curricular goals into a working reality? To provide context for these issues, this thesis will explore a number of articles and studies on the interaction of reading and studies on the interaction of reading and writing. Finally, the threshold to these issues begins with an understanding of how the Florida ESOL program works.

## CHAPTER TWO: FLORIDA'S ESOL/ABE LANDSCAPE

In Florida, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is part of FLDOE's Adult Education Program, which also includes Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE). Adult Education's primary goal is to, "help adults get the basic skills they need to be productive workers, family members and citizens" (AdultEd).

Comprehensive ABE is a program designed for adults (16 or over) who are performing at the 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade level. The program content includes a variety of mathematics courses and also reading, writing and other language arts-related subjects. Like ESOL, ABE has specific benchmarks to assess reading proficiency. Unlike ESOL, ABE also has benchmarks to assess writing proficiency (Adult Basic Education pp 1,2,32). The ABE program also prepares students to take the GED preparation courses. Adult learners in ASE can earn a high school diploma by passing the GED test. ASE is also available for students with a high school diploma, or its equivalent, who need remediation to obtain employment or to pursue postsecondary education (AdultEd). The ESOL program serves as preparatory program for ABE and ASE. Students who speak no English, or limited English, enroll in ESOL to develop fluency sufficient to enable them to function in the ABE or ASE programs.

The FLDOE characterizes Adult ESOL as "an instructional program of noncredit English language courses designed to improve the employability of the state's workforce through the acquisition of English language communication skills and cultural competencies" (FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper p. 3). While some students enroll in Adult ESOL simply to improve employability, by improving English fluency, others enroll in ESOL because it is a gateway to

the higher educational opportunities offered in the ABE and ASE programs. Once they have gained the requisite degree of English fluency in ESOL, students can transition into ABE and ASE to obtain a GED, if they don't have an equivalent high school degree. If they already have such a degree, they can take preparatory courses for college and vocational programs. Adult ESOL is not just the means to getting a job at McDonad's (although students who work there find it to be a great language lab), ESOL can also be a pathway to a career.

The Adult ESOL program has six "educational functioning levels" (EFLs), which are based on the degree of proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, writing and on the ability to communicate in the workplace and in public. These six levels include:

- (1) *Foundations*. This is the beginning level for those who have no, or very little language skills.
- (2) *Low Beginning*. Students in this level can understand basic greetings, simple phrases and commands. The student can read and write familiar words but is unable to connect prose in English
- (3) *High Beginning*. Students in High Beginning can understand simple sentences that contain familiar vocabulary but have limited control of grammar. They can read and write familiar phrases and simple sentences although meaning may be unclear.
- (4) *Low Intermediate*. Low Intermediate students are capable of participating in conversations in limited social situations. Their use of basic grammar is better than students in the first three levels and Low Intermediates can write simple paragraphs with a main idea and supporting details of familiar topics. Their

reading skills have developed to the point where they can comprehend simple or compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs.

(5) *High Intermediate*. Students who reach this level demonstrate a greater ability to participate in conversations, as well as a greater capacity use newly-learned phrases. They also demonstrate an ability to use more complex grammar. Their reading skills have developed to the point where they can use context to determine meaning. In writing they can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.

(6) *Advanced*. For ESOL students, Advanced represents the ‘senior year.’ Once students in this level attain the requisite test scores to graduate, they are eligible to enroll in ABE, ASE and other secondary programs that provide preparation for vocational or professional education. Advanced students can understand and participate in conversations on a variety of subjects. When reading, they can use context and word analysis skills to understand vocabulary and they are able compare and contrast information in familiar texts. Their writing skills have developed to the point where they can write multi-paragraph texts that develop ideas with a clear introduction, body and conclusion. (For the complete “Functioning Level Descriptors.”

(FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper, pp. 33-35, July 1, 2012)

The evolution of literacy skills, from Foundations to Advanced, clearly indicates that the purpose of the ESOL program is to develop English fluency so that English language learners will be able to survive in academic environments that demand full comprehension and effective expression, whether oral or written.

## **Assessment and Promotion in ESOL**

To determine initial placement, FLDOE authorizes four tests: CASAS, TABE CLAS-E, *BEST Literacy* or *BEST Plus* (FLDOE Adult Education Curriculum Standards p. 1, 2012-2013). Of those tests, only *BEST Literacy* assesses writing. CASAS and TABE assess listening and reading and *BEST Plus* assesses “oral proficiency. Unless a school uses *BEST Literacy*, an enrolling student’s writing proficiency is not a factor in placement.

Although writing skills are prominently mentioned, both in the curriculum and the educational functioning levels, writing proficiency is not a criterion for skill level promotion. According to FLDOE’s guidelines, *BEST Literacy*, the only state-approved test that assesses writing, may be used to place students in appropriate skill levels but “*BEST Literacy* cannot be used to show completion of the Adult ESOL course” (FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper, p. 12). If *BEST Literacy* cannot be used to show completion of the Adult ESOL program what would be the point in using it? Arguably, it would provide information on the status of student writing skills. Whether or not that is true, there hasn’t been a strong incentive for its use because the great majority of Florida’s ESOL schools use the CASAS test. FLDOE has approved CASAS to assess reading and listening, but not writing. Consequently, there is no requirement to assess writing (Technical Assistance Paper 12, 14).

Until July of 2012 students had to attain the requisite scores in both reading and listening to move to a higher “educational functioning level.” On July 1, 2012, however, the FLDOE revised its rule. Now students must still take both the CASAS reading and listening tests, but only the results of the reading test is used to award a Literacy Completion point (LCP), which entitles the student to move to a higher level (Technical Assistance Paper).

What are the consequences of a system where a reading assessment is the only basis for promotion? Will it allow students to pass through the ESOL system even though they haven't developed skills in writing and listening that are necessary to function in either in a college classroom or the workplace? Does the current assessment system that uses only reading for promotions, undermine the integration of reading and writing? If the current assessment does bring about a separation of those skills, what is the impact on student learning? The process of answering those questions begins with a review of the relationship between reading and writing.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE READING-WRITING RELATIONSHIP

“We all desperately need to stretch our conventional, pigeonholed notions of reading here and writing there to try to bridge the chasm that has far too long separated these reciprocal, mutually supportive processes.” (Pearson & Tierney 1984)

In the beginning, there was no relationship because separation was absolute. Reading instruction in the American colonies started with a series of primers, which combined reading instruction with religious content. Following the Revolution, religious dogma gave way to material that focused on poetry and literature. When it was first published in the early 1830s, *The McGuffey Reader* quickly gained attention and became a widely-used textbook over next 50 years. In addition to the morality pieces that were not overtly religious, the *McGuffeys* offered material to foster national identity and patriotism. It also introduced teaching materials on the mechanics of reading aloud, which included such topics as “Articulation,” “Inflection,” “Accent,” “Emphasis,” “Modulation,” and “Poetic Pause” (Applebee, 1974, p. 5).

Meanwhile, writing developed in a more fragmented manner. For young, affluent males with the proper primary education, Harvard, William & Mary, Yale and other colonial colleges offered writing instruction rooted in classic Aristotelian rhetoric that was modeled after the curriculum taught in European universities. In addition to the rhetorical conventions, this writing instruction emphasized grammar, diction and word choice. By the early 1800s colleges adopted Campbell and Blair’s belle-lettres view of rhetoric, which embraced the use of literary models (Langer & Flihan, 2000, pp. 1, 2).

Outside of academia, however, writing took on a much different meaning. The majority of people in America had, in all probability, never heard of Aristotle or rhetoric and their concept

of writing had no connection to either: “In everyone’s mind, writing meant the ability to sign one’s name. This was the first, and for centuries the only, writing task that people had striven to master. . . . Writing also meant penmanship” (Clifford, 1988, p. 10). For the common people, writing existed to display penmanship, not ideas. Some of the nineteenth-century rural and urban schools did, however, offer instruction on drafting short contracts, invoices and receipts. Those students who remained longer in school could also get instruction in writing business letters. At best, writing was a fragmented discipline with a wide array of disparate offerings, ranging from rhetorical conventions to penmanship.

### **Shouldn’t All This Be Called English?**

While scholars may differ on which aspects played the most important roles in the development of reading and writing, there is general agreement that the two disciplines existed separately from each other until the late nineteenth-century. By then, a sea change had started to develop: “Harvard added a requirement in ‘reading English aloud’ in its catalogue for 1865. This was expanded and clarified in 1869-70, but the real milestone was the Harvard requirement for 1873-74: *literature was to be studied, not for itself or even for philology, but as a subject for composition*” (Applebee, 1974, p. 30). This type of development represented the beginnings of a movement that would gather a number of disciplines into one subject, to be called English: “These institutional changes succeeded in welding the various studies of English together as a single subject and provided it with its first, albeit rather tenuous, coherence, By 1900 the question would have shifted from *whether* to teach grammar, rhetoric, literary history, spelling, and composition, to *how* to teach English” (Applebee, 1974, p. 17).

Did this new coalition bring about a state of academic symbiosis? No, not exactly. First, Yale broke away from the Harvard model by deciding that literature would be studied in its own right, not as a subject for composition. Other colleges soon followed by dropping emphasis on composition. The proliferation of diverse entrance requirements also created high-voltage friction between secondary schools and colleges. To address that problem, the National Council of Education appointed the “Committee of Ten,” made up of college administrators led by Harvard president, Charles W. Eliot. After holding a series of conferences, the Committee released a report in November of 1892 that essentially defined the newly-minted subject of English and also offered a “reconciliation of the contemporary points of view about teaching it.” According to Applebee, one of most important effects of the Committee’s report was that it served to unify “the many parts of English” (Applebee, 1974, p. 33).

While the Committee of Ten may have unified ‘the many parts of English,’ their ongoing reports and pronouncements that were intended to influence, or perhaps dominate, high school curricula provoked anger and resentment. That, according to Geraldine Clifford, led to the formation of NCTE in 1911 (Clifford 1988, p. 14). The first task of the newly formed NCTE was to find ways to release the hold exerted by the Committee of Ten. After several years of sparring, the NCTE and the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, chaired by James F. Hosis, released its own report, which amounted to the public high schools’ “Declaration of Independence” from the dominance of the colleges. Their report concluded that the demands of college preparation created “monotonous and unintelligent uniformity in the secondary schools” (Hosis, 1917, p. 7). While the Hosis report was pivotal in changing the course high school instruction in the 1920s, it also included a visionary statement; one that articulated a concept that lies at the heart of contemporary pedagogy: “The English course should be arranged as to couple

speaking and writing for practical purposes with reading of the same character, and speaking and writing for pleasure and inspiration with the study of the novelists, the playwrights, and the poets” (Hosic, 1917, p. 28). This statement proposed a new course for literacy skills. Writing, speaking and reading should not just reside in the tent of language arts, those skills should connect and interact to enhance each other.

### **Transforming Theory into Practice: Fifty Years of Slow Motion**

The Hosic report, which the NCTE Committee endorsed in 1930, broadened the scope of writing assignments and encouraged the use of magazines and newspapers to engage literature-adverse readers. As a concept, “coupling” literacy skills generally drew a favorable response, but convincing teachers to convert a good idea into lesson plans would take decades. The notion of integrating, or even interrelating, literacy skills was something to be praised but not put into practice. Convergence of reading and writing, on wide scale, would not begin until the 1960s.

According to Geraldine Clifford, this lengthy state of inertia was largely due to the progressive movement. The “Progressives,” which gained wide acceptance between 1920 and 1955, embraced the pedagogical tenets of Theodore Dwight’s 1835 book, *The School-Master’s Friend*, which advised: “Children should first be made to read what they already understand, and something that relates to their own circumstances, interests and their feelings” (Dwight 1835, p. 50). Not only did Dwight’s advice restrict children to relearn previously acquired knowledge, it also set reading as a prerequisite for writing which served to retard the convergence of those two skills. For Clifford this notion amounted to a giant step backwards: “Freedom from the style, as well as the assumptions, of vocabulary-controlled books—and an expanded conception of the relationships of writing and reading—could have come earlier had the progressives understood

that young children can and do write before they are considered to have mastered the fundamentals of reading” (Clifford, 1988, p. 29). This linear separation, which Clifford challenges, exemplifies the “pigeonholed notion” that has forestalled the symbiotic process from producing the mutual benefits through integrating reading and writing.

### **What the Studies Have Shown**

Studies conducted since the early 1960s have consistently shown that instruction, which combines reading with writing, produces mutually beneficial results. Based on his 1963 longitudinal study of reading and writing development in the fourth, sixth, and ninth grades, Walter Loban concluded that “those who write well also read well” (Report 1). Later, in a 1976 study, Loban followed 211 students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The results of that study showed positive correlations between speaking, listening, reading and writing. The degree of instructional interaction of these skills was commensurate with how well students developed competency in each mode and how well they ultimately used them (Loban 1976). Logan’s studies would prompt more integration in the classroom and would also invite more studies to explore the impact of holistic, instructional methods.

In 1983, Sandra Stotsky published a review of experimental studies that spanned 50 years, from 1931 to 1981. Among the other findings, Stotsky found these correlations: better writers tend to be better readers; better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers; that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers (676). Another 1983 study, which focused on the writing and reading development among poorer children, found a strong connection between the instructional coalition of reading and writing and the enhancement of learning (Chall & Jacobs 625),

Those who agree with Geraldine Clifford, that writing has been arbitrarily subordinated to reading, will love the results of a recent study documenting the positive impact that writing instruction has on reading skills. In their 2011 meta-analysis (a synthesis of results from 95 studies), Steve Graham and Michael Hebert collected data to answer these questions:

*Does writing about material read enhance comprehension? (726)*

*Does Writing Skill improve reading? (731)*

*Does increasing how much students write improve reading? (731)*

The studies they reviewed provided affirmative answers to each of those questions. Writing about reading enhances comprehension because students must paraphrase, transforming the text into their own words, which makes them think about what the ideas mean. It also fosters a qualitative process where students must decide which information is the most important (712).

All of the twenty-one studies reviewed found that improving writing skills also improves reading. By learning sentence/paragraph structure, process writing techniques and organizing text, students gain a better perspective on what they read. By learning how to compose meaning through writing, students become better at constructing meaning through reading (731). All the studies agreed that reading comprehension improves when writing is increased for students in grades one through six. The more a student writes to compose meaning, the more skillfully the student will be able to construct meaning.

### **Are the Results of these Studies Relevant to English Language Learners?**

According to Rebecca Oxford, literacy skills should be integrated in English language instruction, not separated. An integrated approach “stresses that English is not just an object of

academic interest, nor merely a key to passing an examination; instead, English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among people” (Oxford p. 2).

The results of one massive study also show that integrating reading and writing can produce impressive gains in each of those skills for English language learners.

The study, known as the “Pathways Project,” focused on yearly reading and writing assessments from 1996 through 2004. Subjects for the study were drawn from nine middle schools and four high schools in Santa Ana, California (Olson and Land p. 269). Of the 15,000 students who participated, 93% spoke English as a second language. The stated purpose of the study was to assess the impact of a cognitive-based curriculum on the reading and writing abilities of English language learners...”making visible for students the thinking tools experienced readers and writers access in the process of meaning construction” (269). The yearly studies were conducted with experimental groups that used cognitive strategies and control groups that used the traditional curriculum.

The results were impressive. Over seven years, writing gains for the experimental group were 36% higher than the control group (289). The experimental group also had a higher percentage of students who passed the “English Portion of the California High School Exit Exam,” much of which focused on reading. For 2002, 2003 and 2004, the 86% of those in the experimental group passed the exam, compared to only 65% of those in the control group (291).

While the success of the experimental groups may have been largely due to the cognitive curriculum, it is important to consider that the cognitive activities were used with both reading and writing. Many of those activities, such as graphic organizers and color coding to identify composition components, drew on both reading and writing skills. As students engaged those two skills, an integration process took over that enhanced competency in both

reading and writing, which in turn contributed to the gains of the experimental groups. At the very least, this study demonstrates how a teaching strategy can be used to integrate reading and writing.

The results of these and other studies serve to validate the recommendation James Hosisic made nearly 100 years ago, that speaking, writing and reading should be “coupled.” Not only have these studies provided evidence that reading and writing produce mutual benefits, they have also inspired countless articles to explore and analyze how reading and writing interact to enhance each other. Finally, the unequivocal results of these studies have had a wide-ranging impact that has prompted most schools to adopt integrated programs. Integrated reading and writing are now prominently listed among the Common Core State Standards and also in Florida’s ESOL curriculum. These changes strongly suggest that we have finally evolved to a higher order; that, by recognizing and facilitating the connection between reading and writing, we are now living in an Age of Enlightenment! Or are we?

### **After All Those Years, Is Writing Still the “Disinherited Stepson”?**

Forty years ago in 1973 Donald Graves wrote, “A look at comparative research efforts shows writing falling into the disinherited stepson category” (5). Graves made that observation in his doctoral dissertation, years before most of the studies and articles had corroborated the reading/writing connection. Movement to integrate those skills gained unwavering momentum until the late 1990’s when Congress launched a national literacy initiative. At that point, Graves’ 1973 characterization of writing began to take on a new relevance.

The programs, which threatened to push writing back toward the “disinherited stepson category,” began in 1997, when Congress approved the creation of the National Reading Panel

(NRP) to research and develop effective instructional strategies for reading and to guide the development of public policy on literacy (Ramirez p. 9). Following a “scientific study,” the NRP released its 2000 Report which designated the essential components of reading instruction as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency and reading comprehension strategies. The panel’s report scarcely mentioned writing and gave no explanation of what role writing should play (Coady p. 17). The NRP’s report also prompted Congress to create and include “Reading First” in Title I of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Reading First would become the national initiative to enforce the standards (essential components of reading instruction) that would govern the eligibility of participating states seeking funds. Eventually all 50 states chose to participate. To participate and gain funding, the states were required to adopt the NRP’s five “essential components” of reading instruction (NICHD, 2000) (Ramirez).

In her doctoral dissertation, Kim Street Coady describes Georgia’s version of Reading First as a course that “exacerbates an already prominent reading-writing disconnect” (15). In addition to her experience as a teacher and assistant elementary principal, Coady also worked as a Reading First specialist with the Georgia Department of Education. While she agreed with many aspects of the Reading First grant requirements, the 135-minute reading block, in which writing could not be included, “went against everything that I knew as a literacy educator” (37). Even though writing instruction could be given outside the 135-minute block, Coady viewed the mandatory exclusion as the very kind of literacy separation that educators and scholars had been trying to bridge since the 1960s. Quite simply, it was a step backward. It clearly demonstrated that, despite all the studies, separation and subordination have not yet disappeared.

A more pervasive threat to the reading-writing connection involves situations where integration is embraced as a theory but ignored as a practice. This dynamic is not unlike the dieter who never follows a New Year's resolution diet. Is that the situation in Florida? Florida's ESOL curriculum standards tout the integration of reading and writing, but is that objective actually part of the instructional practice or is it or just another unfulfilled resolution?

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE READING-WRITING DISCONNECT IN FLORIDA'S ESOL

At first glance, it appears that the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) has established a viable integration of reading and writing in its adult ESOL program. The Curriculum Standards for Adult ESOL proclaim that the program will focus on “reading writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary and grammar” (Adult ESOL Curriculum Standards p. 1). Another FLDOE document is even more explicit by directing ESOL teachers to “Apply essential strategies for developing and integrating the four language skills of listening composition, oral communication, reading and writing” (Performance Standards p. 1).

The assessment system, which determines promotion to higher fluency levels, paints quite a different picture. Under the current system, approved assessments in reading and listening will be given, but only the results of the reading assessment will be used for promotion. FLDOE continues to require administration of the listening test, which shall be used “to determine the instructional needs” of the student (FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper 14, sect. 5.2.6.3). At the present time, Florida ESOL programs are not required to give writing assessments. By ignoring writing, the assessment system also ignores the objective of the curriculum to integrate reading and writing. As a result, those skills are disconnected and students lose the mutual benefits that the numerous studies have substantiated.

### **A Bit of Circumstantial Evidence**

In May and June I conducted a random survey of ESOL and ABE teachers here in Florida. Questionnaires were sent to over forty teachers from sixteen ESOL schools; twenty-five

of those teachers, from nine schools responded. Most of those teachers taught ESOL. The teachers were asked to respond to these questions:

*While it varies from student to student which skill, based on your observations and assessments, would represent the highest degree of fluency or proficiency among all the students you've taught: reading, listening or writing?*

*In which of those skills (reading, listening or writing) do most of your students, current or former, have the least competency; reading, listening or writing?*

*Based on your experience and observations of current and former students in your classes, which skill(s) require remediation by the most ESOL students, reading, listening, or writing?*

In response to the first question, (most proficiency), 17 out of 20, or 85% of the 20 teachers indicated that ESOL students had the greatest proficiency in reading; 2 out of 20, or 10% indicated listening; 1 out of 20, representing 5%, chose writing.

As to question on least proficiency 54%+, or 13 of the 24 teachers who responded, indicated that ESOL students were least proficient in writing; 6 of the 24 teachers, or 25% chose listening; 12.5% or 3 of the 24 chose listening and writing; 1 (4%+) chose listening and reading; 1 (4%+) chose reading.

Of the 23 teachers who answered the question on the need for remediation, 13, or 56.5 % indicated most ESOL students needed remediation in writing; 3 (13%) chose listening and writing; 3 (13%+) chose listening; 1 (4.34%) chose reading. Three other teachers indicated grammar and spelling (13%+).

While this survey does not establish why there is a disparity in reading and writing skills, it clearly does suggest that such a disparity exists. A better measure would be to compare reading and writing assessment scores. Unfortunately, one half of that equation is missing, which is one reason why a writing assessment should be required. In several ways, a writing assessment would also serve to reconnect reading and writing, which according to the studies, would improve student skills in both reading and writing.

### **The Need for a Writing Assessment**

When only reading is assessed, writing becomes subordinated and isolated, which prevents the two skills from interacting to produce mutual benefits (Clifford 3). When writing is assessed, along with reading, the two skills are put on an equal footing, fostering an interaction that is mutually beneficial. Assessments for both reading and writing also encourage teachers to extend the instructional focus beyond reading to include writing and to integrate the two skills in the same lesson plans. If only reading is assessed, the implied message is that teachers should prioritize reading over writing. When teachers subordinate writing to reading, the symbiotic relationship breaks down and the mutual benefits dissolve.

While educators may deplore the idea of ‘teaching to the test,’ it has become a widespread practice simply because “the public pressure on students, teachers, and principals to raise scores on high-stakes tests is tremendous” (Bond). Because reading assessments are currently the only basis for promotion in Florida’s ESOL program, the priority is reading. As a result, teachers who want to be perceived as “effective” have a strong incentive to prioritize reading, the only skill that will produce promotions. The down-side for many ESOL students is that insufficient writing instruction means a much lower proficiency in writing than in reading. Not only would a writing

assessment encourage balance and integration, it would also enhance a student's chance to succeed in academic/vocational programs and in the workplace where proficiency is necessary not only in reading, but also in writing.

Finally, a writing assessment is, among other things, a lesson that integrates reading and writing. After the prompt has been read and interpreted, the student must construct a written response that that relates to the reading. This process produces an interaction that draws on and develops both skills.

If Florida is to create a de facto integration of reading and writing, it must develop a writing assessment system. The challenge will be to devise a graduated system that will accommodate each of the six fluency levels.

## CHAPTER FIVE: WRITING ASSESSMENT PROPOSALS FOR ESOL

### **The Challenge of Developing Writing Assessments Relevant to Each Skill Level**

Just as reading and listening assessments have been tailored to fit each of the six ESOL proficiency levels, writing assessments must also be aligned to each of those skill sets. To align writing assessments to the skill levels, it is first necessary to know what writing skills students in a given level actually possess. Can students in the Low Intermediate level construct a sentence? Can a student in an “Advanced” class write a paragraph with a main idea and details? Fortunately, FLDOE has adopted a “System of Descriptors,” developed by the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS), which lists “key skills that a typical adult ESOL student should be able to do at each educational functioning level” (FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper pp 33-35). NRS has compiled these criteria for speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is a widely-used resource that involves “a cooperative process through which state adult education directors and the U.S. Department of Education’s Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) manage a reporting system that demonstrates learner outcomes for adult education”(NRS). Because an understanding of the writing skills associated with each level is a condition precedent to choosing or developing an effective writing assessment, the NRS System of Descriptors is a logical place to start.

Skill Descriptors for writing include the following:

*Foundations:*

- No or minimal reading or writing skills, either in English or any other language.
- May be unable to use any written instrument.

*Low Beginnings:*

- Can read and write familiar words and phrases.
- Limited understanding of connected prose.
- Can complete simple forms by writing basic personal information (name, address, telephone number).

*High Beginnings:*

- Can write simple sentences with limited vocabulary.
- Shows little mastery of basic grammar, capitalization, and spelling.

*Low Intermediate:*

- Can write simple notes and messages.
- Sentences lack variety but demonstrate control of basic grammar, punctuation and capitalization.

*High Intermediate:*

- Can write simple paragraphs with main idea and supporting details on familiar topics.
- Can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.

*Advanced:*

- Individual can write a multi-paragraph text with organization and development of ideas.
- Writing demonstrates clearly defined introduction, body, and conclusion.
- Writing shows some complex grammar and a variety of sentence structures
- Uses a diverse range of vocabulary.

(Technical Assistance Paper 33-35)

While these descriptors are not detail-intense, they do provide an outline of the writing skills that should be assessed for each functioning level. Because the assessment would be given to determine whether or not a student should advance to the next level, only the criteria from Low Beginnings to Advanced would apply. Incoming students who do not meet the requisite score for Low Beginning would be placed in Foundations, the starting place for students with “no or minimal reading and writing skills.”

The Skill Descriptors should also prescribe the type of assessment used to test the skill in question. For example, since the ability to complete a simple form is a requisite skill for placement in Low Beginning, the assessment should actually test the student’s ability to

complete such a form. The assessment for placement in High Intermediate should likewise test the student's ability to write simple paragraphs, with main ideas and details, since those are the skill criteria for functioning at that level. While developing ESOL writing assessments will require extensive research, at least two tests currently include assessment activities that are directly relevant to the ESOL Skill Descriptors. *BEST Literacy* provides relevant assessments for Low Beginning, High Beginning, and Low Intermediate, while the FCAT writing assessments align with the skills to be tested in High Intermediate and Advanced. Obviously those tests are not color-matched prototypes for ESOL writing assessments, but they do provide good working models.

### ***BEST Literacy***

The *BEST Literacy* and *BEST Plus* assessments are both produced by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). CAL is non-profit organization that has gained a strong international reputation for its work in a number of bilingual pursuits including English as a second language, dialect studies, and the education of linguistically and diverse adults and children (CAL). *BEST Plus* assesses listening and speaking skills, while *BEST Literacy* is an assessment designed “to measure adult English language learners’ ability to read and write in English” (*BEST Literacy*, p. 1).

Under its current guidelines, FLDOE has actually approved both *BEST Literacy* and *BEST Plus* “to establish the student’s initial functioning level” and “for reporting EFLs to the NRS and for reporting LCPs to the state” (FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper p.11). “*BEST Literacy* can also be used to place students into the Advanced Level, but not to exit students out of the Advanced Level” (12). Unfortunately, the “uses” FLDOE has approved for *BEST Literacy*

are at best irrelevant and at worst a misuse. According to its Test Manual, *BEST Literacy* “does not measure higher levels of reading and writing skills” (*BEST Literacy* p.39). The writing portion of the test, moreover, involves filling out one and two line forms and writing simple notes (18-37). Those tasks fall significantly below the skill level in Advanced where students are expected to “write a multi-paragraph text with organization and development of ideas.” (Technical Assistance Paper 35).

Because FLDOE does not require a writing assessment, either for promotion or “to determine the instructional needs of the student,” authorizing *BEST Literacy* for any other use amounts to an exercise in futility. Prior to July 1, 2012, students had to achieve requisite scores in both listening and reading to be promoted. Under the terms of the 2012 Technical Assistance Paper, promotions are now based solely on reading. Listening tests must still be given, but only “to determine instructional needs” (14). Writing assessments have never been a factor, either in promotion or instructional needs, simply because there has never been a requirement to assess writing. If writing assessments are not required and *BEST Literacy* is approved for use in an inappropriate level, hasn't FLDOE , in effect, transformed it into a fifth wheel? If that is the case, what changes could be made to make it a necessary fourth wheel?

### ***BEST Literacy* for Low Beginning, High Beginning, and Low Intermediate**

There are two changes that would give *BEST Literacy* a meaningful function in Florida's ESOL program. First, FLDOE must require the use of writing assessments. If they are not required, most schools simply won't use them. Secondly, *BEST Literacy* should be used, not to determine placement in Advanced, but to determine promotion and placement into Low Beginning, High Beginning, and Low Intermediate. The *BEST Literacy* assessments do not align

with the skill-set in Advanced, but they do align with the skills described in Low Beginning, High Beginning, and Low intermediate. According to the NRS Skill Descriptors, Low Beginning students “can complete simple forms;” students in High Beginning “can write simple sentences;” those in Low Intermediate “can write simple notes and messages” (Technical Assistance Paper 33,34). Because *BEST Literacy* actually tests all of those skills, it would provide a highly relevant assessment for each of those fluency levels.

There are two parts to *BEST Literacy*'s writing assessment, a “Short-Answer” section involving completion of forms and a “Note-Writing” section that entails writing three to four sentences. The Short-Answer prompts ask the student to write dollar amounts on checks and fill in names, addresses, birth dates and birth places on a variety of forms. One point is scored for answers that correctly respond to the prompt; incorrect responses get a zero (*BEST Literacy* 18-20). This section provides a relevant evaluation for Low and High Beginning skills. In the Note-Writing section, students are asked to write 3-4 sentence notes for a variety of purposes: a dinner invitation to a friend; a note to a teacher explaining an absence; a note to a landlord explaining a late rental payment. The Note-Writing section is scored on a 0-5 scale, based on rubric that evaluates clarity of the writing, elaboration and whether the response is on task (22-37). This section aligns closely with the Low Intermediate skill set.

Although the section on note-writing obviously involves a more advanced skill than completing forms, it would still be feasible to give both parts of the test to students from all three fluency levels. Bench mark scores for promotion and placement could be established for each level by designating the total score necessary for placement in each level. For example, a high score in form completion with a low score in note-writing would indicate placement in Low or High Beginning because those scores demonstrate an ability to perform lower level skills, but not

the higher skills (note writing) required in Low Intermediate. A student with high scores in both sections would qualify for Low Intermediate because those scores reflect the ability to perform higher level skills. A major advantage to giving both parts of the test to students in all three levels is that it would not limit the promotion of students who learn quickly. If, for example, a student who had been in a Low Beginning class makes high scores in both sections, he or she could bypass High Beginning and move to Low Intermediate where the student's skills would be on the same plain as the course material.

Finally, to make the best use of *BEST Literacy*, FLDOE should consider designating *BEST Literacy* as the writing assessment for Low Beginning, High Beginning, and Low Intermediate. *BEST Literacy* provides tests that are directly relevant to the skills identified in each of those levels. In the last analysis, that should be the ultimate consideration for choosing an assessment.

### **FCAT Writing Assessments for High Intermediate and Advanced**

*BEST Literacy* is not a good fit for High Intermediate and Advanced because the skills in those levels rise above the purview of *BEST Literacy's* assessments. Students in High Intermediate “can write simple paragraphs with a main idea and supporting details.” Advanced students “can write a multi-paragraph text with organization and development of ideas.” The writing of Advanced students also “demonstrates clearly defined introduction, body, and conclusion” (FLDOE Technical Assistance Paper 34, 35). These skills go well beyond the skills necessary to complete forms or write simple notes, which the *BEST Literacy* assessment is designed to evaluate.

Since writing skills in the two higher levels involve developing and supporting ideas, the writing should be assessed on how effectively it is focused and organized. The assessment should also gauge how strongly the details support the main idea and how well punctuation, variation in sentence structure and other conventions are used. FLDOE need not look far for an appropriate assessment. All of those features are incorporated in the FCAT Writing Assessment, a program that has been used in Florida's public schools since 1993. While not without flaws, the FCAT program presents a format that holds great promise for assessing the writing of ESOL's upper level students.

First, it offers a rubric that measures proficiency in writing elements that are essential to a quality composition:

- **Focus**—Does the paper present and maintain a main idea, theme, or unifying point?
- **Organization**—Is there a structural development (beginning, middle, and end) with a relationship of one point to another? Are transitional devices used effectively?
- **Support**—Are the details used to explain, clarify, or define specific, creditable and thorough?
- **Conventions**—Is proper use of spelling, capitalization, and grammar demonstrated?

(FLDOE, *Understanding FCAT 2.0 Reports* [Spring 2013], p. 9)

Since the writing skills to be assessed in High Intermediate and Advanced involve organizing and structuring paragraphs to develop and support ideas, this FCAT format offers an ideal assessment because it focuses on those specific skills.

The FCAT Writing program is also compatible with ESOL's upper two levels because the FCAT program tailors its assessment to align with different age and skill levels. Although age is not a factor in ESOL, skill levels are the central factor. High Intermediate and Advanced

represent different levels because the writing skills of students in Advanced are more proficient than the skills of High Intermediate students. Because of that, assessments must be tailored to accommodate the different skill levels. FCAT Writing, which provides assessments for grades 4, 8 and 10, calibrates the scoring criteria and assigns scoring prompts to align with each of the three grade levels. To score a 6, the highest grade, a fourth grader's writing must show "*ample* development of supporting ideas." The bar is raised for eighth graders who must demonstrate "*substantial* development of supporting ideas." In addition to exhibiting "substantial development" tenth grade writers must also bring a "freshness of expression" and commit "few, if any, errors in using conventions" (10,11). This type of calibrated format should provide a viable framework for assessing the differing writing skills of students in High Intermediate and Advanced.

Finally, the FCAT writing program holds great potential as an assessment for ESOL simply because it was created by FLDOE, the same entity that governs Florida's ESOL program. FLDOE created FCAT writing for the state's public schools in 1993. Since that time, the writing program has undergone many changes to adopt new ideas and meet new challenges. Given that experience, FLDOE should be in a unique position to adapt the FCAT writing assessments for use in evaluating the writing of ESOL students.

### **Would the GED Assessment Tighten the Reading-Writing Connection?**

GED, which stands for General Education Development, is a testing service affiliated with the American Council on Education. Used in conjunction with adult education programs, GED tests provide adult students with the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency credential. During the past five years, virtually all aspects of this testing system have been

“overhauled,” including the content areas (GED). As a result, the four areas in the 2014 test include Mathematical Reasoning, Science, Social Studies, and Reasoning Through Language Arts. The Language Arts assessment forges a strong reading-writing connection that could be applied to an ESOL writing assessment.

The GED Language Arts Assessment first requires students to read two “Stimulus Passages” on Daylight Savings Time. The Stimulus Passages are arguments by proponents and opponents who disagree on the impact of DST on energy consumption, and safety. Next, a prompt directs students to write a response that analyzes both positions and then determines which one is best supported. Students are instructed to cite statements and evidence from the Passages that support their conclusions. The scoring criteria includes how closely the answer is connected to the prompt, whether relevant evidence and arguments are cited from the Passages, and whether the writer can identify false reasoning (GED Reasoning Through Language Arts).

Because most English language learners would have little familiarity with Daylight Savings Time, this would not be an appropriate prompt. If, however, a prompt is created that is relevant and engaging, it is hard to conceive of any assessment that would do more to integrate reading and writing. A prompt with Stimulus Passages on immigration issues could be a hot topic for students in High Intermediate and Advanced. Competing claims on consumer products might engage students in Low Intermediate. Ferreting out all the possibilities will take time and research, but if FLDOE truly wants to integrate reading and writing in the ESOL program, it needs to explore the possibilities presented here.

## **Should Writing Assessments Be a Factor in Promotion?**

This is a critical question because it raises the same controversy that has arisen after the listening assessment was removed in 2012 as a requirement for promotion. With reading as the only basis for promotion, do students move to higher fluency levels with proficiency in reading but not in listening and writing? In fact a substantial disparity between listening and reading has developed since the change in 2012. When students were required to attain both requisite reading and listening scores, a student in a given level had the same proficiency in both skills.

Unfortunately, that is not the case today. It is not uncommon for students to be promoted to Advanced (Level 6) with reading scores that qualify for that level, but with listening scores that only qualify for Level 4 or 5. As a result, those students cannot fully function at Level 6 due to their lower proficiency in listening. There is undoubtedly a disparity of writing to reading, but the extent is unknown since there is no writing assessment. If the objective is to prepare ESOL students for educational programs or the work place, promotion should be based, not only on reading, but also on listening and writing.

An unspoken objection to using listening and writing as factors in promotions is that it would slow the rate of promotion and graduation. Since numbers are important to obtain funding, lower graduation rates would reduce funding. While concern over that situation is understandable, does it justify pushing students out the door when they are proficient in only one skill? If reading is to be the only basis for promotion, ESOL schools need to set up remedial classes for students who need to improve proficiency in listening and writing.

Finally, there is no valid reason for not having a writing assessment. Without it, writing becomes separated from and subordinated to reading and the directive in FLDOE's Performance Standards to "integrate language skills" devolves into a hollow platitude.

ESOL students would be best served by listening and writing assessments that are factors in promotion. If, however, reading is to remain the only basis for promotion, a writing assessment must be created and given so that teachers can determine the instructional needs of their students.

## CHAPTER SIX: SUPPLEMENTAL PROPOSALS

### **Create Lesson Plans that Integrate Reading and Writing**

FLDOE cannot bear all the responsibility. ESOL teachers must find and develop lesson plans that integrate reading and writing. Successful programs like the *Pathways Project* provide examples of activities, such as graphic organizers and sentence-starters that engage both reading and writing skills. Like the situation in developing writing assessments, the major challenge in creating integrated lesson plans is to design them so that they align with the different fluency levels. As with the writing assessments, the NRS Skill Descriptors should prescribe the type of content appropriate for each level.

Since the designated skill for Low and High Beginning is “completing simple forms,” an appropriate plan should involve the type of reading and writing required to complete a form:

|               |
|---------------|
| _____         |
| Name          |
| _____         |
| Address       |
| _____         |
| Date of birth |

For students in these levels, this kind of format would provide an integrated lesson that requires them to correctly interpret the word meanings and respond by providing the correct written response. Another activity would involve writing answers to simple questions. An important part of this lesson involves demonstrating how wording in a question can be used in the answer:

When is Christmas?

Christmas is on December 25.

Here students could see that the answer uses *is* and *Christmas* by reversing those words in the answer.

Using wording in a question to compose an answer would also be a suitable activity for Low Intermediate students if the question is posed after a reading. For example, after reading a short account of the Revolutionary War that included a statement that George Washington served as a general in the Colonial Army, this question could be posed: “What did George Washington do during the Revolutionary War?” The teacher could then demonstrate how a complete sentence could be composed by taking “during the Revolutionary war,” and using those words as the introductory clause to an answer: “*During the Revolutionary War*, George Washington was a general in the Colonial Army.” Not only does the reading-writing interaction here involve writing an answer to demonstrate reading comprehension, words from the question also become a component in complete sentence that the student composes as an answer.

Since note-writing is a designated skill for Low Intermediate, activities should involve writing notes. Rather than directing students to write an imaginary note to a teacher, a friend or a landlord, a more effective method would be to thrust the note-writing task into the context of a real life situation. If the note is to go to the landlord, have the landlord write the first note, which will serve as the writing prompt.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I called you yesterday and left a message. The rent was due 10 days ago. I need to know why you haven't paid the rent and when I can expect to receive it. You must send me an email immediately!

The landlord's note sharpens the focus to two questions: Why haven't you paid the rent? When will you send the rent?

Expanding a note into a letter could also be used in High Intermediate where composing paragraphs is the issue. This letter could serve as prompt requiring two paragraphs, the first on life in Bradenton, the second on the experience of learning English.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Your name

How are you? I've heard you are living in Bradenton, Florida and going to school to learn English. What is Bradenton like? Does it have good restaurants? What is your favorite? Why do you like it? So what do you do for fun in Bradenton? Is there a beach? What is it like? What about shopping? What stores do you like?

How is your English coming along? What is the hardest part? What do you do in your English class? What countries do the students come from?

Please write soon, I'd love to hear from you.

Your Very Best Friend, (YVBF)

Here the challenge would be to compose main idea and detail sentences for each of the two paragraphs; the first for life in Bradenton, the second for learning English.

As previously discussed, the GED assessment provides a good fit for the skill level in Advanced, where students should be able to "write a multi-paragraph text with organization and development of ideas" (Technical Assistance Paper 35). Because it involves reading and writing about opposing arguments on timely issues, such as gun control or legalization of marijuana, the GED format is a classic example of how reading and writing can be integrated. This task would require an analysis of both positions, a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each,

followed by a dialectic process that would lead either to the adoption of one position or a resolution of the two positions to a new, more defensible point of view. In any event, this type of activity should motivate students to “organize and develop ideas.”

### **Why Not Conduct a Writing Lab in the Computer Lab?**

How important are writing labs to English language learners? That question was a pivotal issue in a research project conducted by Lisa Gardner Flores and Dominique Chulup. As a part of their research, they asked a group of ESL and Adult Ed. instructors to name the most critical resources for effectively teaching English communication. The two most common responses were writing labs and tutoring: “Of the interventions mentioned, forty-three percent of the respondents identified the writing centers and twenty-nine percent identified tutoring to be the most beneficial” (Chulup 2). The response to that survey reflects a problem identified in an article by Terese Thonus:

As non-native speakers of English are placed in classes with native speakers, anxiety overcomes them; they realize the grammar their ESL teachers have focused on isn't idiomatic enough to make the grade. . . . This is the sad reality encountered at institutions without multi-level, in-depth courses in ESL composition. Whether as a long or short term solution to the non-native writing problem, writing centers must somehow fill the gap. (Thonus 14)

The reality is that writing centers, designed for native writers, sometimes face the formidable challenge of trying to remediate the writing problems of non-natives, who have never had instruction calibrated to their level. In other words, writing centers are important to English language learners, but to be optimally effective, writing centers should be preceded by writing

labs within the ESL or ESOL programs. Instead of trying to fund and staff a full-blown writing center, ESOL and ESL programs could provide many of the basic instructional and tutorial services for writing simply by making use of an existing resource, the computer lab.

Most ESOL schools have computer labs equipped with RosettaStone, a widely used software program for English language learners. While RossetaStone does include a few writing activities, the focus is on reading, listening, and speaking. Typically, an ESOL class would have two to three classes per week in the computer lab, where the students work on those three skills. Those lab sessions certainly benefit student learning in reading, listening and speaking, but why not expand the purview to include writing? By devoting one lab session per week to writing, wouldn't an ESOL school move one step closer to realizing Florida's curricular goal of "developing and integrating the four language skills"?

Teachers could use these weekly writing labs in a number ways that would integrate reading and writing. The two skills would be connected by assigning students to write about what they read in class. The assignments could include retelling a story, describing main idea and details, or relating a reading to their own lives. The writing labs would also be ideal for creating blogospheres. After writing and posting a blog on a classroom reading assignment, students could read, and comment on, the blogs of other students. Not only would this type of interaction be engaging, it would also be focused on academics and it would involve reading and writing about the ideas of others. Student writing from the lab, with names deleted, could be used in the classroom to demonstrate how to revise writing problems. Finally, a classroom newsletter could be created for a wide range of possibilities, from reading reviews to personal biographies.

Obviously one teacher could not provide the tutoring needs for a class of twenty students. Tutors could be drawn from at least three sources. Qualified volunteers could be recruited from

the community. Schools close to state colleges could contact the education departments and establish student internships for students majoring in education. Finally if the school has an ABE program, advanced students in those programs could work as volunteers.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Despite the numerous studies that have documented the mutual benefits of integrated reading and writing, we have yet to bridge the chasm between where we are and where we should be. While literacy educators can rightfully celebrate the impressive learning gains produced by those programs that have integrated reading and writing, they must never forget the length and difficulty of the struggle. It has been a struggle, spanning more than a century, where the pedagogy on integration has been strong and consistent, but the application often weak and sporadic. And now, even after the mutual benefits have been proven, separation and subordination are alive and well. Quite simply, imbalance in the instruction of reading and writing persists and the integration of those skills remains a work in progress.

This disparity was clearly evident in “Reading First,” a 2006 program for elementary students that provided extensive instruction in reading but little in writing. It also continues in Florida’s ESOL schools, where reading remains the only skill tested to determine whether a student’s “educational gains” are sufficient for promotion. Not only is ESOL student writing not a factor in promotion, it isn’t even assessed. That must change. Not only would a writing assessment encourage balance and integration, it would also enhance a student’s chance to succeed in academic/vocational programs and in the workplace where proficiency is necessary not only in reading, but also in writing.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Applebee, Arthur N. *Tradition and Reform in Teaching of English History*. Urbana, Ill.: National College of Teachers of English, 1974. 245. Print.
- Best Literacy Test Manual. (2008). CAL Center For Applied Linguistics. Washington D.C. 1-60.
- Bond, Lloyd. "Teaching to the Test." *Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*.  
<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/perpectives/teaching-test> (2013).
- Chall, Jeanne and Vicki Jacobs. "Writing and Reading in the Elementary Grades: Developmental Low SES Children." *Language Arts*. 617-626. 1983
- Chulup, Dominique T. and Lisa Gardner Flores. "The Transition from Adult Literacy ESL Programs to Academic Reading and Writing: Next Steps for English Language Learners." *Texas Adult and Family Literacy Quarterly*. 11:1 (2007). <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/Research/flores05trans.html>.
- Clifford, Geraldine J. "A Sisyphean Task: Historical Perspectives on the Relationship Between Writing and Reading Instruction." *Center for the Study of Reading*. University of Illinois at Urbana/Champagne 1988. Web.
- Coady, Kim Street. "No Writer Left Behind: Examining the Reading-Writing Connection in the Reading First Classroom through a Teacher Study Group." (2008). *Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology Dissertations*. Paper 28. Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA. Digital Archive @ GSU. Web.
- Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. Introduction. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School

- Officers. Washington, D.C. (2010) [www.corestandards.org/ela-literacy/rh/introduction](http://www.corestandards.org/ela-literacy/rh/introduction). 39.
- Connelly, F.M and Jean Clandinin. "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry." *Educational Researcher* 19 (1990): 2-14. Sage. University of South Florida, Tampa. Web.
- Connors, Robert J. "The Rhetoric of Mechanical Correctness." In T. Newkirk (Ed.), *Only Connections: Uniting Reading and Writing*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1986.
- Constable, Rolly. "Ethnography, Observational Research, and Narrative Inquiry." *Writing @ CSU Guide*. 2013. Web.
- Dwight, Theodore. *The Schoolmaster's Friend*. New York: Roe Lockwood 1835.
- Florida Department of Education. *Curriculum Standards: Adult English for Speakers Of Other Languages (ESOL)*. CIP #1532.010300. Tallahassee, FL 2012, 2013. Print.
- Florida Department of Education. *Performance Standards: Teachers of English for Speakers Of Other Languages*. Tallahassee. 2003. [www.fldoe.org/aa/a/perstand.asp](http://www.fldoe.org/aa/a/perstand.asp). Web.
- Florida Department of Education (Division of Career and Adult Education). *Technical Assistance Paper: Adult English for Speakers of Other Language Program*. Tallahassee, FL. July 1, 2012 [www.fldoe.org/workforce/AdultEd/pdf/adult\\_esol\\_tap.pdf](http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/AdultEd/pdf/adult_esol_tap.pdf).
- Gardinar, Lion F. *Redesigning Higher Education: Producing Dramatic Gains in Student Learning*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, Vol. 23, No. 7. Washington D.C.: The George Washington Graduate School of Education and Human Development (1994).
- GED *Test-Reasoning Through Language Arts* (2014)
- Golden, James L., Goodwin F. Berquist, William E. Coleman and Michael J. Sproule. *The Rhetoric of Western Thought*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 2004. 66.

- Graham, Steve and Michael Herbert. "Writing to Read: A Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Writing and Writing Instruction on Reading." *Harvard Educational Review* 710-738. Winter 2011.
- Graves, Donald H. "Children's Writing: Research directions and hypotheses based upon an examination of the writing processes of seven-year-old children" (1973). Doctoral Dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo. (Proquest) 7408375.
- Herber, H.C. and J. Nelson Herber. "Planning the Reading Program." In A.C. Purver & O.S. Niles (Eds.), *Becoming Readers in a Complex Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. 174-208.
- Hosic, J.F. *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*. Washington, D.C: United States Bureau of Education, Bulletin 2, 1917.
- Langer, J.A. and Sheila Flihan. "Writing and Reading Relationships: Constructive Tasks." *International Reading Association*. 1-8. 2000.  
[www.albany.edu/cela/publication/article/write.read.htm](http://www.albany.edu/cela/publication/article/write.read.htm).
- Loban, Walter. *Language Development: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1976. 1-144.
- Olson, Carol B. and Robert Land. "A Cognitive Strategies Approach to Reading and Writing Instruction for English Language Learners in Secondary School." *Research in the Teaching Of English*. Vol. 41, Number 3, 269-303. February 2007.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read*. Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000.

North, Stephen M. *Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boyton/Cook, 1987.

Oxford, Rebecca. "Integrated in the ESL/EFL Classroom." *Eric Digest*. Sept. 2001.

[www.cal.org/resources/Digest/digest\\_pdfs/0105-oxford.pdf](http://www.cal.org/resources/Digest/digest_pdfs/0105-oxford.pdf).

Pearson, P. David and R.J. Tierney. "On Becoming a Thoughtful Reader: Learning to Read Like A Writer." *Becoming Readers in a Complex Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Stotsky, Sandra. "Research on Reading/Writing Relationships: A Synthesis and Suggested Directions." *Language Arts*. 60 (1983): 626-642.

Thones, Terese. "Tutors as Teachers: Assisting ESL/EFL Students in the Writing Center." *The Writing Center Journal*. Volume 13, No. 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 13-26 Web.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Since this thesis includes discussions on the history and pedagogy of reading and writing, as well as terms pertaining to adult education, including ESOL, it would be useful to define some of the terms discussed in both of those areas.

### **Reading and Composition**

*Aristotelian Rhetoric* involves an analytical approach to rhetoric, which Aristotle defined as: “the faculty of discovering in every case the available means of persuasion.” The speaker or writer must not be confined to a single approach of persuasion, but must examine all the means available. By following this process, the advocate will be more likely to choose the most effective argument. During the nineteenth century, this method was widely used in teaching composition and speaking, first in European universities and later in Harvard, Yale, and other American colleges (Golden et al p. 66).

*The Belle Lettres Movement*, which many universities embraced during the nineteenth century, broadened rhetoric instruction to include writing and criticism, along with speaking. This pedagogy joined rhetoric and ‘polite literature,’ so that oral discourse was studied with poetry, drama, history, and philosophy (Golden pp 125, 126).

*Holistic Instruction*, as it applies to language arts and ESOL, involves instruction that integrates literacy skills rather than separating them (Oxford p. 2).

*Meta Analysis* is a statistical technique in which the results of several similar studies are mathematical combined to improve the reliability of the results (Graham & Herbert p. 9).

*The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)* was founded in 1911, primarily to contest college entrance requirements which NCTE members believed were detrimental to secondary public schools. Today, NCTE's mission focuses on promoting literacy "through the learning and teaching of English and the related arts and sciences of language" ([www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)).

*The Progressive Education Movement*, which took place from 1920 to 1955, limited reading vocabulary to words that were well-understood. "Experience Charts" were used for writing. Compositions directed by these charts produced artificial writing, such as "We went to the park. We saw the trees. We had fun" (Clifford p. 29).

*Qualitative Research* is a many-faceted methodology that is still evolving. Because of that, terminology to describe its exact nature is not yet agreed upon. "What is agreed upon is that qualitative observational research is a systematic inquiry into the nature or qualities of group behavior in order to learn what it means to be a member of that group" (Rolly et.al Writing @CSU). Instead of focusing on numerically-measured data, qualitative research relies on materials that require interpretation. Why did something happen? How did it happen? Qualitative research also uses a variety of research methods, including case studies, interviews, and polling.

*Quantitative Research* is a positivist type of inquiry that relies on examining behaviors and questions in a highly controlled environment. It sees the world as an objective reality and relies on mathematical data to determine findings that can be generalized to similar groups and situations (Stephen North) and (Gareth Morgan).

## **From FLDOE's Glossary of Adult Education Terms**

*Adult Education (ABE)* is a program in Florida and other states that provide courses of instruction in mathematics, reading, and language for adults functioning at an eighth grade level or below.

*Adult Career Pathways* is a systematic framework that connects adult educational programs to postsecondary education, vocations and careers. Each step measures skills in order to improve career and earning opportunities.

*College Readiness* refers to adult students who have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully complete a credit course without remediation.

*Contextualized Teaching and Learning* is an instructional strategy in which teachers relate content to real word situations. *The* intent is to motivate students to make connections between the knowledge and its practical application.

*Developmental Education*, sometimes called remedial education, is designed to foster and support academic development and personal growth of individuals who need to improve skills to meet college entrance requirements. Offered to both students entering college directly from high school and to those returning to school, developmental education provides students with a blend of teaching, counseling, advising and tutoring.

*Differentiated Instruction* is an instructional method in which the teacher adapts the content, process and details of the lessons to match the different skill levels and learning styles of individual students. The learning goals remain the same for all students, but the instructional approach, required tasks, and materials used will vary according to the needs of individual students.

## **From Acronyms and Terms Related to English Language Learners**

*BICS* is the acronym for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills. The term is often referred to as “playground English” or “survival English.” It is the basic language proficiency required for face-to-face communication for routine daily activities, but it is not sufficient for academic communication. As students begin to acquire a second language, they are typically able to develop BICS within one to three years.

*CALP*, the acronym for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, is the language proficiency required for academic achievement. A student who has acquired CALP-level skills can gather factual information independently, find relationships, make inferences and draw conclusions. It typically takes students 5-7 years to develop CALP skills.

*EFL* (English as a Foreign Language) refers to those learning English in a country where English is not the native language.

*ELL* are “English Language Learners,” usually students in secondary schools, who are acquiring English for their education.

*ESL*, the acronym for English Speakers of Other Languages, involves a method of instruction for students who are learning English as a new language. The term often refers to a student who is learning English in order to live and function in a native English-speaking country.

*ESOL* (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is the acronym used to describe learners who either do not speak any English or who are acquiring English as a second language.

The term is often applied to students in public schools who do not speak, understand or write with the same facility as their classmates because they did not grow up speaking English at home.

*L1* This symbol is used to denote the learner's primary or native language.

*L2* represents the language the learner is trying to acquire.

*LCP*, the acronym for Literacy Completion Point, is an assessment score indicating a student has sufficiently developed English skills to move to a more advanced class.

*LEP* means Limited English Proficient. This term identifies those students who have insufficient English skills to succeed in an English-only classroom.

*TESL* refers to those who teach English as a second language.

*TESOL* (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) refers to the training for those who want to teach English to those who don't speak English or have limited proficiency.