THE COMMON CORE AND FIRST YEAR COLLEGE COMPOSITION
THE DISCOURSE OF EDUCATIONAL AIMS ACROSS THE WRITING CONTINUUM

A Project

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by

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Department of English
Critical discourse analysis, utilizing the discourse-historical approach (DHA), of the high school to college writing continuum discourse helps us to examine the implications of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This analysis examines the CCSS English language arts and literacy standards (ELA/literacy) and the Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition (WPA Outcomes), which represent educational and political discourses as they converge to establish educational aims. Through DHA, these texts are analyzed for language, intertextual and discursive relationships, social and institutional variables outside of the texts, and the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts. Examining instances of perspectivization, argumentation, nomination, and predication in educational aims lead to important insights into the writing continuum. This is knowledge that can be leveraged in a time of reform and transition. I conclude that the CCSS ELA/Literacy and the WPA
Outcomes are fundamentally different due to the perspectives that frame them, but these differences do not imply incompatibility. Instruction aligned to both sets of educational aims can add coherence to, and foster transfer of knowledge along, the high school to college writing continuum, but this progress can be hindered by high-stakes assessment. Educators must continue to involve themselves in public policy discourse, as it constantly converges with English education discourse, to advocate for sound policy decisions.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Amy Heckathorn

_________________________
Date
DEDICATION

To my bee. “They got the tail, but they missed the fox.”
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To mom and dad, for what you taught me about courage and curiosity.

To my family and friends, for your love and humor when I needed it the most.

To my mentors, Veronica and Barb, for knowing I could do this before I did.

To Amy and Angus, for your tremendous insight and encouragement.
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CHAPTER 1: COVER ESSAY

This portfolio began taking shape in my graduate research methods class when I determined a research topic that dominated my day job: the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Going through the MA program, this was a topic that came up a few times, especially by high school teachers, and the sentiment was mostly negative but always complex. With this portfolio, I wanted to explore that complexity without simplifying it, drawing from a variety of sources and perspectives. This completed work has supported my professional goals and interests and demonstrates my attainment of the English MA Composition program learning outcomes.

I applied to this MA program in order to continue my education to one day teach writing at a community college, but to also immediately inform my daily work with the California Department of Education (CDE). I started working there as a student assistant and worked my way up the support staff ranks learning as much as I could about educational programs and policy. At the same time, the U.S. was contending with a crippling recession, which took a major toll on public schools, paving the way for federal grants tied to historical reforms. I was tapped by CDE leadership to provide support for the statewide implementation of the CCSS, adopted in California in August 2010. Being involved in the implementation process, and cognizant of the increasingly public discourse on high-stakes assessment and college preparation, I became particularly interested in the high school to college writing continuum and education policy. In my experience and research, it became clear that there are many disconnections among social
actors involved in the writing continuum, leading to political maneuvers trumping research-based decisions and a general culture of distrust and blame. This would become my calling: to use composition and rhetoric expertise and research to inform sound policy decisions and educational programs related to the writing continuum. I expand on this calling in Chapter 2 of this portfolio, my statement of purpose for an education doctorate program. By completing this MA program, I am positioned to engage with this work at the CDE and in doctoral research with a strong understanding of rhetoric and composition praxis and research, a variety of classroom pedagogies, writing processes, and strategies for teaching and respecting students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This understanding is demonstrated by each piece of this portfolio.

In order to contextualize the research included in this portfolio, it is important to address the evolution of this project. In the first iteration of my project proposal, my research included surveying and interviewing first year composition (FYC) students and instructors and researching high school implementation of the CCSS to see the extent to which CCSS-aligned instruction affects student performance in FYC. Unfortunately, this research project was much too large to complete in the amount of time I had given myself to complete the MA program, so I adjusted the proposal to instead interview high school administrators from the top feeder schools to California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) about CCSS implementation to gain insights into the implications of implementation on future FYC courses and students. Making adjustments to the project required deep knowledge of appropriate and ethical methods and methodologies in composition research. This was further demonstrated by the CSUS Institutional Review
Board approving my research protocols for this project with little revision. What I did not anticipate, however, was the almost complete lack of participant response I received to my request to participate in research. Though I figured the beginning of the school year would be a busy time for school administrators, I could not even garner one response that could be expanded into a case study. Once again, I had to revise my project, demonstrating my ability to engage in writing as a process, which led to the work presented in this portfolio. I have completed a critical discourse analysis, using a discourse-historical approach, to analyze the CCSS and the Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition in order to determine whether the goal of the CCSS to prepare students for college writing can be attained.

What follows is a review of the texts that resulted from my research project and how they demonstrate I have met the CSUS English MA Composition program learning outcomes.

Chapter 3, the annotated bibliography, represents extensive research into the high school to college writing continuum, educational aims, instructional frameworks, and educational and institutional policy and research. In order to conduct research coherently on these topics, I had to apply the knowledge I acquired in Rhetoric and Composition theory, pedagogy, practice, and research. My learning experience in this MA program has centered on the evolving theories of Composition and Rhetoric, and many of those are addressed in my annotated bibliography. Certainly, educational aims for writing at all levels retain traces of the theoretical grounding from which they are developed, and, true to most contemporary academic writing situations, the research into the high school to college writing continuum revealed a combination of theoretical perspectives. While as a
field we have distanced ourselves from current-traditional rhetoric, educational stakeholders across levels continue to see academic writing in this light. In my research, it was a challenge to reconcile this perspective with the expressivist, social constructivist, and critical theories leading our discipline today. In examining research in other fields—English Education, Education Policy, Education Assessment—I had to filter external or adjacent fields of knowledge through these theoretical lenses. This research also brought to light pedagogical concerns as externally determined educational aims, though increasingly attendant to the merits of writing across the curriculum, sometimes neglected or mitigated process pedagogy and critical pedagogy. Practitioners, as well, have been somewhat neglected in the development and assessment of educational aims. While the latest aims and assessments were developed to improve upon their predecessors, large-scale standardization has yet to create venues for local school communities to be critically involved in educational discourses that constitute their day-to-day work. Research into the high school to college continuum brings to light persistent mishandlings of power in education, and, as the annotated bibliography demonstrates, such research must be presented in a way that is meaningful to education’s wide distribution of stakeholders. Thus, in addition to demonstrating my knowledge of theory, practice, and pedagogy, the annotated bibliography demonstrates an ethically-driven understanding of the ways in which all language is meaning making, especially within the contexts of academic discourse communities.

Using the extensive research included in the annotated bibliography, I embarked upon the project that is presented in Chapter 4, a critical discourse analysis, using the
discourse-historical approach, to examine the CCSS and the *WPA Outcomes* to determine if instruction aligned to both sets of educational aims can foster coherence across, and transfer of knowledge along, the high school to college writing continuum. This analysis required emerging expertise in Rhetoric and Composition praxis, pedagogy, ethics, pluralism, and research. By comparing educational aims determined by Rhetoric and Composition professionals to those determined through a public process—which included input from governing agencies, assessment developers, and research organizations—I was able to determine how the theory and practices valued in our field and local communities were either represented or neglected in national discourses. For example, while compositionists see the development of metacognition as an essential educational aim, the developers of the CCSS consider this a process that supports attainment of measurable results rather than a result in itself. Through this analysis, I was also able to determine the pedagogies that are shared across the high school to college writing continuum and the educational and political discourses. Universal themes prevalent in the writing continuum discourse revealed strong support for rhetorical, collaborative, pluralistic, and critical pedagogies. It was also important to consider the ethical implications of determining educational aims in conducting an analysis of those aims. Establishing what is valued in the learning of writing is a political act as it interprets social manifestations and constitutes the thinking and writing practices of students. In this act, it is impossible to address each individual critique. My analysis, then, makes clear how professional knowledge is ignored or taken up in public discourse. This required, at every point in my analysis, an interrogation of my own assumptions,
which was challenging because of my experience in state administrative work. I am required to support the implementation of state law, but my analysis helped me to see how I can engage appropriately, constructively, and ethically in this work by having a clear understanding of how policy aligns with or disconnects from research and scholarship in the field of composition and rhetoric. Chapter 4 demonstrates expertise in the teaching of writing and rhetorical analysis of composition research. By mastering the methods and methodologies of the Composition and Rhetoric field, I am fully capable of gathering and examining evidence and drawing sound qualitative and quantitative conclusions.

Chapter 5 includes a presentation that summarizes the findings of the analysis included in Chapter 4 and further demonstrates my knowledge of praxis, discourse communities, and composition research. This presentation was designed for an audience of compositionists addressing practitioner concerns through familiar theoretical lenses and valued practices. However, the presentation is also accessible to external educational stakeholders, emphasizing the social implications of my analysis while avoiding abstractions and confusing jargon. Such a presentation required negotiating the expectations of professionals, policy makers, administrators, and other relevant discourse communities to present my findings in a way that is widely relevant and provoking.

This portfolio represents my clear membership in the composition and rhetoric discourse community. The research, analysis, and reporting presented here demonstrates an accumulation of knowledge but also a sense of ongoing inquiry and curiosity. You will see I am able to conscientiously study phenomena in our field and situate my
research among other scholars and within the ecology of education. I entered this program with the hopes of supporting the learning of writing, and, by completing this portfolio, I have proven to myself that I can do this. I hope you will agree.
CHAPTER 2: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Statement of Purpose Requirement for UC Davis School of Education
Admission/Application

_The Statement of Purpose should focus on your academic and research goals and should address the following questions: What about educational research interests you? What is your intended research topic? Why are you choosing the PhD program at UC Davis? What do you plan to do with your degree?_

I am interested in educational research because of its power to change social and educational paradigms. Educational research has far-reaching implications. It can inform every aspect of the educational ecology: instruction, curriculum, assessment, professional learning, and policy development. It has the power to influence the work of millions of educators, policy makers, students, parents, and employers. Educational research mirrors advancements in technology and the global economy and also has the power to give voice to social actors who are underrepresented in high power conversations. I want to take part in this highly consequential work.

Over the last nine years, I have occupied a particular in-between space, in between high school and college English instruction and in between policy and practice. I completed my M.A. in Composition so that I might one day teach writing at a community college but also to immediately inform my daily work at the California Department of Education (CDE). At the same time, the U.S. was contending with a crippling recession, which took a major toll on public schools, paving the way for federal grants tied to historical reforms. I was tapped by CDE leadership to provide support for the statewide implementation of the Common Core State Standards, adopted in California in August
2010. Being involved in the implementation process, and cognizant of the increasingly public discourse on high-stakes assessment and college preparation, I became particularly interested in education policy related to the high school to college writing continuum. In my experience and from my research, it became clear that there are many disconnections among social actors involved in the writing continuum, leading to political maneuvers trumping research-based decisions and a general culture of distrust and blame. This is my calling: to use my expertise and research in composition and rhetoric to inform sound policy decisions and educational programs related to the writing continuum.

The UC Davis School of Education can be an opportunity for me to meet this calling. With graduate faculty from multiple disciplines, I would be able to tailor my educational program to include studies in linguistics, economics, statistics, sociology, and American studies, all of which would support research into the high school to college writing continuum. The goals of the School Organization and Educational Policy (SOEP) program emphasis also align with my research interests, and coursework aligned to these goals would further my knowledge of policy development and analysis. Another unique aspect of the UC Davis School of Education is the designated emphasis in writing, rhetoric, and composition studies, which also aligns with my research interests. Further, the location of the program is important as it allows for opportunities to connect directly with policy analysts and decision makers connected to Policy Analysis for California Education. UC Davis is also home to the Area 3 Writing Project and the Resourcing Excellence in Education center, which support the connections among secondary schools, postsecondary schools, education policy, composition research, and classroom practice.
Upon completing this program, I will use my degree to do political work that is grounded in disciplinary knowledge. I hope to find employment that will allow me to support secondary and postsecondary school administrations in understanding how research-based programs can support student achievement and college and career readiness. I want to inform sound policy decisions regarding high school to college transitions, with an emphasis on writing programs, and work towards bridging the divide between secondary and postsecondary schools and the divide between practice and policy. If I were to be accepted to the UC Davis School of Education, I would work tirelessly to make use of its exceptional coursework and resources so that I may engage in this work and represent the excellence of this institution.
CHAPTER 3: PUBLISHABLE DOCUMENT

The Common Core and First Year College Composition:
The Discourse of Educational Aims Across the Writing Continuum

Rhetorical Analysis of Public Venue

The following research article is tailored to a Composition and Rhetoric professional audience, as it is highly relevant to teachers of college-level writing across the U.S. as well as other audiences interested in college-level writing. While disciplinary knowledge provides context to the issues discussed in this article, it is still accessible to a wide distribution of readers. The genre, format, length, and documentation of the article meet the College Composition and Communication “Submission Guidelines”. The purpose of this research is to foster coherence in writing instruction and student transfer of knowledge between high school and college.

Introduction

Forty-five states across the nation adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 (Common Core State Standards [CCSS] Initiative). The CCSS are academic content standards for mathematics and English language arts (ELA) and literacy in history-social studies, science, and technical subjects (CCSS Initiative). Academic content standards delineate what students should know and be able to do in each grade level, kindergarten through grade twelve, and serve as the basis of public school instruction, curriculum, and assessment (California Department of Education CCSS Web site). Each state in the U.S. has in place some form of content standards for
mathematics, ELA, history-social studies, science, visual and performing arts, health, physical education, and world language. The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), spurred to action by high college remediation rates and the country’s declining global academic competitiveness, led the initiative to develop this common set of standards, which focus on ensuring students who graduate from high school are college and career ready (CCSS Initiative). Prior to the CCSS, each state developed its own sets of academic content standards leading to varying degrees of rigor and producing frustration among mobile families (CCSS Initiative). Since 2010, a couple of states repealed their adoption of the CCSS amid a political backlash to the standards, but they are still being widely used across the U.S., constituting the literacy instruction for millions of K-12 students.

The implementation of the CCSS should be important to first year composition (FYC) instructors as more and more students are entering their classrooms having experienced CCSS-aligned instruction. The alignment of secondary and postsecondary writing instruction is an ongoing topic of inquiry for our field, and mass adoption of a single set of ELA standards provides an opportunity to examine the high school to college writing continuum critically, specifically the extent to which the educational aims for both settings foster coherence in instruction and transfer of knowledge. Educational aims are the goals, outcomes, standards, competencies, skills, knowledge, practices, and so on, towards which learners are striving. If the CCSS define the preparation necessary for students to successfully engage in FYC, they should serve educational aims largely valued by our field. In order to determine if this is so, we must examine the CCSS
ELA/Literacy and the discourse surrounding the high school to college writing continuum. The articulation between the CCSS and professionally developed educational aims can be explained through an analysis of their language and the perspectives framing their development and use. Based on this analysis, I conclude that these subgenres are fundamentally different, but there is room for articulation between the two in order to foster coherence and transfer of knowledge across the continuum within the current sociopolitical context.

**Methodology**

Because the CCSS have far-reaching consequences, we must examine a variety of contextual factors that inform and are affected by their development and use. A useful methodology that supports such an analysis is critical discourse analysis (CDA), utilizing the discourse-historical approach (DHA). Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer explain that CDA “emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary work in order to gain a proper understanding of how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power” (7), all of which can be examined in the development and use of educational aims. The DHA is valuable for this analysis as it takes into consideration a range of empirical observations, theories, methods, and background information, investigating the persuasive or ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices in order to promote improved communication (89). DHA deploys a triangulatotary discourse-analysis approach focusing on context through four levels: the language of the text; intertextual and interdiscursive relationships; social and institutional variables outside of the text; and the broader sociopolitical and historical context (Reisigl
and Wodak 93). Again, all of these contextual levels are useful in the study of educational aims in order to have a critical understanding of texts and the contexts in which they function. In CDA/DHA, texts may be analyzed through five types of discursive strategies, the ways in which language is used to achieve specific social, political, psychological, or linguistic goals (Reisigl and Wodak 94). In this analysis, I will focus on perspectivization, argumentation, nomination, and predication. By analyzing the discursive strategies in texts, we can gain insight into their underlying ideologies and whether they establish, perpetuate, or fight dominance (88). I will focus my analysis on the CCSS ELA/Literacy and the Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement for First Year Composition (WPA Outcomes Statement). The WPA Outcomes Statement is a central text of the writing continuum discourse, as it constitutes the teaching and learning that should take place in FYC courses, and as the CCSS ELA/Literacy seek to prepare students to engage in the work of the WPA Outcomes, both must be examined in order to determine if the implementation of the CCSS ELA/Literacy can support coherence across the continuum.

**Fundamental Differences Between the CCSS and Outcomes Subgenres**

In DHA, texts are attached to the social actors that produce them. Writers position themselves within the discourse, representing a point of view that either involves them with or distances them from other points of view. In analyzing perspectivization in DHA, the analyst must determine the point of view that frames a text and how other perspectives are represented within the text. The perspectives framing the CCSS ELA/Literacy and the WPA Outcomes are essentially different.
The WPA Outcomes Statement presents a perspective that is informed by disciplinary knowledge and distances itself from certain types of perspectives. The statement is developed and sponsored by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) and this perspective is further explained explicitly within the text of the statement:

This Statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory…

These outcomes are supported by a large body of research…(1)

Essential to the perspective of the statement is the disciplinary knowledge used to support it. Specifically, the outcomes represent the accumulated and collective knowledge of teachers and researchers across the nation. Within the statement, the CWPA somewhat distances itself from other perspectives. The introduction states, “programmatic decisions about helping students demonstrate these outcomes should be informed by an understanding of this research” (1), implying that there is a perspective that does not base programmatic decisions on an understanding of the research. Further, the statement explains the “intentional” definition of “outcomes” as opposed to “standards,” or precise levels of achievement, which are deliberately left to local writing programs and institutions to define (1). This implies that another perspective exists that would define “standards” for FYC instruction on a national scale. A perspective based in disciplinary knowledge, opposed to program decisions not based in this knowledge and on nationally defined standards, is essentially different from the perspective that shapes the CCSS ELA/Literacy.
The *CCSS ELA/Literacy* were, as stated previously, the result of an initiative of the CCSSO and NGA, but their development, as noted in the standards document, was informed by multiple perspectives and sources:

The present work…builds on the foundation laid by states in their decades-long work on crafting high-quality education standards. The Standards also draw on the most important international models as well as research and input from numerous sources, including state departments of education, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators from kindergarten through college, and parents, students, and other members of the public. In design and content, through successive drafts and numerous rounds of feedback, the Standards represent a synthesis of the best elements of standards-related work to date and an important advance over that previous work. (2)

Here we find the broad foundation that frames the *CCSS ELA/Literacy*, which is situated in public policy discourse. Leaders of states brought together a wide distribution of stakeholders in order to build consensus in an open, public process. This differs from the development of the *WPA Outcomes*. While the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* standards have been informed by educators and educational research, the process to develop them included public vetting. The *CCSS ELA/Literacy* perspective is shaped by public policy discourse, which is concerned with the public good of education. This is a good thing. All students should be provided with a high quality education, but what is at issue with these educational aims is whether standards should be defined on a national scale. The *WPA Outcomes* specifically call out “standards to measure students’ achievement” as
something that should be left to local writing programs and their institutions, which it implicates standards for K-12 public schools. This difference is directly influenced by the perspectives framing these educational aims, one disciplinary and practitioner, the other, public and national. While the perspective of the *WPA Outcomes* prefers local standard setting, the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* perspective sees standard setting as a national imperative. There are different perspectives framing these educational aims and this is crucial to understanding the ideologies at the foundation of these texts. The extent to which these educational aims constitute literacy education is imbalanced. One set provides for local articulation, while the other is part of a system that requires local compliance. This understanding is further clarified when we examine the argumentation involved in these documents.

The actual content of arguments can be investigated in texts with a focus on nomination and predication discursive strategies. In an analysis of nomination in DHA, we examine the discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions within texts. To that end, I will examine how educational aims are named and referred to linguistically in the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* and the *WPA Outcomes*, but this is critically attached to the discursive strategy of predication. Predication analysis in DHA entails an examination of the positive or negative characteristics, qualities, and features that are attributed to the social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions constructed in texts. Investigating nomination and predication strategies within these texts helps us more fully understand their validity claims and demonstrates why and how their underlying ideologies make them incomparable.
The WPA Outcomes and *CCSS ELA/Literacy* both define what students should learn in order to be prepared for college writing. Defining what students should learn is the purpose of the broad genre of educational aims, but this broad genre includes many subgenres, two of which are “outcomes” and “standards.” The nomination of educational aims, how they are discursively constructed through subgenre categories, sets up the boundaries that prohibits comparisons between the two. As previously noted, the *WPA Outcomes* makes this distinction within the text of its introduction, defining “outcomes” as the types of results to be expected from instruction, and defining “standards” as precise levels of achievement used to measure student achievement (1). The CWPA further defines the outcomes subgenre as describing “knowledge, practices, and attitudes” that result from learning. The *CCSS ELA/Literacy* somewhat aligns with the CWPA definition of standards. Within its introduction, it refers to its standards subgenre as “expectations to be met,” “essential mastery,” and “required achievements” (2-3). The introduction also refers to a “focus on results rather than means” (3). Thus, both sets of educational aims define results of learning, but the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* establish required achievements, sharing the subgenre definition of standards stated in the WPA Outcomes introduction. The CWPA cautions that standards should be defined by local writing programs and institutions, implicating K-12 standards by this statement and foraying into the highly political debate about determining and assessing educational aims in public schools. The argument for locally defined achievement standards is important to this discussion, as the CCSS are embedded in a specific sociopolitical context with its own historical significance.
A true DHA analysis considers the “extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific ‘context of situation’” and “the broader sociopolitical and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to” (Reisigl and Woda 93). The CCSS are embedded in a public educational policy discourse, which prompted their development and will determine their future use. The predication of K-12 academic standards, the negative or positive characteristics attributed to them, has much to do with their uses. Under the auspices of No Child Left Behind, academic content standards are used to align instruction, curriculum, professional learning, and assessments. Assessments, thus, became the single measurement of school achievement, determining a school’s “adequate yearly progress” towards all U.S. students being academically proficient by the 2014-15 school year. Schools not making “adequate” progress, which is most, face numerous sanctions and the label of “failing school.” Pressures to do well on these assessments have led to several unintended, but highly negative, consequences.

Much of the research into the high school to college writing continuum reveals that one of the major disconnects between writing curriculums has to do with the effects of high-stakes standardized assessments. Dennis Baron finds fault with literacy assessments from the last ten years and asserts such tests do not support the basic nature of literacy: “its dependence on context” (W433). Susan Fannetti, Kathy M. Bushrow, and David L. DeWeese find that all of the participants, high school and college instructors, interviewed for their research loathed the standardized way in which students are taught in K-12, where the expectations are fixed in order to prepare students for testing (80).
Edward M. White and Kathleen Blake Yancey provided responses to the articles in *What is “College-level” Writing?* that also centered on the effects of high stakes assessment (2010). White agrees with contributing authors that high school teachers and college teachers inhabit different worlds, with high schools under the pressures of standardized tests (296). Blake Yancey agrees that the cultures and defined outcomes are different between the segments (300). She notes that students come to college with writing misshaped by testing and without an understanding of writing as disciplinary (304). Focusing on state-mandated writing assessments in high school, White finds the interpretations and uses of the results of these assessments does not align with principles of validity. In his review of high school proficiency tests, he finds that their results are often tweaked so that more students can score proficient, they contribute to the narrowing of curriculum, and the reliance on their results obfuscates other important factors in school accountability, such as school environment, teachers and administrators, and parents (23-25). This resounding indictment of high stakes assessment is an unfortunate predication of academic content standards. A feature of the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* is their connection to testing. While a testament to the sociopolitical and historical context, standards-based reform seems to have done little to prepare students for college writing.

These two sets of educational aims are put forth from different, if not antagonistic, perspectives with subgenre nominations that do not share definitions of localized power and are predicated on assessment systems that have failed to prepare students for college writing. This analysis, however, has also uncovered discursive strategies that can be exploited in order to foster coherence and transfer of knowledge
between high school and college settings while the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* constitute literacy education.

**Space for Articulation**

The *CCSS ELA/Literacy* further define their subgenre by describing what the standards do not cover, utilizing predication to imply the value of local school and teacher discretion. These “intentional design limitations” can be summarized into the following points:

1. **The Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach…they do not—indeed cannot—enumerate all or even most of the content that students should learn.** The standards must therefore be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum consistent with the expectations laid out in this document. (5) The second limitation follows the same logic:

2. **While the Standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or should be taught.** A great deal is left to the discretion of teachers and curriculum developers. The aim of the Standards is to articulate the fundamentals, not to set out an exhaustive list or a set of restrictions that limits what can be taught beyond what is specified herein. (5) It is made clear in these statements that teachers have discretion over how the standards are taught and what is taught beyond what is defined in the standards, and that it is not the aim of these standards to restrict what is additionally taught. Other limitations described in the introduction clarify that the extent of differentiation for advanced,
struggling, linguistically diverse, or disabled students cannot be defined here: “No set of
grade-specific standards can fully reflect the great variety of abilities, needs, learning
rates, and achievement levels of students in any given classroom” (5). Here the standards
are characterized as “sign posts along the way to the goal of college and career readiness”
(5). These stated limitations to the standards must be exploited by practitioners. Teachers
have been characterized as having full discretion over how to teach and address the
diversity of needs in their classrooms. If this value is stated in the standards, it should be
recognized in their implementation, along with other values that support the learning of
writing.

Rhetorical knowledge is largely agreed upon by English Education and
Composition and Rhetoric scholars to be essential for student success in college writing
(Bergmann and Zepernick, Baron, and Blake Yancey). It is a term defined in the WPA
FYC Outcomes:

Rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to
act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is
the basis of composing. Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating
purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose in a variety of texts
for different situations. (1)

The text then goes on to describe what students should learn, use, experience, develop,
and understand related to this overarching outcome. If the CCSS ELA/Literacy describe
the prerequisite knowledge and skills that prepare students to engage in this work, there
must be evidence within the standards that aligns with these values. Joseph Janangelo,
former CWPA president addressing CWPA members, and Linda Adler-Kassner, in a *College English* article, both assert that there is no such evidence to be found in the standards. Janangelo elaborates:

> These standards treat writing as the performance of a narrow range of genres (or modes)…The emphasis within [the *WPA Outcomes*] is on developing writers’ abilities to analyze the expectations of different audiences and different purposes for writing, to use (or develop acumen with) different genres of writing and their conventions, and to think about the relationships between genres (and conventions) and contexts. This of course includes the ability to work with the conventions of different modes (e.g., argumentative and informative writing), but also to understand that there are many genres, purposes, styles, and media open to writers, who must in turn make smart and conscious decisions about choices available to them depending on their purpose(s) and audience(s).

This argument focuses on the writing standards portion of the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* that do, in fact, require students to write arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives (see Table 1. *CCSS ELA/Literacy* Grade 11-12 Text Types and Purposes Standards), but there is evidence within the CCSS document that defines these as broad types of writing that include many subgenres students should experience. In the “Note on range and content of student writing” the CCSS writers state that students “need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies content of student writing” the CCSS writers state that students “need to know
Table 1. *CCSS ELA/Literacy* Grade 11-12 Text Types and Purposes Standards

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies content of student writing” the CCSS writers state that students “need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative—to produce complex and nuanced writing” (55). Also, these text types appear in the writing standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects, attaching these writing types to discipline-specific tasks. “Appendix A” of the standards further explains how these writing types are employed for many purposes and that skilled writers blend these text types to achieve their purposes (23-24). Janangelo and Adler-Kassner’s critique that these text types will narrow student conception of writing is perhaps based in the compositionist perspective on the modes of discourse.

The issue at stake here for compositionists is that the appearance of text types in the standards perpetuates modal writing instruction. Robert J. Connors, in his “The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse,” details the history of the influential classification scheme of Narration, Description, Exposition, and Argument used for the last hundred
years in the teaching of writing. Connors asserts that modal instruction is an attempt to make learning to write easier, but as his review of the history of modal instruction reveals, it does little to improve student writing. He concludes that the reason for this is that “the modes classify and emphasize the product of writing, having almost nothing to do with the purpose for which the writer sat down” (454). He points to the more contemporary classifications that emphasize the writer’s purpose: “those of James Moffett, whose Spectrum of Discourse consists of Recording, Reporting, Generalizing, and Theorizing; of James Kinneavy, who divides discourse into Reference, Scientific, Persuasive, Literary, and Expressive types; and of James Britton, with its triad of Poetic, Expressive, and Transactional discourse” (454). I assert that practitioners must present the text types in the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* to students as *purposes* for writing. Academic writing requires students to write arguments, explanations, and narrations in multiple genres, and students should experience the authentic purposes for which these text types are deployed. Rather than allowing the standardization of text types to limit the genres, contexts, and purposes of reading and writing, teachers can support students in evaluating how elements of these text types are used strategically and appropriately based on genre conventions established by discourse communities. The recommendations to include specific text types come from disciplinary perspectives.

The inclusion of argument writing was not a throwback to instruction based on the modes of discourse, but a recommendation drawn from research. Graff and Birkenstein-Graff urge educators to let students in on the big secret that:
(1) the name of the game in academia—and in the public or working world beyond—is making arguments, and (2), that you play this game not by thinking of something true or brilliant to say in a vacuum—by retreating, that is, to empty, uninhabited space—but by entering into conversation with other perspectives, often by challenging and disagreeing with them. (W413-14)

These scholars argue that, while disciplinary writing has unique features, the act of creating knowledge within a discipline requires building on or departing from the accumulated knowledge of the field. The CCSS ELA/Literacy shares this value by standardizing argument as a text type students should learn to write and evaluate across the disciplines. The writers of the CCSS, in fact, drew from Graff’s previous work on argumentative critical literacy to justify its place in the standards. In addition to referencing Graff, the CCSS ELA/Literacy “Appendix A” cites compositionist Richard Fulkerson, theorist and critic Neil Postman, Joseph M. Williams and Lawrence McEnerney of the University of Chicago Writing Program, ACT surveys, the NAEP Writing Framework, and a survey by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates of the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California, all of which provide evidence for the value of effective argumentation skill in college and beyond (24-25). The CCSS ELA/Literacy draws from research that calls for argument instruction that helps students understand how this text type works in academic writing. Virginia Crank, drawing from Graff and Birkenstein Graff, also extolls the virtues of argument instruction, and, regarding the implementation of the CCSS, asserts that “we may see that as students write more in all disciplines and on
more nonfiction texts that they are coming to college with a more sophisticated approach to understanding how writers make choices and decisions based on rhetorical contexts” (51). Argument instruction that interprets the argument text type as a static mode would be at odds with the research that supports its inclusion in the CCSS ELA/Literacy. In order to build rhetorical knowledge, students must understand how to adapt text types for the contexts and disciplines in which they are writing.

The critiques of the standards from Janangelo and Adler-Kassner, terming the text types as modes, also do not align with the recommendations of the NCTE Review Team tasked with reviewing drafts of the CCSS during its development. In its final review of the CCSS draft, the NCTE Review Team had this to say about the potential exclusion of narrative writing as an actual standard:

NCTE emphatically supports the inclusion of narrative writing across the 9—12 band, as has been iterated in every review our organization has provided. Author Edgar H. Schuster, writing in regard to the 9-CCR Writing Standards, agrees wholeheartedly and states that these standards, without narrative included, “are also woefully out of balance, in the direction of relatively noncreative forms of writing” and further adds that “were those standards to be implemented K through 12, they would kill that spirit and diminish the role of imagination, which the poet Wallace Stevens once aptly described as "one of the forces of nature" in the world of words”...(2-3)

The authors of the standards heeded this recommendation in the final draft, not only establishing narrative as the third text type, but also clarifying that additional creative
forms of writing may be taught at the discretion of teachers ("Appendix A" 23). By understanding the reasoning behind the inclusion of specific text types, teachers can use instructional strategies that support the development of rhetorical knowledge, while at the same time supporting student attainment of the standards. Learning the concepts and techniques of argument, explanatory/informative, and narrative writing for a variety of purposes can support a student’s transition to college writing if the instruction is framed in a way that helps students see how these text types function in authentic writing contexts.

In addition to these text types not being presented to students as restrictive genres, there are multiple grade-level standards that encourage the development of rhetorical knowledge. I present 28 grade 11-12 standards in Table 2 that would require a student to develop rhetorical knowledge. Across the CCSS ELA/Literacy, in all strands—reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language—students must demonstrate an understanding of and use rhetorical concepts and genre conventions for a range of tasks, media, purposes, and audiences. Further, the introduction to the standards describes seven capacities of literate individuals that are developed through the standards. One capacity is that “they respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline,” and is described further:

Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They set and adjust purposes for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task. They appreciate nuances, such as how the composition of an audience should affect tone when speaking and how the
Table 2. Rhetorical Knowledge in the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* for Grades 11-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core State Standards</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RL.3</td>
<td>Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL.4</td>
<td>Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL.5</td>
<td>Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL.6</td>
<td>Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL.7</td>
<td>Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL.9</td>
<td>Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI.4</td>
<td>Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI.5</td>
<td>Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI.6</td>
<td>Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI.7</td>
<td>Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI.8</td>
<td>Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., The Federalist, presidential addresses).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common Core State Standards

| RI.9 | Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features. |
| W.1d | Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. |
| W.2a | Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. |
| W.2d | Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. |
| W.4 | Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. |
| W.5 | Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. |
| W.6 | Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information. |
| W.9 | Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. |
| W.10 | Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. |
| SL.3 | Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used. |
| SL.4 | Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks. |
| SL.5 | Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest. |
| SL.6 | Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. |
| L.1a | Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested. |
| L.1b | Resolve issues of complex or contested usage, consulting references (e.g., Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage, Garner’s Modern American Usage) as needed. |
| L.3 | Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. |
connotations of words affect meaning. They also know that different disciplines call for different types of evidence...(6)

The capacity described above is essentially the same as the rhetorical knowledge WPA Outcome. If the text types call to mind modal instruction, the way in which the standards are predicated throughout the introduction and “Appendix A” provides pathways for teachers to frame the text types in a way that supports the development of rhetorical knowledge.

It is true that the CCSS ELA/Literacy are fundamentally different from the WPA Outcomes—the term “rhetorical knowledge” does not appear in the standards—but these differences do not entail incompatibility. The educational aims delineated in the outcomes and the standards share many of the same values for preparing students for college level writing. While the current sociopolitical landscape is being dominated by nationally defined measures of student achievement, teachers across the continuum must find ways to ensure students being defined by those measures are able to traverse the divide.

Discussion

The resounding critique of high stakes assessments aligned to standards can perhaps explain some of the unsympathetic reactions to the CCSS themselves. While I
have highlighted space for constructive alignment between the *CCSS ELA/Literacy* and the *WPA Outcomes*, this alignment of educational aims means nothing if the pressures of high stakes, inauthentic assessment dominates instruction aligned to the standards. All of the guidance within the CCSS that encourages teacher discretion and the development of rhetorical knowledge risks being completely ignored if the measurement of student achievement rests on the results of large-scale high stakes assessments. As DHA analysis calls for a “future-related prospective critique” that “seeks to contribute to the improvement of communication” (Reisigl and Wodak 88), I must call for the collective vigilance of educators across levels and disciplines as new assessment and accountability systems are implemented on the heels of the CCSS. With the *CCSS ELA/Literacy*, we have an opportunity to foster coherence across the high school to college writing continuum, but that will not happen if new assessments present inauthentic, invalid testing of writing, and teachers and schools are forced to teach to the test through punitive accountability measures. As the NCTE *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing* implore, assessments must be based in the school communities in which they are used if they are to have relevance to those communities (Joint Task Force on Assessment). As it stands now, standards and assessment have moved further out of local purview and currently are a process done *unto* local communities, rather than a process in which they are critically and essentially involved.

In these early days of new assessments aligned to the CCSS and the latest discussions around public school accountability, it does appear that policy makers have acknowledged the negative consequences of previous systems. The assessments now
include more variety of item types, including more constructed response items where students have to provide brief written responses to questions. They also include a performance task that engages students in a lengthier writing activity over the course of a few days, attempting to provide a more authentic writing situation. The federal government is rethinking NCLB provisions amid widespread dissatisfaction with high-stakes assessment. California has implemented a local control funding formula that largely puts budgetary and accountability decisions into the hands of local school communities and is having serious talks about a state accountability system that relies on multiple measures. However, this transition to new assessments and accountability systems will take several years. It is a hugely important time to get involved in these initiatives, to learn more about the educational policy discussions at the federal, state, and local level and about opportunities to provide input and feedback. While we have called for locally developed assessments and measures of student achievement that rely on teacher involvement, we have gone from state-based assessments to multi-state assessments. Not all of our disciplinary knowledge has influenced these new systems. If we analyze the discourse of our field and how it comes in contact with public policy discourse, we have to acknowledge where our values overlap and continue to advocate for sound policy decisions that truly support the learning of students traversing the high school to college writing continuum.

**Conclusion**

The *CCSS ELA/Literacy* constitute the learning of millions of K-12 students, and this transition to a common set of academic content standards provides an opportunity for
secondary and postsecondary educators to work together to create coherence across the high school to college writing continuum. While the CCSS ELA/Literacy have been criticized because they are seen as being at odds with discipline-based knowledge, I have demonstrated that these inconsistencies are can be explained by the language and the perspectives framing their development and use. The CCSS ELA/Literacy can be a tool that supports the development of rhetorical awareness, which is essential for success in postsecondary writing. However, this opportunity for coherence across levels can still be hindered if new assessments and accountability systems perpetuate the narrow conception of writing students learn while their teachers and schools face the high stakes of assessments. Educators would do well to champion instruction that develops the skills and knowledge students need to meet the demands of college-level writing while remaining cautious and vigilant that new assessments and accountability systems do not undermine this progress.
CHAPTER 4: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Methodology


In this methods text, the authors introduce critical discourse analysis, discourse-historical approach (DHA)—its history, agenda, theory, and methodology. DHA deploys a triangulatory approach that focuses on context through four levels: the language of the text; intertextual and interdiscursive relationships; variables outside of the text, social and institutional; and the broader sociopolitical and historical context (93). Texts are analyzed through five types of discursive strategies: nomination; predication; argumentation; perspectivization, framing or discourse representation; and intensification or mitigation (34). The strategies are made clear by the use of linguistic devices to attain certain objectives. This analysis is part of the eight-step process of DHA, a recursive process that includes taking into account the relevant context knowledge (96).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the discourse surrounding the high school to college writing continuum are excellent subjects for a DHA project. These texts create a vocabulary for “persons, objects, events, processes and actions,” which would be fruitful for an examination of nomination. They also attach “characteristics, qualities, and features” to these nominations, allowing for an analysis of predication. The CCSS and related literature also make use of argumentation as they make arguments for the rightful aims of literacy instruction. They are of, from, and against specific
perspectives demonstrating perspectivization, framing, and discourse representation. Finally, their “utterances can be articulated overtly” as well as “intensified or mitigated” (93). CDA/DHA can help to contextualize the discourse on the high school to college writing continuum and make clear the different perspectives and objectives making up the discourse. With DHA, we can analyze the CCSS and contextual factors surrounding their development and use to investigate misuses of power. The CCSS are meant to prepare students for college writing. If this is true, they must have grounding and support in the high school to college writing continuum discourse.

The High School to College Writing Continuum Literature


Addison and McGee examine their own and seminal, large-scale research in the field from the last ten years on high school and college writing and synthesize the results to gain broad and complex insights into what is currently known, and from this, what steps should be taken in the future. In addition to the researchers’ own study for the *CCCC*, they examine the research by the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (a collaboration between the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Council of Writing Program Administrators), the National Commission on Writing, the National Curriculum Survey, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and institutionally-based research. The National Survey of Student Engagement reveals that valued practices of the field are currently being employed, but when considering other large-scale studies,
there are findings that both support and complicate these results, that while valued practices are reportedly used, it is not clear if such practices are deployed only for college bound students (155), student reporting did not corroborate this finding (160), and comparisons between high school and college valued instructional practices showed they did not align in some areas (157). Regarding writing beyond the university, research reveals that college level writing may not be preparing students for workplace writing, that writing expectations of college faculty may be at odds with business leader expectations (163-65). Studies into what skills and knowledge transfer along the writing continuum must contend with these issues of articulation (166). In light of this review, the authors suggest future directions: (1) The partnership between NSSE and WPA should serve as a model for many of our future research efforts; (2) We need to help diversify the types of writing taught through a vertical curriculum that begins in high school, continues through college, and specifically fosters transfer across contexts; and (3) Utilize the internet to create a repository of small-scale research, raw data, and tools that could be leveraged to enrich future research (171).

This article provides context to the current state of the high school to college writing continuum. It presents a synthesis of research that can help frame an analysis of CCSS. The researchers’ second suggestion for adding coherence to the continuum is highly relevant, as the CCSS are meant to provide a basis for a vertical curriculum from K-12 to postsecondary. Addison and McGee highlight the variety of perspectives asserting what high school writing, college writing, and career writing should be. I can compare these findings to the content of the CCSS in order to see if implementation of
the standards can, in fact, support students in traversing the high school to college writing continuum.


Baron examines literacy assessments from the last ten years and their related politics to show how such assessments, even with faulty instruments and reporting, have created a culture of blame in the education system. “Literacy has always been in crisis,” but today people support this assertion through the data from standardized tests (W425). Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings’ Commission on the Future of Higher Education in America considered standardized testing for college, fueled by the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), which found that as many as one-third of recent college graduates did not qualify as “proficient” in literacy (W426). Baron finds fault with the Commission’s ideas about teachers as coaches, online schooling, competency, for-profit schools, and the commodification of education (W427-28). He also points to the NAAL’s quiet discovery of flaws in their tests, which hugely tempered the literacy crises to nonexistence (W429). Other reports included recommendations, similar to the Commission’s, to extend testing in colleges: a report on NCLB, ACT reports, and a report from ETS (W430-31). Baron could only find one report to mention that found higher education raised literacy levels (W432). He insists, however, that these reports are based on faulty assumptions, giving high scores for skill in test-taking, not
literacy (W432). When teachers teach to these tests, students lose the basic nature of literacy: “its dependence on context” (W433). Thus, high school writing should not necessarily prepare students for writing in college because it is a new part of the writing-education cycle where one must learn the new rules to be successful, which is how most writing situations present themselves (W433-34). This is also why college writing teachers cannot establish for high school teachers what they teach because we cannot know what the future writing context will be (W434). Therefore, in order to make sure students are not left behind, we should focus instruction on the immediate contexts and demands of actual writing (W434).

Measuring literacy, Baron proves, is complicated, and any one report or assessment cannot be the final word and should be vigorously critiqued for its assumptions. His recommendation that literacy must be taught attendant to its dependence on context is also critical. I will need to examine the CCSS to confirm if they call for writing instruction that fosters student understanding of writing as integrally dependent on context. Baron also notes, it is the assessment of these skills that is not connected to real writing. While assessment is beyond the scope of this study, it will be important to mention the relationship between the CCSS and assessments.


Bergmann and Zepernick conducted a study to examine student perceptions about writing and writing instruction. The researchers convened four focus groups of higher
achieving students divided by their major disciplines and reconvened some participants for two additional focus groups (127-28). The researchers found that students thought of their writing in English classes as personal, expressive, and subjective rather than professional or academic as they saw writing in other disciplines (129). Writing in English classes seemed to be governed by few concrete rules, while writing in other disciplines was considered highly formulaic (129). The researchers suggest that instead of English writing courses having the goal of teaching students how to write, the goal should be to teach students how to learn to write when entering a new context, to show students that any writing task requires the ability to find and use appropriate conventions and to write appropriately to the intended audience, to make choices in their writing based on the discourse community and rhetorical situation (141-42).

Bergmann and Zepernick’s recommendations are similar to Baron’s that learning to write in college should really be about developing the ability to learn how to write with each new writing context. In an analysis of the CCSS, I need to observe the extent to which these standards prioritize the instruction of discourse awareness, as these scholars suggest such instruction supports a student’s transition from high school to college writing and transfer of writing ability across contexts. Regardless of what students are asked to write in high school or in college, if they are used to, and not turned off by, the idea that writing must be informed by the discourse community and rhetorical situation in which it occurs, writing will seem less a mysterious task.
The WPA Outcomes were recently revised from the 2.0 version. The statement begins with an introduction that explains it “attempts to both represent and regularize writing programs’ priorities for first-year composition” from what composition teachers have learned from practice, research, and theory, and is aligned to the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing in order to establish a continuum of practice from secondary to postsecondary (1). It defines “outcomes,” or types of results, as different from standards for measuring student achievement, which is left to local writing programs to set (1). It calls for research-based practices for supporting students to achieve these outcomes and explains that their abilities will “diversify” as new settings for writing set expanded, multiplied, and divergent outcomes (1). Thus, this statement provides faculty in all disciplines ways of building on what students learn in their FYC course (1). The outcomes are organized under four headings: Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing; Processes; and Knowledge of Conventions. Under each heading are bullet points that describe what a student should know and be able to do by the end of the first year composition course. There are also bullet point statements about further learning that can be supported by all programs and departments.

The WPA Outcomes Statement is a central text of the writing continuum discourse as it constitutes the teaching and learning that should take place in FYC courses. This particular set of educational aims has been developed by educator professionals based on
professional research. It somewhat addresses the controversy of establishing educational aims by clarifying the boundaries of its genre, differentiating outcomes from standards. All of this information will be important in relation to the CCSS. As opposed to the CCSS for ELA/Literacy, the Outcomes emphasize the particular thinking and practices students should develop, rather than the products they should produce.


In this framework, the authors describe the habits of mind and the rhetorical and 21st century skills students will need in order to be college-ready and ways of fostering these habits and skills. The intended audience for the framework is every educator who teaches writing in classes across levels and subject areas as well as parents, policymakers, employers, and the general public (2). The research that supports the framework is drawn from academic fields such as composition and rhetoric, writing across the curriculum, and English education (2). The habits of mind this framework suggests should be fostered are the following: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition (1). The particular writing, reading, and critical analysis experiences that contribute to the development of the habits of mind are aligned with the WPA Outcomes Statement and include: developing rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, writing processes, knowledge of conventions, and ability to compose in multiple environments (2-3, 1). The framework also notes, “standardized writing
curricula or assessment instruments that emphasize formulaic writing for nonauthentic audiences will not reinforce the habits of mind and the experiences necessary for success” in postsecondary education (3).

This particular text of the writing continuum discourse is aligned to the WPA Outcomes Statement and is similar in its development, being informed and reviewed by educators and professional research and practice. These educational aims constitute teaching and learning that should take place in K-12 settings, as does the CCSS ELA/Literacy. It differs from the Outcomes and the CCSS ELA/Literacy by defining “habits of mind” as educational aims. These focus more on how students approach rhetorical/linguistic tasks. Similar to the WPA Outcomes Statement, the Framework for Success also addresses standardization, warning against inauthentic experiences and formulaic writing. These statements about standardization from professional organizations will be important in examining the CCSS and its implications for driving instruction and assessments. Also, once again, writing across the curriculum is emphasized in these educational aims.


In this article, the researchers interviewed teachers from a large metropolitan university and local middle schools and high schools where many students of the university attended (78-79). The researchers find that all of their participants loathed the
The research in this article is significant as it addresses the impact of standardized writing assessment in K-12 on student writing in college. Standardized assessments, as these researchers find, have huge implications for students transitioning from high school to college writing. The authors make the following critiques of the assessments: they are attached to high stakes, they emphasize a product model that is incompatible with the process model, and their use shapes student perceptions of writing, which have to be reshaped when they get to college. The CCSS provide the foundation for the next generation of assessments. It will be important to note the researchers’ findings as an area of future inquiry to ensure new assessments and accountability systems do not lead to a narrow curriculum that makes the transition to college writing needlessly challenging for students.

Here Graff and Birkenstein-Graff posit the teaching of argument as a way of providing coherence to a historically disjointed education system. They find that argument is central to every academic department and discipline, for in each, students are encouraged to join a conversation, which entails a response to what has already been said (W410). The importance of this universal central practice lies within its ability to demystify the academy by showing what unites all of its pieces (W411). Currently, curriculums across disciplines are rarely connected or complimentary to each other, and more telling, classes within the English department alone leave students feeling that the rules change with each class (W411-12). While differentiated instruction is a good thing, a “mixed-message curriculum” makes academic literacy seem more difficult than it is (W413). The name of the game in academia is making arguments, and we do this through conversations with other perspectives (W413-15). This argumentative critical literacy is “the key to academic success at all levels and disciplines (W415).

This article theorizes a way to link high school and college writing curriculums, as well as all of the disciplines therein, through the act of making arguments. The CCSS refer to Gerald Graff’s work concerning this idea in “Appendix A” to the standards. It is important to understand the research base of the CCSS as it demonstrates how research is turned into policy. Critiques of the standards have lamented its focus on specific text
types, but we see here a recommendation to do just that. However, Graff and Birkenstein-Graff are not recommending that argument is the only genre students must learn. Instead, these scholars posit the teaching of argument, a familiar writing type, as way for students to access academic writing across disciplines. In my analysis of the CCSS, I will have to clarify the difference between modal instruction and using modes as way for students to build on the academic and non-academic genres they have experienced in order to transfer this knowledge to new contexts.


The authors of this article examine the writing language gap between secondary and postsecondary settings through a partnership with a high school English teacher and a writing survey given to her students (129-30). To frame this analysis, the authors first present research into transfer and transition finding the following themes significant to this area of research: fostering connections between secondary and postsecondary locations of writing, talking to students when fostering connections, and writing capacity. To expand on this work, the authors detail the survey and findings, focusing on student responses that describe the types of writing they do in school (130-31). The authors characterize their responses as complex and layered and categorize them into the following layers: genre layer (as a more static definition of genre tied to purposes and functions), institutional layer (the writing descriptions which are particular to their
school), discipline layer (writing that is done outside of the English class), and personal/familial layer (personal communications and writing to solve family and household problems). From this experience, the authors conclude that FYC instructors should develop a corpus of writing languages with their students (138-40). It begins with incoming students’ recalling their prior writing experiences and the vocabulary used to describe them, and then it develops as students and teachers negotiate the meanings of those descriptions in different settings (138-40). This practice makes visible the boundary between secondary and postsecondary settings and builds awareness of the language of writing and its evolving nature, which can be helpful to students when they are confronted with writing situations beyond academic settings (140-41).

This article seeks to bridge the gap between the language used in secondary writing to that used in postsecondary writing. It establishes that there is, in fact, a language gap between the high school writing discourse and the college writing discourse. The strategy the authors propose is modest but practical and useful in FYC. As the authors note, it is not the only way to bring attention to this transition (140). My analysis of the CCSS, educational aims that will constitute the writing instruction of millions of K-12 students, will provide another way for informing FYC instructors about the writing experiences students will bring with them, another “common frame” to support teachers as they discuss the language of writing with their students.

Rounsaville, Angela, Rachel Goldberg and Anis Bawarshi. "From Incomes to Outcomes: FYW Students’ Prior Genre Knowledge, Meta-Cognition, and the
In this study, an initial report on a continuing project, the researchers focus on if and how first year writing (FYW) students draw upon prior writing experience when tasked with college writing genres. Through surveys and interviews the researchers find that while many students have a diverse and rich bank of genre knowledge from school, work, and other non-academic writing experiences, none of the students interviewed drew from these prior experience to complete an FYW assignment (107). The researchers suggest that in order to draw student attention to the resources they already have, teachers should ask students to reflect on what the assignment reminds them of and what prior knowledge they can adapt for the current task, and, furthermore, ask students to consider how and why they perceived the assignment in that way (108). By examining their processes of recognition by asking how and why, students take the important first metacognitive step, which can be employed with every decision in the composing process (108). The researchers suggest further research into students’ discourse resources and metacognitive assumptions and how curricula can be designed to address these concerns (109).

Another dimension of transfer, besides the explicit teaching of discourse awareness, is drawing from students’ prior writing experiences. The Bergmann and Zepernick study on transfer above, which drew from interviews with nearly graduated college students, examined the later part of the writing continuum, applying FYC knowledge across disciplines and in the workplace. I think the findings of Rounsaville et
al. could have easily explained the findings from Bergmann and Zepernick. Students complained that their English classes did not teach them how to write in the disciplines, but if they did not learn how to be reflective and how to use their prior knowledge, they may have been taught more than they are utilizing. The CCSS do little to address critical self-reflection, noting that the full range of metacognitive strategies could not be mandated through these achievement standards, leaving room for teachers and curriculum developers (3). This article will support the recommendation to FYC instructors that metacognition is an important skill for students to develop in order for them to draw from their high school writing experiences. Because the CCSS do not specify metacognitive strategies students must learn, it is possible that students will enter FYC with varying experiences with metacognition, if they have had any experience with it at all.


Edward M. White and Kathleen Blake Yancey provide responses to the articles in this monograph. White agrees that high school teachers and college teachers inhabit different worlds, with high schools under the pressures of standardized tests (296). Students come to college unable to use research as a way to develop and support their own ideas and thinking (297). It is exactly this tradition, branching out from the conventions of your earlier education, which should be defended (298). Blake Yancey
also agrees that the cultures and defined outcomes are different, but she finds promise in the ways those cultures can be connected. One of those ways is to share key terms (300). She notes that students come to college with writing misshaped by testing, and students do not understand writing as disciplinary (304). Referencing Sommers and Saltz, she further notes that students successful in writing have taken on a position as novice (305). A novice must learn the methodologies of his field if he is to excel in it (305). She concludes that high school and college teachers should share these expressions in their vocabulary of practice: writing processes, genre (as defined by the WPA Outcomes), and Bitzer’s rhetorical situation (307-308). She is clear to note that these two cultures can move forward together without collapsing their differences (309).

These authors focus on the different cultures of high school and college. Blake Yancey’s terms for a shared vocabulary of practice are useful terms to note in the CCSS, where they are noted and how they are used. The authors are also concerned with the effects of standardization in K-12, echoing several scholars in the high school to college writing continuum literature. Sharing a language and respecting the contexts of K-12 and college writing are strong recommendations for FYC instructors looking to build on students’ prior educational experiences and support learning that is transferable to other contexts.

The CCSS ELA/Literacy

This area of the CDE website includes extensive information about the development, adoption, and implementation of the CCSS in California. The California State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the CCSS in August 2010. The CCSS delineate what students should know and be able to do in each grade level, kindergarten through grade twelve, in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) and literacy in history-social studies, science, and technical subjects. The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) led the initiative to develop this common set of standards, which focus on ensuring students who graduate from high school are college and career ready. States wishing to adopt the standards were required to adopt the national initiative version and could supplement it with 15 percent of their own content. California, through legislative extraordinary session authority, convened a group of educators and content experts, some appointed by then Governor Schwarzenegger and some appointed by the legislature. This Academic Content Standards Commission (ACSC) was tasked with reviewing the standards in order to make an adoption, with or without California additions, or no adoption recommendation to the SBE, also appointed by the Governor. The ACSC ultimately recommended that the SBE adopt the standards with California additions. The meetings of the commission and the SBE were all publicly noticed meetings with extensive public comment heard, but the ACSC was on a tight deadline to review the standards before the Race to the Top application deadline and only met for six all day meetings to discuss the standards and their recommendation.
Because the CCSS constitute learning in K-12 public schools that will prepare students for credit-bearing coursework in college, it is essential to understand the context that led to their development and local adoption and implementation. As I consider the implications of CCSS implementation on future FYC courses, I must attend to the entanglements of educational, political, and economical discourses to understand how the social actors involved construct and constrict educational aims and values.


In this document, Conley provides the rationale for the standards, an overview of how they were developed, a summary of research that supports them, some evidence that the CCSS will prepare students for college and careers, the changes in teaching and learning likely to occur with implementation, and how to use the standards. Conley explains that the patchwork system of content standards across the U.S. can no longer address the need for an education that builds lifelong learners ready to take on new, complex jobs and has contributed to high and costly remediation (1-2). Aided by work and feedback groups consisting of teachers, content experts, states, and leading thinkers, and informed by public review and comment, the final version of the standards was presented to states in June 2010 (2-3). Conley describes some of the evidence base supporting the standards, including standards initiatives by various organizations—America Diploma Project, ACT, the College Board, and the National Assessment Governing Board—and states—including California—and international comparisons (3).
He refers to the standards bibliography for more of the contributing research and reports (3). Conley then goes on to cite multiple studies that show the alignment of the standards to the skills and knowledge students need to meet college and career expectations (4).

Educators can be successful with the CCSS by comparing them to their previous standards, focusing on the verbs as well as the nouns in the standards to gauge the cognitive understanding students should demonstrate, and sharing resources widely (7). Conley closes by dispelling common misconceptions of the standards: that they were not developed by the federal government, that the CCSS initiative is separate from the assessments used to measure them, that the standards do not specify instructional methods or curriculum that teachers must use, and that they are not a radical departure forcing teachers to start from scratch (8).

In order to have a better understanding of the standards, it is crucial to know all that we can know about their development and research base. This document demonstrates the wide distribution of influences that come into play in order to establish public educational aims. Social actors such as foundations, research associations, assessment developers, and policy centers are cited throughout the document, and while the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is referenced, the NCTE and the MLA are not. While it appears the process to develop the standards was an extensive, open process, it is not clear how disputes in this process were addressed and which voices were ultimately heard over others.

In this piece of the CCSS appendices, the authors include relevant research for key elements of the writing standards. They define the three text types included in the standards—argument, informational/explanatory writing, and narrative writing—and explain the uses for these text types in English, history-social studies, and science classes (23). They also express that different text types other than those mentioned in the standards may be used at the discretion of the teacher, and the use of texts which blend types should also be used as appropriate (24). In the last section of this piece, the authors explain the special place of argument in the standards. Citing Gerald Graff, Neil Postman, Joseph M. Williams, and Lawrence McEnerney, and studies done by ACT (including one study focused on California colleges and universities), the College Board, NAEP, and by other nations, the authors conclude that argument/persuasion writing skill is one of the most highly valued in the postsecondary classroom and, in the age of information, the workplace (24-25).

The information in this appendix counters some of the criticisms against the CCSS ELA/literacy. For one, it is explicitly stated here that the text types listed are not the only text types to be taught. A narrowing of the curriculum, then, should not be a consequence of the standards but could perhaps be a consequence of high stakes assessment. Acknowledging the research informing the standards gives insight into their purpose and philosophy and can perhaps support sound implementation strategies that
maintain a connection to the research, rather than viewing the CCSS as a standalone curriculum document.


The CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, whose development was led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association (2), are based on the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Reading (both literature and informational text), Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language (7). The CCR Anchor Standards provide a broad description of what students should know and be able to do by the end of high school (3). The grade-specific standards are similar to the CCR standards but are appropriate for the grade level and build on the standards from the previous grade level (7). For writing, the CCSS include standards regarding text types and purposes, production and distribution of writing, research to build and present knowledge, and the range of writing (55). The CCSS also provide writing and reading standards for history-social studies, science, and technical subjects, which are similar to the English language arts standards but emphasize discipline-specific reading and writing tasks (7). The introduction to the standards includes information about their key design considerations, capabilities of the literate individual, how to read the document, and key
features. A key design consideration in developing the standards is an integrated model of literacy, so while the standards have been divided into strands for conceptual clarity, the processes of communication are closely intertwined (3). Another key design consideration is the standards’ focus on results rather than means (3). As stated in the introduction, the standards build on the previous work of state standards development and draw from international models and research and input from state departments of education, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators from all levels, parents, students, and other members of the public (2).

The CCSS represent a far-reaching set of educational aims within the writing continuum discourse, as they constitute, statutorily, instruction in multiple states for each grade level, K-12, with specific, results-centered aims. The CCSS are more specific than the WPA FYC Outcomes and the Framework for Success, and, unlike these texts, intentionally omit educational aims that could be described as means rather than ends. Their development is also quite different from these other texts in that it was informed by more than professional educators. The CCSS do, however, emphasize the importance of literacy as a shared responsibility across disciplines. The implications for future FYC courses entailed by the implementation of these standards will require analysis of the whole standards document, rather than focusing on the writing standards alone. The standards note the intertwined nature of communication processes, which is also represented in the WPA Outcomes and the Framework for Success. To understand the place of the CCSS within the writing continuum, we must also examine how they
constitute the teaching of reading, speaking and listening, and language, in addition to writing.

Reviews of the CCSS ELA/Literacy


Adler-Kassner claims that the latest educational reform efforts are attempting to subdue the tension among liberal learning, professional training, and disciplinarity in higher education and suggests a strategy for addressing these concerns for stakeholders within and outside of the academy. The academy’s efforts to balance liberal learning, professional training, and disciplinarity has not made a persuasive case to stakeholders and reformers who are encouraging reforms that focus on the “public good” of career and college readiness without attending to liberal learning and disciplinarity. Adler-Kassner reviews the CCSS for writing to provide evidence of this argument. She finds that these standards dissolve ideas about writing as a discipline and constrain the types of writing and purposes students experience (442-443). By setting the goal to prepare students for college and career, the standards consider these endeavors to be the same, disregarding the discipline-specific practices of assessment, the study of composed knowledge, and that competencies are always situated in context (443-444, 449). Adler-Kassner suggests that in the face of these reforms, general education instructors should use their courses as an introduction to communities of practice and focus on introducing students to learning
how to learn in appropriate ways, moving students from novice to expert in the practices of communities using metacognitive strategies (450). In order to do this, she further suggests instructors establish and teach the “threshold concepts” of their disciplines, the concepts that are critical for epistemological participation in their discipline (451).

Adler-Kassner sees the CCSS writing standards and related assessments as an attack on liberal learning and disciplinarity. Her analysis, however, focuses on the writing standards and does not take into consideration the notes that explain that the text types mentioned are only broad categories and that students benefit from learning about the subgenres to these text types and genres that mix text types and the standards that ask students to write appropriately for task, purpose, and audience. These are important points for anyone who would like to construct a comprehensive understanding of the standards. As noted in the CCSS ELA/Literacy introduction, acts of communication are intertwined, so you cannot understand the CCSS as a whole by only reviewing the writing standards. Discipline-specific practices in the study of English can be found in the reading, speaking and listening, and language strands, and in the study of other content areas through the literacy standards for history-social studies, science, and technical subjects. Assessments based on these standards, however, are a valid concern and voiced throughout the literature. In an analysis of the CCSS, it will be critical to emphasize the importance of the integrated nature of the standards and how the assessments diverge from composition assessment principles.

Crank presents a synthesis of research on the high school to college writing continuum and concludes that college writing instructors can help build on a first year student’s high school writing experiences by examining and furthering what students know about genre/format, argument, and authority/voice, and what these terms or concepts mean for different discourse communities. High school teachers must contend with multiple constraints leading to less opportunities for writing, a focus on rules and standardization, and layers of external pressure (50-52). These constraints can be overcome through a shared vocabulary when FYC instructors learn the nuances of familiar terms used in secondary settings (52-53). Genre or format are used in high school as sets of rules that must be followed in order to do well on externally mandated assessments (55). In college, students should learn that genre conventions are socially constructed in discourse communities, develop the habit of “considering form/genre as entirely dependent on the rhetorical situation, and build the capacity to think about their writing in the context of the discipline (56). Citing Graff and Birkenstein-Graff, Crank explains how argument at the college level is also different from secondary settings, and that helping students see the difference, moving from arguing a position on a controversial topic to arguing within a discipline, should be addressed in FYC (57-58). Students may also need help with differentiating from a narrative, expressivist notion of voice to voice that gives a sense of expertise of material and audience (59). Crank sees potential in CCSS implementation, “that as students write more in all disciplines and on more nonfiction texts that they are coming to college with a more sophisticated approach
to understanding how writers make choices and decisions based on rhetorical contexts” (51).

Once again, we find particular concepts that hold potential for connecting high school writing to college writing, specifically how these concepts take on new meanings in college. Voice is something that is less explicitly mentioned in the high school to college writing continuum discourse, while attending to genre conventions and argument are values shared across the continuum. The expressivistic voice Crank mentions as being prevalent in secondary settings could be asked of students working on the narrative text type in the CCSS. Argument in the CCSS seems to be closer to what Crank describes happening at the college level, with standards for writing argument in all content areas. However, the CCSS does not delve into the level of expertise students must demonstrate in the topics of their arguments. This is a transition that will still likely take place in college—relying on authoritative sources to support a novice argument in high school to becoming an authority on a topic in order to make expert arguments in college.


In this blog, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) President brings attention to the CCSS initiative and how it relates to the work of WPA members. He mentions a few of the groups involved in this initiative, including the National Governors Association, Achieve.org, ACT, the College Board, and “other educational
companies and think tanks,” and proposes that it is a good time for members to pay attention and decide how to “frame the case” they want to make. He then explains the work of the NCTE Task Force, which has written a response to the standards pointing out important skills the standards address but noting the narrow range of genres represented in the standards. This, he asserts, is antithetical to the emphasis in the *WPA Outcomes Statement* to develop a writer’s ability to understand that there are many genres, purposes, styles, and media available to writers who have to make intentional choices based on these factors. He then suggests that members participate in the development of these standards by opening discussions about how members define successful writing and prepare writers based on the knowledge of their field and engage in positive and productive interchanges with the CCSS initiative.

Janangelo provides a recurring critique of the standards, that they address a narrow range of genres, or what he terms “modes.” The specific text types named in the K-12 English language arts standards are argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative, but the standards document also notes that there are several subgenres related to these broad types and that students should be encouraged to write texts that blend these text types. In order to achieve all of these expectations, implementation of the CCSS requires more than just knowledge of the CCSS. It requires the collective knowledge built over time in the fields of composition and rhetoric, writing across the disciplines, and English education. The standards should not be used or interpreted in a way that is antithetical to these fields.
This report is the third and final report of the NCTE Review Team on the CCSS ELA/Literacy before the standards were finalized. The review team includes representative classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and literacy specialist selected because of their integrity and expertise (1). The team concedes that their list of major concerns has dwindled with the latest draft of the standards and that members were impressed with the significant changes (1). Their final deliberations uncovered the following major concerns: 1) exclusion of narrative writing; 2) prescription of decodable texts for K-1 readers; 3) amount of standards for K-3; 3) exclusion of metacognitive strategies; and 4) the absence of Appendix A meant to provide clarity around text complexity (1-8). The team also provides specific feedback and suggestions to refine the standards so that they “present a rigorous, yet reasonable continuum of expectations for student learning” and provide “fewer, clearer, and higher” standards (9-15).

The ways in which the CCSS were informed by professional expertise are important to consider in placing the CCSS in the high school to college writing continuum. Although much of the feedback provided by the review team led to the refinement of the standards, some of their suggestions, such as the incorporation of metacognition, went unanswered. The NCTE’s review of the standards, and their
concession that significant changes were made during the drafting process, demonstrates both the extent and limitations of the development process.
CHAPTER 5: ORAL PRESENTATION

The Common Core and First Year College Composition
Joy Kessel
English MA Composition

Presentation Topics

- Introduction
- Methodology
  - Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach
- Analysis
  - Fundamental Differences Between the CCSS and Outcomes Subgenres
  - Space for Articulation
- Discussion
- Conclusion

Introduction – The CCSS

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
  - Academic content standards for:
    - Mathematics
    - English language arts (ELA)
    - Literacy in history-social studies, science, and technical subjects (Literacy)
  - Define what a student should know and be able to do in each grade level, K-12
  - Prepare all students for credit-bearing college courses and entry-level work
  - Initiative led by the Council of Chief State Schools Officers and National Governors Association
    - Address high remediation rates and declining global competitiveness
  - Even with some states repealing adoption, CCSS constitutes literacy instruction for millions of K-12 students

Introduction – The High School to College Writing Continuum

- Implications for first year composition
- How do educational aims for high school and college foster coherence in instruction and transfer of knowledge?
Educational aims: goals, outcomes, standards, competencies, skills, knowledge, practices, etc.

How does the language and perspectives framing the CCSS ELA/Literacy and the WPA FYC Outcomes support or hinder coherence across the continuum?

Methodology – CDA Discourse-Historical Approach
- Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)
- CDA: “the need for interdisciplinary work in order to gain a proper understanding of how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing institutions or in exercising power” (Wodak and Meyer)
- DHA: Considers a range of observations, theories, methods, and background information, while investigating the persuasive or ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices in order to promote improved communication (Reisigl and Wodak)
  - Analyze discursive strategies in texts to gain insight into their underlying ideologies and whether they establish, perpetuate, or fight dominance. (Reisigl and Wodak)

Methodology – CDA Discourse-Historical Approach
- Triangulatory approach focused on context through four levels:
  1. Language of text
  2. Intertextual and discursive relationships
  3. Social and institutional variables outside of the text
  4. Broader sociopolitical and historical context
- Texts analyzed through five types of discursive strategies
  1. Nomination
  2. Predication
  3. Argumentation
  4. Perspectivization, framing, or discourse representation
  5. Intensification or mitigation
• Texts: CCSS ELA/Literacy and WPA FYC Outcomes

Analysis – F
• Perspectivization: positioning speaker’s or writer’s point of view and expressing involvement or distance
  o WPA Outcomes
    ▪ “This Statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory”
    ▪ “These outcomes are supported by a large body of research”
    ▪ Distance from other perspectives
    ▪ “Programmatic decisions…should be informed by an understanding of this research”
    ▪ “Outcomes” not “standards” which are “deliberately left to local writing programs and institutions to define”
    ▪ Disciplinary perspective opposed to program decisions without understanding of research and nationally defined standards

Analysis – Perspectivization
• CCSS ELA/Literacy
  o “Builds on the foundation laid by states in their decades-long work…”
  o “Draw on the most important international models…”
  o “State departments of education, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators from kindergarten through college, and parents, students, and other members of the public…”
  o Public policy discourse, consensus, public vetting in addition to educator perspective
  o Multi-state defined standards for K-12—implicated by WPA Outcomes perspective?
• WPA Outcomes and CCSS perspectives are different

Analysis – Argumentation
• Argumentation: validity claims of truth and normative rightness; the arguments put forth in the texts
  o Educational aims are derived from discourse communities; are socially-constructed; can be debated
  o Arguments visible through nomination and predication in texts
Analysis – Nomination and Predication

- Nomination: discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions

- Predication: positive or negative characteristics, qualities, and features attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions

Analysis – Nomination and Predication

- Definitions of subgenres to educational aims genre
  - WPA Outcomes
    - Outcomes: types of results; “knowledge, practices, and attitudes” that result from learning
    - Standards: precise levels used to measure student achievement
  - CCSS ELA/Literacy
    - “Expectations to be met,” “essential mastery,” “required achievements”
    - “Focus on results rather than means”
  - Are the WPA Outcomes calling for locally defined K-12 standards?

Analysis – Standards, Assessments, and Accountability

- DHA: considers the
  - “extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific ‘context of situation’”
  - “the broader sociopolitical and historical context which discursive practices are embedded in and related to” (Reisigl and Wodak)

- K-12 academic content standards attached to specific uses
- Under No Child Left Behind, standards are used to align instruction, curriculum, professional learning…
- …and assessment

Analysis – Standards, Assessments, and Accountability

- High School to College Writing Continuum Research
  - Baron:
    - such tests do not support the basic nature of literacy: “its dependence on context”
  - Fannetti, Bushrow, Deweese:
    - high school and college instructors loath standardized way students are taught
- K-12 expectations are fixed to prepare students for testing
  - White and Blake Yancey:
    - student writing misshaped by testing
  - White: On state-mandated high school writing assessments:
    - consequences do not align with principles of validity
    - narrow curriculum
    - do not address other important factors of school accountability

**Analysis – Nomination and Predication**
- What the CCSS ELA/Literacy do not cover:
  - All that students are expected to know and be able to do
  - How teachers should teach
  - Great deal is left to the discretion of teachers and curriculum developers
  - Set of restrictions that limits what can be taught beyond what is specified
  - Range of differentiation for advanced, struggling, linguistically diverse, or disabled students
    - “No set of grade-specific standards can fully reflect the great variety of abilities, needs, learning rates, and achievement levels…”

**Analysis – Nomination and Predication**
- Content of Educational Aims
  - Rhetorical Knowledge
    - Largely agreed upon among English education and composition and rhetoric scholars to be essential to success in college writing
    - WPA Outcomes: “Rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts.”
  - Is “rhetorical knowledge” addressed in the CCSS ELA/Literacy?
    - Joseph Janangelo, former CWPA President, similar to Linda Adler-Kassner in *College English* article:
      - “The standards treat writing as the performance of a narrow range of genres (or modes)…”

**Analysis – Nomination and Predication**
- Rhetorical Knowledge in the CCSS ELA/Literacy
  - Narrow range of genres?
Standards call for the writing of arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives
“know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing…to produce complex and nuanced writing”
Writing types also called for in writing standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects; discipline-specific writing tasks
“Appendix A”: writing types are employed for many purposes and skilled writers blend these text types to achieve their purposes

Analysis – Nomination and Predication

- Compositionists cautious against modal instruction
  - Connors’ “The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse”
  - Influential classification scheme: Narration, Description, Exposition, and Argument
  - Used to simplify writing instruction, but largely ineffective
  - More contemporary classifications emphasize the writer’s purpose
    - James Moffet’s Spectrum of Discourse consisting of Recording, Reporting, Generalizing, Theorizing
    - James Kinneavy’s Reference, Scientific, Persuasive, Literary, and Expressive
    - James Britton’s Poetic, Expressive, and Transactional

Analysis – Nomination and Predication

- CCSS ELA/Literacy text types as purposes for writing
  - Academic writing presents situations that require argument and explanation
  - Narration is a disciplinary form in English language arts
  - Inclusion of argument is based upon composition scholarship
    - Graff and Birkenstein-Graff urge educators to let students in on the big secret that:
      - the name of the game in academia—and in the public or working world beyond—is making arguments, and (2), that you play this game not by thinking of something true or brilliant to say in a vacuum—by retreating, that is, to empty, uninhabited space—but by entering into conversation with other perspectives, often by challenging and disagreeing with them.
    - “Appendix A” cites Graff’s work on argumentative critical literacy
Also cite: compositionist Richard Fulkerson, theorist and critic Neil Postman, Joseph M. Williams and Lawrence McEnerney of the University of Chicago Writing Program, ACT surveys, the NAEP Writing Framework, and a survey by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates of the California Community Colleges, CSUs, and the UCs.

Analysis – Nomination and Predication
- Crank: with CCSS and attention to argument, “we may see that as students write more in all disciplines and on more nonfiction texts that they are coming to college with a more sophisticated approach to understanding how writers make choices and decisions based upon rhetorical contexts”

Analysis – Nomination and Predication
- CCSS ELA/Literacy Draft NCTE Review Team Report:
  - “NCTE emphatically supports the inclusion of narrative writing across the 9—12 band, as has been iterated in every review our organization has provided.”
  - Narrative as a text type and additional creative forms of writing may be taught at the discretion of teachers.

- Reasoning behind text types provides implications for instruction
- Their appearance does not imply, nor encourage, modal instruction to the neglect of rhetorical knowledge.

Analysis – Nomination and Predication
- In addition to the text types not being presented as restrictive genres…
- Multiple grade-level standards encourage development of rhetorical knowledge.

Analysis – Nomination and Predication
- CCSS ELA/Literacy capacities of literate individuals developed through standards:
  - They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline. Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They set and adjust purposes for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task. They appreciate nuances, such as how the composition of an
audience should affect tone when speaking and how the connotations of words affect meaning. They also know that different disciplines call for different types of evidence…(6)

- CCSS ELA/Literacy: different perspective, different language, but not incompatible with WPA Outcomes…

IF…

Analysis – Standards, Assessments, and Accountability
- Constructive alignment between CCSS ELA/Literacy and WPA Outcomes will mean nothing if high stakes assessment drives instruction
- Teacher discretion and the development of rhetorical knowledge risks being ignored if results of large-scale assessments are the single measure of school achievement

- DHA calls for a “future-related prospective critique”
  - Educators must guard against
    - inauthentic, invalid testing of writing
    - punitive accountability measures that force teaching to the test

Analysis – Standards, Assessments, and Accountability
- New assessments have made some improvements
  - More constructed response items
  - Performance task writing activity completed over a number of days
- Federal government rethinking NCLB provisions
- Widespread dissatisfaction with high-stakes
- California Local Control Funding Formula and multiple measures state accountability system

Analysis – Standards, Assessments, and Accountability
- HOWEVER,
  - State-defined assessment has been replaced with multi-state defined assessment
  - “Precise levels of achievement” on a national scale
- Politics must be a part of practice as English education is constantly in contact with public policy discourse
  - Acknowledge when values align
But continue to advocate for sound policy decisions that truly support
students traversing the high school to college writing continuum

Conclusion

- CCSS ELA/Literacy and WPA Outcomes are different in language and
  perspective but not incompatible and can add coherence to, and transfer
  knowledge along, the high school to college writing continuum
- But high stakes assessment could hinder this progress as they’ve been shown to
  narrow student conception of writing
- Educators must champion instruction that develops skills and knowledge students
  need to meet the demands of college level writing, but be cautious and vigilant
  against new assessments and accountability systems

Questions?
Works Cited


