Writing as Leadership: Inviting Reflection & Development

Jennifer K. Rauscher

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Our Question...

- How might an understanding of today’s educational context, adult development theory, and writing to learn inform English leadership?

Let’s explore together...
We basically do not know what the world of tomorrow will really be like, except that it will be different, more complex, more fast-paced, and more culturally diverse.

(Schein, 2004, p. 393)
English Today

- Common Core State Standards
- 21st Century Literacies
- Response to Intervention
- Assessment
- Accountability
- Teacher Quality
- Professional Learning Communities
Critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity are essential attributes of being college and career ready.

(CCSS, p. 7)
The concept of what it means to be literate is constantly changing and the process of becoming literate occurs over an entire lifetime.

(CCSS, p. 4)
English Language arts is an integrated discipline and even though represented in standards as four distinct areas these should be taught in rich, authentic learning contexts.

(CCSS, p. 4)
Helping students…

- Demonstrate independence
- Build strong content knowledge
- Respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose and discipline
- Comprehend as well as critique
- Value evidence
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- Understand other perspectives and cultures

(CCSS, p. 7)
Write & Think

- When you think about teaching English today, what do you find most challenging? What does this mean for you as a leader?

- Turn & Talk

"I write to find out what I’m thinking.”
~Edward Albee
Leading English Today

What might we learn from the past? Please read Lao-tzu’s advice to leaders, considering—

- What, if anything, resonates with you? Why? What’s the basis for your thinking?
- What, if anything, challenges you? In what ways?

(Hint: Annotate the text in preparation for sharing.)

- Turn & Talk

“The only end of writing is to enable readers better to enjoy life or better to endure it.”

~Samuel Johnson
Leading English Today

English teachers agree with Lao-tzu...

Research on teacher preparation, induction, and retention indicates that few teachers want to be told how to teach: “Many teachers enter the profession expecting a culture of ongoing study, learning, and reflection, and when they find teacher-proof materials and scripted programs, they can become disillusioned and leave.”

(NCTE, 2010, p. 17)
Today’s schools face a seemingly hopeless paradox; they must educate citizens for the future without knowing what the future may hold.

Because no quick fix exists for this paradox, today’s educational leaders face a new challenge:

Creating and sustaining a culture that supports people in recognizing and facing problems and in *increasing their mental capacity* in order to solve problems successfully.

Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Williams, 2005; Heifetz, 1994

emphasis added
With a developmental approach, leadership becomes an *educative process*—the process of helping others “advanc[e] to a more sophisticated stage of mental development” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 29) in order to meet challenges.

Likewise, a leader becomes “a person whose way of being in the world...amounts to the exercise of authority *on behalf of facilitating the development* of those around him or her” (Kegan & Lahey, 1984, p. 226).
Development–Focused Leadership

Development–focused leadership then is not about setting a vision and taking people there.

Instead, it is about supporting people as they collaboratively decide what is worth moving towards and supporting their growth and learning as they figure out how to get there together.
Write & Think

- What do you understand about development-focused leadership at this point? What questions or concerns do you have?

- Turn & Talk

Effective teachers help students to “read and write and talk their way to understanding.”

~Mike Rose
Development–Focused Leadership

1. Know Your Teachers
2. Provide "Discretionary Space"
3. Invite Development
4. Reassess
How do we, as individuals, make sense of our world? How do we “know”? How might “knowing” our teachers in a developmental sense inform our leadership?

- Please consider these questions as you read and annotate the top half of the How Do You “Know”? handout.

- Example: Teacher Survey
According to Eisner (2002), “those who work with [children] will always need the *discretionary space* and the *educational imagination* to invent practices that are appropriate for not only the individual child, but also suitable for the particular time and situation” (p. 7).

*emphasis added*
Writing & “Discretionary Space”

Writing provides discretionary space:

- Literacy Read & Respond Journal
- Deep Discussion Organizer
- Read–Think–Write Reflection

“Writing offers an excellent pathway for brainstorming, clarifying, and questioning.”

Fisher & Frey
Leadership becomes a special sort of educating in which the teacher raises problems, questions, options, interpretations, and perspectives, often without answers, gauging all the while when to push through and when to hold steady.

(Heifetz, 1994, p. 245)
Writing & Inviting Development

Please read the bottom half of the How Do You “Know”? handout to explore these questions:

- What experiences might invite development?
- How might writing allow you to invite development?

Example: Curriculum Recommendation

Turn & Talk
E. M. Forster is credited with asking, “How can I know what I think until I see what I say?”

But I wonder…

How can we know our teachers until we see what they write?

Exit Tickets: Another Way of Knowing
Our Question...

- How might an understanding of today’s educational context, adult development theory, and writing to learn inform English leadership?
- Why should we care?
Why I Think Leaders Should Care About Writing…

Writing—

- Informs leadership
- Engages teachers
- Invites development in teachers
- Encourages teachers to invite development in students

Agree or Disagree? Write It Down! 😊