

Report of the PreK-16
English Composition Task Force

Approved by the PreK-16 Leadership Council

June 6, 2007

Maryland Partnership for Teaching and Learning, PreK-16

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Executive Summary	5
Recommendations and Strategies	6
Standards	7
Teacher Preparation	9
Writing Instruction: English Language Arts Teachers.....	11
Writing Instruction: Non-English Language Arts Teachers.....	12
Student Portfolios	13
Teacher Workload	14
Professional Development	15

Selected Bibliography	17
Appendix A (NCTE Guidelines)	19
Appendix B (Action Plan)	25
Appendix C (List of Stakeholders)	37

Introduction

To communicate clearly is an imperative for students as they prepare for their future school and work lives. As a matter of fact, the National Commission on Writing in its April 2003 report, *The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution*, declared that "writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many." It then stated

American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom. Writing is how students connect the dots in their knowledge. Although many models of effective ways to teach writing exist, both the teaching and practice of writing are increasingly shortchanged throughout the school and college years. Writing, always time-consuming for student and teacher, is today hard-pressed in the American classroom. Of the three "Rs," writing is clearly the most neglected.

The nation's leaders must place writing squarely in the center of the school agenda, and policymakers at the state and local levels must provide the resources required to improve writing (p. 41).

According to *The 2007 Survey on Teaching Writing* (National Writing Project, 2007), 74% of the general public thinks that writing should be taught in all subjects and at all grade levels. Two-thirds of the public believes that more resources should be devoted to helping teachers teach writing. More than 80% of the respondents believe that students should learn to write as a graduation requirement. Yet often as a matter of policy, and particularly of practice, the teaching of writing is given little attention in both teacher preparation programs and PreK-12 classrooms. Policymakers can no longer lament this academic tragedy; it is time for action.

Writing is intimately connected with thinking in all academic disciplines. Informal activities such as note taking and journal writing are frequently used to help students develop ideas, gather materials, draw conclusions, and discover new knowledge. Writing is also a primary means of assessing what students know. Assignments such as writing summaries, analyses, interpretations, syntheses, and critiques demand that students understand complex material and apply that knowledge to new situations. All of those skills are valued both in academic settings and in the workplace. Yet in far too many classrooms, students are writing less each year.

To deal with this burgeoning crisis, policymakers at all levels within Maryland must recognize its urgency. And then they must align funding with stated priorities. Leaders in institutions of higher education need to recognize collectively the importance of common expectations and resolve to establish and communicate those expectations to PreK-12. PreK-12 leaders need to ensure that the Voluntary State Curriculum is aligned with these expectations if students exiting high schools are to be prepared for the rigor of the first college-level writing course. Maryland needs teachers who are able to write and to teach writing when they complete teacher preparation programs. And most of all, students need to enjoy writing, to take pride in their work, and to understand that good writing provides them an indispensable tool for succeeding in the communities in which they live and in the global society where they will work.

Executive Summary

In the spring of 2006, the PreK-16 Leadership Council created the PreK-16 English Composition Task Force. It was charged with the following:

- Studying and recommending revisions or clarifications as necessary for the “Statement of Expectations” document for introductory English composition at the college level
- Studying and recommending revisions or clarifications as necessary for the current “C” paper for introductory English composition
- Studying the current status of English composition in PreK-12 and recommending as necessary additional steps for PreK-12 to prepare students for introductory English composition at the college level
- Preparing a comprehensive report and specific action plan for implementing the recommendations of the Task Force

The Task Force met as a whole four times during the 2006-2007 school year. It also organized around cluster areas -- Standards, Teacher Preparation, and Policy and Practice -- in order to maximize members’ time. Those clusters met as needed in addition to the entire Task Force meetings. From the cluster reports, the Task Force created an integrated document with an interdependent set of essential recommendations and strategies.

The recommendations and strategies found in this report fall into seven broad categories.

1. Standards
2. Teacher Preparation
3. Writing Instruction: English Language Arts Teachers
4. Writing Instruction: Non-English Language Arts Teachers
5. Student Portfolios
6. Teacher Workload
7. Professional Development

These recommendations and supporting strategies are a comprehensive response to the Leadership Council’s charge to the Task Force. The recommendations and strategies are not a menu of options, but an articulation of a comprehensive approach to the current state of writing instruction. Success depends on the implementation of the entire plan. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to “cherry pick” the recommendations that an individual or group likes while ignoring the others. For instance, the implementation of student portfolios cannot be accomplished without addressing teacher-student workload. Additionally, the recommendations and strategies found in this report must not be reduced to an unfunded mandate. There undoubtedly will be costs associated with this report (see Appendix B). But the already existing cost in terms of unrealized human potential and the subsequent effect on economic development must not be minimized.

Leadership is the essential and cohesive element for implementing the recommendations set forth by this Task Force. At all levels, leaders must understand the issues and the underlying research. These issues are imminently solvable if leaders have the will to do so.

Recommendations and Strategies

Standards

Far too many Maryland high school graduates who attend colleges and universities are required to take developmental courses before they are prepared to enter the first college-level writing course. This situation is a complex problem requiring a multi-pronged approach to improve preparation of students for the rigor of college writing. PreK-12 has a responsibility to prepare better writers, and higher education has a responsibility to prepare teacher candidates who can teach writing. A foundation for this effort is to establish agreed-upon high school exit writing expectations consistent with the entrance writing expectations for the first college-level writing course so that high school teachers can have a clear understanding of what they must do, regardless of where their students matriculate.

The Maryland State Department of Education, in collaboration with higher education colleagues, has been engaged in a year-long review of its English language arts standards as part of its participation in the American Diploma Project (ADP). The intent of this review is to align Maryland's standards with world-class standards in the discipline. Meanwhile, colleges and universities continue to deliver developmental writing courses intended to prepare students for college-level writing courses. It is critical that the ADP standards and high school exit criteria align with the exit standards for developmental courses if high school graduates are to avoid the need for writing remediation in the future.

The *Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition* as exit writing standards for the first college-level composition course have been in place since 1998. Although there is widespread understanding and use of these standards in the community colleges, these standards are not universally used at the four-year institutions. It is time to review and, if necessary, revise these exit standards so that entrance standards can be developed and thus used as the consistent target for PreK-12.

These and other initiatives are setting the stage for a rich discussion of standards for writing in Maryland. Those discussions and the resolve to implement resulting recommendations will be the first step in preparing high school graduates for the demands of college-level writing.

Recommendation # 1: The PreK-16 Partnership should develop high school exit writing expectations consistent with entrance expectations for the first college-level writing course.

Strategies

1. Create a broad-based, statewide English Language Arts Alignment Committee as a committee of the PreK-16 Workgroup to
 - a. review the exit standards for the highest level college/university developmental writing courses;
 - b. review the alignment of the PreK-12 English language arts standards developed for the American Diploma Project;
 - c. establish a set of criteria for exemplary writing samples and anchor papers for use by English teachers PreK-16;
 - d. develop entrance expectations for the first college-level writing course; and

- e. consider the current use in higher education of the *Standards for a “C” Grade in English Composition* and the implications for their potential application in developing PreK-12 exit writing standards.
2. Engage PreK-16 stakeholder communities in dialogue with the intent of securing commitment to the high school exit writing expectations and entrance standards for college writing.
3. Provide high school students feedback related to their readiness for college writing, e.g., college open houses, informal college student visits to high schools, writing review sessions, writing workshops, and summer sessions.
4. Design and implement online “tutorial support...to high school students who aspire to succeed in college,” (similar to that used in the *Minnesota Project*) that involves college student peer tutors, as well as college and high school faculty.

Teacher Preparation

The compelling power of personal modeling, which was called “ethical proof” in the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, undergirds the primary element in this recommendation: all teachers must demonstrate the ability to write. The credibility of teachers to teach writing effectively is predicated upon teacher preparation programs that include rigorous instruction in writing.

The lack of attention to preparation in writing is the key argument of *The Neglected “R”* (The Report of the National Commission on Writing, College Board, 2003). One of the recommendations in this report is to “require successful completion of a course in writing theory and practice as a condition of teacher licensing.” The subsequent study and report of the National Commission on Writing (*Writing and School Reform*, 2006) validated the importance of tending to this neglected skill as the business sector and the general public have repeatedly acknowledged the value of competence in writing. Teachers must be able to model effective writing, and they must be able to provide appropriate instruction in writing. Simply stated, no teacher should complete a teacher preparation program without the ability to write and to teach writing.

Controversy continues among English teachers at all levels regarding the proper mix of literature and writing courses in English education programs. Each is important, and they both contribute greatly to students’ control of language. But formal instruction in writing is a necessity that cannot be accomplished only by writing about literature. Rather, English education programs in institutions of higher education must strive for a balance between literature and composition/rhetoric courses if the writing skills of teacher candidates and students are to improve. English teachers must have a clear understanding of the writing process as well as the history and culture of language. Teacher candidates of subjects other than English must write extensively and graduate with the training necessary to hold students accountable for standard written and spoken English.

Recommendation # 2: All prospective teachers in teacher preparation programs must demonstrate the ability to write; possess knowledge of the writing process, grammar, usage, and mechanics; and understand how to teach writing as appropriate to their disciplines.

Strategies for All Prospective Teachers

1. Ensure that all prospective teachers in teacher education programs write extensively, respond to student and peer writing, and demonstrate the ability to use a variety of writing strategies.
2. Ensure that all elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs require candidates to complete writing assignments that focus on all phases of the writing process, including reflection, revision, and editing.
3. Incorporate into teacher preparation programs new and emerging technologies, and instruct prospective teachers in the use of emerging technologies in the teaching of writing.
4. Encourage the national teacher accrediting agencies to audit all standards to ensure that the ability to write and the ability to teach writing are included.

Additional Strategies for Prospective English Teachers

1. Ensure that institutions of higher education (IHE) English education programs have a balance between literature and composition/rhetoric and include the history and culture of language.
2. Ensure that students in IHE English education programs can produce different forms of written discourse for a variety of audiences and purposes and can assess the effectiveness of their products in influencing thought and action.
3. Provide explicit instruction in the teaching of the writing process.
4. Teach prospective English teachers how to model various types of writing, conference with student writers, evaluate writing, train and use student peer evaluators, and create an environment of risk-taking in the classroom.
5. Examine certification requirements to ensure that “resident teachers” are able to demonstrate a balanced program of literature and composition/rhetoric.

Additional Strategies for Prospective Non-English Teachers

1. Ensure that non-English teacher candidates are able to hold students accountable for standard written and spoken American English.
2. Revisit the required elementary reading instruction courses at all colleges and in all in-service venues to ensure that both learning to write and writing to learn are emphasized for elementary teacher candidates.
3. Revisit the required secondary content reading courses at all colleges and in all in-service venues to ensure that a balance is placed on both reading and writing strategies in middle and high school classroom instruction.

Writing Instruction: English Language Arts Teachers

Writing is one of the primary areas of study in the English Language Arts curriculum. Teaching students to write requires specialized knowledge and methodologies, just as with any other content area. Teachers of English need to be competent in theoretical, pedagogical, and content knowledge of the language arts. In short, English language arts teachers need to be exemplary users of English language knowing both the what and the how of writing so they can promote students' command of standard written English.

Because writing is a dynamic activity, teachers need to be able to design assignments that provide guided instruction throughout the processes of writing. Part of effective teaching is helping students to develop effective processes for approaching writing tasks. Teaching writing, then, is more than just assigning writing tasks. Teachers need to scaffold activities, providing appropriate support and feedback so students continue to develop techniques and strategies to engage in increasingly complex tasks, producing richer and more complex texts as they move through the curriculum.

Recommendation # 3: English language arts faculty at all levels PreK-16 should structure writing assignments that require students to write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences and use and exhibit a variety of forms and structures.

Strategies

1. Ensure that regular writing assignments require the use of the entire writing process from initial generation of ideas through the drafting and revision processes to completing the final draft in order to achieve rhetorical proficiency.
2. Ensure that there are multiple opportunities for expository and persuasive writing assignments.
3. Create an expectation for longer and varied writing assignments, in addition to brief and extended constructed responses as required in the Maryland assessment program.
4. Ensure that writing assignments require students to explore themes and social issues, as well as to analyze texts.
5. Construct writing assignments so that students must use a variety of primary and secondary sources.
6. Make available a greater variety of English elective courses focusing on specific writing styles, genres, and student needs.
7. Use strategies from current research to address factors related to culture, gender, and development of writing skills.
8. Implement the strategies related to the teaching of language in *A Practical Guide to Accelerating Student Achievement Across Cultures* developed by the Education That Is Multicultural and Achievement Network.
9. Incorporate and model best practices in the use of technology as defined by the Maryland State Technology Standards, including standards for use of the World Wide Web and the teaching and evaluation of writing, with particular regard to research, plagiarism, etiquette, fair use, and intellectual property.

Writing Instruction: Non-English Language Arts Teachers

Writing is integral to all academic disciplines and thinking. It is not the exclusive domain of English language arts teachers. People write to explore, to inform, to persuade, to discover, to assuage, to remember. Sometimes they write to their families and themselves, or maybe they write to a civic group, a community leader, or a government representative; they may write to co-workers, clients, or special interest groups. In all of these contexts and more, writers must make choices about language, structure, evidence, and other features depending on the particular situation.

Writing is an essential element in education, closely connected with critical thinking and an important means for learning. Academic disciplines, in fact, are defined in part by the specific research methods that they use. Since habits of mind are developed, practiced, and mastered through writing, learning how to write is essential in all disciplines. To be a biologist, historian or lawyer means to write as a biologist, historian, or lawyer. Writing is not separated from the disciplines but rather deeply embedded. Students must learn how to think as a historian or biologist, and writing is an essential element in learning how to think.

For these reasons, as well as those stated earlier in this report, teachers across the disciplines must be involved in the teaching of writing in their disciplines. No one discipline or teacher can be responsible for providing the rich and varied experiences that students require to develop into the mature, flexible writers they need to be to succeed in college and beyond. Teaching writing—not merely assigning it—requires that teachers know their content area, e.g., history, biology, mathematics, literature, as well as appropriate pedagogical strategies to promote learning and to develop students' writing abilities.

Recommendation # 4: Non-English language arts faculty at all levels PreK-16 should assign regular writing experiences, maintain common expectations for standard written American English, and insist on proper grammar, usage, and spelling.

Strategies

1. Use as developmentally and subject appropriate the composition expectations and standards created by the statewide PreK-16 English Language Arts Alignment Committee.
2. Emphasize written literacy in all core subjects in PreK-12 and in college-level general education courses and courses in the major by having teachers stress the importance of all phases of the writing process.
3. Create an interdisciplinary team at each high school and at each institution of higher education to encourage writing in the disciplines and across the curriculum.
4. Increase the use of technology at all levels in the teaching of writing.
5. Identify writing intensive courses in all college catalogues.

Student Portfolios

Student writing portfolios are an established method of authentic assessment. In PreK-12 education, they have been used at the school, district and state levels for both formative and summative assessment purposes. In some colleges and universities, writing portfolios have been used for placement into first-year writing courses and for exit or competency testing. The popularity of portfolios with writing teachers rests with their flexibility, as well as their ability to attend to both the processes and products of writing. In other words, portfolios are context specific, assessing student writers through methods that acknowledge the research on writing and learning to write. Because the contents of portfolios are the products of classroom-based activities, they can provide a range of experiences, tasks and competencies, produced through extended inquiry, feedback, revision, and editing. Portfolio contents likewise allow teachers to track and monitor students' writing progress and writing repertoire of both English and non-English course writing samples, provide a basis for consistent feedback, and facilitate readiness for the first college-level writing course. The scope of the portfolio showcases writers' strengths and weaknesses and reflects the scope and sequence of the writing program.

Characterized by the processes of collection, selection, and reflection, writing portfolios document students' development over time. Portfolios foster self-assessment, a key activity of mature writers who can adapt to different rhetorical situations. By implementing a portfolio process PreK-12, teachers and students will have evidence of students' writing experiences, their language development, and their ability write for various purposes and audiences.

Recommendation # 5: All PreK-12 English teachers should maintain student writing portfolios that include the types of writing experiences assigned, the variety and consistency of feedback provided, and the assessment of writing assignments.

Strategies

1. Create in local school systems a standardized end-of-year summary form to be kept in portfolios with recommendations for improvement and growth for each student.
2. Confer with students to choose representative works from the portfolios, provide reflection and feedback for growth, and complete end-of-year summaries.
3. Pass on to the next year's teacher students' portfolios containing representative compositions of the students' best work.
4. Explore in local school systems the use of technology to provide feedback and to manage, store, and transfer portfolios.

Teacher Workload

Dramatic action is required if teachers of writing are to spend more time engaging students in writing activities, providing more frequent opportunities for meaningful interaction in the classroom, and giving more timely and substantive feedback to students. Producing better writers demands thoughtful consideration of those actions that will bring about the necessary changes. At the very heart of this discussion must be the extremely heavy workload that many teachers of writing face.

Simple mathematics suggests that a teacher with 125 students who spends only 20 minutes per paper will work an additional 41 hours a week grading papers. This does not include one-on-one, teacher-to-student conference time needed to assist students in achieving writing proficiency. In addition to those papers, planning for lessons, delivering those lessons, completing other assigned tasks, and communicating with students and parents make for a minimum of an 80 hour work week – hardly a life attractive to current and prospective teachers. Certainly, there is conflicting research on the impact of class size on student performance, but there is no doubt about the human toll on teachers of writing when their workload is excessive. Such pressures often force teachers of writing to focus more on mechanics than on style and content and on less rigorous and fewer writing assignments. The only way students become better writers is to write more – not less.

A discussion of teacher workload at all instructional levels is a critical first step in addressing the *Neglected “R,”* since there is a direct relationship between that workload and the effective teaching of writing. The NCTE has developed guidelines, based on research, that can form the basis of such conversations. These guidelines should be addressed immediately by all school systems, as well as colleges and universities, to assure that policies and practices embody the principles contained in those guidelines.

Recommendation # 6: Local school systems and institutions of higher education should analyze current student/teacher ratios and total teaching loads with the intent of reaching and maintaining National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) guidelines (Appendix A).

Strategies

1. Provide additional English teachers to meet NCTE guidelines.
2. Assign more students to teachers who do not have a writing intensive load.
3. Differentiate staffing by providing coaches, tutors, co-teachers, and/or evaluators of writing.
4. Provide English teachers with additional time during the school day for evaluating papers.
5. Eliminate extra duties for teachers of English so that they may spend time evaluating student writing assignments.

Professional Development

Perhaps the most compelling reason for ongoing professional development for teachers emanates from the speed and significance of change within and around education. Technology has had a significant impact on the meaning, development, and expression of literacy. For example, spell checks and Web Sites, e.g., wikipedia, wikis, and instant messaging, are transforming contemporary practices of communication with extensive implications for teaching about language use and research. Evidence of the recognition of the impact of technology on composition is evident in the 2011 Writing Framework to guide the National Assessment of Educational Progress (the Nation's Report Card). These assessment plans require students in grades 8 and 12 to use computers with word processing software, including available editing, formatting, and text-analysis tools, as part of the new test. This requirement will be implemented for students in grade 4 by 2019. The pace of change in technology signifies how it is impossible for initial teacher preparation programs to anticipate the knowledge and competencies that teachers will need within even a few short years of entering the workforce. Teachers will only be able to keep up if their professional development subsequent to initial certification is continuously enriched.

Teacher preparation programs are also hard pressed to equip beginning teachers to succeed in contemporary classrooms increasingly characterized by a diversity of languages, cultural differences, learning styles, and levels of motivation. Ongoing professional development addressing current research and methodology in the teaching of writing is crucial if teachers are to provide all students with opportunities for success.

Collaboration between local school systems and colleges and universities is essential for the ongoing professional growth of teachers. In addition, a variety of professional development options should be available for teachers, and school system leaders must encourage teachers to take advantage of learning opportunities provided by such organizations as the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association, and the National Writing Project.

Recommendation # 7: Teachers in all disciplines and at all levels PreK-16 should be engaged in ongoing, job-embedded professional development in the teaching of writing.

Strategies

1. Provide ongoing professional development experiences for teachers at all levels PreK-16 on
 - a. current research on the effective use of regular writing assignments; appropriate expectations for design, variety, and instruction related to those assignments; and appropriate assessment and evaluation;
 - b. methods to develop students' ability to use proper grammar, usage, and mechanics;
 - c. methods to model various types of writing for students, to have conferences with student writers, and to create an environment of risk-taking in the classroom; and
 - d. knowledge of and training in the use of expanding technologies in the teaching of writing.

2. Create opportunities for PreK-16 faculty to meet and apply aligned grading standards to actual student writing samples.
3. Establish in each local school system a team of writing specialists who will provide model lessons and guidance for non-English classroom teachers in the teaching of writing in the disciplines and across the curriculum.
4. Use professional development schools as a source of job-embedded professional development.
5. Develop regional partnerships between local school systems and colleges and universities to provide professional development opportunities in the teaching of writing to both faculties.
6. Support the extension of the National Writing Project throughout the state.
7. Provide opportunities for professional growth through membership in professional organizations, conference attendance, college courses, and writing projects.
8. Establish new programs and organizations to provide mentoring, coaching, e.g., Literacy Coaching Model, partnerships, and collaboration among all teachers of English and writing.

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Appendix A

Statement on Class Size and Teacher Workload: Secondary

(<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/class/107623.htm>)

NCTE Guideline

A guideline approved by the NCTE Executive Committee and found to be consistent with NCTE positions on education issues

Statement on Class Size and Teacher Workload: Secondary

Prepared by the NCTE Secondary Section, 1990

The Secondary Section of the National Council of Teachers of English recommends that schools, districts, and states adopt plans and implement activities resulting in class sizes of not more than 20 and a workload of not more than 80 for English language arts teachers by the year 2000.

Effective learning demands opportunities for students to become actively involved in their education, and demands many roles for their teachers: teacher as facilitator, as enabler, as empowerer--not only as lecturer and transmitter of knowledge. These opportunities and roles cannot be achieved when teachers are faced with large classes and heavy workloads.

- A teacher who faces 25 students in a class period of 50 minutes has no more than 2 minutes, at best, per pupil for one-to-one interaction during any period.
- The greater the number of students in a class, the fewer the opportunities for students to participate orally.
- The larger the number of students in a class, the greater the amount of time devoted to classroom management rather than instruction.

- The larger the class size, the less likely teachers are to develop lessons encouraging higher-level thinking.
- Teachers of larger classes are more likely to spend less time with each student paper, and to concentrate on mechanics rather than on style and content.

Policymakers must realize that when a teacher spends 20 minutes reading, analyzing, and responding to each paper for a class of 25 students, the teacher must have 500 minutes for those processes alone. A teacher with 125 students who spends only 20 minutes per paper must have at least 2500 minutes, or a total of nearly 42 hours, to respond to each assignment. Therefore, responding to one paper per week for each of their 125 students requires English teachers to work over 80 hours a week.

Simply reducing class size alone does not necessarily result in improved achievement when instructional methods do not change. Therefore, attention to staff development while addressing class-size reduction goals will assure maximum benefits for students.

Researchers have identified the following encouraging results from reducing class size and improving instructional methods:

- Smaller classes result in increased teacher-student contact.
- Students in smaller classes show more appreciation for one another and more desire to participate in classroom activities.
- In smaller classes, more learning activities take place.
- Smaller classes foster greater interaction among students, helping them understand one another and increasing their desire to assist one another.
- Smaller classes allow for potential disciplinary problems to be identified and resolved more quickly.
- Smaller classes result in higher teacher morale and reduced stress.
- Fewer retentions, fewer referrals to special education, and fewer dropouts are the ultimate rewards of class-size reduction.

The Secondary Section recommends the following five-year plan:

1. Establish a goal to reduce each English language arts class to not more than 20 students and to limit each language arts teacher's workload to not more than 80 students. Districts may

demonstrate progress toward this goal in a variety of ways.

2. Write a plan for ongoing staff development to assist teachers as they modify instructional techniques to take advantage of reduced class size. These efforts may include such experiences as conference attendance, inservice courses, college courses, teacher support groups, and writing projects.
3. Collect evidence of support for teacher examination, development, and implementation of effective classroom practices that increase the frequency and quality of teacher-student interactions intended to improve students' language competency.
4. Develop a timeline with annual goals and a report of annual accomplishments.
5. Seek a statement of support for the plan from the local board of education and the administrators and teachers involved.

"No football coach in his right mind would try to teach 150 players one hour per day and hope to win the game on Friday night. No, the team is limited to 40 or 50 highly motivated players, and the coach has three or four assistants to work on the many skills needed to play the game. The 'student- teacher' ratio is maybe 15:1. But the English teacher--all alone--has 150 'players' of the game of composition (not to mention literature, language, and the teaching of other matters dropped into the English curriculum by unthinking enthusiasts)."

--John C. Maxwell

"The way to learn a language is to breathe it in. Soak it up. Live it."

--Doris Lessing

The first curriculum priority is language. Our use of complex symbols separates human beings from all other forms of life. Language provides the connecting tissue that binds society together, allowing us to express feelings and ideas, and powerfully influence the attitudes of others. It is the most essential tool for learning . . . Language . . . is the means by which all other subjects are pursued.

--Ernest L. Boyer

"High schools exist to develop students' powers of thought, taste, and judgment . . . to help them with these uses their mind. Such undertakings cannot be factory-wrought, for young people grow in idiosyncratic, variable ways, often unpredictably."

--Theodore R.Sizer

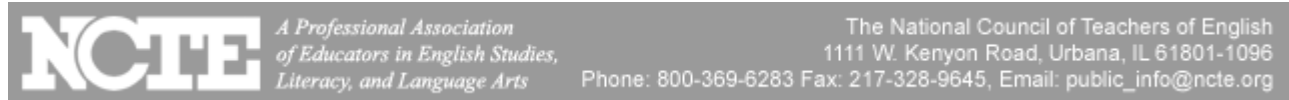
"Acquiring language; improving one's ability to listen, speak, read, and write; achieving full literacy--these are the tasks of a lifetime. They are also indispensable for a fully human life, a lifetime in which learning never stops."

--Geraldine Van Doren

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Related Information:

There is no related information at this time.





Statement on Class Size and Teacher Workload: College

(<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/class/107626.htm>)

NCTE Guideline

A guideline approved by the NCTE Executive Committee and found to be consistent with NCTE positions on education issues

Statement on Class Size and Teacher Workload: College

Prepared by the NCTE College Section, 1987

In an era of increasing public concern over the writing and reading ability of college students, it is especially important that the workload of English faculty members be reasonable enough to guarantee that every student receive the time and attention needed for genuine improvement. Faculty members must be given adequate time to fulfill their responsibility to their students, their departments, their institutions, their profession, the larger community, and to themselves. Without that time, they cannot teach effectively. Unless English teachers are given reasonable loads, students cannot make the progress the public demands.

Economic pressures and budgetary restrictions may tempt administrations to increase teaching loads. With this conflict in mind, the College Section of the National Council of Teachers of English endorses the following standards:

- 1.** English faculty members should never be assigned more than 12 hours a week of classroom teaching. In fact, the teaching load should be less, to provide adequate time for reading and responding to students' writing; for holding individual conferences; for preparing to teach classes; and for research and professional growth.
- 2.** No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement.
- 3.** Remedial or developmental sections should be limited to a maximum of 15 students. It is essential to provide these students extra teaching if they are to acquire the reading and writing skills they need in college.

4. No English faculty member should teach more than 60 writing students a term: if the students are developmental, the maximum should be 45.
5. No more than 25 students should be permitted in discussion courses in literature or language. Classes larger than 25 do not give students and teachers the opportunity to engage literary texts through questions, discussion, and writing. If lecture classes must be offered, teachers should be given adjusted time or assistance to hold conferences and respond to students' writing.
6. Any faculty members assigned to reading or writing laboratories or to skills centers should have that assignment counted as part of the teaching load. Identifying and addressing the individual needs of students is a demanding form of teaching.
7. No full-time faculty member's load should be composed exclusively of sections of a single course. (An exception might occur when a specific teacher, for professional reasons such as research or intensive experimentation, specifically requests such an assignment.) Even in colleges where the English program consists mainly of composition, course assignments should be varied. Repeating identical material for the third or fourth time the same day or semester after semester is unlikely to be either creative or responsive.
8. No English faculty member should be required to prepare more than three different courses during a single term. Even if the faculty member has taught the same course in previous years, the material must be reexamined in the context of current scholarship and the presentation adapted to the needs of each class.
9. The time and responsibility required for administrative, professional, scholarly, and institutional activities should be considered in determining teaching loads and schedules for English faculty members. These responsibilities cover a broad range, such as directing independent study, theses, and dissertations; advising students on academic programs; supervising student publications; developing new courses and materials; serving on college or departmental committees; publishing scholarly and creative work; refereeing and editing professional manuscripts and journals; or holding office in professional organizations.

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without permission from NCTE.

Related Information:

There is no related information at this time.

Appendix B

PreK-16 English Composition Task Force Action Plan

Recommendation # 1: The PreK-16 Partnership should develop high school exit writing expectations consistent with entrance expectations for the first college-level writing course.

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date/Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicator of Success
1. Create a broad-based, statewide English Language Arts Alignment Committee as a committee of the PreK-16 Workgroup to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. review the exit standards for the highest level college/university developmental writing courses; b. review the alignment of the PreK-12 English language arts standards developed for the American Diploma Project; c. establish a set of criteria for exemplary writing samples and anchor papers for use by English teachers PreK-16; d. develop entrance expectations for the first college-level writing course; and e. consider the current use in higher education of the <u>Standards for a “C” Grade in English Composition</u> and the implications for their potential application in developing PreK-12 exit writing standards. 	PreK-16 Leadership Council	June 2007	NA	- Committee operational by September 2007
	English Language Arts Alignment (ELAA) Committee	October 2007	Staff and committee time	- Written review of standards
	ELAA Committee	October 2007	Committee time	- Minutes of committee meeting
	ELAA Committee	January 2008	Staff and committee time	- Writing samples and anchor papers prepared
	ELAA Committee	March 2008	Staff and committee time	- Fully developed expectations ready for stakeholders
	ELAA Committee	March 2008	Staff and committee time	- Minutes of committee meeting

2. Engage PreK-16 stakeholder communities in dialogue with the intent of securing commitment to the high school exit writing expectations and entrance standards for college writing.	Committee	March/April 2008	Staff and committee time	Documented stakeholder sessions
3. Provide high school students feedback related to their readiness for college writing, e.g., college open houses, informal college student visits to high schools, writing review sessions, writing workshops, and summer sessions.	IHEs	Ongoing	Source of funding to pay college professors	# of feedback sessions per IHE
4. Design and implement on-line “tutorial support...to high school students who aspire to succeed in college,” (similar to that used in the <i>Minnesota Project</i>) that involves college student peer tutors as well as college and high school faculty.	PreK-16 Workgroup to seek funding and college willing to pilot	March 2008	Source of funding to pay college professors	Beginning of pilot by Fall of 2008

Recommendation # 2: All prospective teachers in teacher preparation programs must demonstrate the ability to write; possess knowledge of the writing process, grammar, usage, and mechanics; and understand how to teach writing as appropriate to their disciplines.

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date/Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicator of Success
<p>Strategies for All Prospective Teachers</p> <p>1. Ensure that all prospective teachers in teacher education programs write extensively, respond to student and peer writing, and demonstrate the ability to use a variety of writing strategies.</p>	IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation	Immediate	Cost of doing business assuming teacher workload is appropriate	Increased number of student writing assignments as reported to MSDE program approval branch by IHEs
<p>2. Ensure that all elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs require candidates to complete writing assignments that focus on all phases of the writing process, including reflection, revision, and editing.</p>	IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation	Immediate	Cost of doing business	Increased variety of writing assignments as reported to MSDE program approval branch by IHEs
<p>3. Incorporate into teacher preparation programs new and emerging technologies, and instruct prospective teachers in the use of emerging technologies in the teaching of writing.</p>	IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation	Immediate	Unable to calculate; depends on emerging technology; will need funds	Technology inventory and use verification
<p>4. Encourage the national teacher accrediting agencies to audit all standards to ensure that the ability to write and the ability to teach writing are included.</p>	IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation	Fall 2007	Cost of doing business	Change in National standards by spring 2009

<p>Additional Strategies for Prospective English Teachers</p> <p>1. Ensure that institutions of higher education (IHE) English education programs have a balance between literature and composition/rhetoric and include the history and culture of language.</p>	<p>IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation</p>	<p>Spring 2008</p>	<p>Cost of doing business</p>	<p>Design of approved programs submitted by each institution</p>
<p>2. Ensure that students in IHE English education programs can produce different forms of written discourse for a variety of audiences and purposes and can assess the effectiveness of their products in influencing thought and action.</p>	<p>IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation</p>	<p>Spring 2008</p>	<p>Cost of doing business</p>	<p>Course syllabi and student artifacts for program approval visits</p>
<p>3. Provide explicit instruction in the teaching of the writing process.</p>	<p>IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation</p>	<p>Spring 2008</p>	<p>Cost of doing business</p>	<p>Course syllabi and student artifacts for program approval visits</p>
<p>4. Teach prospective English teachers how to model various types of writing, conference with student writers, evaluate writing, train and use student peer evaluators, and create an environment of risk-taking in the classroom</p>	<p>IHEs; MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation</p>	<p>Spring 2008</p>	<p>Cost of doing business</p>	<p>Course syllabi and student artifacts for program approval visits</p>
<p>5. Examine certification requirements to ensure that “resident teachers” are able to demonstrate a balanced program of literature and composition/rhetoric.</p>	<p>MSDE Division of Certification and Accreditation</p>	<p>Spring 2008</p>	<p>Cost of doing business</p>	<p>Report to Workgroup</p>

Additional Strategies for Prospective Non-English Teachers				
1. Ensure that non-English teacher candidates are able to hold students accountable for standard written and spoken American English.	IHE Teacher Preparation Programs; MSDE C & A	Spring 2008	Cost of doing business	Course syllabi, student artifacts, and interviews for program approval visits
2. Revisit the required elementary reading instruction courses at all colleges and in all in-service venues to ensure that both learning to write and writing to learn are emphasized for elementary teacher candidates.	MSDE C & A and IHEs	Spring 2008	Cost of doing business	Course syllabi, student artifacts, and interviews for program approval visits; reports from in-service programs delivered by MSDE
3. Revisit the required secondary content reading courses at all colleges and in all in-service venues to ensure that a balance is placed on both reading and writing strategies in middle and high school classroom instruction.	MSDE C & A and IHEs	Spring 2008	Cost of doing business	Course syllabi, student artifacts, and interviews for program approval visits; reports from in-service programs delivered by MSDE

Recommendation # 3: English language arts faculty at all levels PreK-16 should structure writing assignments that require students to write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences and use and exhibit a variety of forms and structures.

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date/Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicator of Success
<p>Strategies</p> <p>1. Ensure that regular writing assignments require the use of the entire writing process from initial generation of ideas through the drafting and revision processes to completing the final draft in order to achieve rhetorical proficiency.</p>	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Immediate	Cost of doing business assuming teacher workload is appropriate	Evidence of student writing assignments resulting from entire writing process in student portfolios
2. Ensure that there are multiple opportunities for expository and persuasive writing assignments.	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Immediate	Cost of doing business assuming teacher workload is appropriate	Evidence of expository and persuasive writing assignments in student portfolios
3. Create an expectation for longer and varied writing assignments, in addition to brief and extended constructed responses as required in the Maryland assessment program.	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Immediate	Cost of doing business assuming teacher workload is appropriate	Evidence of longer assignments in student portfolios
4. Ensure that writing assignments require students to explore themes and social issues, as well as to analyze texts.	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Immediate	Cost of doing business	Evidence of theme and social issue exploration in student portfolios
5. Construct writing assignments so that students must use a variety of primary and secondary sources.	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Immediate	Cost of doing business	Evidence of use of primary and secondary sources in student portfolios
6. Make available a greater variety of	PreK-12 schools	Fall 2008	Cost of doing	Course offering

English elective courses focusing on specific writing styles, genres, and student needs.	and IHEs; local school systems		business unless additional staff required	booklets/brochures
7. Use strategies from current research to address with factors related to culture, gender, and development of writing skills.	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Fall 2008	Staff time to review research and cost of doing business	Lessening of achievement gap in English
8. Implement the strategies related to the teaching of language in <i>A Practical Guide to Accelerating Student Achievement Across Cultures</i> developed by the Education That Is Multicultural and Achievement Network.	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Fall 2008	Staff time to review report and cost of doing business	Lessening of achievement gap in English
9. Incorporate and model best practices in the use of technology as defined by the Maryland State Technology Standards, including standards for use of the World Wide Web and the teaching and evaluation of writing, with particular regard to research, plagiarism, etiquette, fair use, and intellectual property.	PreK-12 schools and IHEs; local school systems	Fall 2008	Cost of doing business except for possible need for new technology purchases	Reduced incidents of plagiarism

Recommendation # 4: Non-English language arts faculty at all levels PreK-16 should assign regular writing experiences, maintain common expectations for standard written American English, and insist on proper grammar, usage, and spelling.

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date/Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicator of Success
1. Use as developmentally and subject appropriate the composition expectations and standards created by the statewide PreK-16 English Language Arts Alignment Committee.	PreK-12 schools and local school systems; IHEs	Upon completion of committee's recommendations in spring of 2008	Cost of doing business	Grading rubrics created to implement expectations
2. Emphasize written literacy in all core subjects in PreK-12 and in college-level general education courses and courses in the major by having teachers stress the importance of all phases of the writing process.	PreK-12 schools and school systems; IHEs	Immediate	Cost of doing business	Review of writing assignments
3. Create an interdisciplinary team at each high school and at each institution of higher education to encourage writing in the disciplines and across the curriculum.	PreK-12 schools and school systems; IHEs	Fall of 2007	Cost of doing business unless they must meet during the school day	Existence of interdisciplinary teams and minutes of meetings
4. Increase the use of technology at all levels in the teaching of writing.	PreK-12 schools and school systems; IHEs	Immediate	Depends on school or IHE and their current technology inventory	Classroom observations
5. Identify writing intensive courses in all college course catalogues.	IHEs	Fall of 2008	Cost of doing business	Courses in catalogues

Recommendation # 5: All PreK-12 English teachers should maintain student writing portfolios that include the types of writing experiences assigned, the variety and consistency of feedback provided, and the assessment of writing assignments.

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date/Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicator of Success
1. Create in local school systems a standardized end-of-year summary form to be kept in portfolios with recommendations for improvement and growth for each student.	Local school systems	Winter 2008 assuming teacher workload (See Rec. 6) is appropriate	Staff time	Standard portfolio form for every student in local school system
2. Confer with students to choose representative works from the portfolios, provide reflection and feedback for growth, and complete end-of-year summaries.	Classroom teacher	Ongoing from Winter 2008 assuming teacher workload is appropriate	Staff time	Portfolios with student work
3. Pass on to the next year's teacher students' portfolios containing representative compositions of the students' best work.	Classroom teacher	Spring 2008 assuming teacher workload is appropriate	Staff time	Sign off by next year's teacher that portfolio was received
4. Explore in local school systems the use of technology to provide feedback and manage, store, and transfer portfolios.	Local school system	Winter 2008	Staff time and possible technology	Report to superintendent from technology division

Recommendation # 6: Local school systems and institutions of higher education should analyze current student/teacher ratios and total teaching loads with the intent of reaching and maintaining National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) guidelines (see Appendix A).

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date/Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicator of Success
1. Provide additional English teachers to meet NCTE guidelines.	Local school systems; IHEs	Fall 2008	Depends on school system ; may be additional hires or may be reallocation	Increased # of assigned English teachers
2. Assign more students to teachers who do not have a writing intensive load.	Principals; Deans	Fall 2008	Cost of doing business	Master schedules/ teacher assignments
3. Differentiate staffing by providing coaches, tutors, co-teachers, and/or evaluators of writing.	Local school systems; principals; IHEs, deans	Fall 2008	The number of newly hired teachers in # 1 above will determine cost here	Increased # of coaches, tutors, co-teachers, and evaluators
4. Provide English teachers with additional time during the school day for evaluating papers.	Principals; local school systems; deans; IHEs	Fall 2008	Cost of doing business unless additional staff required	Master schedules/ teacher assignments
5. Eliminate extra duties for teachers of English so that they may spend time evaluating student writing assignments.	Principals; local school systems; deans; IHEs	Fall 2008	Cost of doing business	Master schedules/ teacher assignments

Recommendation # 7: Teachers in all disciplines and at all levels PreK-16 should be engaged in ongoing, job-embedded professional development in the teaching of writing.

Strategy	Responsibility	Implementation Date/Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicator of Success
<p>1. Provide ongoing professional development experiences for teachers at all levels PreK-16 on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. current research on the effective use of regular writing assignments; appropriate expectations for design, variety, and instruction related to those assignments; and appropriate assessment and evaluation; b. methods to develop students' ability to use proper grammar, usage, and mechanics; c. methods to model various types of writing for students, to have conferences with student writers, and to create an environment of risk-taking in the classroom; and d. knowledge of and training in the use of expanding technologies in the teaching of writing. 	<p>Local school systems; IHEs</p> <p>Local school systems; IHEs</p> <p>Local school systems; IHEs</p> <p>Local school systems; IHEs</p>	<p>Fall 2008</p> <p>Fall 2008</p> <p>Fall 2008</p> <p>Fall 2008</p>	<p>Cost of doing business</p> <p>Cost of doing business</p> <p>Cost of doing business</p> <p>Cost of doing business</p>	<p>Agendas for professional development sessions</p> <p>Same</p> <p>Same</p> <p>Same</p>
<p>2. Create opportunities for PreK-16 faculty to meet and apply aligned grading standards to actual student writing samples.</p>	<p>Local school systems; principals; IHEs; deans</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Cost of doing business</p>	<p># of opportunities provided</p>
<p>3. Establish in each local school system a team of writing specialists who will provide model</p>	<p>Local school system</p>	<p>Fall 2008</p>	<p>Select from available central</p>	<p>Schedule for team of writing specialists</p>

lessons and guidance for non-English classroom teachers in the teaching of writing in the disciplines and across the curriculum.			office staff; in some systems it may require additional staff	
4. Use professional development schools as a source of job-embedded professional development.	Local school systems; IHEs	Immediate as available	Support for Professional Development School	Report from PDS coordinator
5. Develop regional partnerships between local school systems and colleges and universities to provide professional development opportunities in the teaching of writing to both faculties.	Local school systems and IHEs	Fall 2007	Cost of doing business	# of collaborative professional development partnerships created
6. Support the extension of the National Writing Project throughout the state.	Local school systems; IHEs; MSDE	Immediate	Cost of doing business	# of participants in National Writing Project
7. Provide opportunities for professional growth through membership in professional organizations, conference attendance, college courses, and writing projects.	Local school systems	Fall 2007 (depending upon available budget)	Cost of doing business; may need to have budget request fro 2008	# of participants at such events
8. Establish new programs and organizations to provide mentoring, coaching, e.g., Literacy Coaching Model, partnerships, and collaboration among all teachers of English and writing.	Local school systems	Begin in Fall of 2007	Depends on nature of mentoring, coaching, and partnerships; may require budgetary support	Increase in the number of mentors, coaches, and partnerships

Appendix C

List of Stakeholders

The Task Force circulated and/or presented working drafts to the groups listed below. We would like to thank those who offered their thoughtful consideration of the recommendations and strategies found in this report. Their input was invaluable in the development of the final product.

Statewide Groups/Organizations

- Assistant Superintendents for Instruction
- Deans of Education
- Executive Officers
- Local School System English Supervisors
- Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals
- Maryland State Teachers Association Board of Directors
- PreK-12 Principals Advisory Council
- PreK-16 Workgroup
- Maryland Parent Teachers Association
- Statewide Standards for College English Committee
- Superintendents
- University System of Maryland English Chairs
- University System of Maryland freshman writing faculty

Campus/Local Education Agency, School Specific Groups

- Community College of Baltimore County Developmental Education faculty
- Community College of Baltimore County English Department
- College of Notre Dame Education Department
- Howard County English Instructional Team Leaders
- Montgomery and Prince George's County Maryland Writing Project Contacts
- University of Maryland College Park faculty and graduate assistants affiliated with the Center for Literacy, Language and Culture at UMCP (includes all in Reading, English/Language Arts Education, and Second Language Education and Culture)
- University of Maryland College Park faculty listed as Rhetoric and Composition for the English Department
- Wicomico County Secondary English teachers

National/Regional Contacts

- Mary Crovo, Deputy Executive Director, National Assessment Governing Board
- Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association
- National Center personnel for the National Writing Project
- National Listserv for the Jesuit Conference on Rhetoric and Composition
- Sandra Murphy, Professor of Education, University of California Davis; co-chair of 2011 NAEP Writing Framework Development Steering Committee
- WPA-L@asu.edu, National List Serve of college composition professionals