



“How Do You Get from Here to There?”: Traversing the Space between Creative Writing Studies and Secondary English Teacher Training

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ABSTRACT

In previous CWSC presentations, I have explored the importance of collaboration between secondary and postsecondary creative writing and English language arts teachers, and more scholarship has recently begun to emerge considering the importance of interaction and pedagogical collaboration between these stakeholders, as well as material on secondary-specific creative writing instruction. Little work has yet been done, though, on the challenge of integrating the fields creative writing and secondary English teacher training at a programmatic level. In my presentation, I will offer some initial considerations regarding such integration and suggest a possible path forward within postsecondary English, creative writing, and secondary teacher training programs.

First, I will provide a brief survey of the current state of creative writing as a component of teacher training programs, drawing attention to how few training programs address creative writing in the same systematic ways they often engage “sibling disciplines” such as composition and literature. Second, I will consider factors—such as secondary textbooks, lack of pedagogical training, and state educational standards—that lead to the exclusion of creative writing in these programs and argue that such exclusion is not only unwarranted, but actually antithetical to the factors cited.

After establishing this background, I will summarize some of the more common academic structures that house creative writing and teacher training programs, either together or separately, with specific attention paid to the location of content-area experts in English teaching and how frequently they are based in English departments versus education programs. I will argue that, while no single organizational structure is always best, there is quantifiable value in creative writing and teacher training programs being located as close to each other as possible within existing bureaucratic and departmental frameworks. I will also argue the necessity of

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secondary methods teachers having some background in creative writing, either through traditional writing workshops or, preferably, through direct engagement with creative writing pedagogy in their own coursework, not only to advance creative writing as a discipline, but also to better prepare teacher candidates in their programs.

Finally, I will share resources and materials highlighting my own integration of creative writing pedagogy into my English 486: Teaching English course for English Teaching majors at Indiana State University to illustrate some successful approaches to this programmatic integration, highlighting creative writing pedagogy-based assignments that address Indiana and NCTE standards for teacher training programs. I will also offer suggestions for resources that interested teachers and program supervisors might use to further enhance their curricula.