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METHODS

English Teacher Preparation, Budget Cuts, and Kuhn's Theory of Paradigm Shifts: A Closer Look at Content Area Feedback during Student Teaching

ELIZABETH BROCKMAN

Special thanks for encouragement and editorial assistant to CMU colleagues Amy Ford, Carlin Borsheim-Black, Marcy Taylor, and Susan Griffith, as well as *LJM* editors Greg Shafer and Amanda Stearns-Pfeiffer.

Thanks to Maxine Hairston's landmark "The Winds of Change," many writing teachers are familiar with Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts. Hairston describes the theory in these terms:

When a scientific field is going through a stable period, most of the practitioners in the discipline hold a common body of beliefs and assumptions on the problems that need to be solved, the rules that govern research, and on the standards by which performance is to be measured . . . But paradigms are not necessarily immutable. When several people working in a field begin to encounter anomalies or phenomena that cannot be explained by the established model, the paradigm begins to show signs of instability. For a while, those who subscribe to the paradigm try to ignore the contradictions and inconsistencies . . . or they make improvised ad hoc changes to cope with immediate crises. Eventually, however, when enough anomalies accumulate to make a substantial number of scientists in the field question whether the traditional paradigm can solve many of the serious problems that face them, a few innovative thinkers will devise a new model . . . (p. 76)

Hairston further explains that paradigm shifts are highly disruptive and, more specifically, that the transition period from the old to new paradigm is characterized by unrest, instability, and upheaval. Those clinging to the old paradigm often resist change with vehemence for both intellectual and emotional reasons:

Finally, however, most of the resistance to the new paradigm will dissipate when its advocates can demonstrate that it will solve problems that the traditional paradigm could not solve. Most of the new generation . . . will adopt the new model, and the older practitioners will gradually come around to it. Those who cling to the old paradigm lose their influence in the field because the leaders in the profession simply ignore their work. When that happens, the paradigm shift is complete, and the theory that was revolutionary becomes conventional. (p. 77)

Hairston's use of Kuhn's theory in "Winds of Change" was a confident rhetorical move. By applying the theory to Composition Studies, she is claiming the revolutionary paradigm is teaching writing as a process; more importantly here, however, Hairston's summary seems to imply that the stakeholders promoting the new paradigm will succeed, the result eventually being, in more or less time, a completed paradigm shift and improved pedagogy. Though the unrest, instability, and upheaval characterizing the transition period would prevent anyone from describing paradigm shifts as tidy or simple affairs, Hairston's summary seems to suggest that a new and superior paradigm will ultimately prevail, according to Kuhn's theory.

Think again.

Kuhn's theory comes to mind when I think of a relatively short-lived and pedagogically sound program called Subject Matter Supervision (SMS) in the English Department at Central Michigan University (CMU). This program, which is a single, substantive element of the English Major in the BS in Education, allows English professors to provide classroom embedded, content-area guidance for student teachers, which augments the mentorship of university coordinators who tend not to have academic credentials or classroom experience in English. SMS began in the early 1980s, the

result of an NCATE mandate, and ran for approximately twenty-five years until it was temporarily discontinued at the end of Spring 2010 because of budget cuts caused by an economic crisis in Michigan. A closer examination, however, suggests the program was particularly vulnerable because it was in the midst a paradigm shift, so stakeholders were experiencing the unrest, instability, and upheaval characterizing the transition period, despite a twenty-five-year history. Interestingly, the program was surprisingly and quickly reinstated after just one semester, and further turmoil typical of paradigm shifts persisted, until data associated with SMS was utilized in the English Department in two important ways: a program review and a curricular revision. As I later explain, these key university-sanctioned assessment activities helped to complete the paradigm shift and, in turn, assisted stakeholders in reimagining SMS as a permanent capstone course.

LAJM readers will immediately recognize the teacher-preparation program in question as specific to a single institution; however, the story behind the program has widespread interest, especially for those who have served as cooperating teachers for student teachers from CMU or other universities. These cooperating teachers tend to self-identify as readers, writers, and lovers of all things literacy related, so they are likely to appreciate learning the extent to which content-area knowledge and pedagogies are valued as part of the student teacher mentoring process. These same cooperating teachers might equally appreciate, but also be surprised by, a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the university politics and turf wars associated with student teaching that this short history provides. Most student teachers, along with their cooperating teachers, know that the university policies change very slowly, and the short history offers one reason why. Finally, the SMS history is relevant to teachers who have the desire to introduce, champion, and, more importantly, sustain innovative programs in their own schools. By conducting a Kuhnian analysis, these teachers will possess the theoretical basis for assessing the stability of their own programs and, in turn, be better equipped to identify and implement practical strategies that leverage their programs to ensure long-term success.

An Overview of SMS at CMU

During its initial twenty-five-year history, SMS in the English Department affected thousands of people in secondary-level schools across the Lower Peninsula: approximately 1,100 English majors at CMU, all their cooperating

teachers, and over 132,000 students in grades 6-12 (assuming 120 students per student teacher). Given this scope, it seems appropriate to describe how the program functions, to date, during any given semester, so this first section highlights background information, including placement procedures and observation practices that took place, week in and week out, from one year to the next.

Placement Procedures

Since the 1980s, English majors completing their student teaching requirement have varied in number from as low as ten to as high as thirty. Regardless of number, however, College of Education (EHS) supervisors are responsible for assigning school placements for all majors, including English, and those placements vary in terms of grade level and subject matter. As most *LAJM* readers know, some student teachers work a full semester with solely one or two cooperating teachers in a single department, while others divide their experiences by teaching eight weeks each in either their major or minor fields of study or in middle or high school placements. It all depends on the student teacher's preferences and the professional needs of the designated school principal and/or potential cooperating teacher(s). Regardless of placement, however, the SMS professor from the English Department has the academic credentials and often previous 6-12 teaching experience to mentor student teachers in virtually any English course—from English 7 to AP English 12. In fact, SMS professors often observe student teachers conducting, for example, writing workshops, library research, or class discussions of time-honored literary works—just as they did in previous chapters of their own professional lives.

In addition to grade level and subject matter, placement variations naturally exist in the geographical location of host schools. The Lower Peninsula covers more than 35,000 square miles across these regions: Northern Michigan, Mid-Michigan, Capital City, Metro Detroit North & South, Bay City, Genesee County, Grand Rapids, and the Thumb. The EHS supervisors, who typically have Master's degrees and long-term relationships with local school districts, live remotely from campus in all of the regions, the better to supervise and mentor their assigned student teachers. In contrast, SMS professors typically live near CMU, so their assigned student teachers typically represent a range of local (1-50 miles from campus), mid-range (50 – 100 miles from campus) and far-distance (100+ miles) placements across the

state. With this combination, the SMS professor easily logs over 1,000 miles in a single semester—a factor that will later be more fully explored.

Observation Practices

University resources at CMU allow student teachers to be observed twice by the SMS professor, the first time during Weeks 4-8 of a fifteen-week semester and the second time during Weeks 9-14. Each observation requires that the SMS professor drive to the school, attend one class (a standard class of approximately fifty-five minutes or a block class of approximately ninety minutes), and conduct a post-observation conference with the student teacher and host teacher. Sometimes a meeting with the building principal is possible, depending on time constraints. As a follow-up to the visit, the SMS professor writes a one-page evaluative letter on department stationery suitable for inclusion in the student teacher's portfolio, which is a compilation of teaching materials and artifacts to supplement the job search. These letters (excerpted examples to be provided shortly) served overlapping purposes by documenting the student teacher's classroom activities, providing both formative and evaluative feedback, and functioning as recommendations.

A basic assumption in the English Department regarding the SMS observations is that they inherently differ from those conducted by the EHS supervisor. First, the SMS observations do not result in a letter grade for the student teacher. The goal, here, is to encourage the student teacher to regard the SMS professor as a consultant or coach, thereby reducing stress and anxiety in an already highly charged learning environment. Second, the SMS observations require no additional preparation or paperwork for the student teacher, a practice responsive to the student teacher's already excessive workload. Third, the hope eventually became that the SMS supervisor would be a "familiar face" to the student teacher either because he or she had completed a methods course under the direction of the SMS professor or because the SMS professor is well known in the department as an English Education professor and advisor.

In addition to the three differences listed above, however, there is one more: English as a content area. Though the SMS professor, like the EHS supervisor, often discusses pedagogical topics applicable across the curriculum (professional dress, school relationships, classroom management, voice speed/inflection, job searches, and more), the primary focus of the observation is the content area and content-area methods. An English Department procedural document distinguishes the SMS and EHS observations in these terms:

[EHS] is fully responsible for each student teacher. An EHS supervisor places each student teacher, observes him/her several times throughout the semester, and then assigns a semester grade. In contrast, SMS supervisors are responsible for solely two observations (one each eight weeks). Though they often do far more—informal emails regarding assignments or lesson plans, additional observations for student teachers experiencing particular or unique challenges, telephone conversations with principals or cooperating teachers—their role is far more limited than that of the EHS supervisor. On the other hand, the EHS supervisor is unlikely to have credentials in English. As such, she or he may be unable to discuss the following kinds of topics: (a) effective writing assignments, (b) *To Kill a Mockingbird*, (c) introductory elements in sentences, (d) Shakespearean sonnets, (e) invention or revision strategies, (f) Transcendentalism, (g) Emily Dickinson, (h) YA novels, or (i) the differences among an "A," "B," or "C" paper. The primary purpose, then, is clear: SMS professors conduct classroom observations to discuss subject-matter issues, ones the EHS supervisors may not have the expertise to consider. In the process, however, SMS professors achieve other goals: enhancing general classroom practices, serving as an "English Department link" for the student teacher, and being a CMU ambassador to in-service English teachers and Michigan public schools. (SMS Procedural Document)

As further clarification, consider the following excerpts taken from the SMS letters previously mentioned as part of the observation process:

Sarah - Expository Writing/Mid-Sized Town in the Bay City Area

During Expository Writing, you and your students participated in two substantive activities. Using an overhead, you first helped students conduct rhetorical analyses of an original and revised text "with an eye" toward concrete and telling details. During this segment of the class, students identified global issues (such as overall purpose, audience, and organization), but they also investigated sentence-/word-level considerations (such as topic sentences, specific examples, and usage conventions). It was solid work. Next, students compared the differences between factual statements and inferences, and the class discussion was lively and engaged. Watching you teach, I noticed your confidence and "court sense," if you'll pardon the sports metaphor. You have good timing and voice control, and you intuitively know to seek participation from all corners of the classroom. Excellent!

Stan – English 9/Suburban Community in Metro Detroit

As you know, your class began with a highly dramatic reading of Poe’s “The Raven” performed by Christopher Walken and posted on YouTube. Next, you asked students about the poem, intuitively using questions like those found in *Thinking Backwards*, a textbook from ENG 319, and then you directly taught three sound devices: assonance, consonance, and alliteration. Using a PowerPoint presentation, you defined each of these terms, demonstrated them with examples from “The Raven,” and then you checked for understanding by asking students to locate and share other examples of the sound devices from the poem. Last, you provided yet another reading of “The Raven,” this one by the Simpsons.

As we discussed after class, your lesson was highly effective for three key reasons. First, you have great teaching persona: focused, low key, trustworthy, and well paced. It’s no wonder that students really listen and appear safe sharing their opinions or questions with you. Second, you made excellent use of technology to ensure that students understand that poetry (like drama) is a performance genre. The mediated, oral readings were inspirational, and they motivated students to value literature written over one hundred years ago—no small feat. Last, you used multiple methods to promote a highly interactive class session in which students are actively learning.

Kelly – English 9/Rural Town in Mid-Michigan

In addition to observing you teach, I also learned about future curricular plans. After studying *Of Mice and Men*, your students will read Mitch Albom’s *Tuesdays with Morrie* and Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*. Though I know you have strategies and plans in mind for both texts, you might consider asking students to compare Albom’s writing style in his book and his sports column (published in the *Detroit Free Press*), and you might consider carving out class time for watching a televised production of *A Raisin in the Sun* (because it is a play and, therefore, a performance genre designed to be viewed). These are just two ideas.

Kate - English 10/Small Town in Northern Michigan

As you know, the class I observed was a highly productive workshop. [Your cooperating teacher] explained that students had been in the middle of studying *Julius Caesar*, when you detected some confusion on their part. In particular, students were struggling to keep the characters straight, including names, roles, and narrative significance.

In response to this confusion, you asked [your cooperating teacher] an important question: Could the character map—which was originally designed as a capstone activity—be moved to the middle of the unit? Your rationale for this bold move was solidly grounded in composition theory/practice. As you learned in ENG 319, writing is a means of learning, and so you believed that if students paused in the middle of reading *Julius Caesar* to write and reflect about the play, they would be more likely to “get their heads around” the various characters and, in turn, enhance their overall reading experience. [Your cooperating teacher] wisely agreed to your suggestion, and the class session I observed was the end result of the request.

As the procedural document and four excerpted letters demonstrate, the SMS observations address a variety of pedagogical topics, some of which are relevant across the curriculum: Sarah’s ability to seek full participation from students, Stan’s excellent teaching persona that promotes a safe environment for students, Kelly’s potential to extend her lessons for her students’ benefit, and Katrina’s skill to negotiate with her cooperating teacher to promote student learning. However, each of these topics is explored via the lens of the content area and content methods: authors and specific literary works, genre and genre features, rhetorical analyses, writing workshop, revision, writing-to-learn strategies, reading skills/strategies, reading methods, summary, technology in the English classroom, and more.

EHS supervisors living remotely from campus tend to be retired principals, so they are highly experienced at observing and evaluating teachers across the curriculum; however, these supervisors tend not to possess teaching credentials or graduate degrees in English or English Education, so they would not likely address the complex and highly specialized topics showcased in the four excerpts. Assessment data supports this observation. In a survey measuring student teacher perceptions conducted in 2008, over 90% of the English majors claimed their EHS supervisors discuss English-related issues only “somewhat,” “a little” or “not at all” (SMS Assessment Results). These results are not meant to undermine the value of the EHS observations but, instead, to show that the English Department observations provided an important complement. As such, the excerpted letters and assessment data demonstrate how student teachers majoring in English benefited from and valued feedback from a supervisor who is a content area specialist.

Applying Kuhn's Theory to SMS

The previous description of SMS provides evidence that it benefits English majors at CMU and, by extension, cooperating teachers and 6-12 students. Why, then, was the program cut, even on a temporary basis, and why has its future not been guaranteed for over three decades? Though rival explanations exist, one interpretation is best understood through Kuhn's theory, as summarized by Maxine Hairston's in her landmark "Winds of Change." Despite an over twenty-five-year history, the program had not resulted in a completed paradigm shift, so the program has always been far more vulnerable than it would be otherwise.

The Early Years: An "Anomaly" Emerges

SMS began in the early 80s at CMU, the result of an NCATE mandate. The mandate required that the subject-matter departments—math, science, foreign languages, history, and English—assign professors to travel off campus to observe student teachers and provide mentoring in the designated content area and content-area methods. At this time, SMS was a new model—a new paradigm, to use Kuhn's language—for supervising student teachers. First, the model was new at CMU. Prior to the NCATE mandate, EHS had always shouldered responsibility for supervising student teachers, so the mandate violated longstanding institutional boundaries between EHS and the subject matter departments. Second, SMS was new to the state. In general, student teachers in Michigan are supervised by professors in either an education or a subject matter department, but not both. In contrast, SMS at CMU was designed to complement the student teaching supervision already provided by EHS. It's important to note, however, that even with the new paradigm, the EHS supervisors still served as "faculty of record" for each student teacher and bore the ultimate responsibility for placing, overseeing, and providing final evaluations for every student teaching experience. Also noteworthy, the program mirrored degree requirements for Teacher Education at CMU because students interested in pursuing secondary-level teaching earn a BS in Education, but they combine the degree with a major and minor or a double major from two subject matter departments. In this regard, the SMS mandate was logical in terms of curricular requirements for teaching candidates at CMU.

Despite the logic, CMU faculty and staff generally responded to the program—the new paradigm for student

teacher supervision—just as Kuhn's theory would have predicted: as an anomaly best addressed by implementing ad hoc solutions or by ignoring it. According to Dr. Stephen Holder, who joined CMU in the 1970s and served as English Department chair from 1996-2005, some subject-matter departments assigned SMS responsibilities to professors as unpaid overloads, so observations were not completed on a consistent basis, if at all. Other departments hired emeriti professors or retired school teachers, but compensation was negligible, and little or no connection existed between the SMS observations and departmental programs. Holder explained that this low level of support—what Kuhn might call ad hoc solutions—was typical across campus during the early SMS years.

Meanwhile, EHS also appears to have been less than supportive in the early years. In an 80s EHS student handbook, for example, student teacher supervision is described as "a team effort involving cooperating teachers, building principals and university representatives" (p. 74), but the SMS professor's role is diminished: The student teacher "will be visited by field-based faculty about seven or eight times a semester . . . to provide feedback and assistance. Subject matter specialists are also looking for feedback . . . on ways their department can improve the teacher education program" (74). In response to this passage, Kuhn might say that EHS was ignoring the new paradigm, as is often the case in the early stages of a paradigm shift, because the passage suggests the SMS professor was participating for only programmatic assessment, not mentorship or teacherly guidance.

In contrast, the English Department appears to have supported fully the NCATE mandate in the early years. Dr. William Lewis—a CMU English professor from 1962-1993 with extensive secondary-level teaching experience—reports that he immediately volunteered to oversee the SMS observations during the final decade of his career, and he was given course release for this work. In other words, he taught one or two fewer traditional, on-campus courses than his English Department colleagues each semester to compensate for the time required to conduct SMS observations. As I later explain, course release is expensive, but it formalized the SMS observation system, granting it greater permanence and importance in the English Department, as opposed to ad hoc solutions offered sporadically in other departments across campus. In the early SMS years, this level of financial support and faculty motivation was unprecedented across campus.

The Middle Years: Unrest and Instability Continue

Despite financial support and early faculty motivation, the paradigm shift was still not complete in the English Department, and several years of unrest and instability ensued, just as Kuhn might have predicted. Faculty members hired to replace Lewis after his retirement were former high school teachers with PhDs in English and/or English Education who were highly qualified to supervise student teachers, and each one initially fulfilled the responsibility with care and diligence; however, once these same professors were granted tenure, they tended to request and be granted on-campus teaching assignments in lieu of supervising student teachers, the primary concern being the extensive travel combined with health concerns and/or other teaching or service responsibilities on campus.

To resolve the staffing instability, the English Department instituted in the late 1990s two key procedural changes. First, the contract letter of any new tenure track professor hired to conduct SMS observations explicitly listed it as a required teaching responsibility. Second, the department increased staffing from two to three faculty members per semester for the SMS observations, so professors supervised fewer student teachers each semester (from twelve to fifteen down to seven to nine), thus dramatically reducing travel time. These two procedural changes, alone, helped to stabilize the program for a period of more than a decade by reducing the “revolving-door syndrome.”

In particular, one English professor, who was hired in the mid-90s, accepted and maintained her SMS responsibilities long after a positive tenure decision. I, the author of this essay, am that professor! As a new tenure track faculty member with a freshly minted PhD in English earned while teaching high school English, I reveled in my SMS responsibilities--and still do. Under Holder's direction, I devised and institutionalized the previously mentioned SMS letters, and I created a systematic means of obtaining placement information from EHS so that records were accurate, complete, and timely (not always the case in the early SMS years). Because I have been the primary faculty of record for a required methods course, my SMS responsibilities have continuously informed my on-campus teaching, and each student teacher I visit is almost always a former student; on occasion, the cooperating teacher or even the principal is a former student too. Best of all, though, I have the opportunity to participate in what is, arguably, the most important

semester of an English major's undergraduate education--a privilege beyond measure. Despite driving thousands of miles over the past twenty years and often in variable weather conditions, I take tremendous pleasure and professional pride in remembering the following kinds of representative mentoring scenarios that SMS affords:

- Encouraging student teachers to start or continue reading programs that foster voracious independent reading among their students; discussing strategies for effective reading programs that distinguish them from SSR or DEAR; identifying specific and popular authors and titles that represent differing genders, ethnicities, and historical time periods; sharing related resources to be analyzed after the observation is over.
- Augmenting student teachers' pedagogical choices by recommending content-area methods/concepts introduced in their English Education courses, such as Atwell's Rule of So What? or Write about a Pebble and Graff & Birkenstein's Quotation Sandwich or Planting a Naysayer; connecting pedagogical choices and content-area methods/concepts to the CCSS designed to accelerate students' literacy growth; brainstorming strategies for conducting formative and summative assessment.
- Emphasizing the importance of genre; commending student teachers for crafting genre-based literature studies on, for example, fairy tales or children's literature; teasing out not only text features of the genre in question but also socio-cultural markers; identifying and naming craft elements so that students “read like writers”; challenging student teachers to explore craft elements, text features, and socio-cultural markers in everyday, non-literary genres and to encourage the same in their students.
- Commending student teachers for incorporating digital tools in the classroom; exploring if the digital tool is age and task appropriate; debating the myth of the digital native or theorizing whether technology has merely enhanced or completely revolutionized the world as we know it; introducing digital “scaredy cats” to Google Docs, WeVideo, and GoodReads as accessible and powerful digital tools that promote student engagement and literacy growth.
- Meeting cooperating teachers and hearing their stories; asking specifically if their student teacher would be a viable candidate for potentially open positions in English; hearing the answer, “yes,” more times than I can count and sharing that good news with the student teacher; knowing that, in sharing, I have helped to foster teacherly confidence and self-esteem.

These are just five scenarios out of hundreds in a, to date, twenty-year career at CMU, but they demonstrate why I find my SMS responsibilities so intellectually, emotionally, and pedagogically rewarding. It's all about making connections with student teachers, most of whom are former students, and helping them synthesize the complex concepts represented across the English sub-disciplines—all for the purpose of engaging their students and accelerating their literacy growth. As previously noted, my SMS longevity is atypical among my English Department colleagues, and I believe it stems at least in part from the two key procedural changes that Holder devised during his tenure as chair and his strong support of the program.

Holder clearly differed from the department chairs in the other subject matter departments because of his strong SMS support. He indicated that he poured resources into it, most obviously because the English Major for the BS in Education was one of the largest in the department but also because CMU was originally founded as a normal school, so training teachers held historical significance in the institutional culture. In addition, Holder claimed that by supporting SMS, he hoped his department would be an SMS leader at CMU by providing a model program that other departments could emulate. In particular, he perceived the course-release system as distinctive and superior from that of other subject-matter departments (especially hiring retirees to conduct observations or requiring faculty to do them as unpaid overloads). Holder also believed that SMS functioned as on-going professional development for participating professors by providing a meaningful and consistent reason to work in the schools, and I can personally attest to the veracity of this goal. Finally, Holder hoped SMS would support teaching candidates both during the student teaching experience and after graduation. Referencing Elizabeth Green's "Building a Better Teacher," Holder indicated that training the individual teacher is the most important means of educational reform both in individual schools and across the state.

Despite admirable goals, however, Holder claimed that SMS was in constant jeopardy, particularly after CMU rolled out a new budget model in 1997. In this model, the individual colleges function as "cost centers," with tuition dollars generated by individual departments initially "taxed" by the university before being returned to the respective dean for overall distribution among the departments. Student teachers at CMU enroll in thirteen credits, but the corresponding tuition dollars generated by those credits were and, to date, continue to be allocated to solely EHS,

so the English Department and, by extension, the College of Humanities and Social & Behavioral Sciences (CHSBS) must absorb the cost of SMS, which generates no tuition dollars. Holder indicated he had to justify each and every semester the value of SMS—value to the student, the faculty member, and the overall quality of the English Major—in comparison to the value of the SMS professor teaching an on-campus course and generating tuition dollars. Still, SMS gained strength in the English Department and even across campus, thanks to Holder. In fact, other subject-matter departments began to offer course releases to SMS faculty, and (as previously mentioned) the same English professor consistently oversaw SMS, even after a positive tenure decision. However, the constant tension that Holder experienced by continually needing to justify the program is typical of the unrest, instability, and upheaval of the transition period during paradigm shifts, according to Kuhn.

After Stephen Holder, Dr. Marcy Taylor served as English Department chair from 2005- 2011, and she introduced a new SMS procedure, a procedure with the power to bring tremendous stability to the program. Prior to Taylor's tenure as chair, SMS was staffed semester by semester with a combination of one tenure track professor and two temporary faculty with MA degrees and previous secondary-level teaching experience. Taylor reasoned, however, the strongest SMS benefit was helping English majors make specific and explicit connections between their pedagogical choices during student teaching with their program of study, and that these connections were possible only if the SMS faculty also taught the methods classes: ENG 319 - Teaching Composition in the Secondary Schools and ENG 311 - Teaching Literature in the Secondary Schools. Taylor's procedural change was to assign SMS responsibilities to solely tenure track English Education faculty, instead of temporary faculty.

In addition to implementing this new staffing model, Taylor oversaw a 2007-08 assessment initiative of the SMS Program — the first of its kind — that yielded very positive student responses:

- English majors rated the overall usefulness of SMS observations more highly than their EHS observations. On a scale of 1 -7 (with 7 being the highest), 82% rated their SMS visits as a 5, 6, or 7, while only 74% rated their EHS visits as 5, 6, or 7. Note: These numbers are especially telling because EHS supervisors amassed far more classroom hours than SMS supervisors, who are allowed to visit only twice.
- Nearly 75% reported they would prefer having an English Department professor be their primary supervisor

during student teaching and that their seminar group be comprised of solely English majors.

- Approximately 45% indicated that they would prefer an equal number of visits from both SMS and EHS (in other words, SMS visits would increase from two to at least five visits) while 30% indicated they would prefer that SMS visits be greater in number than EHS visits. (SMS Assessment Results)

Even Kuhn might interpret Taylor's new staffing model and positive assessment results as movement towards a completed paradigm shift, except for a new staffing development that caused more unrest and upheaval, to use Kuhn's phrasing. New tenure track English professors teaching methods classes and assigned to or eligible for SMS unexpectedly resigned from CMU and accepted teaching positions at other institutions, or they urgently requested on-campus teaching assignments that didn't require travel, the result of important personal and emotional reasons (health, childcare, and/or family crises) or pressing professional and academic reasons (other supervisory or administrative roles providing alternative teaching assignments). Meanwhile, some faculty members proposed that new educational technologies would allow for remote supervision of student teachers, while others claimed that the importance of face-to-face interaction could not be underestimated.

Before any of these new staffing concerns and questions could be discussed, let alone addressed or answered, CHSBS Dean Pam Gates was forced to cut SMS in May 2010 because of the budget crisis in Michigan, which ended the twenty-five-year history of an effective, but highly vulnerable, teacher preparation program in the English Department at CMU. For one semester—Fall 2011—student teachers with English majors were not supported with SMS.

By the end of the semester, however, Gates overturned her previous decision and reinstated SMS in time for the Spring 2012 semester. Why? What made her change her mind? First, student enrollments at CMU unexpectedly and sharply increased, which provided much needed relief to the budget crisis that the institution had shouldered the previous year. Second, Gates learned firsthand that SMS directly benefited students in ways that, in absentia, became more transparent. Without strong mentorship, for example, some student teachers struggle, even to the point of potentially failing the semester; without SMS, these at-risk student teachers received no hands-on English Department mentorship or advocacy. Equally significant, Gates learned that principals favor faculty recommendations based upon

direct classroom observations; without SMS, these English Department recommendations would no longer be possible for teaching candidates. Finally, Gates was always kindly disposed to SMS. Originally hired in the 1990s to teach English Education and Children's Literature courses, she understood the value of teacher preparation and K-12 education.

The dean's reversal was positive support for SMS; however, Kuhn might argue that the ease with which she cut and reinstated the program is most accurately characterized as further upheaval and unrest, the kind of turmoil that takes place in the middle of a paradigm shift.

The Final Years: The Paradigm Shift Moves to Completion

From 2013 - 2016, SMS gained strength and stability, in spite of rapidly declining enrollments caused by MDE's Professional Readiness Test (PRE). This strength and stability stems initially from Dr. Nicole Sparling, the current English Department chair, who staunchly supported SMS by staffing it—not unlike Steve Holder and Marcy Taylor had done in previous years—even as other subject matter departments cut the program. In addition, Sparling strongly backed the ad hoc assessment work of Dr. Amy Ford and Dr. Carlin Borsheim-Black, two new tenure track English Education professors who expressed strong agreement, in general, regarding the importance of clinical experiences for teaching candidates in English and, in particular, for SMS. As this section clarifies, their support for SMS, however, took a more far reaching important shape than “merely” student teacher observations.

In 2014, Amy Ford completed the first large-scale assessment of the English Education Program by analyzing the previously mentioned SMS letters—a rich data source that played an instrumental role in her work and ensuing results: The [SMS] letters are currently the only measure in the English Education Program that illuminates teacher candidates' ability to integrate the various facets of effective teaching. Assessing this capacity to integrate will be essential as CMU seeks CAEP accreditation in alignment with InTasc standards. The letters are qualitative and descriptive and therefore able to render visible teacher candidates' integration of the multiple kinds of knowledge requisite to the complexity of teaching (11).

Ford goes on to explain that the SMS letters, unlike any other data source available at CMU, are similar in nature to

narratives and, therefore, better able to capture in qualitative terms the complexity of teaching English, as well as the support that teaching candidates need from subject matter specialists to synthesize and integrate English content area knowledge and methods. In the overall report, Ford makes use of the previously mentioned 2007-08 assessment results, as well as other data (the MTTC test results, student interviews, focus groups, and MDE exit surveys); however, she leans most heavily on the SMS letters, using them as leverage to support what is, arguably, one of the most important and far reaching assessment findings: "the importance of teacher candidates receiving support from faculty who are experts in their subject matter during clinical experiences in which they assume significant responsibility" (p. 2). A quick review of the four previously quoted SMS letter excerpts explains why. In each scenario, the student teacher receives specific, content-oriented feedback that unpacks and synthesizes reading, writing, and other literacy-related topics in ways that are both formative and evaluation, and all within the context of classroom choices the student teacher has personally made.

Ford's finding that content area feedback matters, which resulted from systematic university-sponsored assessment, provided concrete evidence that the paradigm shift was moving from a period of transition to one of stability. This claim is supported in two ways. First, the report and its findings were so well received by the University Assessment Council that the English Education cohort eventually received a \$10,000 award for future professional development initiatives--a strong vote of confidence from the university community at large. Second and perhaps more importantly, an influential EHS report entitled "Transforming a 21st Century Educator Preparation Program: A Report of the 2023 Teacher Preparation Task Force" emphasizes the importance of subject matter-specific feedback in clinical experience--a far cry from the previously mentioned 1980s EHS student handbook in which SMS is characterized as a venue for curricular improvement, and not a means of teacherly support and guidance.

Significantly, Ford's assessment work was conducted during approximately the same time that Borsheim-Black was leading an ad hoc committee in a revision of the English Major for the BS in Education. She began the process recursively by leading a cohort of departmental colleagues across the English sub-disciplines--literary theorists, linguists, creative writers, and rhetoric/writing specialists--through an exploration of, for example, the NCTE standards, CAEP

accreditation requirements, the Common Core State Standards, which were all essential considerations in generating the curricular goals that would guide the new major. Unlike a previous ad hoc committee charged with revising the English Major for the BS in English (a non-teaching degree program), Borsheim-Black's committee was required to be mindful of and responsive to professional organizations and accrediting agencies in generating curricular goals for teaching candidates. Once the new goals were established, the committee mapped them upon the then-current program of study by indicating in which specific courses the goals were "introduced," "reinforced," or "mastered," and this single act made transparent a serious curricular gap: the courses in the major provided the means primarily to introduce and/or reinforce concepts, but little or no opportunity existed to demonstrate mastery. It was agreed that even ENG 460, the English Department capstone course, didn't fully serve teaching candidates in terms of "mastery" because it functioned informally as a "special topics" course. Some English professors selected course topics and designed final projects conducive to teaching candidates, but others didn't; and regardless of course topic or final project, no clinical experience was required in ENG 460. Therefore, the student teaching experience, and by extension SMS, was characterized as the primary opportunity for mastery among teaching candidates.

This departmental acknowledgement was unprecedented and, most relevant here, provided evidence of further movement towards the stability associated with completed paradigms. Never before Borsheim-Black's ad hoc committee had a cross section of English Department professors worked so carefully to align programmatic goals in light of required coursework and discovered a serious gap filled solely by student teaching. Like Ford's assessment work, Borsheim-Black's curricular revision was based upon a systematic, university-sanctioned assessment initiative, and it made transparent the importance of SMS during not only the student teaching experience but also throughout the entire degree program. Ford's previously mentioned assessment work demonstrated the importance of SMS for the individual English major and his or her professional growth as a teaching candidate, while Borsheim-Black's work demonstrated programmatic significance; without student teaching, and by extension SMS, the English Department provided little discernible means for students to demonstrate mastery over the major.

Aligning programmatic goals with the current major, however, was only the first step in Borsheim-Black's ad hoc

committee work because several other curricular gaps were also revealed. For example, one goal—the need for teaching candidates to write competently in a variety of genres with differing purposes and audiences—resulted in the addition of a brand new composition requirement, and another goal regarding cultural diversity resulted in two new literature requirements. Most relevant here, though, the ad hoc committee's work reinforced the need for a more structured and far reaching sequence of English Education courses, so a new 200-level introductory English Education course was successfully proposed, and two existing courses—the previously mentioned ENG 311 and ENG 319—were re-sequenced and revised. Ford's previously mentioned assessment work reinforced the English Education cohort's belief that each of the sequenced courses should include a clinical experience, so plans began for that important curricular feature in each of these three courses.

The question remained, however, if the revised major should include a designated capstone course taught in the English Department. Some faculty argued that student teaching should continue to be the capstone, while others contended that the major, itself, should include a capstone, in addition to student teaching. Significantly, the previously mentioned ENG 460, which was originally designated as the department capstone, had been replaced for English majors earning the non-teaching degree with another upper-division literature course; however, ENG 460 remained “on the books,” and some faculty argued that it could now be easily updated to fit the exclusive capstone needs of English majors earning a BS in Education. In particular, if the course were reimagined with an intensive two- to three-week clinical experience as the centerpiece, it could be the final course in a four-course sequence of pedagogy courses and an opportunity, not unlike student teaching, for students to demonstrate mastery of the programmatic goals. In the end, these faculty successfully argued and the ad hoc committee agreed that this new English Education version of ENG 460 would serve the same curricular purpose as SMS—an opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery under the guidance of English Ed faculty—but it (unlike SMS) would be safeguarded for future generations of teaching candidates by the revenue stream the tuition dollars would always provide.

According to the 5-07-16 minutes, the English Department passed the new curriculum proposed by Borsheim-Black's ad hoc committee, including a forecasted, reimagined ENG 460 as a capstone that would function as SMS (See Appendix A for the new English Major for the BS in Education).

Discussion

What would Kuhn say? With SMS reimagined as the new ENG 460 capstone, is the paradigm shift finally over? In other words, is the new paradigm complete because “its advocates can demonstrate that it will solve problems that the traditional paradigm could not solve?” (Hairston, 1982, p. 77). Skeptics might say no. After all, the original paradigm before the 1980s was that EHS alone supervised student teachers, and the same will be true again after ENG 460 replaces SMS, once the transition period from the old major to the new takes place.

Adherents, on the other hand, might say yes. Calling for a more complex and nuanced stance, they would safely predict that English majors at CMU will now benefit from clinical experiences supervised by English professors, the goal of SMS all along. What was formerly an opportunity for merely two SMS observations—the first during Weeks 4-7 of student teaching and the second during Weeks 8-12—is transformed into a system that is far more extensive and, arguably, substantive. As previously noted, the content-area clinical supervision will begin with teaching candidate' introductory English Education course completed during the freshman or sophomore year and continue on a yearly basis until culminating with intensive two- to three-week clinical planned for the capstone course completed the semester prior to student teaching. This fact, alone, provides evidence of a new and improved model, a new paradigm to use Kuhn's words.

For this new paradigm to have taken place, Kuhn would surely agree that SMS needed champions, and this short history showcases several key figures: William Lewis in the early years; Steve Holder, Marcy Taylor, Pam Gates, and I during the middle years; and Nicole Sparling in the final years. These champions each played crucial roles in keeping SMS afloat in the English Department at CMU for many turbulent years, but their support alone was insufficient to complete the paradigm shift. As Hairston's summary of Kuhn's theory makes clear, a paradigm shift “belongs” to an entire community, not a handful of community members. Though a few community leaders can make a strong, sincere, and substantive impact, their support alone could also be characterized as unsystematic and subjective and, therefore, easily compromised and/or overturned. By comparison, Ford's and Borsheim-Black were not “champions.” Instead, they conducted systematic university-sponsored assessment that demonstrated the important role SMS played

in the teacherly growth of the individual teaching candidate, as well as programmatic role within the English Major as a whole.

According to Ford, sustainable programs need “leverage and legs” so that they become indispensable to the community at large, despite the costs. To clarify, consider the previously referenced 2008 assessment initiative with those of 2014. The 2008 assessment results demonstrated that English majors at CMU greatly valued SMS and strongly believed it benefited them, which resonated deeply among those already advocating for the program. Results surely helped to justify the new staffing model comprised of solely tenure track faculty, but that matters only with faculty buy in and administrative support—both potentially and sometimes highly temperamental. In contrast, Ford's and Borsheim-Black's assessment work demonstrated SMS's important role and positive impact within and beyond the English Major. In other words, they demonstrated that SMS filled what would otherwise be a serious curricular gap in the English Major and, in turn, the BS in Education at CMU—leverage and legs.

What's Next?

This short history initially suggests that Kuhn's theory has practical implications in local schools. More specifically, *LAJM* readers who introduce new programs in their schools should not be dismayed or discouraged if their ideas are initially met with a healthy dose of discord, especially if the program or model will displace an old program that is ingrained within the institutional culture. This discord—what might be called unrest, instability, and upheaval—is to be expected and even anticipated as a natural part of any change process, if Kuhn's theory has merit. Of course, it's professionally painful when a teacher's new and thoughtfully crafted program is not automatically embraced by colleagues and/or administrators, but Kuhn's theory provides a logical explanation why, so these innovative teachers should take heart, be strong, and stay the course—just as SMS advocates did, even when the program was constantly questioned and even temporarily cut. Likewise, if a teacher has successfully introduced a new program but finds, after time, that she or he is the sole or primary champion for the program, then the teacher should think again. As this short history suggests, programs that stay afloat as a result of primarily a champion's hard work and advocacy are more likely to be vulnerable and at risk. If these teachers hope to make their programs sustainable, they should consider exploring ways

to conduct school sanctioned, systematic assessment with results closely tied to school mission and community values, the way that Ford and Borsheim-Black did in the English Department at CMU.

Equally important, this short history supports the important role that content area faculty have played in the English Department at CMU over the past few decades, thanks to SMS and its advocates. However, the English Education cohort at CMU agrees the next logical step is to conduct a larger-scale study that brings state and even national attention to the role of content-area supervision in teaching programs. This study would include the data sets referenced in this short history, especially Ford's program review, Borsheim-Black's curricular map, and the SMS letters, and it would also include data from other universities, including (but not limited to) the extent to which English Education specialists are hired as tenure track faculty in Education departments to supervise student teachers. Most relevant here, however, the cohort agrees this future study would be stronger and more substantive if it systematically included the voices and perspectives of cooperating teachers who supervise and mentor pre-service teaching candidates. As *LAJM* readers know, cooperating teachers are content-area specialists too, and their important role in the mentoring process can't be underestimated.

Final Words

As this short history makes clear, Subject Matter Supervision—affectionately known as SMS—is a program that belongs to the English Department at Central Michigan University. SMS has benefited countless teaching candidates by providing a means for classroom-specific feedback from a content-area specialist and, by extension, it has benefited cooperating teachers and students in grades 6-12 across the state.

As I reflect upon my twenty-year anniversary at CMU, however, I know that SMS has also benefited me both personally and professionally. A former middle/high school English teacher, I appreciate the opportunity to spend meaningful time on a consistent basis in public schools where my career began. This teacherly sense of “coming full circle” that SMS affords was particularly clear several years ago when I had the honor of visiting a student teacher hosted by Mr. Pat Daly at Dow High School in Midland, Michigan. I had been Daly's first student teacher back in 1982, more than thirty years ago!

As previously indicated, however, I have taken the greatest professional pride and pleasure in participating in

literally hundreds of student teaching experiences. As *LAJM* readers know, student teaching is, arguably, the most important semester of any undergraduate program, so I consider my SMS responsibilities a privilege beyond measure, one that I will cherish as I enter the final phase of my teaching career.

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Appendix A: Revised English Major for the BS in Education (Approved May 2016)

Required Courses I (12 hours)

- ENG 234 - Introduction to Literary Analysis 3(3-0)
ENG 333 Literature of Non-Western Cultures 3(3-0)

- ENG 349 Shakespeare 3(3-0)
ENG 580 Literature for Young Adults 3(3-0)

Required Courses II (6 hours)

- ENG 175 The Nature of Language 3(3-0)
ENG 271 Modern Grammar 3(3-0)

Required Courses III (3 hours)

Select one from the following:

- ENG 294 Introduction to Creative Writing 3(3-0)
ENG 510 Writing Center Practicum 3(3-0)
ENG 514 Language & Media Discourse 3(3-0)

Required Courses IVa (6 hours)

Select one course as a section in American literature and the other course as a section in British literature: Note: In Required Courses IVa, students must take one course in each of the following traditions: A = American or B = British

In course registration, each section of courses in Category IVa will be accompanied by a section letter; for example, a section of "Topics in Romantic or Realist Literature" may focus on American literature (337A) or British literature (337B). Students cannot satisfy the requirements for Category IVa by repeating the same course number with a different section (i.e., you cannot count both ENG 337A and 337B for this requirement).

- ENG 337 Topics in Romantic or Realist Literature 3(3-0)
ENG 338 Topics in Modern or Contemporary Literature 3(3-0)

Required Courses IVb (3 hours)

Select one from the following:

- ENG/WST 327 Women Writers: Gender, Sexuality, and Literature 3(3-0)
ENG 328 Native American Literature and Film 3(3-0)
ENG 329 African American Literature 3(3-0)
ENG 330 Gods, Monsters, and Immortality: Mythic Literature 3(3-0)

Required Courses V (13 hours)

- ENG 211 Introduction to English Education 3(3-0)
ENG 311 Teaching Literature in Secondary School 3(3-0)
ENG 319 Teaching Composition in the Secondary School 4(3-1)
ENG 460 Senior Seminar: Proposed Capstone in English Education 3(3-0)
Total: 43 semester hours