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Writing on Demand in College, Career, and Community Writing: Preparing Students to Participate in the Pop-Up Parlor

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Cover Page Footnote

Thank you to the National Writing Project for grant funding to scale up the C3WP in Native American schools.

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KELLY SASSI AND HANNAH STEVENS

Teachers introducing the National Writing Project's College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP) to their students often use Burke's concept of the parlor to describe the process of joining an academic conversation:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (Burke, 1941, p. 110-111)

This Burkean parlor describes well an academic conversation that is long-lived, such as the theme of spiritual growth in *The Odyssey* or the role of invention in the writing process. However, in today's world, where ideas are shared in kairotic moments via social media, the scene for discussion or debate may more resemble a pop-up shop than a parlor, a possible addition to Burke's established conversation—here today, gone tomorrow, but often returning and cycling around. This is the scene where the skills in the "Writing on Demand" unit of C3WP (which draws from skills developed throughout the program) may be useful—the pop-up parlor may take the form of a 40-minute ACT essay-writing task, an on-the-spot demonstration of writing skills during a job application process, a comment period for a bill in the political system, or

a non-violent protest that takes shape over social media. In this article, we review the literature on C3WP; contextualize the "Writing on Demand" unit in relation to the other instructional resources in C3WP; explore five big ideas about writing on demand; and describe an approach to teaching this unit that includes some preliminary results from a rural, Native American high school.

Review of Literature

C3WP is a professional development program that focuses on the teaching of argument writing, emphasizing the moves writers make with evidence from source texts. The program has excellent research results in the improvement of student writing and on the change in teacher practice (Stokes, Heenan, Houghton, St. John, & Ramage, 2017a). These results are based on specific program phases—first, an advanced institute designed by site leaders that guides potential teacher-leaders through four cycles of instruction. A cycle of instruction is composed of 1) professional development workshops, in which the program design elements and instructional resources are introduced; 2) teacher use of instructional resources in their classrooms; 3) collaborative formative assessment with NWP's Using Sources Tool; and 4) teacher-led decision-making about which C3WP instructional materials they should teach next, based on formative assessment results. The cycle then repeats, with the writing project site leaders introducing new materials that provide teachers with an opportunity to experience the resources they are about to introduce to their classes. In the second phase of C3WP, these same program design elements are used, though some of the professional development is "embedded," which means that site leaders teach in teacher-participant classrooms to model the instructional resources, co-teach with participants, or observe them teaching and provide feedback afterwards.

In rural communities where C3WP was introduced, there was an increase in student writing success. In addition, many participants spoke of the building of relationships through community, a lack of formal hierarchy known to many teachers in PD settings, engaging teachers in writing while simultaneously providing resources, and the connection to colleagues through other leadership opportunities as the major influences that led to the success of the program (Stokes et al., 2017b). These successes allow professional development to influence classroom practice in positive ways, and educators cite C3WP as the bridge that connects professional development to classroom practice (Heenan et al., 2017a). The program has the ability to effect change as it applies to writing, which includes answering the question: “What do I do next to support my students as writers?” (Reed, 2017). The C3WP is able to affect not only teachers, but also students as writers as Heather Coffey and Steve Fulton (2018) discuss further, focusing on the intersections between literacy, engagement, and writing, as they apply to student growth, an important consideration that Melissa Legate (2018) supports further. Coffey and Fulton found that students were able to engage critically when they were guided to think outside of the classroom, a skill learned through activities presented via C3WP. Perhaps more important, though, the NWP and the C3WP offer teachers and students a productive in-service program that allows both parties to take away new skills, a discussion many scholars have explored previously (Fleischer, 2004; Hicks et al., 2004; Baker, 2004; Yeager, 2006). Furthermore, C3WP works to provide underrepresented students the ability to gain access to the discourses of power (Delpit, 1988; Delpit, 2006), through development of their writing-on-demand skills, which translates to college readiness.

In addition to the skills the C3WP provides instructors and students, the program has the ability to reach rural school districts and a diverse population of students, a consideration many scholars are addressing, especially in regard to students of color (Finney, 2014; Johnson, 2018; White & Matteoni, 2018). While many scholars focus directly on African American students (Lee, 2017; Hankerson, 2017) and students from at-risk backgrounds (Jagusch, 2014; Finney, 2014; Dietlin & Ford, 2014), scholarship on writing and professional development is less visible in regard to Native American populations.

Writing on Demand within the Context of the C3WP Instructional Resources

The C3WP instructional resources are mainly comprised of “mini-units,” though these are of various sizes, from a series of 15-minute exercises to longer 7-9 day units. An underly-

ing design principle behind this mini-unit is that argument writing should be taught multiple times—should be made a routine for students—rather than as a large, stand-alone unit, which has often been the case. These mini-units (and other instructional resources) are listed in an instructional resources chart that is used as more than just a directory of materials on the website. In the chart, the materials are grouped by focus, and on the right side of the chart is a list of the skills that a specific mini-unit addresses. When teachers have completed a formative assessment, they look at the list of skills to determine which instructional resources would make the best next choice for their students. One of the later materials, the “Writing on Demand” unit, is different from the other mini-units. In the instructional resources guide, the “Writing on Demand” unit stands alone between the sections titled “Advancing Arguments with Evidence” and “Researching Self-Selected Topics” because these are the C3WP resources in which all the elements of argument writing come together in a performance task.

The “Writing on Demand” unit is less about teaching the discrete skills of argument writing and more about providing an opportunity to *apply* the skills students have learned throughout the program year. Usually, teachers choose to use this unit near the end of the year to assess how well students are able to apply what they have been learning or they use the unit prior to writing tests that require students to write on demand. How frequently is the “Writing on Demand” unit taught by teachers in the C3WP? According to data collected by the National Writing Project from 2017-19, it is the unit that generates the fourth-largest volume of papers in the on-line tracking system for formative assessment (see Figure 1).

Assignment	Total papers 2017-2019
Secondary Annotating Audio & Video Evidence	25
Secondary Curating to Counter	27
Secondary Making Civic Arguments	50
Secondary Finding a Topic and Researching the Conversation	64
Secondary Extending Argument with Interest-driven Research	68
Secondary Focusing on Purpose and Audience in Public Arguments	69
Secondary Student Using Sources Tool	69
Secondary Making the Case in an OpEd	104
Secondary Coming to Terms with Opposing Viewpoints	164
Secondary Organizing Evidence	389
Secondary Making Moves with Evidence	408
Secondary Creating a Culture of Argument/Writing/Civic Discourse	449
Secondary Ranking Evidence	455
Secondary Writing On-Demand Arguments	1156
Secondary Connecting Evidence to Claims	2229
Secondary Writing and Revising Claims	2306
Secondary Writing into the Day to Jumpstart Argument	2425

Figure 1: Usage of C3WP Mini-Units over Two Years

The number of participating teachers was 219 in 2017-18 and 206 in 2018-2019, for a total of 425 unique teacher participants. There were different groups of teachers in the different years because these were different grant-funded projects. The data was collected by NWP on March 1, 2019, and the total may have increased slightly before the end-of-the-grant period. The NWP has had grant periods of 1 to 3 years for implementing the C3WP, and some districts have been implementing the program beyond their grant-funding periods.

Before we walk through the “Writing on Demand” unit, we want to emphasize that C3WP is a *professional development program*, not just a set of materials. That is, there are underlying principles, support, and professional decision-making that are crucial to the functioning of the program. Although the National Writing Project leaders have been generous in making all of the materials available on their website, the success of C3WP rests on the ability of trained teacher leaders to work collaboratively with districts to support teachers’ use of the materials. C3WP success requires two things: 1) the support and coaching of teacher consultants who have used the materials themselves, and 2) professional autonomy and trust of teachers to make their own decisions about when and how to use these materials with their students.

Not only does the National Writing Project respect teacher professionalism, but it also values diverse contributions. As Tom Fox points out, “When invitations [to collaborate] are offered and accepted, the knowledges of the invitees are put in contact with each other to produce unexpected shifts in teaching practices, new understandings of literacy learning, renewed commitment to teaching and school change, and fresh perspectives on research” (2018, p. 177). The Red River Valley Writing Project site is in the first year of partnering with two predominantly Native American districts to scale up the C3WP. We are engaged in rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe, 2005) to help us reach for these understandings and perspectives as we focus on shifts that will lead to greater social justice in our region.

The inequity of high-stakes tests has been well documented in writing assessment studies (Au & Gourd, 2013; Inoue & Poe, 2012): “Emphasis on opportunity to learn, therefore, holds the potential to play an important role in the achievement of social justice in writing assessment” (Poe, Inoue, & Elliott, 2018, p. 5). The scale-up of the C3WP in our nation’s schools provides the much-needed opportunity to learn the specific skills that will help students succeed in the academic writing required in college.

Five Big Ideas about Writing on Demand

In this next section, we will propose five big ideas about writing on demand that we believe are important to think about when teaching the C3WP unit or introducing it in professional development. The ideas are 1) emotions matter, 2) everyone does it: reasons for writing on demand, 3) time is important, 4) reading on demand is a part of writing on demand, and 5) transfer is key. These ideas are distilled from six big ideas Sassi introduced in virtual roundtables in early 2018, and they build on her previous on-demand writing work with Gere and Christenbury (2005). We present them here as context for our particular approach to the C3WP “Writing on Demand” mini-unit. We share these ideas with teachers and students with the aim of building confidence and increasing access to writing on demand.

Emotions Matter

Given the history of high-stakes tests, there are political and personal factors involved when writing on demand. People bring previous thoughts and experiences to writing on demand and oftentimes emotions, like fear and anxiety. Educators can attend to building student confidence by providing opportunities for students to write about their emotions and by pointing to skills they have already developed through work with previous C3WP units. Taking an assets-building stance communicates confidence in students’ abilities as writers. Teachers can start with this simple prompt:

Jot down your own understandings, concerns, and experiences with on-demand writing.

After a few minutes of writing, we invite participants to share and air their concerns. In small groups, they share their concerns about introducing the “Writing on Demand” unit to students in high-needs schools. They bring up issues, like the dominance of high-stakes testing, the concern that on-demand writing is not a true reflection of students’ abilities as writers, the racism inherent in large-scale tests, the bias in graders of such tests, the out-of-proportion importance placed on test scores, the questionability of such tests actually measuring what they purport to measure, the fear of damaging student and teacher self-esteem/engagement, and more. Some of them have personally had damaging experiences with writing on demand. Others are proud of their ability as writers who have mastered this kind of writing. There is a wide range of thoughts and concerns, all of which are valid.

Everyone Does It: Reasons for Writing on Demand

Given all the concerns just aired, people may want to avoid the “Writing on Demand” unit, but it can and should

be taught, and here is why: Everyone writes on demand. By moving writing on demand out of the sphere of test prep and into everyday life, teachers can help students access reasons for learning this important life skill. Just as Kelly Gallagher exhorts teachers to provide “reading reasons” to students (2003), so should we provide writing reasons for writing on demand prior to introducing the C3WP unit on this topic. This is where the concept of the Pop-Up Shop—an alternative conception of the Burkean Parlor—may be relevant toward the “Writing on Demand” unit specifically. Not all teens see themselves spending lots of time in a parlor, a space that suggests a kind of academic elitism, but they may be more convinced that the argument skills developed throughout the College, Career, and Community Writers Program may be useful to them in a rhetorical moment when employing those skills quickly and thoughtfully will personally benefit them or their communities.

Most obviously, being able to write well on demand can help students have choice about where they attend college. While we do not condone the use of them, high stakes tests, like the ACT, SAT, and various state tests, include writing-on-demand portions. Doing well on an AP essay writing test can also help a student’s application or translate to college credits when they arrive. What many high school students don’t know, however, is that they are likely to have to write essay tests in college. Sassi was astounded when students in an upper-level course at the University of Michigan told her that they had written dozens of essay tests in their time there. The essay test as a performance assessment for a wide range of content is more common than one might think. Moreover, a writer who has developed the fluency and rhetorical knowledge to write on demand is more likely to contend with the high volume of writing required in college. However, these are likely not the reasons that most high school students will find convincing.

It is important that we share the other reasons for writing on demand, like those associated with career and community. Students may not know that many employers require writing on demand at the time of application. Sassi shares a personal story about her mom:

My dad died very suddenly of stomach cancer when he was only 42, and our family did not have health insurance at the time; my mom had to close the family business (a restaurant) and our family was thrust into poverty. My mom, who did not have a college degree, applied for an office job at the local Pepsi-Cola plant. When she turned in her job application, she was asked

to sit for a writing test, which involved responding to an on-demand prompt.

Fortunately, Sassi’s mom got the job, but her story is an important one to share for students who need different reasons for engaging with the “Writing on Demand” unit of the C3WP. It is also important for students to know that once in a career, it is often those with strong writing skills (and much workplace writing IS on demand) who are offered promotions and raises.

Writing on demand is also important for participating in a democratic society—the time period to comment on causes we believe in can be very short (especially when there is a government shut-down). Oftentimes, it is the person or group of people who can “suss out” a rhetorical situation and respond to it in writing that cause large social changes. “Those with the writing skills to comment on current events in a short time frame can be highly influential in our socially mediated world” (Sassi, Gere, & Christenbury, 2014, p. 22). Think about fundraisers for natural disasters or the #MeToo Movement.

Additional reasons for writing on demand are often shared by the teachers we work with in National Writing Project meetings. For example, Grant Atkins of the Genesee Valley Writing Project brought up mental health as another reason for writing on demand. Sometimes something happens in life that necessitates writing right then, right there. For example, writing to make sense of a traumatic event or writing to heal may also be writing on demand. The more we talk with teachers about writing on demand, the more we realize that writing on demand has broad application in life. Taking time to share a multitude of reasons may help students to find their own internal motivation for sharpening this skill. Given this importance, the next big idea in writing on demand we want to explore is that of time.

Time is Important

Time is something that sets writing on demand apart from all other kinds of writing. Not only is time important in a world dominated by social media, it is important that students understand the timeliness of arguments, or *kairos*. In addition, students must also understand their place within the *kairos* of an argument, much like the pop-up parlor metaphor. Emily Drabinski (2017) states, “The Greek notion of *kairos*, or qualitative time, offers a lens that represents the moment from a useful analytic distance” (p. 77). Students who are able to hone their writing-on-demand skills recognize that arguments have expiration dates, so to speak.

Reading on Demand is a Part of Writing on Demand

Writing on demand is really reading on demand, whether the reading involves reading source texts or just reading the prompt very carefully. For many students, a big challenge of writing on demand is the reading involved. But reading in the kairotic moment is not the only instance when reading is relevant. A teen named Emily had this to say: “I definitely think reading helps you to see other styles of writing; you can see different ways to get your point across” (Gere, Christenbury, & Sassi, 2006, p. 16). That is, reading for craft helps students make connections between the moves they see other authors making in their arguments and the moves the student might choose to make when writing on demand. That is why C3WP mini-units, like “Annotating Audio and Video Evidence” and “Coming to Terms with Opposing Viewpoints,” are so crucial in building skills for success when writing on demand.

For the mass incarceration unit, there are seven texts, ranging from a brief infographic to a video to a 738-word article from *USA Today*, which rates a 17.1 on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade-Level Scale. That is a lot of reading to absorb prior to writing an essay. When Sassi led National Writing Project teachers through the unit in New Orleans in early 2019, many said that they were conflicted about how much time to spend reading, how to read, and how to use the reading in their own writing. This task relies on the writers having some metacognitive knowledge of their own processes of reading and writing, which leads to the fifth and final big idea about writing on demand: transfer is key.

Transfer is Key

Perhaps the most compelling reason for a classroom teacher to use the “Writing on Demand” unit is that it provides an opportunity to see what transfers from classroom instruction to a writing task completed independently. Whereas in a typical unit, teachers can add in scaffolding, differentiate instruction, and even extend a unit to give students more time, with writing on demand, none of these supports are possible. It is not enough that students can read sources, develop a claim, decide on the best evidence to use in supporting the claim, make the moves necessary to handle source material, but they must also have internalized metacognitive work about which of the strategies they have experienced throughout the C3WP year are the best choice for them, the best choice for this particular task, and present these choices at the right time. It’s important that students have had op-

portunities to reflect on their own skills, so they can transfer them to other contexts. We, as teachers, don’t get to decide which materials, strategies, and approaches students use in a timed-writing scenario. It is important that students be empowered to make those decisions for themselves.

We have shared these big ideas about writing on demand to provide insight into our philosophical approach to the unit.

Description of Teaching Writing on Demand in a Classroom of Native American Students

Sassi was asked to model teaching writing on demand at one of the schools our site is working with for C3WP. The district leader who made this request wanted to see if doing so would help their students reach higher scores on the ACT writing test.

Since the Red River Valley Writing Project was in the process of doing a needs and assets report for the National Writing Project as a condition of the new i3 grant, Sassi agreed to the request with alacrity. Modeling the “Writing on Demand” instructional resources—and collecting student writing from that day—would allow site leaders to get a snapshot of the range of writing at this school on a particular day. We already knew that teachers identified strengths in their Native students’ writing, like the ability to do expressive writing, so Sassi emphasized that students can also be expressive and use their own voices when writing arguments on demand.

Due to limited time, only two sessions of writing on demand were modeled in a single day for all juniors about a week prior to the ACT exam. However, the district leader was very enthusiastic about student attitudes, which she described as “more confident” after the sessions. In using the “Writing on Demand” unit to help students prepare for the ACT, Sassi first changed the prompt, so that it looked like an actual ACT prompt. The reason for the change was to demystify the ACT test by analyzing how the writing task would be presented to them when they sat for the test later. This was done because students had no other access to test prep in their isolated, rural town, unlike students in more urban areas of the state.

After the think-aloud and sharing the template, students wrote in a timed situation. They were encouraged to use a modified version of the writing process, devoting 10 minutes to prewriting/planning, 25 minutes to drafting, and 5 minutes to revising and editing.

Just practicing writing on demand is not enough. Students also need feedback on how they did. Sassi did a quick

read-through of the papers, pointing to something students were doing well and suggesting one or two things they could do differently. When handing back papers later that day, she reviewed strategies for when they take that actual ACT—reading the prompt carefully, using an abbreviated writing process, connecting claims to evidence, using templates if needed, and remaining confident in the assets they bring to the situation. For classroom teachers with more time, we recommend the C3WP resource called “Reading to Revise in Color.”

Results

Figure 2 shows the growth in writing scores after implementation of the “Writing on Demand” unit. The actual ACT test scores from the first writing on demand session are in the right column. As one can see, there is a notable nudge upward in scores from 2017 to 2018.

ACT Writing Score	2017 scores (n=31)	2018 scores (n=39)
8	0	3
7	0	1
6	5	16
5	9	8
4	11	7
3	6	4
2	1	0

Figure 2: 2017-2018 ACT Scores

The district leader explained that the 2017 scores were pretty typical for this school in the last several years. In 2018, however, some upper-score points were reached—one student scored a 7 and three an 8. There were also fewer students scoring on the low end—the number of students scoring a 3, 4, or 5 all decreased. Although these are very preliminary results and may or may not be connected to the “Writing on Demand” unit, they energized the district leader, who has been very supportive of our writing project site’s work with teachers in their district.

When we were invited back to do this unit again at the same school one year later, we taught a fuller version of the mini unit, lasting three days, this time inviting students to read several articles from the packet. Naturally, this resulted in more evidence being used in the essays and longer essays. Appendix A shows the prompt from the C3WP unit and the

one that was modified to look like one the students would encounter on the ACT.

Next, students were guided in an analysis of the prompt, with an emphasis on the textual elements that they will see repeated when they sit for the test. This was accomplished through a think-aloud, pointing out elements that will be the same for them on test day and those that will be different. For example, it is helpful for students to know that the topic of the prompt is in the title, that the language of the essay task is always the same (but the topic is different), and that they need to treat the material in the text boxes just as they do source texts in other C3WP units. They also need to know that, although the word “argument” is *not* used, they are expected to write an argument.

This one-page version of the mass incarceration prompt offers some affordances and challenges for students. Compared to receiving the entire text set of the mass incarceration articles, there is a lot less to read. However, this form of the “Writing on Demand” prompt also offers little evidence that students can use in an essay. Some students expressed that they felt they did not have enough information to write about the topic. Other students felt overwhelmed by the amount of information and wondered how to manage analyzing the different perspectives, so Sassi shared the following template adapted from *They Say/I Say* to help them bring in the different perspectives.

In discussions of _____one controversial issue is _____. On one hand, _____. On the other hand, _____. Others even say _____. My own view is that _____. (Graff & Birkenstein, 2014, p. xviii)

Here is how one student used the template:

In discussions of mass incarceration, one controversial issue is overpopulation in prisons. On one hand, one perspective argues that the number of adults supervised by the U.S. correctional system is currently at its lowest. On the other hand, another perspective argues many prisons are overcrowded. Others even say that people of color are dramatically over represented in the nation’s prisons and jails. My own view is that many prisons are unnecessarily overcrowded.

When she was invited to do the “Writing on Demand” unit at another Native school nearby, the teacher said that she preferred to use the topic of single-use plastics rather than mass incarceration because it was of higher interest to both her and her students. It also was more in line with the new

North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings (2015), specifically the first one, “Sacred Relatives: Native people practice a deep interconnectedness with the land, the resources, the water, all living things and all human beings. Land stewardship, respect for all 2 legged, 4 legged, winged, crawlers and swimmers and a strong belief in the sacredness of all human beings are key elements of our spirituality” (p.3).

Sassi worked collaboratively with the teacher to come up with a text set and a prompt on this topic. Students engaged with the topic and when the teacher saw the essays, she said that she was positively surprised by the amount and quality of writing her students were able to do. When students have opportunities to write on culturally responsive prompts, sometimes they write better (Sassi, 2018).

We have yet to see if the longer unit that focuses on topics of interest to teachers and students and is aligned with Native American Essential Understandings will result in higher scores this year.

Conclusion

The ACT test scores in this preliminary work suggest that teaching a version of the C3WP “Writing on Demand” unit with an orientation to our five big ideas may be helpful in improving student test scores of Native American students, though causality cannot be ascertained—only a randomized control study could prove that. However, for social justice reasons, such a study is not appropriate for this school. Students have no access to any other test prep, and the state we live in uses ACT scores for college placement, something we do not condone. Further study is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of teaching this unit. Such study should include measures beyond a test score, especially if we are to consider the broader application of on-demand writing skills to a student’s life theorized in the beginning of this article.

For example, C3WP addresses the habits of mind and experiences in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, and the “Writing on Demand” mini-unit helps teachers assess how well students can independently apply the argument writing skills that they have been taught. Carefully observing how students are doing while writing on demand may help teachers see if students are developing this particular experience in the Framework: “Rhetorical knowledge – the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts” (Council, 2011, p. 1). Demonstrating rhetorical knowledge

is something that students will be called upon to do after their secondary education, whether they enter a Burkean parlor or stop in at a pop-up shop.

In addition, further inquiry might consider the degree to which students may find agency and power (Delpit, 1988) in their writing through the “Writing on Demand” unit. When a student is given the skills to succeed and granted access to a “culture of power” (Delpit, 1988), they are able to find agency in the written word and gain the confidence necessary to prepare for the college classroom (and beyond). As Delpit explains further, “the codes or rules...relate to linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self...ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting” (p. 25). The “Writing on Demand” unit of C3WP introduces students to the codes or rules necessary to participate in higher education and, perhaps more broadly, higher levels of thinking, especially as they relate to writing. Further research might explore the ways in which the College, Career, and Community Writers Program builds a foundation for the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. Taken together, these two resources may support both secondary and post-secondary teachers in helping students not only negotiate the high school to college transition, but also could support them in transferring their skills to careers and even finding voice and agency in their everyday lives. Our preliminary work does not address such sweeping claims. Our principal aim in this piece has been to argue that the “Writing on Demand” unit is different from the other C3WP material—more “pop-up” than parlor—and thinking through these materials and how we present them (the big ideas) is an important part of professional development around the College, Career, and Community Writers Program.

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Appendix A

Mass Incarceration Prompt (Original from C3WP Unit)

Mass incarceration has become a subject of debate. Although the number of adults supervised by the U.S. correctional system has dropped in recent years, the U.S. incarcerates more of its citizens than any other nation in the world, 698 people per 100,000 in the population, with the next highest rate being El Salvador at 618 (Wagner & Sawyer, 2018). Our prison population increased dramatically in the 1980s during President Reagan’s “War on Drugs.” This led to disproportionate numbers of people of color in prison compared to the overall population.

What do you think the Senate Judiciary Committee should do about sentencing reforms? Why?

Write an argument. Use ideas and evidence from the reading packet to support your argument. Use what you have learned about citing and quoting sources in your writing.

The audience for your argument is the Senate Judiciary Committee, who oversees legislation on sentencing reforms.

Mass Incarceration Prompt (Revised Based upon ACT Prompts)

On any given day, 2.3 million people in the United States are locked up and 7 million are under control of the justice system (Wagner & Sawyer, 2018). Our prison population increased dramatically in the 1980s during President Reagan’s “War on Drugs.” Consequently, the U.S. incarcerates more of its citizens than any other nation in the world, 698 people per 100,000 in the population, with the next highest rate being El Salvador at 618 (Prison Policy, 2018). Violent crime has been reduced, but what is lost as a society when so many people are incarcerated? Given the disproportionate numbers of people of color in prison compared to the overall population, it is worth examining the implications and meaning of mass incarceration (great number of prisoners) in our society.

Read and carefully consider these perspectives. Each suggests a particular way of thinking about mass incarceration.

<p>Perspective One</p> <p>“The increase in the jail and prison populations from less than 200,000 in 1972 to 2.2 million today has led to unprecedented prison overcrowding and put tremendous strain on state budgets” (Equal Justice Initiative, 2014) The increase of private prisons operated by for-profit corporations hinders efforts to reduce mass incarceration.</p>	<p>Perspective Two</p> <p>“The number of adults supervised by the U.S. correctional system dropped for the ninth consecutive year in 2016. . . and is currently at its lowest rate (860 per 100,000 in 2016) since 1996 (830 per 100,000)” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016)</p>	<p>Perspective Three</p> <p>“[P]eople of color are dramatically overrepresented in the nation’s prisons and jails. These racial disparities are particularly stark for Blacks, who make up 40% of the incarcerated population despite representing only 13% of U.S residents” (Prison Policy Initiative, 2018).</p>
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Essay Task

Write a unified, coherent essay about mass incarceration in the U.S. today. In your essay, be sure to:

- clearly state your own perspective on the issue and analyze the relationship between your perspective and at least one other perspective
- develop and support your ideas with reasoning and examples
- organize your ideas clearly and logically
- communicate your ideas effectively in standard written English

Your perspective may be in full agreement with any of those given, in partial agreement, or completely different.