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Editors' Introduction

JANET NEYER, DEBORAH MEISTER, AND ELIZABETH BROCKMAN

Welcome to *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* 34.2, which is a guest-edited issue focusing exclusively on the National Writing Project's new source-based argument writing program: the College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP). This program began in 2012, the result of an Investing in Innovation grant sponsored by the US Department of Education (Bear and Fox, 2019, p. 6), and it has a proven track record of accelerating student literacy in source-based argument writing (Arshan, Park, & Gallagher, 2018; Gallagher, Woodworth, & Arshan, 2015).

We begin this editors' introduction with sincere thanks to Amanda Stearns-Pfeiffer, *LAJM* editor. As a trio most accustomed to overseeing the Teachers as Writers Blog, sponsored by the Chippewa River Writing Project (CRWP) at Central Michigan University, we have deeply appreciated Amanda's ongoing and unwavering guidance throughout the editing process of a regional journal: recruiting authors, navigating the editors' platform, seeking blind reviews, working with authors, and answering our endless questions. Additionally, we thank Rachel Bear and Tom Fox of the National Writing Project, most importantly, for their leadership work in the C3WP nationwide, but also for their enthusiastic "thumbs up" regarding this issue and their excellent manuscript, "Knotworking the C3WP: A Retrospective," which is the lead article. Last, we thank Troy Hicks, CRWP director, for imagining the Teachers as Writers Blog in the first place. It was our group editing work for the blog that inspired us to propose this special *LAJM* issue devoted to the C3WP, and then Troy thoughtfully and skillfully reached out to Tom and Rachel to request their support of this issue.

The C3WP is NWP's new and innovative argument writing program that answers the urgent and contemporary call for respectful civic engagement and discourse in source-based writing (National Writing Project, 2019b). Equally important, the program is highly responsive to teachers' classroom needs as demonstrated below by, respectively, Kristin Smith from Livonia Franklin High School, John Lennon from Petoskey High School, and Tyler Judd from Harrison Middle School:

- I was working my way through reading and responding to a stack of twelfth grade informational essays when something dawned on me. In my seven years of teaching in three completely different school environments (from an urban charter school to a suburban alternative school to a traditional urban high school), I had worked with hundreds of diverse students on

all different types of writing, and this day I noticed, once again, the same trend in these essays that I had observed so many times before: My students struggled with using evidence from outside sources in their own writing. (Smith, 2019, p. 12)

- [My AP students] were savvy enough not to demonize the opposing viewpoint in an angry, volatile way, but their writing still didn't demonstrate that they had entered a conversation, as academic writing is most commonly characterized today. Instead, they had chosen a topic, taken a side (admittedly, in a more objective way), and focused primarily on proving that they were right. In doing so, they used and correctly cited sources, but they merely quoted them, as opposed to leveraging the sources to make their own arguments. This reductionary view of argument not only limited my students' abilities as writers, but it also limited their ability to engage fully in the topics they studied. (Lennon, 2019, p. 19)
- In this [university writing center] work, one of the most glaring things that I noticed about especially the freshmen writers was that they often seemed totally lost — with the task, the source material, where to start, how to even remotely say what they wanted. It fascinated me: Sure, they were freshmen who were "novice writers" at a major transitional moment (Sommers & Saltz), but English was still something they had been doing since they were six — why were they struggling so hard? (Judd, 2019, p. 27)

These teachers' testimonies provide evidence that teaching source-based argument writing is a complex and ongoing pedagogical challenge: It's about entering a conversation and leveraging sources to support a nuanced stance (Lennon, 2019, pp. 19-25), connecting evidence to claims (Smith, 2019, pp. 12-18), and preparing students for college and beyond (Judd, 2019, pp. 26-29). For these reasons and more, the C3WP is a writing program that includes *cycles of writing* that take place four times a year and include distinctive features, such as routine argument writing; skills-based mini-units emphasizing the use of current nonfiction sources; the recursive writing of claims that emerge and evolve as students read over time; multiple perspectives beyond pro/con; embedded, teacher-driven formative assessment; and teacher professional development.

With these distinctive features in mind, we aim to introduce *LAJM* readers to the C3WP. The issue begins with Rachel Bear and Tom Fox's "Knotworking the College, Career, and Community Writers Program: A Retrospective," a

historical perspective of the C3WP, with special emphasis on the complex challenges involved in creating a writing program that would meet standards, support teachers, and engage students in respectful discourse around real issues. The second and third articles, written by Kristin Smith and John Lennon, are classroom narratives in which teachers introduce the C3WP to their students, allowing *LAJM* readers to see implementation strategies and the extraordinarily promising results. The fourth and fifth articles, written by Tyler Judd and Delia King, collectively provide a wide-angle perspective. Tyler explores the definition of college writing via a C3WP lens, while Delia connects the C3WP with Michigan's Literacy Essentials K-3. In the sixth article, Kathy Kurtze shares an overview and the stunning assessment results of a year-long C3WP professional development partnership in a rural school district, and then Dave Stuart, in the seventh article, showcases the foundational moves teachers can incorporate to engage students in "earnest and amicable argument," even before they start writing. In the eighth article, Kelly Sassi and Hannah Stevens characterize writing on demand as a deeply valued skill, both within and beyond classroom borders, before demonstrating how they implemented a C3WP mini-unit that helped empower students and accelerate their literacy growth. Maria Kioussis and Amy Ford Carpenter, in the ninth article, take *LAJM* readers to a classroom in which Maria adapted the C3WP for a literary study of the Harlem Renaissance and its relevance today. The final article, written by Jessica Moman and Stephanie Comfort Maher, outlines the benefits of the C3WP from the teacher's perspective—a fitting endpoint to this special *LAJM* issue.

We hope the ten articles in this *LAJM* issue inspire readers to learn more about the C3WP. For more information, please scan the QR code or refer to the webpage (<https://sites.google.com/nwp.org/c3wp/home>) and to "For the Sake of Argument: An Approach to Teaching Evidence-Based Argument" (https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/ae_spring2018_friedrich.pdf), by Linda Friedrich, Rachel Bear, and Tom Fox. Also, The CRWP's Teachers as Writers Blog (<http://chippe-wariverwp.org/blog/>) will explore two important C3WP concepts—implementing routine argument writing and navigating the C3WP website—not addressed in this issue.

According to the NWP webpage, the C3WP was created and implemented:

... with teacher-leaders from across the country. The goal is to assure more teachers have the ability to teach college and career-ready writing—with a specific emphasis on

writing arguments based on nonfiction texts, an important skill every young adult needs. C3WP provides scaffolded teaching and formative assessment resources that support the development of students' argument writing and prepares youth for college, career, and community engagement. (National Writing Project, 2019a)

As a guest editorial team, we are deeply appreciative of the NWP leadership for imagining, creating, and sustaining the C3WP, and we are pleased to further its outreach to Michigan teachers in rural, suburban, and urban school districts via *LAJM*.

Sincerely,

Janet Neyer, Deborah Meister, and Elizabeth Brockman
Guest Editors, *LAJM* 34.2

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