

How English Language Arts Teachers Are Prepared for Twenty-First-Century Classrooms: Results of a National Study

Samantha Caughlan, Donna L. Pasternak, Heidi L. Hallman, Laura Renzi, Leslie S. Rush, and Michael Frisby

A national study of English teacher preparation in U.S. colleges and universities revealed that faculty address changes in content and context salient to English education, particularly curricular, demographic, political, and technological changes, through initiatives at both the program and methods course levels. Programs require many hours of field placements and high numbers of credit hours in the subject area and in subject-specific methods, and also distribute the responsibility for addressing institutional and pedagogical change across courses. Methods courses raise awareness of focal issues and allow opportunities for preservice teachers to discuss these issues. However, opportunities are scarcer for applying knowledge by putting it into practice. This article discusses tensions in English education as they relate to conceptual coherence at the program and course levels, as well as tensions between what we call awareness versus application.

In 1995, Smagorinsky and Whiting published the results of a national study of methods classes, which were examined through collection and analysis of methods course syllabi. Their landmark project still exists as the only study aiming to comprehensively study how English teachers are taught to teach in middle and secondary schools. Since then, much has changed in education, and members of the NCTE CEE Commission on the Teaching of English Language Arts (ELA) Methods have regularly discussed the Smagorinsky and Whiting study and the need for more current data. The authors of this article, all members of the Commission, embarked on a national study to meet this need. The study on which this article is based emerged from our desire to understand how programs and teacher educators viewed preparing English language arts teachers for a changing world and to address the chal-

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lenges resulting from these changes. As a result of preliminary discussion in the Commission meetings, we also considered how challenges and changes in the discipline over the past 20 years were curricular, cultural, and political, and aimed to design a study that would capture these dimensions of change.

Challenges in English teacher education throughout the last two decades have been curricular: States developed K–12 standards and as-

essments and expected teachers to both align local curriculum and ensure students score at proficient levels on new assessments. With the advent of the Common Core State Standards, pressures for “college and career readiness” (CCSSI, 2010) have prompted English teachers to include more nonfiction texts in their courses, to teach reading strategies as opposed to literary analysis, and to require students to write to prompts similar to those found on essay exams.

Challenges in English teacher education have been cultural: While the percentage of White and middle-class teachers grew larger, more students of color and children of immigrants entered classrooms, even in communities with relatively little demographic diversity (Baber, 1995; Boutte, 1999; Burbank et al., 2005; Nieto, 2003; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Increased technology and its use for communication also prompted changes in textual production and consumption in private, civic, and working life.

Challenges in English teacher education over the past two decades have been political: The new standards were accompanied by legislation (e.g., NCLB), and the attendant growth of accountability measures at K–12 and university levels held individual schools and their teachers accountable for student performance on state measures to an extent never seen before. At the same time, political attacks challenged the efficacy of traditional programs of teacher certification, and ongoing attempts have been made to link K–12 student performance to the programs that prepared their teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2014; Zeichner, 2010).

This article reports findings from a questionnaire that formed part of a larger study of English teacher preparation programs. This questionnaire, distributed to English teacher educators across the United States, sought input about the field of English teacher preparation in the twenty-first century. Considering subject-specific methods courses as the primary location where secondary teachers develop subject-matter-specific pedagogical content knowledge (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Shulman, 1987),

we focused much of our questionnaire on ELA-specific methods courses. However, recognizing that such courses operate within a programmatic and institutional context, we also questioned respondents about where and when teacher candidates learn about various topics, if they do so outside of methods courses. The questionnaire aimed to capture how the day-to-day practices and pedagogies of English teacher educators changed throughout the two decades since Smagorinsky and Whiting's (1995) study. Our research questions were as follows:

1. What are general characteristics and essential content of ELA methods courses as they are situated within various teacher preparation programs?
2. How are English teacher preparation programs and associated ELA methods courses addressing changes as they relate to curricular, demographic, political, and technological developments currently facing classrooms?

English Teacher Preparation in the Twenty-First Century

We conducted a literature review to ascertain the current state of scholarship related to teaching ELA methods (Pasternak, Caughlan, Hallman, Renzi, & Rush, 2014) with the aim of synthesizing research in English education, English teacher education, and English methods courses. To gain an overview of topics, we looked first to the main journals publishing research in the United States on English education and teacher education: *Research in the Teaching of English*, *English Education*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, and *Teaching and Teacher Education*. Our purposeful focus on English teacher education, rather than the broader field of teacher education, had implications for how we identified the five areas that we defined as influential in changing the landscape of the field (field experience; preparing teachers for racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity; new technologies and new literacies in English education; content-area literacy requirements; and K-12 content standards and associated assessments). Our review revealed that only one of these areas, that of technology, was frequently studied (Beach et al., 2010), although rarely did studies address how technology was integrated into the ELA methods course and/or across programs to prepare future teachers of English (Pasternak et al., 2014); other new areas of emphasis were inconsistently addressed.

We found in our review that most research on preservice teachers in ELA methods courses since 1995 concerned effective methods of teaching

specific ELA content, developing an identity as an English teacher during the preservice period, and studies of the methods course as a context or in the context of a larger program. Moreover, the great majority of studies did not focus on a national or even a regional scope. In presenting a portrait of current English education programs more generally, our questionnaire provides some grounding for larger studies, as well as support for claims made in smaller studies.

In identifying the focal areas for the study, we were also influenced in our work by a series of position papers developed over time by the Conference on English Education (CEE) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Responding to these resources and our own experience with salient policy and legislation, we identified the five key topics of focus for our study listed above. Through examining how methods courses and programs operationalize new concepts and practices, we provide insight into how educators achieve a balance between conceptual knowledge about (or awareness of) new ideas and application of that knowledge in teaching practices. This line of examination is perhaps similar to the focus in teacher professional development on teacher knowledge and belief and the application of that knowledge to instructional practices (Borko, 2004; Borko, Jacobs, & Koellner, 2010).

English teacher education is often positioned as a subfield within teacher education, and the content domain (that of English language arts) is considered secondary to the focus on pedagogy, in a general sense. However, we assert that pedagogy is disciplinary, as we explain in our next section, and thus maintain the focus on English education that Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) did 20 years ago. Other fields within teacher education may pursue similar studies as ways to forefront the unique facets of their content area domains.

Place of the Methods Course in Teacher Education

The research on methods courses rarely addresses the issue of whether teacher education is affected by including content-specific methods in teacher preparation programs (Clift & Brady, 2005; but see Boyd et al., 2012 for a rare exception). Tension exists between two schools of thought regarding teacher preparation: One school considers that learning to teach is a process of acquiring general rules and routines for organizing learning experiences (Hunter & Russell, 1981), while the other suggests that it is a specific discipline itself that dictates which methods are effective (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Schön, 1987). Both routes require coursework

in the subject area and placement for student teaching or internship in a subject area classroom; but, in the first, general methods courses are considered sufficient preparation; in the second, one or more subject area-specific methods courses are required by the state or program.

Complicating this situation, scholars argue over the extent to which a secondary school subject can be considered specific to its discipline. Certain critical theorists focus on the role of schooling in normalizing behavior and preparing docile citizens by transforming contested disciplinary content into unambiguous knowledge (e.g., Fendler, 2003; Popkewitz, 1998), while other critical theorists (Bernstein, 1996; Giroux, 1988) use this premise as a way to focus on the agency (or lack thereof) of participants within classrooms and schools. The school subject itself becomes a means for accomplishing the goals of schooling, rather than promoting disciplinary knowledge (Popkewitz, 1998). Other scholars promote the view that school subjects reflect the epistemologies and discourses of the disciplines, knowledge of which is required to enter those communities as literate members (Applebee, 1996; Gee, 1996; Langer, 2011; Moje, 2008; Shulman, 1987). Even if schools have turned disciplines into subjects, these scholars assert that teachers should strive to teach disciplinary ways of knowing.

Scholarship around pedagogical content knowledge (Ball et al., 2008; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987) also establishes a space for the teacher as possessing disciplinary expertise that the layperson does not have. The methods course is where the teacher candidate develops knowledge of content for teaching, understanding of student development in relationship to content, and means of representing core concepts. There really are no “general” methods according to this perspective (Brass, 2015).

With this collective scholarship in mind, we define the subject-specific methods course for the purpose of our study as primarily focusing on the representation and teaching of ELA content. A methods course often also involves inquiry into the beliefs or opinions of participants regarding concepts of ELA at the secondary level, the planning of lessons or courses of study, and classroom management related to content-specific methods. We did not regard courses providing background in English content for teacher candidates as methods courses if the focus was not on how to teach that content.

Theoretically, one would expect neither subject matter courses nor generic “secondary methods” courses to provide much guidance in gaining pedagogical content knowledge, since subject matter courses rarely consider what disciplinary knowledge is specifically useful in the high school classroom nor how to represent it to adolescents. Conversely, a general methods course would be of little help in communicating how methods of,

for example, grouping students, writing lesson plans, planning questions along Bloom's taxonomy, etc., would be specifically useful in promoting disciplinary reading, writing, and discourse (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Shulman, 1987). The methods course is generally thought to be where novice teachers encounter the specific pedagogical problems in a discipline and the specific instructional practices for addressing them as they intersect with the content that needs to be taught.

We maintain that recent scholarship (e.g., Boyd et al., 2012; Hill, Ball, & Schilling, 2004) supports the importance of subject-specific methods, especially in relation to constructivist and social

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constructivist theories of learning, theories that apply to both learning to teach and the learning of teacher candidates' pupils. Teachers must understand their subject matter both as disciplinary adepts and as their students experience it, with the goal of moving students to mastery of relevant academic performances (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Dewey, 1902). It is important

that teachers use their relatively brief time in professional preparation to develop metacognition and effective practices specific to the disciplines they will teach in their classrooms. However, as this assumption is not shared by a number of alternative and emergency certifying programs, as well as by entire states that provide generic secondary certification, collecting data on the prevalence and makeup of methods courses is a first step toward studying the difference such courses make in preparing new teachers.

Much has changed since Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) collected their data in the early 1990s. Focus on just "the" methods course is no longer sufficient. Research indicates that program coherence is important and that carefully sequenced, comprehensive preparation makes a difference (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Hours spent in the field before student teaching have multiplied, and assignments are often linked to coursework (Clift & Brady, 2005). To more fully understand what is being taught in a methods course as well as compose a current national portrait of English teacher education, research is needed that clarifies the changes in concept and practice that have taken place in secondary English teacher education programs in response to the changing curricular, cultural, political, and economic contexts since 1995. Given this, a study of twenty-first-century English teacher education programs seemed in order.

Methods

The questionnaire responses analyzed in this article are part of a larger, national study of English teacher preparation (see Table 1 for timeline). The 90 questions were a mixture of fixed (multiple-choice), partially structured, and open-ended items, some of which were randomly distributed among participants. The questionnaire was designed to gather general data on English education programs, methods courses, and on programmatic responses to change. Self-administered over the Internet by respondents, at its conclusion, respondents were asked to voluntarily upload their methods course syllabi for analysis. Analysis of the survey data led to focus group interviews (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). These additional data were collected to avoid the limitations of straight survey research, including discrepant interpretations of questions and respondent fatigue (Blair, Czaja, & Blair, 2014; Groves, Cialdini, & Couper, 1992; Weisberg, 2005), and the distortions of studies relying only on publicly available materials and syllabi (e.g., NCTQ, 2013). This article reports the descriptive findings from the questionnaire; other publications addressing the inferential analyses and the rest of the study are in process.

The CEE Methods Commission National Questionnaire

We developed the questionnaire as described above. To aid in questionnaire distribution, we developed a contact list of English educators and English teacher certification programs across the United States, as none was available. We then developed the survey; piloted it for clarity, comprehensiveness, and length; and refined it (see Table 1).

Year One	Create a contact list of English educators across the United States Literature review of studies pertaining to English language arts methods courses Questionnaire design and pretesting
Year Two	Questionnaire administration and collection of syllabi Questionnaire analysis
Year Three	Focus group question design and pretesting Focus group administration Syllabi and focus group analysis

Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section I focused on how programs are structured and included questions on types of courses taken; the extent and nature of field experiences offered; what subject-specific methods courses were required and who taught them; and what programs were offered among bachelor's, post-baccalaureate, master's, and alternative routes to certification. Section II asked how methods instructors were addressing our five focal areas. Section III asked how programs were responding to two types of changes: conceptual and curricular changes in the field (e.g., addressing the needs of English language learners, responding to changing conceptions of teaching and learning) and political and institutional changes (e.g., new program assessments, financial challenges). Section IV collected information about our respondents regarding their teaching experience and their role in the English education program at their institution, clarifying the respondent's depth of knowledge of a program.

Each author took responsibility for developing and refining questions in one focus area, reading each other's for clarity, bias, and relevance. We considered program makeup, methods course design, instructor identity, and the changes affecting the field and how educators were facing them. As there were no large-scale studies of English educators in any of those areas to rely on, we had no model but realized the questionnaire had to be a reasonable length. We attempted to reduce response burden in two ways. First, the questionnaire included contingency questions so that participants did not have to answer questions not relevant to their programs: for example, if a respondent's institution only certified teachers at the bachelor's level, they skipped the 33 questions about master's, post-baccalaureate, and alternative programs. Considering the 90-item length of the questionnaire, we felt non-response due to response burden (Barrett, 2008) outweighed the chance that skip questions influenced error rates (Manski & Molinari, 2008). Second, we wanted qualitative data on our five focal areas but considered that answering a large number of open-ended questions would have resulted in additional non-response or non-completion. Therefore, we randomly distributed four open-ended questions among respondents, shortening response to the questionnaire to 20–45 minutes, dependent on the levels of certification of a program (Blair, Czaja, & Blair, 2014; Sheehan, 2001).

We piloted the questionnaire with 17 volunteer English educators around the country from a variety of program types. They provided feedback on the experience of completing the questionnaire, the time it took to complete it, and remarked on specific questions they felt were unclear

or repetitive. With this feedback, we were able to correct errors or clarify wordings, add or reduce questions or choices as required, and improve the questionnaire before sending it out to our complete contact list. We also learned that, for the most part, respondents felt they understood our questions, and found the questionnaire worth doing.

Defining the Population and Sample

To obtain contact information for English teacher educators and programs, we, along with student research assistants and volunteer faculty from around the country, identified programs through state lists of accredited programs and the U.S. Department of Education Title II lists of secondary ELA programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Visiting program websites, we collected information on more than 1,000 programs preparing English teacher candidates for certification, but only 747 had one or more identifiable contacts for English education. Some of these were missing; others featured small programs relying solely on general secondary methods courses, and entire states (such as Arizona) without certification in specific secondary subject areas had few programs in secondary English education. In addition, alternative programs not associated with universities, whether private or public, did not post programmatic details, including names of faculty or requirements. This limited the number of contacts available in particular states, such as Arkansas and Texas. Using the contact list we developed through this search, NCTE personnel formatted the survey electronically and distributed it via email to 942 faculty and instructors at 747 institutions. We resent it to non-respondents twice more. When we received more than one response from an institution, we kept the response that was most complete; with two complete responses, we used the response from the program director as the person who would be the most familiar with all aspects of a teacher education program (AAPOR, 2011). We discarded questionnaires that we deemed incomplete if the respondent did not finish at least the first part of Section I on methods courses. At the end, we analyzed responses from 242 institutions from 47 states, a return of 32.4% (see Figure 1 and Table 2) (AAPOR, 2011; Sheehan, 2001).

Programs in English education ranged in size from 0 to 86 completers, according to the 2010–11 Title II data on numbers of students completing each program that year. Programs in English departments tended to be slightly larger, with a mean of 19.9 completers ($SD = 14.5$) as compared with 14.3 completers ($SD = 11.0$) in education and 14.1 completers in programs sharing responsibility for methods.

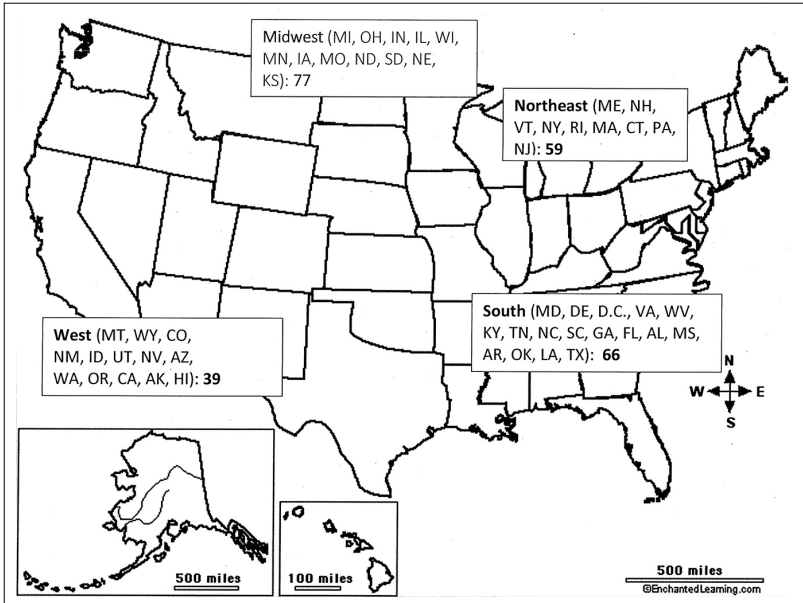


Figure 1. National Distribution of Survey Respondents

We included data from both partial and completed questionnaires in our analysis as we inferred from open-ended questions that respondents answered questions where they were sure of their answers. Only 205 of the 242 respondents made it to the end of the questionnaire, not unusual in an instrument of this length (Blair, Czaja, & Blair, 2014; Porter, 2004). The report of our findings contains the number of respondents for particular questions. The “missing data” indicated in table captions refers to participants who provided no response to the individual question or set of questions.

U.S. programs certifying English teachers (Title II, 2010)	1,085
Programs with identifiable contacts	747
Questionnaires distributed	942
Responses received	269
Responses rejected due to duplication or lack of completion	27
Responses analyzed (rate of 32.4 percent)	242

Questionnaire Analysis

For this article, we focus on the descriptive analysis of quantitative data (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) as well as the qualitative analysis of open-ended questions. Frequency data were tabulated for all questions, and variables were added for “check all that apply” categories to gauge the number of options chosen. In Section I, respondents selected how programs were structured: bachelor’s, post-baccalaureate, master’s, and alternative. We created tables to compare the answers to each question across groups. In the remaining areas, we computed frequencies using the Multiple Response tool in SPSS, allowing us to continually account for changing numbers of respondents.

Open-ended responses were coded inductively (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011) using content analysis (Patton, 2002), with each author taking responsibility for particular sections of the survey. Open-ended responses were primarily used to illuminate the quantitative results and to expand the possible categories for analysis for later stages of the larger research project.

Limitations of the Questionnaire

Research based on questionnaires has inherent limitations, as researchers cannot member-check anonymous results for construct validity (Blair, Czaja, & Blair, 2014). We addressed this limitation in two ways: through our pilot and through multiple sources in the larger study (space constraints prohibit that discussion in this article).

Researchers must also interpret missing data, which we omit from the following report (Weisberg, 2005). Based on our pilot responses and the survey literature, our three main reasons for missing data are survey fatigue, lack of knowledge in particular areas, and skipping questions with negative answers (Blair, Czaja, & Blair, 2014). Although few respondents missed any of the first set of questions describing methods course content and teaching, by the final section 37 participants had dropped out. Such survey fatigue does not explain all of the missing data. We found particular questions not answered within sections where most participants were continuing to answer questions; this we discuss in the findings.

Findings

In the remainder of this article, we identify our findings from the questionnaire and discuss their implications for English education. We describe how participants responded to the multiple-choice and open-ended questions in

the questionnaire that indicated how their programs and methods courses were structured and taught, including what content respondents felt was essential in a methods course, how field experiences function in their programs and courses, and how programs address each of the focal areas of emphasis in programs and courses. Finally, we consider themes that emerged across areas and conclude with a few words on the challenge of studying teacher preparation programs.

Program Types and Structures

Section I of the questionnaire collected information about the programs that house methods courses. All respondents answered the same questions for each possible type of certification program offered by their institution: bachelor's, post-baccalaureate, master's, or alternative certification. We found that the default program is still the bachelor's degree with certification, as more than 80% (186 out of 242) of institutions have such a program. However, most institutions have more than one program for certification. Twenty-five percent of institutions (60) have exactly one program, with the modal number of programs being two (83 institutions). One third of institutions have three (66) or four (15) programs. This diversity of options may be a result of two influences: first, the push in the late twentieth century to professionalize teaching through the establishment of graduate programs in education (Holmes Group, 1986); second, the attempt by universities to offer opportunities for certification to nontraditional students who already have a degree and have been working in another field. This more client-oriented response is likely to account for the inclusion of alternative programs (Grossman & Loeb, 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

Comments written in response to Section III of the questionnaire indicate that program structures are currently in transition due to changes necessitated by external pressures. These comments indicated programmatic changes such as reducing time to degree, redesigning program requirements, adding voluntary workshops to prepare students for licensure requirements, emphasizing more content within courses, and adding more courses to the curriculum.

Our investigation of differences among program types revealed more similarities than differences. When referring to number or types of credits required, hours in the field, etc., respondents frequently commented, "same as our bachelor's program." In Section II of the survey, respondents were asked to respond to how they address issues more generally, and not by

program. Therefore, some of the following tables most likely refer mainly to what happens in bachelor's programs.

Methods Courses

The stand-alone, subject-specific methods course, prevalent when Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) published their study, is no longer the standard. More than 75% of bachelor's programs have 4 or more credits of methods required (see Table 3), with the mode being between 4 and 6 credits in bachelor's, master's, and post-baccalaureate programs. While a greater percentage of bachelor's programs than programs at other levels require 7 or more hours of ELA methods, we only see a distinct break from the pattern of more than 1 course of methods required in the alternative certification programs, where only 28% of programs have 4 or more credits of methods required, and 16% of programs require no subject-specific methods. This shift may also be due to some consideration of what is meant by *methods courses*. Since we defined *methods courses* on the questionnaire as those primarily focusing on the representation and teaching of ELA content, we were careful to include only such courses in our analysis.

We found that about 50% of the content-specific methods classes are housed in the English department, with about 37% housed in education. Another 14% of programs jointly offer methods classes. These classes are taught predominantly by tenure-line faculty with about a quarter of the programs employing instructors and an eighth of them using graduate students to offer this content.

Table 3. Number of Credits of ELA Methods Required

Number of credits	Bachelor's	Post-Bacc	Master's	Alt. Cert.
Other	2.81	8.89	7.69	8.00
0	1.12	2.22	1.92	16.00
1-2	4.49	3.70	3.85	4.00
3	17.42	20.74	25.96	44.00
4-6	30.90	31.85	25.96	12.00
7-9	26.97	20.00	20.19	4.00
More than 9	16.29	12.59	14.42	12.00
Total Responses	178	135	104	25

Note: In percentages; missing data omitted.

Content in Methods Courses

With frequencies above 92%, respondents ranked the following content as essential to cover in the methods class: pedagogical content knowledge, teaching methods and materials, lesson and unit planning, and assessment practices. Other common categories on which there was less agreement included teaching philosophy (71%), subject matter (69%), micro-teaching (58%), classroom management (47%), and other (24%). In the “Other” category, respondents indicated that specific literary and language content (i.e., the classics, adolescent literature, American Sign Language) was as essential to being a prepared ELA teacher as learning to integrate technology and understanding multiple literacies. Also mentioned was content that addressed ELA equity and differentiation, the integration of fieldwork and the methods content, policies and trends in ELA, specific pedagogical content (i.e., questioning, discussion tactics, write-to-learn strategies), and, lastly, standards alignment. This list of essential content is representative of the tensions in the field: What is the canon and who decides what texts should be taught? Should a methods course cover ELA content or just pedagogy? Should methods instructors teach the standards, and which ones?

One hundred percent of respondents indicated that their program requirements included at least one ELA content-specific methods course. Respondents listed the specific courses required for each program level as part of the survey (see Table 4). The majority of respondents, across all levels of certification (bachelor’s, master’s, etc.), indicated that their programs required a comprehensive methods course that covered the teaching of all aspects of ELA content: literature, composition, language, and linguistics. Such comprehensive courses differ from more narrowly focused courses, such as those on the teaching of writing or the teaching of grammar (see Table 4). Many of the respondents indicated that comprehensive methods courses were offered in a two-semester sequence (e.g., *The Teaching of English Methods, I and II; Introductory and Advanced Methods*). When programs offered methods courses for specific ELA content, the offerings included writing (composition) methods more frequently than literature methods, the teaching of adolescent literature, content area literacy, grammar, language, ESL, inclusion, technology or multiple literacies, and speech and communication.

Table 4. Required Specific Methods Courses in Programs by Level/Type

Bachelor's (n = 183; 473 courses listed)	%	Post-baccalaureate (n = 138; 339 courses listed)	%	Master's (n = 97; 236 courses listed)	%	Alternative (n = 28; 55 courses listed)	%
Comprehensive	39	Comprehensive	40	Comprehensive	43	Comprehensive	36
Writing	21	Writing	21	Writing	18	Writing	15
Literature	9	Literature	8	Literature	9	Reading	11
Adolescent literature	7	Adolescent literature	7	Adolescent literature	6	Literature	7
Content area literacy	5	Content Area Literacy	5	Reading	5	Adolescent literature	5
Reading & literature	4	Reading	4	ESL	3	Inclusion	4
Reading	4	Reading & literature	3	Content area literacy	2	Content area literacy	2
Grammar	3	Language	2	Grammar	2	Reading & literature	2
Technology	2	General methods	2	Technology	2	Grammar or language	2
Multiple literacies	2			Reading & Literature	2	Technology	2
						Language	2
Other	4	Other	8	Other	8	Other	12

Note: Open-ended question; percent out of total number of courses listed by respondents for each program type. Across categories, categories listed as “Other” were indicated 1% or less: ESL, speech and communication, grammar, linguistics, language, multiple literacies, differentiation/inclusion, assessment, none, and does not know.

Field Experiences

We also found significant periods of time spent in the field in most types of programs, with large numbers of hours spent in various pre-student teaching practica, and the modal length of student teaching experiences in most programs ranging from 12–15 weeks. As in other areas, the alternative certification programs reveal a different pattern, with a significant percentage of programs offering fewer hours in the field. Only 34 respondents reported having alternative certification programs at their institutions, and only 24 of those answered the question about time spent student teaching (some respondents stated they were unfamiliar with the alternative program at their institution).

While field experiences are universally considered an important part of the preservice teacher’s experience in teacher education programs, little research has been done on the connection between the specialized English methods course and the application of that content in field experiences (Pasternak et al., 2014). The questionnaire included questions about the field experiences across programs, as well as those connected specifically to the methods course(s).

The majority of respondents stated that their preservice students have opportunities to practice teaching prior to student teaching, with 73% of bachelor’s programs requiring more than 60 hours of field experiences before student teaching (this percentage drops about 20 points in post-baccalaureate and master’s programs—see Table 5). More particularly, 71% of programs reported having a field component connected to their ELA methods course as part of the overall field requirement, varying widely in number of hours required. It is not clear from the questionnaire data how these experiences are integrated with coursework, or how many hours are spent in direct teaching activities versus hours spent in observation activities.

When asked an open-ended question about the purpose of the field experience prior to student teaching, respondents provided answers that fit into the following categories: (a) *connecting theory to practice*; (b) *applying English content*; (c) *reflecting*; and (d) *gaining practical knowledge*. These categories of responses for the purpose of field experiences match with the examples of assignments completed during field experiences (most common being reflection, creating lesson plans, and receiving comments from mentor teachers).

Table 5. Hours of Field Experience before Student Teaching

	Bachelor’s(%)	Post-Bacc(%)	Master’s(%)	Alt. Cert.(%)
None	0.56	3.05	3.85	25.00
Fewer than 40	6.70	12.21	15.38	29.17
40–60	19.55	32.82	26.92	12.50
61–100	36.31	27.48	21.15	8.33
More than 100	36.87	24.43	32.69	25.00
Total Responses	179.00	131.00	104.00	24.00

Note: Missing data omitted.

Table 6. Where Are K–12 Standards Addressed?

Where addressed	Bachelor's	Post-Bacc	Master's	Alt. Cert.
Not Addressed	0.00	0.74	0.97	0.00
Separate Coursework	4.60	6.67	4.85	16.67
Throughout Coursework	44.83	48.89	56.31	50.00
Methods Course	45.40	39.26	34.95	29.17
Field Experiences	5.17	4.44	2.91	4.17
Extra-Curric Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Responses	174	135	103	24

Note: In percentages; missing data omitted.

An emerging theme from the open-ended responses regarding field experiences indicated a concern with lack of input from the respondents over the hands-on experiences of students in the field. For example, the comment “of course it depends on the placement” indicates that the value of the field experience may depend on the school partnership.

Distributing Responsibility for Addressing Change

Respondents were asked how particular twenty-first-century issues (literacy teaching, technology integration, cultural and linguistic diversity, and content area standards) were addressed at both the program level and at the level of the ELA methods course. Program-level questions relate to how teacher candidates encounter these issues throughout their program. As an example, Table 6 shows where K–12 standards are addressed in each type of program, serving as an indicator of both stability and difference across program types. The majority of respondents indicated that their programs either distribute responsibility for teaching the standards throughout program coursework or center it in the ELA methods course. As these tendencies track across the table, more programs certifying above the bachelor’s level claim to distribute this responsibility and fewer center it in the methods course, while the pattern in the alternative programs differs yet again. As indicated in the sections below, this pattern of distributed responsibility is repeated across the focal topics.

“New Areas of Emphasis” as Addressed in Programs and Methods Courses

Since 1995, teacher preparation programs have changed conceptually and structurally in response to evolving ideas about teaching and learning and the

types of experiences new teachers need in general, but subject areas differ in the issues they find salient. English is both the subject most closely related to language and literacy (thus having a particular relationship to language variation, to literacy instruction, and to conceptions of “new literacies”) and is the subject, along with math, most often tested for standards-aligned achievement. Thus, we felt these topics deserved special attention in the questionnaire.

Technology and Multiple Literacies in the English Curriculum

Most of the relevant research found in our literature review (Pasternak et al., 2014) concerned the efficacy of employing technology in classroom practices rather than in the methods classroom, although there are an impressive number of studies that explore this work with preservice teachers (e.g., Lee & Young, 2011; Ortega, 2013; Pasternak, 2007). The interest in examining technology and the ELA is consistent with other findings from the questionnaire that indicate English educators find technology integration and the understanding of multiple or new literacies as the most essential “other” content that should be taught in the subject-specific methods class (see above).

Respondents from programs certifying English teachers in programs at all levels indicate that technology is integrated throughout their programs although it is unclear how each program defines *integration*, a topic worth further investigation. Interestingly, despite the lack of specificity as to the meaning of integration, respondents were much more likely to reply that technology was integrated throughout a program than to claim it being addressed through a separate class teaching discrete technology skills (see Table 7).

Where addressed	Bachelor's	Post-Bacc	Master's	Alt. Cert.
Not Addressed	4.02	4.44	7.69	8.33
Separate Coursework	27.59	26.67	23.08	33.33
Throughout Coursework	44.83	46.67	48.08	45.83
Methods Course	22.41	19.26	17.31	8.33
Field Experiences	1.15	2.96	3.85	4.17
Extra-Curric Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Responses	174	135	103	24

Note: In percentages; missing data omitted.

When asked if the methods course covered technology integration in the teaching and the learning of ELA, there was some consistency across two types of technology taught to preservice teachers as defined by the questionnaire: technologies that were “open,” or promoted collaborative, active environments; and technologies that were “closed,” or used for discrete assessment purposes or for individualized learning. Respondents indicated that both open and closed technologies were used by preservice teachers to learn the content of the methods course (at 75% and 74%, respectively), while somewhat fewer in each category had preservice teachers design lessons employing technology in teaching ELA content (63.5% and 67%). Slightly fewer than half reported having students use these technologies to design lessons for the field. It is worth noting that the number of respondents to these questions is low (around 175) compared to other questions in this section (where the response rate was consistently around 200). This may be due to confusion about the “open” and “closed” terminology (although not mentioned in the pilot results) or reflect rudimentary knowledge about technology trends among our respondents.

Respondents to the open-ended question, “What is your understanding of how the English language arts methods course should address the integration of technology in the English language arts?” revealed conflicts about the value of integrating technologies into ELA. On the one hand, many respondents apparently assumed students were using technology in their subject area courses, or reported using technology most frequently for preservice teacher assessment and/or certification purposes. On the other hand, a commitment to twenty-first-century technologies as part of the ELA curriculum was expressed by others, for example, “Technology skills are an integral part of 21st century skills and, consequently, an important part of our ELA methods classes.” Respondents reported the extent and direction of commitment was related to instructor expertise and their own comfort with technology.

Respondents also reported that the availability and use of technology was often differentially distributed between the university and K–12 settings, with some complaining, “the public schools tend to have more technology money than the university does, so we struggle with this.” Conversely, others felt their students were well-equipped to use technology but, “Seeing more current practices in local schools that address teaching ELA with technology would be helpful.”

When asked which technology standards for teachers and/or students the respondents used to integrate technology into preservice teacher learning, the response was NCTE/NCATE (43%), closely followed by state teaching

standards (39%). Twenty-four percent indicated “none,” showing a need to investigate the reasoning behind and influences on standards adoption in this and other areas.

Preparing Teacher Candidates to Teach Reading and Writing Skills

Until recent decades, reading and writing instruction was focused largely at the early childhood and elementary levels. However, in today’s secondary schools, English teachers are commonly responsible for reading and writing instruction (Wilson, 2011). Thus, respondents to the questionnaire were asked where and how instruction in reading comprehension and writing was provided in English classes, in both the English-specific methods course and how the needs of struggling readers and writers were addressed in the program as a whole. Data indicate that in bachelor’s degree programs and post-baccalaureate programs the methods course is a primary means for helping preservice English teachers meet the needs of struggling readers and writers, with 40% of the respondents from both types of programs choosing the methods course as the location of this instruction (see Table 8).

Bachelor’s degree programs and post-baccalaureate programs are also similar in the extent to which the needs of these students are integrated throughout the program. Separate courses for this purpose were noted by 21% of the bachelor’s degree programs and 18% of the post-baccalaureate programs.

Respondents reporting on master’s degree programs were more likely to see the instruction on reading and writing skills being integrated throughout the program, while a smaller percentage of master’s programs chose the methods course and an even smaller percentage chose a separate course

Table 8. How Programs Address Instruction Related to Needs of Struggling Readers and Writers

Where addressed	Bachelor’s	Post-Bacc	Master’s	Alt. Cert.
Not Addressed	0.00	0.74	0.97	8.33
Separate Coursework	0.00	0.74	0.96	25.0
Throughout Coursework	20.69	17.78	18.27	33.33
Methods Course	33.91	36.3	47.12	25.0
Field Experiences	40.23	40.0	26.92	8.33
Extra-Curric Activities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Responses	174	135	103	24

Note: In percentages; missing data omitted.

for the location of instruction on struggling readers and writers. Alternative programs seem to be almost evenly split among the three options.

When asked how the teaching of reading comprehension skills and the teaching of writing were addressed in the ELA methods class, respondents leaned heavily toward course readings and discussion (88.5% and 96% of respondents, respectively) and development of lesson plans/materials (84% and 92.5%, respectively). Some opportunities exist for preservice teachers to participate in tutoring students in reading comprehension (41%) and in writing (51%), or in other forms of application in these areas, paralleling what we've seen in other areas—that opportunities to apply what is learned in methods courses are limited.

Analysis of responses to an open-ended question regarding how methods courses might address reading and writing instruction brought to light a tension between the teaching of literacy skills and the teaching of literature. This tension underscores the way the field has embraced teaching both *literacy* and *literature*, with the teaching of literature being a foundation of the discipline of English language arts (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995; Smith & Lambert Stock, 2005). There was a strong sense among many respondents that reading and writing instruction should be central to the methods course, with some respondents advocating for a separate content area literacy course. Still other respondents noted that the focus of the methods course should be on the teaching of literature. This set of tensions—literature instruction versus literacy instruction—may represent the influence of the background of individuals who teach the methods courses, with some coming from a solely English background and others coming from a literacy-oriented background.

Addressing the Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

Our findings from the questionnaire indicated that most English teacher preparation programs addressed the subject of teaching diverse learners as well as the teaching of English language learners (ELLs). Both of these strands were viewed as the purview of teacher education programs, more generally, with only 15% reporting this inclusion within the methods course. Across program types, the majority of respondents (in the 50th percentile) selected the category of integrated throughout as the most applicable and appropriate manner in which to represent where the needs of diverse learners are addressed.

As with other twenty-first-century topics, traditional college course activities such as readings, lectures, and discussions were the most common way of addressing the topic of teaching diverse learners (87%) and ELLs (75%) in the methods course. Yet, respondents acknowledged that the top-

ics of the teaching of diverse students and the teaching of ELLs were also addressed through application in the field, with diverse students quite high (75%) compared to English language learners (25%). The understanding of the term “diverse students” was often very broad, with respondents noting both diversity in terms of cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity as well as diversity in abilities.

Application was not necessarily tied to the context of the program (e.g., a teacher education program situated geographically near schools with high percentages of diverse students or ELLs). Rather, comments to the open-ended questions revealed that partnerships between teacher education programs and opportunities in schools for preservice teachers to work with diverse groups of students were essential for application to occur. Such partnerships facilitated access to schools for people traditionally associated with the university (preservice teachers, supervisors, and faculty). Finally, in characterizing such placements, a wide spectrum of options existed in respondents’ views of where preservice teachers learned to apply their knowledge to working with diverse students, from traditional high schools to community-based sites and programs for adult ELLs. This wide spectrum of placements likely reflects the field’s notion of diversity, as various programs seek to prepare their students to view diversity in complex ways (Morrell, 2004).

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings from the responses to the open-ended questions addressing the teaching of diverse students and ELLs was the emphasis on preservice teachers’ need for awareness of these issues, as opposed to concrete methods of addressing language diversity in the classroom. This tension was not limited to issues of diversity, and we discuss it at more length, in our discussion below, as a theme that crosses categories.

Preparing Teacher Candidates to Use K–12 Content Standards

In our review of research (Pasternak et al., 2014), we discovered that despite state and national content standards becoming ubiquitous since the mid-1990s, there has been almost no research on how preservice English teachers are prepared to address content standards in the secondary classroom. There was commentary and some research on how programs address state and national accreditation standards for teacher preparation, but we also found that those standards are not aligned with, and often do not mention, the K–12 content standards every teacher’s students must meet (Kober & Rentner, 2011). There were also indications, particularly in commentary, of a resistance on the part of English educators to the writing of English

standards by non-teachers (Caughlan & Beach, 2007), to the narrowing of purpose and curriculum that results from teaching to the test, and to the loss of autonomy by teachers (Alsup et al., 2006).

In spite of this gap in the research literature, our results indicate that addressing the standards in the English methods course and in the larger program is almost universal. Of our respondents, over 99% of programs report addressing K–12 content standards somewhere in the program, generally integrated throughout coursework and addressed in the methods course (see Table 7); only 2.5% report not addressing them in the ELA methods course. We offered a number of options of possible ways teacher candidates could address K–12 standards in the methods course. Application of standards to lesson plan assignments was prevalent: All who addressed standards in their courses did so. However, most had more than one means of having students interact with content standards in methods courses, such as addressing them through reading and discussion (85.6%), relating them to roles and responsibilities (71.5%), or using the field experience as a means to explore standards (79.2%, a much higher incidence than reported for the other focal areas). The median response was the use of three options for addressing standards. Only 13% of respondents had their students choose standards to fit their lesson plans as their only standards-based assignment.

A small number of methods instructors and their students looked at standards critically. Of the 30 responses to the question, “What is your understanding of how the English language arts methods course should prepare teacher candidates to address content standards in their teaching?” fewer than 10 respondents reported a critical orientation (e.g., putting standards in their sociohistorical or political context, or inviting students to read them comparatively or critically). More common were instrumental rationales that new teachers needed to be able to read and apply standards in current classrooms. The almost universal inclusion of standards as a topic in methods courses makes it even more interesting that so little has been said about the place of standards in teacher preparation in the English teacher education research literature.

Discussion

In the discussion below, we highlight two salient themes: (1) the coherence of teacher preparation programs and (2) the distinction between *awareness* and *application*. These two points help synthesize many of the tensions the findings presented.

Coherence of Teacher Preparation Programs

We place our examination of English teacher preparation within the larger framework of secondary certification programs. The institutions represented by our respondents generally follow current recommendations for program design, requiring many hours of field placements and high numbers of credit hours in the subject area and in subject-specific methods, both directions that we view positively. The actual coherence of these programs is more difficult to ascertain. How are the larger number of hours of field experiences and longer periods of student teaching integrated with coursework? What is the relationship between the schools where students are placed and the university? Are the subject-specific methods courses conceptually coherent with the goals and values of the teacher preparation program, whether housed in English or education? Respondents to the open-ended questions often indicated problems with communication among departments at the university level and between the programs and the cooperating teachers. These questions are similar to those that teacher education has raised more generally (Darling-Hammond, 2010) and reflect broader tensions in teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

While we found attention to new areas of emphasis in ELA was not universal within methods courses, this was often because new areas of emphasis were considered as addressed within other areas of the program, indicating that some communication and planning among areas does occur. The means of addressing preparing teachers for literacy instruction, technology integration, teaching to K–12 standards, and meeting the needs of diverse students varied widely. However, these topics were almost universally acknowledged to be significant, as indicated by the fact that almost no respondents chose “not addressed” by some area of their program: either in separate courses, field experiences, or integrated throughout the program. The widespread distribution of responsibility we uncovered also raises the issue of what areas in a program “own” particular commitments. In the following section, we discuss a significant theme related to how participants articulated a responsibility toward new areas of emphasis.

Awareness versus Application

One aim of our inquiry was to convey how the field envisions an updated image of English education in the twenty-first century. Through our literature review (Pasternak et al., 2014), we began to construct a foundation for how the discipline has changed since the 1990s. Theoretically, we understood that teacher educators vary in their conceptions of the teaching of English;

yet, our study unveiled findings related to what we view as a dichotomy of *awareness* of issues versus *application* of concepts into teaching practices. A differentiation between *awareness* and *application* helped us articulate how English teacher educators viewed their responsibility—and sometimes capacity—for addressing new areas of emphasis. We see this differentiation as corresponding with commonly held distinguishing differences in teacher professional development between teacher knowledge and beliefs and teacher practice (Borko, 2004; Borko et al., 2010). Our findings maintain that the two—awareness and application—must go hand in hand to constitute successful teaching practices.

In both instances, the term *awareness* has positive intentions and is related to the need for prospective teachers to possess an in-depth understanding of teaching, learning, and context. While we see that awareness of “new areas of emphasis” is important for teacher candidates as a way to be current with the field, we believe that these emerging educators need time and space to put new knowledge into practice. *Application* connotes the translation of knowledge into practice and, in teacher education, is often assumed to be located in the field component of programs. In the larger field of teacher education, a recent focus on developing practice as foundational to teacher preparation is gaining traction (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Forzani, 2014), although there is little scholarship on the topic in English education generally (but see Grossman & Thompson, 2008).

The questionnaire results revealed that awareness of issues was promulgated in the methods course primarily through engaging students in readings, lectures, and discussions about particular topics. This was especially true where changes in the field were addressed in the third section of the questionnaire. *Awareness* signifies a traditional approach to learning in higher education that is often removed from practice. For example, we see that awareness of teaching diverse learners and English language learners is oftentimes not connected to fieldwork if field sites are difficult to obtain. Likewise, some respondents thought technology should be hands-on and practical, yet other respondents described either their universities’ or local schools’ lack of access to quality technology.

The main home for application was the field experience attached to the methods course. In their open-ended responses, respondents indicated the field experience component of the teacher education program was the one area of the program where teacher candidates have the opportunity to practice their newly minted pedagogical and content knowledge. For example, “The practice of working in the field feeds students’ learning in the methods course and makes what they are learning more relevant and

authentic.” The field experience, according to another, provides “(an) opportunity to practice research based teaching . . . an opportunity to disrupt some of the well-established teaching practices that do not significantly support learners.” While some respondents seemed to assume that application was occurring in the field, others indicated that teacher candidates in programs were not always afforded the opportunity to apply their knowledge, as application depended on circumstance and context.

One new area of emphasis that did not fit this general trend was the strand related to K–12 content standards, where application was more common than awareness. Our data indicate that teacher educators have encouraged only a cursory level of awareness regarding standards at the same time that almost all teacher candidates are expected to use the standards in planning their lessons. Thus, the field expresses both adherence and resistance to standards.

Promoting the awareness that classrooms are complex places with constantly changing dynamics has, at times, overshadowed links to practice.

Promoting the awareness that classrooms are complex places with constantly changing dynamics has, at times, overshadowed links to practice. As prospective teachers experience the disjunction between what we see as awareness

of issues and application to classrooms, they may risk essentializing student groups based on factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Though not the intention of teacher educators, awareness can become a proxy for understanding. One promising finding: Programs that reported having professional development schools or using co-teaching in their student teaching experiences spoke more confidently about what their students were doing in their field experiences, exemplifying strong connections between the university methods course and partnerships built in the field.

Conclusion

As indicated in the list of types of methods courses and the variety of new topics calling for English educators’ attention, we see that the three-credit methods course that addresses teaching canonical literature, a narrow range of school-based writing genres, and teaching the forms of a “Standard” dialect is no longer the standard in English education. As Smagorinsky and Whiting (1995) noted, the three-credit general English education methods class was the default methods class for most university-based teacher education programs 20 years ago (p. 8). As our study found, three credit hours will not hold these traditional topics plus such topics as the changing nature of texts and youth culture, the linguistic diversity of our youth, the growing reach

of policy into teaching and the curriculum, and the increasing number of struggling readers and writers found in secondary classrooms. These provide new demands for the English teacher's attention.

As noted earlier in the literature review, pedagogical content knowledge (Ball et al., 2008; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987) is the foundation upon which teaching is built within a particular subject-matter domain. As the boundaries of the methods course change, teacher educators and preservice teachers alike must understand the ways in which these changes are occurring. Our study highlights the importance of teacher educators navigating the tensions within the context of their program and working to build coherence throughout their program, thereby understanding which new areas of emphasis might be included in methods courses and which might be addressed by other courses within a teacher education program.

Our study, and the field of ELA, has confirmed the field's multifaceted approach to core tenets of the discipline (Morrell, 2015). In contrast to the field's multiplicity, neoliberal reforms promote a narrowing of ELA curriculum and goals (Brass, 2014). Most recently, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) direct English teachers to close reading, a focus on the traditional rhetorical modes in writing, "language" study that consists of vocabulary study and mastery of an outmoded view of a "Standard" English, and a list of exemplary texts that focuses on levels of text complexity rather than cultural relevance. A number of our respondents mentioned the need to address the demands of the CCSS in methods courses, but they did not indicate that this recused them from addressing the realities of a changing cultural and classroom context.

Changes such as the move to the CCSS, coupled with demographic changes in our K-12 U.S. schools, have prompted us to attend to the voices of English teacher educators throughout the United States. Although our study's findings highlight what we view as "tensions" (awareness versus application, external pressures, and coherence of programs) within the field of ELA, we also hold to the belief that these so-called tensions broaden the way we characterize our discipline. These tensions also place English teacher education into the larger and rapidly changing context of teacher preparation more generally. In these changing times, English educators find ourselves at a crossroads of how English education in the United States will grapple with the larger changes affecting how English teachers are taught in the twenty-first century. The results of our study have revealed that new areas of emphasis within ELA have expanded what we have traditionally considered our discipline, and this alone urges us to reconsider how to best prepare English teachers for a changing context.

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Samantha Caughlan is a freelance researcher, scholar, and project manager operating in Lansing, Michigan, since 2014. Her specialties include English language arts teacher preparation; disciplinary literacies; policy related to teacher evaluation, teacher preparation, and literacy education; qualitative research methods; and critical discourse analysis. Prior to her current position, she spent 10 years coordinating English education programs at Michigan State University and California State University, Fresno.



Donna L. Pasternak is professor of English education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and directs the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Writing Project. Her research focuses on the education of teachers of English, in particular how technology is integrated into their classroom practices. She has been a member of NCTE since the 1970s.



Heidi L. Hallman is an associate professor of English education in the department of Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Kansas. Her research interests include studying the preparation of English teachers, especially in relationship to teaching in diverse classrooms and schools. She has been a member of NCTE since 1999.



Laura Renzi is an associate professor in the department of English at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on the preparation of secondary English teachers and the use of field experiences in their preparation, as well as the use of LGBTQ young adult literature in the secondary English classroom. She has been a member of NCTE since 2005.



Leslie S. Rush serves as associate dean in the College of Education at the University of Wyoming. An NCTE member since 1990 and current member of the Conference on English Education's Executive Committee, she studies disciplinary literacy in English language arts as well as English teacher preparation.



Michael Frisby is the associate director at the Indiana Statistical Consulting Center. He is an experienced statistician, having provided statistical consulting on hundreds of statistical projects from PhD students and faculty members at both Indiana University and Michigan State University. Michael teaches graduate-level courses at Indiana University on statistical consulting and oversees ISCC's statistical collaborators working on hundreds of unique projects each year.

CEE Graduate Student Research Award Call for Proposals

The Conference on English Education (CEE) is pleased to announce the establishment of the CEE Graduate Student Research Award. This award seeks to support graduate student research that advances the work of CEE as articulated through the organization's position statements and sponsored publications (see www.ncte.org/cee).

The award provides a maximum of \$2,500 to support a specific research project conducted by a graduate student; in addition, \$500 is provided to support travel to the NCTE Annual Convention to present that research. Graduate students at the master's and doctoral level are eligible; all applicants must be members of CEE.

We hope that the research supported by this initiative contributes to and extends CEE's efforts to examine important issues in English education. For more information, please see www.ncte.org/cee/awards.

Proposals are due **by August 8, 2017**, and should be submitted as email attachments to the CEE Liaison at cee@ncte.org. A decision will be announced by late-September 2017, and the award winner will be recognized at the CEE Luncheon and the CEE Business Meeting at the NCTE Annual Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. The award winner is expected to present the research at the 2018 or 2019 NCTE Convention or at the 2019 CEE Summer Conference.
