Designing Dialogues on Writing and College Readiness Across Educational Institutions

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Abstract: College readiness, particularly with regard to academic writing, has become central to education policy. While this transition seems a natural point where college professors and secondary teachers might build the mutual understandings that "readiness" suggests, little contact occurs. This tendency is unfortunate, because both groups contribute expertise and insight about students' writing needs. In order to build grounded knowledge about college writers and transitions, we invited a group of secondary English teachers and college writing instructors to a series of School-University Dialogues. This paper reports on the successes and challenges of this affinity-space-based collaboration, examining its emergent design features over time, as well as evidence of its ability to effect change in teachers' practices and roles.

Introduction

College readiness, particularly with regard to academic writing, has become central to federal and state-level education policies. National foundations, standards consortia, and state-level education agencies have worked to develop assessments and standards aimed at college and career readiness for all students. Too often, teachers sit on the sidelines of these conversations about college readiness and writing across high school and college levels. Even while the transition between high school and college seems a natural point where college and secondary teachers might collaborate to build the mutual understandings that "readiness" suggests, little contact occurs (Alsup, 2001; Alsup, Bush, Brockman, & Letcher, 2011). When contact does occur, professors and policy-makers often blame secondary teachers for students' poor writing and preparation (e.g. Goldstein, 2017; Sanoff, 2006).

Secondary teachers, however, possess valuable knowledge about student writing even if the standardized assessments to which their teaching often responds do not line up well with disciplinary models of college writing. Similarly, college professors understand the demands of the extended, theoretical, researched writing that students must complete in college (Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010). We wondered if bringing representatives of these groups together to build local knowledge about first-year college writers and college transitions would produce more grounded understandings. We invited a group of local English teachers and college writing instructors to a series of School-University Dialogues. Rather than one-time, top-down, expert-led professional development, we designed the Dialogues to respect the expertise of all teachers and to reflect a wide swath of teaching experiences.

Literature review: Models for professional development and learning

In secondary schools, "professional learning communities" (PLCs) have become widespread models for teacher learning (e.g. DuFour, 2007; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). PLCs, often organized in reaction to traditional, top-down professional development, build teacher learning "communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The results of implementing such structures, however, are diverse and can be equally restrictive for teacher participants (DuFour, 2007; Lock 2006). For instance, many PLCs are school- or team-wide and devised to study a topic considered important by administration leaders. As early as 2001, Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth cautioned that "community," as applied to school structures like classrooms and teacher organizations, "has lost its meaning" (p. 943). These structures, in other words, may or may not be open to equitable participation.

In contrast, learning scientists have embraced the concept of researchers working alongside of practitioners and administrators to design professional development and learning interventions. Rather than a top-down model, Penuel, Roschelle, and Shechtman's (2007) articulation of co-design positions teachers as centrally important designers of research solutions to instructional problems. Similarly, Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2004) have considered principles of distributed leadership in which school leaders actively collaborate in order to accomplish diffused tasks like professional development, instructional (re)design, and reform. Broader concepts of design-based implementation research (Penuel, Fishman, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2011) argue that in order to successfully implement educational interventions (particularly at scale), collaborative work that draws on the practical expertise of researchers, administrators, and practitioners is necessary, even though such negotiation is often challenging due to the disparate experiences and worldviews of various members (see also Penuel, Roschelle, & Shechtman, 2007).

More recently, school districts have paired with research organizations in *research-practice partnerships* (RPPs) where stakeholders investigate questions, design interventions, and gather data together (Coburn, Penuel,

& Geil, 2013; Penuel, Coburn, & Gallagher, 2013). RPPs are often large, grouping diverse colleagues including teachers, administrators, policymakers, and researchers. This work typically examines common features of such models: place-based, long-term inquiry; focus on instructional problems; and the production of findings that might not be possible without diverse partners. RPPs bring together multiple values, cultures, and complex collaborations, though research suggests teachers' input is sometimes marginalized in such partnerships.

Existing research on professional or design partnerships in the area of writing and college readiness among college writing faculty, English education, and secondary teachers, however, has been limited. Formal and informal interaction, collaboration, and research across high schools and colleges is rare, and the divide between college writing programs and secondary teacher education has been clearly documented (Alsup, 2001; Alsup, et al., 2011). When collaborative conversations between high school and college teachers do occur, they are often short-term (Strachan, 2002; Donahue, 2007; Crank, 2012). In other words, in the realm of ELA/writing teaching, such initiatives have so far failed to build extended research-practice partnerships (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013) that might create sustainable programs that ease high school students' transitions to college.

The design of dialogues

As we began to plan the first meeting of the School-University Dialogues, one story echoed. Years before we'd even considered starting the discussion, several colleagues had been asked to talk with high school teachers about college preparation. They'd arrived in an auditorium and were appalled when they were seated on the stage, literally above the high school teachers, and, as representatives of "higher education," asked to answer questions about what schools could do better. Avoiding such situations and metaphors became our guiding principle.

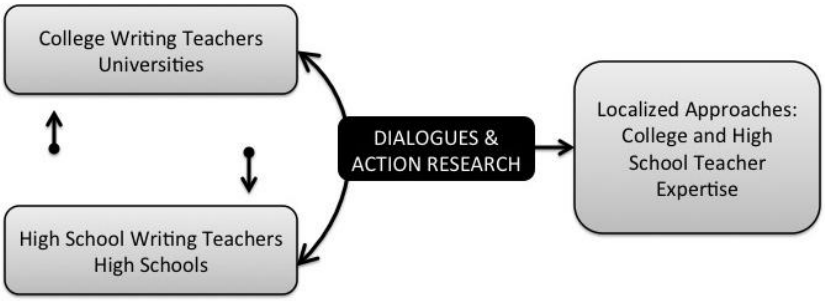

Figure 1. Addressing disconnects between college and high school through mutual dialogue.

Our model, shown in Figure 1, is explicitly dialogic and focuses on teaching writing across the high school–college divide. We wanted the resulting professional learning to respect the expertise of all of the teachers in the room. As such, though we did want to engage in active exploration and honor the various institutional and sociocultural contexts from which members come, we rejected the idea of working from a communities of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice are simply too intertwined with individual learning trajectories that develop from novice to expert. Rather, in our network of teachers, everyone was simultaneously an expert teacher in her own institutional context and a novice teacher in the other institutional context, and would likely make both legitimate peripheral moves and central ones depending on the current topic of discussion. We thus turned to Gee's (2004, 2017) idea of *affinity spaces* to provide more equitable grounding. This work explicitly reconceptualizes learning as residing in spaces, not in individuals—an important shift towards understanding how the development of expertise is necessarily dispersed and distributed in collaborative networks.

Affinity spaces are sites of informal learning where groups with diverse expertise interact around a "common endeavor" (Gee, 2004, p. 85). We use this concept to place writing teachers' and researchers' interests on the same level, to disrupt traditional boundaries, to examine expertise as distributed across people and institutions, and to build "dialogues" around a joint interest. While many scholars have theorized affinity spaces primarily as online entities (e.g. Lammers, Curwood, & Magnifico, 2012), we see this terminology as useful for describing and designing ongoing interactions among otherwise-disconnected teachers. Whereas high school and college writing teachers have historically talked *about* each others' institutions in conversations about "college-readiness," they have rarely connected in person (Strachan, 2002). Conceptualizing this group as an affinity space focuses our activity on cultivating lateral, non-hierarchal discussions across institutions and individuals.

Methods

Rationale and research questions

By conceptualizing Dialogues as an affinity space and viewing professional learning as equitable, collaborative, and distributed, we made a commitment as leaders to revise its structures over time, adjusting to the needs of the group. In other words, we knew that this design would remain emergent and contingent; thus it became important to employ practitioner-based action research methods (e.g. Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2006) to capture changes and learning over time. Similar to Cole and Packer's (2016) study of the 5th Dimension, sustainability was more important to us than maintaining a particular design or structure, and the input of Dialogues members in the ongoing design of the space and our collaborative research has been vital. As such, we cannot document learning in Dialogues merely by describing members' work in meetings or analyzing the various products and presentations that participants have made over time. Here, we follow the work that Cole and Packer (2016), Curwood (2013), Fields and Kafai (2009), and Lammers (2016) have done to examine the evolution of learning practices, group structures, and overall designs over time. We adapt the analysis of "key moments" in participants' learning (Halverson & Gibbons, 2009) to the necessary shifts that we made to the design of Dialogues in collaboration with our members, and we ask the following research questions: (1) What evidence do we have that this space mattered to participants' teaching practices? (2) What evidence do we have that the Dialogues design was able to create new roles, structures, relationships, or knowledge? How do we know that design adaptations were effective?

In asking these questions, we aim to articulate the adaptive design structures of Dialogues and consider when similar "key moments" or key shifts might become necessary in the life of similar groups and partnerships.

Participants

While 22 college professors and high school teachers have participated in Dialogues meetings over the years, here we focus on the 13 members who have sustained participation through all of the group's phases and have been consistent attendees. (All names are pseudonyms except ours, and we plan to eventually look more closely at members who have ceased participation. They, too, are important in affinity spaces.) The members listed below in Table 1 represent the teams who have developed each of the four current cross-institutional research projects:

Table 1: Teams who have developed each of the four current cross-institutional research projects

Pseudonym	Role	Attendance
Alecia	Co-director of Dialogues, English Teacher Educator	2014-current
Christina	Co-director of Dialogues, Director of Composition	2014-current
Kasey	High school English teacher	2014-current
Marie	High school English teacher	2015-current
Ellen	High school English teacher	2014-current
Natalie	High school English teacher	2014-current
Colleen	High school librarian, at-risk English teacher	2014-current
Lara	High school ESL teacher	2015-current
Janet	College composition teacher	2014-7/2017
Melissa	College composition teacher	2014-current
Lindsay	College composition teacher, English teacher educator	2014-current
Sam	College composition teacher, graduate student, project assistant	2015-current
Caitlin	College ESL composition teacher, graduate student	2015-current

Data

Analyses were conducted using multiple artifacts including: field notes, meeting agendas, meeting transcripts, lpost-meeting debriefs, post-event surveys, and participant-created presentations, chapters, and narratives. For the purposes of this analysis, we were interested in macro-level shifts and structures of Dialogues, and how we adapted the activity over time to sustain participation. We engaged in open-ended thematic analysis (e.g. Boyatzis, 1998) of observational data and field notes on Dialogues meetings, as well as the artifacts listed above. From this analysis, three "key moments" where reorganizations of activity became necessary to respond to members learning and research interests emerged. These phases describe macro-level evolutions over time, whereas we plan to engage in further micro-level analyses in the future to further tease out these themes and findings.

Findings

The findings we present here focus first on the long narrative arc and macro-level results of this partnership. To provide context for readers, we first show the overall progression of "common endeavors" in which we have

engaged, and how members of the partnership have used their participation in the collaboration to begin projects in their own classrooms and school buildings. We then analyze three "key moments," or phases, in the design of Dialogues, to show how we made design changes to respond to the interests and the needs of the participants.

The overall picture: Building common and research-driven endeavors

Our first agenda included questions to foster a collaborative, distributed discussion: "What do we share? What are common concerns? What are some experiences/ideas about writing that we all value as writing teachers? What are the questions that are still on the table?" (April, 2014). We wanted every teacher's expertise to be valued.

In the participants' reactions and field notes from this initial meeting, we learned that everyone wanted to keep talking. One high school teacher noted surprise: "I assumed it would be…more of a lecture from the college profs. This was so much more than what I expected." Another high school teacher asked "could we hear from current [college] students at some point?" A college teacher noted that she was thinking about "how we have the same challenges across the board… and so much to learn from one another" about teaching writing. In the April, 2014 meeting, we began a list of topics for future discussions, centering ideas for learning from each other.

Beginning in October, 2014, we designed a system for high school teachers and college professors to learn from each other: Over two meetings, we brainstormed research topics and questions about writing teaching. Then, as leaders, we created a "speed dating" activity, asking participants to rotate to a variety of topics and discuss which ones they were interested in taking forward into a larger project. Topics included "revision and editing," "creating motivation to write," "workshop writing or peer conferencing," and a space for further ideas (October 2014). By Spring 2015, four topic groups of high school and college teachers had emerged and coalesced:

1. **Revision** (two high school teachers, one Composition instructor, Alecia)
2. **Second-language writers** (one high school teacher, one ESL Composition instructor, Christina)
3. **Students' attitudes towards research** (one high school teacher, one Composition instructor, one Composition graduate student and instructor)
4. **Digital and multimodal writing** (two high school teachers, one Composition instructor)

During the next two years, members of these research collaborations worked together to visit each other's classrooms, design action research studies, collect data (including surveys, interviews, and artifacts), analyze these data, and present this work in public, first at a University-level colloquium and later at the National Convention of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference. All four of these initial teams (representing 13 participants altogether, including Alecia and Christina) successfully completed cross-institutional, action research studies. Each group has since completed a full draft of a chapter detailing these findings, and together, we are writing a book proposal to highlight the Dialogues partnership. In the following sections, we detail the phases of the partnership, showing the deliberate and emergent design choices and the ways in which participants responded to evolutions over time.

Phase 1: Brokering access and building curiosity through visceral experience

Dialogues began with building curiosity and brokering access to a range of students and teaching experiences. Bringing college professors and secondary teachers together for lunch and conversation was the centerpiece of this phase, but from the beginning, we wanted to open the institutional doors. At first, we used Dialogues meetings to host panels on college transitions and writing with first-year college students and experienced professionals. In each meeting, we included time for open discussions, for listening to a variety of experiences, and for considering teaching and learning practices across the settings. This curiosity building became our first common endeavor.

Brokering access to students

Field notes and transcripts demonstrate that participants used the cross-institutional conversations to see and think beyond their own settings. In this excerpt from December, 2014, high school teachers asked questions of first-year college students to project forward and understand the writing preparation that their own students need, and college professors considered how to tease out and understand their students' prior knowledge from high schools:

> ***Janet:*** We try to do a questionnaire at the beginning of [Composition] to try to learn where students are coming from with writing. What are the best questions to ask [students] about their writing background?
>
> ***Student 1:*** What was the most meaningful writing assignment you did in HS? And why? What was the least valuable writing assignment you did in HS?
>
> ***Student 2:*** Those are good. What kinds of writing make you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? What do you want to learn about writing?

Ellen: What do you wish your HS teachers would have taught you?

Student 3: Revision. I only did one paper in HS where there were revisions.

Student 2: Talking about writing. More discussion about why are you writing what you're writing. (12/12/2014 Field Notes)

Because the first year students had been high school students recently, conversations with them made the college transition—and a number of elements that are typically obscured from college professors' and high school teachers' vision—very tangible. Such experiences helped to motivate the necessity of cross-institutional learning.

Brokering access to classrooms across settings

In addition to building curiosity, direct social contact allowed us to broker access to members' classrooms and students to extend the discussion. We opened up university Composition classrooms to Dialogues secondary teachers, and we encouraged secondary teachers to likewise welcome Dialogues professors. To normalize these visits, we visited classrooms ourselves when invited. Long before we planned research projects, these cross-institutional visits enabled learning about college and secondary writing with observation and visceral experience.

For example, Sam, a graduate student and Composition instructor, reflected on differences across settings and how "being back in a high school after a decade or so makes everything feel foreign to me" (Sam, narrative). Two ESL teachers, one secondary and one college, learned about the deep differences in their students and settings by visiting each others' classrooms, and subsequently decided to introduce their students to each other:

> Lara's students were in her classroom for one period each day, but for the rest of the day, they… interacted with mainstream students […] Many had been in the U.S. for enough time and with enough purpose to feel that this country was their home. […] In my classroom (Intensive English), the students were only enrolled in English language classes [...] They identified as citizens of their home countries and temporary residents of the U.S. (Caitlin, narrative).

Overall, in-person access to multiple teaching settings and practices effected curiosity. In these initial meetings and classroom visits, Dialogues participants began to think across each others' settings, and to articulate ideas about their writing students. Their expertise as writing teachers, and as teacher-learners, began to grow as they realized how much their institution's norms and practices colored the ways in which they understood teaching.

Phase 2: Building research questions and doing action research

In Phase 2 of Dialogues, we began to encourage all of the members to follow their emerging interests and questions in order to craft small cross-institutional action research projects. Rather than considering answers through open discussions, we settled on articulating honest questions and active areas of interest and inquiry in the fields of Composition and English Education. These questions began to lead into research.

Cross-institutional action research: Opportunities and tensions

Initially, in October 2014, we "speed dated" during a meeting as a way to articulate interests and surface questions. As questions coalesced around several topics, we suggested a new common endeavor—cross-institutional research—to continue learning from each other and move our work forward. We wrote an internal grant to fund Dialogues meetings and a local research colloquium, and hoped that our intuition about research was correct. We took up teacher research in our April, 2015 Dialogues meeting with a short writing prompt: "[T]hink about what you know. Think about things that bother you. Think about things that work for you. Think about changes you'd like to make to your own practice… or base it on the observation you did this morning…" (4/3/2015 Field Notes).

Field notes and transcripts show that these discussions built curiosity around research, which Alecia and Christina led by offering practitioner-friendly texts (e.g. Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2006) and sharing our own research projects, methods, and journeys. In subsequent meetings, we included time for research groups to meet, asked secondary teachers to share their Masters-level qualitative projects (a requirement at our university), and solicited experiences with IRBs and methods from college professors and graduate students.

From Fall 2015 through Summer 2016, Dialogues teams developed questions, designed research, and collected data. Teachers at both levels consulted with us as they identified, tried, and adopted a variety of research practices including observations, surveys, interviews, and artifact analyses. This process was rarely straightforward, however. College and high school teachers are busy, and everyone struggled with finding time to visit each others' classrooms. Ellen, a high school teacher, experienced this tension acutely. She was deeply committed to her group's work on digital and multimodal writing, but her family's health and responsibilities at

school forced her to miss two Dialogues meetings and delay active data collection. She confessed to Christina that she was "nervous" to attend because she felt that "she no longer had a role to play, and she'd let the group down" (5/13/2016 Debrief Memo). She did choose to attend the meeting, though, and her presence enabled her to reconnect with her group and pull the project towards successful completion. Ellen's story, along with numerous other moments of guilt and difficulty (from leaders and participants alike), suggests the challenge of sustaining a space in which all participants play central roles and bring vital expertise to the discussions.

Reflections on cross-institutional action research: Changes in teaching practice

Looking beyond participants' research experiences, their reflections reveal that they began to think differently about teaching practices as a result of their research. Marie noted that her group's revision study helped her adopt colleagues' practices "I use the revision activities my group came up with in my teaching now. I intend to explore the possibilities of digital essays, which I learned about from [another group]" (Marie, 10/12/2016 Survey).

Similarly, Janet, a college instructor, shifted the way in which she introduced the research paper in her first-year writing class in response to her group's interviews with students about research practices and techniques:

> I realized that while I encouraged inquiry, I didn't include safeguards in my assignments […] I began sharing results from our team's transfer studies with my classes: 'If you like your project,' I would say, 'you're not only more likely to do well on your paper, but to remember it. Research demonstrates it. If you don't like your research question, switch it now' (Janet, narrative).

Overall, designing action research had far-reaching consequences. Dialogues participants evaluated and applied widely accepted, professional tools of qualitative research. They learned about research ethics, submitted IRB proposals, developed data collection and analytical methods, negotiated cross-institutional research, and interacted with students from multiple institutions in person and through research artifacts. These experiences led them to reflect on their work in complex ways, building confidence in each others' practices and their own conclusions.

Phase 3: Becoming writers and presenters for a broad audience

In May 2016, the research teams had persevered through challenges to plan and execute their projects, and we knew from one-on-one conversations that many members were worried about their progress. We decided, instead of dwelling on delays, to celebrate the team, as well as the recent funding of our local colloquium grant and our roundtable symposium acceptance to the NCTE conference. We brought cake, decorations, and Dialogues t-shirts to the meeting; asked everyone to share their plans or progress; took stock of challenges and what we'd learned; and began to consider how to address these local and national audiences. We reasoned that in order to continue to develop members' identities as researchers and developing experts in their topic areas (particularly after difficult winter logistics), Dialogues members needed to shift towards, and celebrate, this emerging common endeavor.

External audience as professional validation

An external audience proved important in Dialogues members' confidence and identity as researchers. After our September, 2016 local research colloquium, we surveyed the group about presenting to colleagues, mentors, and administrators, all of whom had been invited. Many seemed surprised by the interest, including Lindsay, a college instructor: "I enjoyed seeing the big turnout, realizing that people are interested in our research" (9/2016 Survey). Ellen noted that she was "glad" she hadn't walked away after the winter's setbacks: "The audience was receptive [and] the questions they asked were helpful in giving us ideas as to where to go from here" (9/2016 Survey).

Exciting, too, were members' positive responses to each others' presentations, which most had experienced in final form for the first time at the colloquium. Lara, for instance, noted that "it was great to share research [and] methodologies and learn from colleagues from multiple levels of education as well as different areas among the state" (9/2016 Survey). While we knew that all of the teachers enjoyed socializing at Dialogues meetings, presenting as professionals increased their respect for each other, too. As Janet put it, "[I want] to take more opportunities to learn from my high school peers… The others' presentations reminded me of how much more I can learn from them" (9/2016 Survey). This mutual professional respect only got stronger when we reprised our research findings in an NCTE symposium, and several members told us afterwards that they very much wanted to write chapters for a book about our findings and experiences (now in progress).

Writing as real practice and as empathy

We suspected that Dialogues members would see themselves differently as a result of conducting research, writing and giving presentations, and composing book chapters. We didn't anticipate that members would share the experience of becoming teacher-researchers and writers with their students. Engaging in teacher-writing provided

ways for college professors and high school teachers to discuss real-world writing practices with students, and to empathize with their composition struggles. Casting back to a Winter, 2017 Dialogues meeting where we began to draft reflective narratives, Kasey remembered her excitement at Alecia's decision to include mentor texts in our writing. She recalled bursting into her classroom the next day, saying "'You'll never believe what happened yesterday!' [...] I couldn't wait to show [my students] that real people use mentor texts…" (Kasey, narrative).

After the writing retreat that we hosted in August 2017, in preparation for assembling our now-in-process book manuscript, we asked members to consider whether they would tell their students about their experiences. The responses described several helpful practices to student writers, including Caitlin's suggestion to "create a place where we can focus on our task and leave other concerns out of that space" (8/2017 Survey). Several teachers, including Lindsay, Marie, and Kasey, who worked together on their research chapter, spoke to the importance of collaboration and "working with a writing group to help motivate you" (Kasey, 8/2017 Survey). Colleen spoke directly to empathy with students for whom writing doesn't come easily: "It really helps them to know that learning never stops and that everyone struggles with written expression" (Colleen, 8/2017 Survey).

Discussion and significance

Overall, the Dialogues have been successful: they have led to partnerships among high school teachers and college professors, partnerships among four secondary schools and our university, local cross-institutional knowledge about college transitions and college readiness in English Language Arts, and the generation of research-based findings about student writing and college readiness that have been presented in local and national venues.

Learning Sciences literature notes that context and perspective are critical features of instructional situations. Penuel, Roschelle, and Shechtman's (2007) co-design suggests teachers should be active partners in educational research design, while Spillane, Halverson and Diamond's (2004) work shows that school leaders benefit from working with a network of partners to implement change. Dialogues shows us that these findings are not confined to situations where instructional reform or new design are being developed; rather, the need for respecting context and noting perspective extends to the ordinary practice of fields like writing and college readiness. In short, the difficulties of preparing students look very different for high school teachers and college composition instructors. Neither of these views are correct; rather, each is incomplete. They inform each other.

A space like Dialogues—one that deliberately draws on the expertise of teachers across institutions and levels—reveals this partiality clearly, and it has encouraged members to visit each others' spaces and learn from each others' students and findings. When college professors like Janet and secondary teachers like Marie discuss the ways in which they have revised their classroom practices in response to their own research, it becomes easy to understand how Coburn, Penuel, and Geil's (2013) conception of a research practice *partnership* creates real change in educational institutions. When we enable teachers to work together and learn from each other, students and colleagues at both levels benefit. High school students see their teachers' cross-institutional expertise as they begin applying to college. First year college students get the benefit of a professor who understands that their prior knowledge of high school writing is critical to their future success. One limitation here is that we are not (yet) aware of students who came through the high school classes of a Dialogues member into first-year writing at our university, but we are eager to learn about how these perceived benefits to students play out.

Along with this broadened view of student writers during college transitions, Dialogues has enabled new writerly roles for teachers. Over time, and through research design and writing experiences, college professors and high school teachers have begun to talk about themselves as not just teachers, but actively working researchers and writers who have observed a range of learning settings. In their research groups, Dialogues teachers have considered not only data that they've collected, but how their teaching practices might respond. Some groups have even extended their work into bringing their students into dialogue (in the case of Lara and Caitlin's ESL students). This attention to, and empathy for, students' experiences as writers helps teachers tune into the communicative—not just evaluative—nature of writing, and may help students write for real settings beyond the classroom walls.

In short, while changeable and contingent, the emergent nature of this design has enabled us to respond to participants' needs and continually reinvent our Dialogues space to suit the changing needs and phases of the group. In turn, that responsiveness has enabled Dialogues members to follow their interests, adapt their practices, and create new knowledge across institutions about college readiness in the increasingly-central field of writing. If we had initially aimed to create a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or a professional learning community (DuFour, 2007) in which we taught secondary teachers and college composition instructors about qualitative research, Dialogues might well have ceased when we reached the end of the initial static design. Instead, the emergent nature of a designed affinity space (Gee, 2004, 2017) has pushed us to teach, listen to, and sustain each other over time. The diverse expertise that has grown through our ongoing conversation is far more diverse, respectful, interesting, and useful to secondary and college educators than we had initially imagined.

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