

Book Reviews

Charles W. Bridges, Editor.

TRAINING THE NEW TEACHER OF COLLEGE COMPOSITION.
Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1986.
149 pp.

Training the New Teacher of College Composition is a 1986 publication by the National Council of Teachers of English which addresses the growing awareness among theorists and experienced composition teachers that there is a need to offer the new teachers of college composition a solid theoretical and practical orientation to new teaching responsibilities. The book grew from the realization that there appears to be little consensus about the best means by which new composition teachers can be prepared; the training programs that do exist are not widely reported and, in many cases, the new instructor faces writing classes with an insufficient familiarity of composition theory.

The book's editor, Charles W. Bridges of New Mexico State University, and contributor Richard C. Gebhardt of Findlay College, frame the general content of this book in stressing that the training of writing teachers be unified in guiding the new teacher to develop a comprehensive, integrated view of the process of discovering and communicating ideas in written language in a student centered dynamic classroom environment. They suggest that the new teacher be oriented to the underlying theory and principles of peer editing, group revision, teacher response versus evaluation, the focus on the writing process itself, and the importance of designing clear and pertinent writing assignments. Their articles highlight notions that are touched on and elaborated further in the book.

William Imscher and Richard P. Van de Weghe describe the respective training programs at the Universities of Washington and Colorado as collaborative workshops in which the novice composition

teachers learn to design writing assignments, respond to student writing, and conduct peer editing classroom interaction. The beginning teacher will read articles by Don R. Cox and O. Jane Allen who maintain that teaching technical writing with a close eye to the importance of purpose, audience, and collaborative work will dispel the alarm that threatens new teachers when they face a technical writing class for the first time. These entries are followed by advice from John J. Ruskiewicz and Mary Jane Schenck who exhort inexperienced teachers to teach the writing process by offering their students strategies of invention and organization within a collaborative writing environment. Ronald Lusford has contributed practical suggestions about the often mentioned topic of peer group writing and revision.

There are important articles by Richard L. Larson of Herbert R. Lehman College, City University of New York, and Maxine Hairston, of the University of Texas, who offer clear and direct guidance to the new teacher about designing writing assignments that instill growth in the process of student writing and about the kinds of teacher responses that encourage that growth. They emphasize the fact that a positive and dynamic classroom environment complements all assignments that are structured to nurture continuous writing growth. Christopher C. Burnbaum discusses portfolio evaluation at New Mexico University where new teachers receive sensitive guidance as they learn to conduct conferencing, teach revision, and respond to portfolios of their students' written work.

Finally, Timothy R. Donovan, Patricia Sprouse, and Patricia Williams of Northeastern University comment on the fact that many new composition teachers are sent to their classrooms with a syllabus and a handbook, where they learn more about the art of teaching than any training program or text can actually teach them. They have capitalized on this learning by asking their new composition teachers to write logs of their teaching progress which are assembled and become a valuable resource collection of ideas about teaching strategies.

In reading this book the new teacher of college composition and those who train them will find a collection of articles that repeatedly put forth the view that training students in the process of writing will foster growth in written products. Along with useful bibliographies, most articles include clear and practical advice on how new composition teachers can learn to design a theoretically sound and successful writing program.

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