# Editors' Introduction:

## GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS TO
## *RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH*

As many have observed, research in education and related fields has entered an era of paradigm proliferation. Although the various para- digms are often grounded in conflicting perspectives, we believe that the differences need not result in the paradigm wars that characterize much debate about the conduct and reporting of research. Rather, we think that the field is well served by accepting an ethical imperative articulated by philosopher Richard Bernstein, who says that we should "assume the responsibility to listen carefully, to use our linguistic, emotional, and cog- nitive imagination to grasp what is being said in 'alien' traditions" (cited in Donmoyer, 1996, p. 20). Taking Bernstein's words to heart, we feel it is important to judge manuscripts according to the customs and the tradi- tions they invoke. In that sense, we need to be willing to project our- selves into other people's communities in order to find out how they structure their social lives, particularly the ways in which they inquire into and talk about teaching and learning.

Motivated by Bernstein's challenge to see research perspectives from the inside out, we have made a commitment to making *RTE* a forum that presents research conducted from the field's diverse sites, methodologies, and ontological orientations. Our effort to honor a pluralistic approach to research, however, comes with a catch. While we see *RTE* as being inclusive in terms of the types of manuscripts appropriate for publica- tion, we also face the fact that the volume of submitted manuscripts greatly exceeds the number that we can publish. Historically, *RTE* has been able to publish only 10-20% of submitted manuscripts. Our paradox is this: How can we be both inclusive and exclusive at the same time? On what basis do we judge manuscripts that merit publication in *RTE*? How do we both invite a diverse set of contributors and then not publish the great majority of articles that are submitted?

We wish to address these challenges on two fronts. First we will explain our approach to the review process. We then explicate those qualities that we see as essential in articles that we publish, regardless of the type of research conducted or the manner of presentation chosen.

### Review Process

One way we seek to honor diversity in research approaches is to send manuscripts to diverse sets of reviewers. We try to send every man-

uscript to reviewers who share the researcher's concerns, at least one of whom is knowledgeable in the research paradigm the manuscript enacts. However, because *RTE*'s audience is diverse, it is important for us to assess how a manuscript might be read by readers who do not share the manuscript's perspective. Therefore, we try to include one informed skeptic in each set of reviewers. If there are conflicting judgments, we will pay special attention to those reviews that attend to Bernstein's appeal to adopt an insider's view of unfamiliar customs.

The external reviews are critical factors in our decision to publish or not publish a manuscript. Each manuscript goes out to three established reviewers and one graduate student reviewer. Our cohort of established reviewers originated with reviewers who have worked with previous *RTE* editors; to this cohort we have added researchers from schools, universities, and other institutions whose expertise we value in reviewing articles. Our graduate student reviewers have been assembled from both self-nominations and recommendations of university advisors. (See the announcements in this issue calling for both student and teacher reviewers; reviewers can also nominate themselves at the *RTE* World Wide Web site, also announced in this issue.) In each issue of *RTE* we will publish the names of external reviewers who have recently considered manuscripts, as well as the *RTE* editorial board members. These reviewers should represent the variety of research approaches that are reflected in the manuscripts that are submitted for review.

## General Characteristics of Publishable Manuscripts
### APA Guidelines

*RTE* requires all contributors, regardless of the genre selected, to follow the guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fourth Edition* published by the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC 20036. All articles should follow the APA conventions for citations, subheadings, punctuation, tables, and other manuscript features. Conventional research reports should also follow the four part structure described in the APA manual. Authors of studies that include a detailed "Context of the Investigation" should place this fifth section between the introductory section and the Method section of the manuscript. Research reports in other genres and review articles should adopt the conventions of the APA manual for manuscript features and citations but need not use the four part structure.

The relationship of paradigm to manuscript form is, we feel, critical. We anticipate that much of the research that we receive will be amenable to the conventional APA structure; that is, researchers will develop research questions and ground them in relevant theory and research,

explain the methods through which report the results of the research, an the import of the study. Research t that is, that is predicated on the sy data—ought to remain faithful to th addition of a "Context of the Invest ground their inquiries in other trad account for their approach and the r inquiry and their method of present

### Style

Research reports are often criticize ly reliant on jargon and technical lang all but other insiders. We do see a ro in research because they allow for re works with an economy of language cult for many research reports to be v able through jargon. Yet we also wi itous uses of jargon that are indeed write with the goals of clarity, elegar may be read with interest and unde well.

### Guidelines for Specific Genres

Next we provide guidelines for au genres we will consider for pub *Conventional Research Reports, Research Articles*.

### Conventional Research Reports

Research reports traditionally incl different aspects of the report. T *Statement/Theoretical Overview, Metho* tion to these traditional sections, we provide a *Context of the Investigation* s

*Problem statement/Theoretical overv* author states the research problem ar explicitly outlining the research qu research. To articulate the context of t pose for the study, the author situate theory and research.

In reading the opening section of t cally consider the following questions

explain the methods through which they have conducted their inquiry, report the results of the research, and then engage in a discussion about the import of the study. Research that does follow these conventions—that is, that is predicated on the systematic collection and analysis of data—ought to remain faithful to the *APA* guidelines (with the possible addition of a "Context of the Investigation" section). Researchers who ground their inquiries in other traditions should make some effort to account for their approach and the relationship between their method of inquiry and their method of presentation.

### Style

Research reports are often criticized by the uninitiated for being unduly reliant on jargon and technical language, rendering them unreadable to all but other insiders. We do see a role for jargon and technical language in research because they allow for researchers to convey conceptual networks with an economy of language. We imagine it would be very difficult for many research reports to be written without the shorthand available through jargon. Yet we also wish to discourage excessive or gratuitous uses of jargon that are indeed exclusive. We encourage authors to write with the goals of clarity, elegance, and grace so that their research may be read with interest and understanding, and perhaps pleasure as well.

### Guidelines for Specific Genres

Next we provide guidelines for authors who write within the various genres we will consider for publication in *RTE*. These include *Conventional Research Reports, Research Reports in Other Genres*, and *Review Articles*.

### Conventional Research Reports

Research reports traditionally include four sections, each addressing different aspects of the report. The four sections are the *Problem Statement/Theoretical Overview, Method, Results*, and *Discussion*. In addition to these traditional sections, we will include an account of how to provide a *Context of the Investigation* section.

*Problem statement/Theoretical overview.* In the opening section, the author states the research problem and its importance to the field, often explicitly outlining the research questions investigated through the research. To articulate the context of the inquiry and to establish the purpose for the study, the author situates the research problem in relevant theory and research.

In reading the opening section of the research report, reviewers typically consider the following questions:

1. Is the problem under study a worthy topic of investigation? Does the author focus the problem so that it is amenable to investigation? Does the author clearly state the research questions?
2. Does the author situate the research problem in a relevant and compelling theoretical framework? Is the framework itself sufficiently established through rigorous inquiry? Is that framework articulated through the establishment of an appropriate (usually current) citation base? Is the framework substantive, empirically-grounded, and faithful to the conceptions of the theoretical antecedents referenced?
3. Does the author clearly articulate why this problem is significant enough to justify both an empirically-grounded inquiry and the publication of the results of that inquiry? Does the author clearly explain what this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field?

*Context of the Investigation.* Researchers often argue that the results of their studies are unique to the context of the investigation and therefore seek to explain the particular characteristics of the research site. In such cases they provide a section about the context of the investigation in which they describe (1) the institution (school, workplace, etc.) and its values, structure, processes, history, personalities, etc.; and (2) the key participants in the research.

In reading the *Context of the Investigation* section, reviewers typically consider the following questions:

1. Does the author identify all relevant factors in the environment that might affect the results of the study?
2. Are these factors explained in sufficient, yet not excessive, detail?
3. Does the author link the information in this section to other parts of the article? In particular, does the author make it clear how the contextual information helps to answer the research questions?

*Method.* In the next section of the article, authors typically explain the nature of the data that have been collected, the ways in which they have been collected, and the ways in which they will be analyzed.

In reading the *Method* section, reviewers typically consider the following questions:

1. Does the author explain the methods of data collection and analysis clearly and in detail? Are research participants described and accounted for as appropriate for answering the research questions identified in the opening section? Is the methodology sufficiently illustrated in order to clarify the researcher's approach to conducting the inquiry?

2. Does the author account for the sample si problems? Does the author account for c ticipants (race, gender, ethnicity, school s theoretical framework of the inquiry?
3. Does the author give a convincing accoun the methods of data collection and analy es of the research questions investigated author provide a theoretical rationale for gy of this research that is consistent wit provided in the opening section of the ar

*Results.* In the next section of the article, t cusses the results of the data collection.

In reading the *Results*, reviewers typically co tions:

1. Are the data reported through an approp numbers, words) in order to elucidate the the questions under study? Is the prese (e.g., tables, figures, transcripts) an appropr readers to see and understand the import
2. Does the author thoughtfully analyze the and rigorous methods? Does the author c the data that provide a different perspec author fully account for all cases within th er the significance of anomalous or discon

*Discussion.* In the final section of the report, implications of the research.

In reading the *Discussion*, reviewers typicall questions:

1. In arguing from the results, does the auth tions of what the data allow? Is the final a quence of the empirical evidence available
2. Does the author ground the discussion in th that motivated the research as outlined in t article? Does the author sufficiently extend er the original motivating theory? To wha consider the theoretical significance of th results?
3. Does the author provide a contribution or field's understanding of some aspect of tea aspect of literate action?
4. On the whole, does the author argue from a principles that are theoretically related? Doe argument with clarity?

2. Does the author account for the sample size in terms of the research problems? Does the author account for other traits of research participants (race, gender, ethnicity, school success, etc.) in terms of the theoretical framework of the inquiry?

3. Does the author give a convincing account of the appropriateness of the methods of data collection and analysis for the specific purposes of the research questions investigated in the article? Does the author provide a theoretical rationale for the particular methodology of this research that is consistent with the theoretical overview provided in the opening section of the article?

*Results.* In the next section of the article, the author reports and discusses the results of the data collection.

In reading the *Results*, reviewers typically consider the following questions:

1. Are the data reported through an appropriate set of symbols (e.g., numbers, words) in order to elucidate their significance in terms of the questions under study? Is the presentation of these symbols (e.g., tables, figures, transcripts) an appropriate vehicle for enabling readers to see and understand the import of the data?

2. Does the author thoughtfully analyze the data through appropriate and rigorous methods? Does the author consider interpretations of the data that provide a different perspective on them? Does the author fully account for all cases within the sample so as to consider the significance of anomalous or disconfirming data?

*Discussion.* In the final section of the report, the author considers the implications of the research.

In reading the *Discussion*, reviewers typically consider the following questions:

1. In arguing from the results, does the author stay within the limitations of what the data allow? Is the final argument clearly a consequence of the empirical evidence available from the research?

2. Does the author ground the discussion in the theoretical framework that motivated the research as outlined in the opening section of the article? Does the author sufficiently extend, reflect on, or reconsider the original motivating theory? To what extent does the author consider the theoretical significance of the investigation and its results?

3. Does the author provide a contribution or insight that extends the field's understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning, or other aspect of literate action?

4. On the whole, does the author argue from a sound, consistent set of principles that are theoretically related? Does the author present this argument with clarity?

## Research Reports in Other Genres

The APA-style research report has clearly been the dominant mode of publication for empirical investigations in the history of educational research. Recent challenges, however, have questioned the APA structure's exclusive status in research journals. Bazerman (1988) has identified the behaviorist underpinnings of the APA publication manual, an epistemology that is not shared by a number of modern researchers. Researchers who ground their work in other epistemologies have made a persuasive case that different theoretical frameworks call for other modes of presentation. Our commitment to emphasizing the theoretical relationship between epistemology and methodology opens us up to unconventional ways of reporting research.

We are very concerned that all articles submitted to *RTE* be evaluated on their own terms; that is, we believe that the APA conventions should not govern the review of articles that are written from a different perspective and in a different mode, even if these conventions do provide the rules for certain formalities such as citation style, subhead appearance, and other features. Yet in inviting a plurality of perspectives and modes, we risk editing a journal with no core values, orientation, or direction. We therefore wish to establish broad principles that govern the review of data-driven articles that are not written according to APA specifications. Some of these principles are consistent with those elaborated in the section on conventional research reports. Others are particular to research reports written in other genres.

In reading research that is not reported in the APA style, reviewers typically consider the following questions:

1. Is the problem under study a worthy topic of investigation? Does the author focus the problem so that it is amenable to investigation? Does the author convey in some way the purpose of the inquiry?
2. Does the author situate the research problem in a relevant and compelling theoretical framework? Is that framework conveyed in some way in the course of the presentation?
3. Does the author draw on a well-defined set of data for the basis of the research? Are the performances of all participants (including, when relevant, the researcher) accounted for in the presentation of the research? Does the author consider the significance of anomalous and disconfirming cases?
4. Are the interpretations, final reflections, conclusions, and other efforts to make sense of the data warranted by the evidence collected during the inquiry? In these final considerations does the author return to the inquiry's motivating theories to make sense of the data?
5. Does the genre of presentation emerge from the theoretical framework that motivates the research? Is this relationship clear? Does

this genre provide a compelling medium [...] research? Does the article live up to th[...] instance, that a narrative is riveting? D[...] promise other aspects of rigorous resea[...] riveting, does the author sacrifice clear a[...] achieve this effect?

## Review Articles

We have identified three types of articles th[...] *reviews*. They are:

1. *Research reviews*, in which the author pro[...] research relevant to current questions, issu[...] intention of clarifying the topic's significanc[...] perspective on it.
2. *Conceptual arguments*, in which the author dra[...] to develop theory. The research base is not as[...] research review. Rather, the author draws on [...] research, reports it in greater detail, and uses i[...] cal argument about a topic in the field.
3. *Methodological reviews*, in which the author [...] methodology with the goal of reaching a new und[...] theoretical relevance of specific tools and trad[...] research.

In reading review articles, reviewers typically consider[...] questions:

1. Is the purpose of the review clear?
2. Is the topic significant and relevant to the field, and does [...] any new perspective or insights on the problem under re[...]
3. Does the review use a citation base that would contr[...] for scholarship?
4. Does the research cited provide sufficient ground to su[...] the argument forwarded?
5. Does the article fairly represent all positions on the [...]
6. Will the article provide grounds for other scholars to [...] and advance the field with greater insight?
7. Does the author use the review in order to ask new [...] under consideration?

## Introduction to the Current Issue

The wind[...] articles tha[...]

this genre provide a compelling medium for the presentation of the research? Does the article live up to the standards it suggests—for instance, that a narrative is riveting? Do these special criteria compromise other aspects of rigorous research—that is, if a narrative is riveting, does the author sacrifice clear accounts of data in order to achieve this effect?

## Review Articles

We have identified three types of articles that fall in the category of *reviews*. They are:

1. *Research reviews*, in which the author provides an overview of research relevant to current questions, issues, or topics with the intention of clarifying the topic's significance or providing a new perspective on it.
2. *Conceptual arguments*, in which the author draws on prior research to develop theory. The research base is not comprehensive as in a research review. Rather, the author draws on a smaller corpus of research, reports it in greater detail, and uses it to make a theoretical argument about a topic in the field.
3. *Methodological reviews*, in which the author analyzes research methodology with the goal of reaching a new understanding of the theoretical relevance of specific tools and traditions in literacy research.

In reading review articles, reviewers typically consider the following questions:

1. Is the purpose of the review clear?
2. Is the topic significant and relevant to the field, and does it provide any new perspective or insights on the problem under study?
3. Does the review use a citation base that itself meets high standards for scholarship?
4. Does the research cited provide sufficient grounds for supporting the argument forwarded?
5. Does the article fairly represent all positions reviewed?
6. Will the article provide grounds for other researchers to understand and advance the field with greater insight?
7. Does the author use the review in order to extend the field of study under consideration?

## Introduction to the Current Issue

The winds of fortune have provided us in this issue a diverse set of articles that illustrate the points we wish to make about the range of arti-

cles we hope to publish. One concern we have is that our attention to diversity will make it appear that we are trying to establish a new orthodoxy that will exclude traditional research reports. We wish to emphasize that our goal in explicating our review procedures is to provide researchers from diverse sites and approaches with an understanding that we will try to review each manuscript on its own terms, all the while trying to preserve the core values that have guided *RTE* throughout its thirty-plus years of publication.

In this issue we publish four very different research articles. Two of the manuscripts (those by Cheri Williams and Mari M. McLean, and by Thomas Hawes and Sarah Thomas) were accepted for publication under Sandra Stotsky's editorship. Although very different in topic, data source, and research methodology, these two articles represent the sort of rigorous approach to conducting conventional APA-style reports that we hope to continue to publish in *RTE*. The articles by Susan Callahan and Timothy J. Lensmire illustrate alternative ways of talking about research. Callahan's study of the state-mandated portfolio assessment in Kentucky could have followed a conventional APA-style report, and indeed her original draft followed a hybrid format, combining the APA structure with a narrative presentation. At the urging of one of her reviewers, however, she decided to embrace more wholeheartedly a narrative presentation for the published version of her research. Using a story format allowed her to provide a compelling account of one department's efforts to implement the portfolio assessment, even if this genre did present some structural problems, such as where and how to account for her research methodology. We offer her article as one effort to render a research report through a narrative and encourage readers to adopt a critical, as well as open, stance in reading it.

Lensmire's article stretches our conception of research yet further. The initial response from reviewers was quite mixed. One reviewer, whose opinion we regard highly, suggested that we reject it because the article does not "report, review, or discuss" any research. But the other three reviewers supported its publication. They felt that the article makes insightful points about writing workshops and that it lives up to the standards it suggests. We discussed this article quite a bit and decided to publish it, even though we shared some of the reservations of the dissenting reviewer. We decided that we would ask Lensmire to explain why this article should be considered as research, and he provided the following reply:

Dear Michael,

You and Peter asked me to discuss briefly how the work embodied in my article is research. In making this request, you noted that, in the context of *RTE*'s past, "research" has for the most part referred to empirical work, and that the publication of my article represented a departure from this practice.

I think of my work as research in at least two related ways. First, for me, it is a form of teacher research. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) note, "The

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unique feature of questions that prompt teacher research is that they emanate solely neither from theory nor from practice, but from the critical reflection on the intersection of the two"(p. 6).

When I was doing the teaching, research, and writing for my book, *When Children Write*, I began to question how advocates of writing workshops imagined and characterized the teacher and teaching in their research reports and how-to books. This questioning of popular images of the writing teacher was driven, in large part, by my own experiences teaching children. That is, certain questions arose out of the interaction of my experiences as a workshop teacher with workshop materials and books meant to support and guide my thinking and teaching.

Because I ultimately decided to emphasize children's experiences of the writing workshop in *When Children Write*, I focused relatively little attention on questions of how workshop advocates imagined teachers and teaching. I bring sustained attention to such questions in the current article.

It is true that the article is not grounded, primarily, in my own teaching experiences—instead, I draw on the writing of workshop advocates, educational and literary theorists, researchers of teaching and learning in classrooms, and others (Kurt Vonnegut for god's sake). But these materials are summoned in order to make sense of teaching in writing classrooms. I think the article can be considered part of a broader teacher research effort to better understand teaching and its complexities.

Second, my work can be considered philosophical research. I hesitate to invoke "philosophy" because I was not trained as a philosopher or philosopher of education. But if we assume Dewey's notion of philosophy as a form of cultural criticism—as an attempt to bring critical imagination and intelligence to bear on beliefs and customs and policies—then my work is, in this sense, philosophical. Dewey did not assume that philosophy and philosophers had some sort of special access to grand, ahistorical, universal truths and goods. But the criticism he called for did involve bringing reflection to our judgments of what we think good and bad, and evaluating beliefs and practices against what we think desirable.

Above, I said that a goal of my work was to makes sense of teaching in writing classrooms. Given my reference to Dewey and the sort of philosophy he advocated, I should add that this "making sense" involves not only seeking clarity, but also wrestling with what we think is more and less desirable, what we think better and worse. In other words, if we try to live up to Dewey's sense of philosophical work, then we will necessarily be concerned with what is good and bad in our thinking and writing about, and our enactments of, teaching in the writing classroom.

My characterizations of my work as philosophical research and as teacher research are certainly not in opposition. Dewey sought to link theory and practice in the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago. More recently, Berthoff (1987) wrote of approaching the classroom as a "philosophical laboratory," as a site in which theory might be brought to bear on practice even as practice corrects theory. My current research is not always tied tightly to my own practice, but it shares this orientation.

Does Lensmire's article count as "research"? Lensmire and three very supportive reviewers have persuaded us that it does (even if at times we haven't been entirely sure). We invite you to read his argument not only for his points about writing workshops, but for the questions his article raises about what to expect of a research article.

We would like to hear your response. We have developed a *Readers' Forum* at the *RTE* World Wide Web site at http://members.aol.com/RTEngl/rtehome.htm. We encourage any reader to post a response to any article we publish. We are especially interested in hearing commentary on this introduction and the four articles we publish in this issue of *RTE*. If you do not have access to the World Wide Web but wish to post a response anyway, type your thoughts (using a large font and dark print) and send them to *RTE*, College of Education, Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum, University of Oklahoma, 820 Van Vleet Oval, Norman, OK 73019-0260 and we will post it for you.

We apologize for the length of this introduction, but hope that by addressing these issues in detail we will provide readers and contributors with an understanding of our thinking as we receive and consider articles submitted for publication. *RTE* has historically been among the leaders in setting the direction for literacy research. We hope that through such features as our Readers' Forum we can engage the profession in a discussion of what those directions ought to be and what vehicles we should use to get there.

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# Tests Worth Taking?: U
## for Accountability i

### Susan Callahan
*Northern Illinois Univ*

*In response to the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform of Education began requiring writing portfolios fro grade students. These portfolios were intended to improve the amount and kind of writing produced train teachers to assess individual student writing in tion, and (3) to hold schools accountable for the prog first two years of the portfolio requirement, the Dep the accountability aspect of the assessment, stress schools could expect based on their students' perform the meaning that portfolios came to have for the f school described in this study.*

*I observed the way the nine members of the Pine preted and implemented the portfolio assessment du rienced the assessment as a test of their competence pressure to produce good portfolio scores but little i lios might be used in the classroom. Consequently, w change the amount and kind of writing produced by teria used to assess student writing, it did not dem writing was understood or taught.*

Ten years ago few teachers had heard of wr ever, portfolios are at the center of many dis gogy, writing assessment, and curriculum des folios are seen as a way of encouraging proces student responsibility for learning. Within wr folios are widely viewed as the most potential and within curriculum design, portfolios are c way to encourage faculty development and writing programs (Callahan, 1995). This inte encouraged many teachers and administrator without fully considering how a particular p practices and relationships that already exist statements by many portfolio advocates, (see Smit, 1994; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991; Wh folio use is no longer an option for many teach ment.