

**ELAN 7320 Teaching Composition  
in Elementary and Middle School**

Wednesdays 4:40-7:15 or 4:50-7:25 or 5:00-7:35

JoBeth Allen, 125 Aderhold

(I don't have set office hours because I'm often in schools, but I'm happy to find a time to meet with you; email is the best way to contact me)

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We'll work together as a literate community, an inquiry community, and an action community to explore various aspects of the teaching/learning of writing. I'll set up a class listserve that will be integral to our learning. Please check email regularly - I'll be sending articles to read, assignments, wonderful advice, pictures of my grandchildren, information on conferences and other resources.

Everyone, individually or with partners, will choose one area of composition for in-depth investigation: culturally-relevant instruction, children with special needs (e.g. a hearing impairment, learning disability, etc.), teaching a particular genre (e.g. fiction, poetry), conferences, spelling instruction, reading-writing connections, or any topic of particular interest to you. These can be action research projects in your classrooms; those who don't have classrooms might want to partners with someone who does for a collaborative action research project. You may want to document how you create or extend a writing workshop in your classroom. Those of you who are working with a new curriculum in Clarke or other school districts may want to tailor your investigation to some aspect of that curriculum. We will develop a rubric to guide the writing and evaluation of our reviews. These inquiries should have an identified audience and purpose, such as writing a grant proposal, an article for a journal, a professional learning experience for other teachers, etc. These should be around 20 pages, beautifully crafted, brilliantly persuasive, and educationally illuminating. We'll design a rubric for these projects together.

**LEARNING IN A LITERATE COMMUNITY.** My hope is that, working together, our class will become the kind of literate environment you will want to create in your own classroom. To create this environment, it is essential that we all attend each session fully prepared. These are some of the learning structures we'll use to work towards our goals.

a. Literacy Workshop/Literacy Group We'll begin each class with reading aloud, making a reading/writing connection, writing and conferring, and sharing. We'll be writing on topics of personal interest in at least three genres. We'll each keep a Writer's Notebook - this will be a new experience for me as well as for many of you perhaps. See page 70 of Katie Wood Ray's *The Writing Workshop* for

some ideas for possible entries in your notebook (hint – buy or make one that really fits you – that you love – that you’ll want to carry with you and put stuff in!). Literacy groups are self-selected.

Joy of joys – you get to read for pleasure all semester, in at least three genres! To “read like a writer” in your memoir, fiction, and informational selections, we try to think about the craft of the text (language use, imagery, humor; leads and endings, character development) and think – perhaps write – “I want to be able to do that with my writing, so I’ll need to...”

b. Pedagogy Explorations/Pedagogy Group Please keep a Pedagogy Notebook (this can be on computer, as long as you bring notes each time). Your questions and observations about literacy teaching and learning, classroom experiences, and notes on professional readings will be the basis of both small group and whole class discussions. It is critical that each of us comes to class having read the common readings and having written about them. Your note-taking style is up to you, so long as you record key concepts and question the texts about things you don’t understand, things that make you think of your own learning, and especially things that relate to your own teaching. These questions will be the core of our discussions, so highlight them in your notes in some way. You may want several sections in your PN, e.g., for notes on readings, mini-lesson ideas (there will be lots each week – it will be up to you to translate them to your grade level), maybe a list of recommended professional and children’s literature book, etc. **MAKE IT USEFUL TO YOU!** We’ll use pedagogy notebooks regularly, so please make sure you bring them each class session. Pedagogy groups are grade/content specific.

c. Inquiry Support Teams While you’ll be conducting individual or collaborative inquiry projects, we’ll form teams of people interested in similar areas to provide support, share resources, read each others work in progress, etc.

**LEARNING THROUGH INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PROJECTS.** You can design your own avenue for learning by choosing which activities would be most beneficial, based on your professional goals. Some would be great partner experiences.

**NOTE:** Attendance is important, because we are learning from each other and because this content is so critical to being an effective teacher. If necessary, you will be allowed one excused (in advance) absence; any other absence will result in grade reduction of 5 points per absence. Yes, there are occasional exceptions – I’m a sucker for a sick kid at home, but less tolerant of other “emergencies,” such as the undergrad who had to take the cat to the vet because her mother had a new Mercedes and didn’t want cat hairs on it!

## MENU OF POSSIBLE LEARNING PROJECTS FOR ELAN 7320

### Everybody Sections (60 points)

1. Inquiry Project While this is required of all members of the class, projects will vary considerably in focus and format. I'll ask for a 1-page proposal early in the semester so that we are in agreement about your plans. (50 pts)
2. Writer's Notebook and One "Published" Piece This is the fun part! (10 pts)

### Individually Designed Sections (need to add up to 40 points)

3. Additional readings This is a way to pursue your own goals for the course. Feel free to borrow my books, or to find related readings on your own. If you do chapters or articles on a specific topic, count 6-8 as one book, depending on length). The write up should include key points, and how what you read might impact your teaching. (10 pts each)
4. Family History Project Use *History comes Home* as a jumping off point for your own family history project. Apply principles of "universal design." You can collaborate on this. Write up how you taught (lesson plans, etc.) and document student engagement and learning. (30 pts)
5. "Transformative Unit" Use any one of Ada and Campoy's units, or combination of units, as a jumping off point. You can collaborate on this. Apply principles of "universal design." Write up how you taught (lesson plans, etc.) and document student engagement and learning. (30 pts)
6. Pedagogy Notebook While I'll be looking at these each week over your shoulder during discussions (kind of disconcerting, isn't it!), I will not grade them unless you decide to turn it in for points. I'll be looking for high quality interaction with the texts and useful organization of the notebook in sections that go beyond the text, e.g., lists of mini lessons, additional readings, websites, etc. (10 pts)
7. Design Your Own Learning Project You are smart, creative, and probably have a pretty good idea of how you can work toward your goals. Think it through, write it down, and we'll talk. (??? pts)

After you have decided what would be the **best set of learning experiences for you**, please fill in your learning contract (next page).

\_\_\_\_\_ 'S LEARNING CONTRACT and EVALUATION

| Learning Activities                     | Self Evaluation | JoBeth's Evaluation | Points |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|--------|
| Inquiry Project on                      |                 |                     | /50    |
| Writer's Notebook and "published" piece |                 |                     | /10    |
|   |                 |                     |        |
|   |                 |                     |        |
|   |                 |                     |        |

(narrative evaluation plus number of points earned)

Total points: self-evaluation \_\_\_\_/100 JoBeth's evaluation \_\_\_\_/100

GRADING SCALE : A 91-100, B 81-90, C 71-80, etc. (don't go there!)

\* Please turn this sheet in at the end with your final projects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
your name

\_\_\_\_\_  
JoBeth

**Syllabus ELAN 7320 Fall 2004**  
**Teaching Composition in Elementary and Middle School**

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Focus</b>   | <b>Preparation, Events</b>   |
|--------------|--|--|
| August 25    | Writing to change ourselves, writing to change our world               | Select a memoir to read this week; "read like a writer"; bring your cultural "memoir-abilia"                                 |
| September 1  | Memoir-abilia; exploring our cultural influences                       | Read your memoir – enjoy!<br>History – read at your own pace   |
| September 8  | Writing as transformation  | Authors, 1-3;<br>WW, 1-4 (as needed)   |
| September 15 | Blurred genres: memoir and poetry                                      | Authors Unit 1;<br>Romano (pdf) or Siemens (pdf)<br>WW, 5-8 (as needed)  |
| September 22 | universal design for the inclusive classroom                           | Strickland et al. (pdf);<br>Authors Unit 4   |
| September 29 | <i>Center workshops on Units in Authors in the Classroom!</i>          | <b>Prepare Authors in the Classroom Workshop (any but 1 and 4)</b><br>Select a novel to read; "read like a writer" (4 weeks) |
| October 6    | Teaching fiction, teaching using standards                             | WW, 9-11; Atwell (pdf)<br>(visit from FD); your district standards   |
| October 13   | Blurred genres: memoir and fiction; linguistic diversity as a resource | WW, 12 and 16<br>Skilton-Sylvester &/or de la Luz Reyes and Laliberty  |
| October 20   | Whole class teaching; cultural diversity as a resource                 | WW, 13<br>Ladson-Billings (pdf) and Thompson (pdf)   |
| October 27   | Responding to student writing, conferences                             | WW, 14; Harwayne (pdf)<br>Select an informational book or several pieces; "read like a writer"                               |
| November 3   | Literacy across content  | Angelillo (pdf)  |
| November 10  | Fostering critical literacies  | Vasquez<br>(visit from Red Clay)   |
| November 17  | Assessment & Evaluation  | WW, 17-18  |
| December 1   | Sharing and publishing; Blurred genres: fiction/informational/poetry/  | W, 15 and 19   |
| December 8   | Celebrating literacy in schools and beyond                             | Inquiries due  |

Readings:

1. *The Writing Workshop: Working Through the Hard Parts* (and They're All Hard Parts) by Katie Wood Ray with Lest Laminack (WW)\*
2. *Authors in the classroom: A Transformative Educational Process* by Alma Flor Ada & Isabel Campoy (Authors)\*
3. *History Comes Home: Family Stories Across the Curriculum* by Steven Zemelman, Patricia Bearden, Yolanda Simmons, and Pete Leki (History)\*
4. *exciting articles and chapters from books that I'll email you, free of charge!*

\*how the books are noted on the syllabus above

\*\*note that readings are CHAPTERS, e.g., 1-3 is not just 3 pages (-: