**Research in the Teaching of English**

*Research in the Teaching of English* (RTE), was started by Richard Braddock and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1967, four years after Braddock’s (1963) NCTE-commissioned report *Research in Written Composition* and one year after NCTE’s first RTE seminar (Herrington, 1989). *RTE* offers insights into the shared and divergent interests and methodological perspectives of composition studies researchers.

**Methodological Focus**

Although *RTE*’s founding paradigm, and much of its first thirty years, privileged quantitative methodology, today the journal is multidisciplinary and reflects a variety of methodologies. Articles include “original research and scholarly essays that explore issues in the teaching and learning of literacy at all levels” (NCTE, 2010). Sarah McCarthey, a current *RTE* editor and professor at the University of Illinois, indicated that a majority of recent submissions are qualitative and technology-focused, which she believes reflects trends in the field (S. McCarthey, personal communication, September 15, 2010).

**History**

For insights into *RTE*’s development, I began by investigating its editors over time. Their decisions, while “shaped by the interests and approaches of the larger community of writing…[also] reflect the values of leaders in the community and their attempts to shape its future” (Herrington, 1986, p. 118).

**Editors in Research in the Teaching of English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Institutional Affiliation</th>
<th>Herrington’s Characterization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1967-1972</td>
<td>Richard Braddock</td>
<td>University of Iowa</td>
<td>Establishing Community &amp; a Charter</td>
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<td>1973-1978</td>
<td>Alan C. Purves</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Questioning &amp; Opening Up</td>
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<td>1978-1983</td>
<td>Roy C. O’Donnell</td>
<td>University of Georgia</td>
<td>An Established Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984-1991</td>
<td>Judith A. Langer</td>
<td>University of California</td>
<td>Diversity &amp; Division</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arthur N. Applebee</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SUNY, Albany</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992-1997</td>
<td>Sandra Stotsky</td>
<td>Harvard</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997-2003</td>
<td>Peter Smagorinsky</td>
<td>University of Oklahoma</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Michael Smith</td>
<td>Rutgers University</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003-2008</td>
<td>Anne DiPardo</td>
<td>University of Iowa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Melanie Sperling</td>
<td>University of California, Riverside</td>
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<td>2008-</td>
<td>Mark Dressman</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sarah McCarthey</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Paul Prior</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
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I also read Herrington’s (1989) history of *RTE*’s first twenty years, reviewed editorial statements, and searched the journal for articles on a personal topic of interest—how teachers respond to student writing. I learned that although quantitative work was highly privileged for many years, *RTE* has also always provided a forum for scholarly debate.
My search for articles about teacher response to student writing during these years yielded mostly articles such as Stiff’s (1967) “The Effect upon Student Composition of Particular Correction Techniques” and Smith’s (1969) “Measuring Teacher Judgment in the Evaluation of Written Composition”, but also Gee’s (1972) “Students’ Responses to Teacher Comments.” Early on, RTE conceived of writing primarily as a subject taught in school, and researchers showed an interest in assessment & evaluation.

During these years, there were serious debates about various methodologies and issues of sociolinguistics and language differences. Scholars also began showing an interest in the composition process and methods to study process. My search for articles about teacher response to student writing showed scholars’ continued interest in assessment (e.g., Cohen’s 1973 “Assessing College Students’ Ability to Write Compositions”), but also new interest in what counts as writing (e.g., Moslemi’s 1975 “The Grading of Creative Writing Essays”) and a new focus on teachers (Harris’s 1977 “Teacher Response to Student Writing: A Study of the Response Patterns of High School English Teachers to Determine the Basis for Teacher Judgment of Student Writing”).

Although the issues of study broadened during this time (e.g., new interests in functions of writing in various social contexts outside of school and sentence combining techniques), most articles still accepted the values of quantitative research. My search turned up articles such as Beach’s (1979) “The Effects of Between-Draft Teacher Evaluation versus Student Self-Evaluation on High School Student’s Revising of Rough Drafts”, Crowhurst’s (1980) “Syntactic Complexity and Teachers’ Quality Ratings of Narrations and Arguments”, and Hillocks’ 1982 “The Interaction of Instruction, Teacher Comment, and Revision in Teaching the Composing Process.”

More ethnographic and naturalistic studies were included in the journal during these years, and researchers began to align themselves firmly with either the qualitative or quantitative tradition. Examples of personal articles of interest included Charney’s (1984) “The Validity of Using Holistic Scoring to Evaluate Writing: A Critical Overview” and Sperling’s (1990) “I Want to Talk to Each of You: Collaboration and the Teacher-Student Writing Conference.”

These years reflected varied research interests (e.g., genre, evaluation, debates about the “literacy crisis”) and methodologies (e.g., experimental, case studies, ethnographies). I found a number of articles about teachers’ responses to student writing, including Beason’s (1993) “Feedback and Revision in Writing across the Curriculum Classes”, Sperling’s (1994) “Constructing the Perspective of Teacher-as-Reader: A Framework for Studying Response to Student Writing”, and Newkirk’s (1995) “The Writing Conference as Performance”.

Smagorinsky and Smith (1997) attempted to avoid the “paradigm wars” by judging manuscripts “according to the customs and traditions they invoke” (p. 285). I saw the first example of published practitioner research, and many examples of cultural research and critical perspectives. Few articles focused explicitly on teachers’ responses to student writing (e.g., Peterson’s “Evaluation and Teachers’ Perceptions of Gender in Sixth-Grade Student Writing” 1998).

DiPardo and Sperling, who were graduate students at Berkeley in the late 1980s, committed to seeking ways to connect RTE research to classrooms and schools, and articles during this time showed a clear interest in pedagogy from a variety
of perspectives (e.g., critical, multi-modality, and ESL). An article of interest for me included Kim’s (2004) “Online technologies for teaching writing: Students React to Teacher Response in Voice and Written Modalities”

**2008-Present.** The current editors are trying to advocate broad notions of research and literacy. Big issues that they plan to focus on are methodological challenges in studying multimodal composition, how researchers are using data in systematic and engaging way, linking policy an practice, and globalization. The editors take the business of writing introductions seriously, and try to group papers in a way that is connected. (e.g., representation, new literacies).

**Information for Graduate Students**

**Submission Guidelines.** Manuscript submissions should follow APA sixth-edition guidelines, and utilize appropriate ethical standards. They should not be submitted or under review with another journal. Additionally:

- Manuscripts should be no longer than 40 pages in length, exclusive of tables, figures, and references, and should be written in Times New Roman 12 pt. font or equivalent. Send an electronic copy of your manuscript to rte@education.illinois.edu. Manuscripts will receive a masked review by established researchers. …Manuscripts should be accompanied by a cover letter that includes each author’s name, institutional affiliation, home and work telephone numbers, mailing address, fax number, and email address. Email is our preferred way of maintaining contact with authors. (RTE, 2010)

**Student Membership Rates.** Student membership in NCTE is $20 per year, and a student subscription for a full volume (4 issues) of RTE is $10. The website is http://www.ncte.org/journals/rte.

**Student Review Opportunity.** RTE invites doctoral students to serve as manuscript reviewers. You can self-nominate by contacting the editors at rte@illinois.edu with the following information: name, mailing address, university affiliation, e-mail address, and field of interest. You will review a single manuscript (see attached Guidelines for Manuscript Review), and receive a masked copy of the editors’ decision letter as well as the reviews written by senior scholars.

**Annotated Bibliography.** Every November RTE publishes an annotated bibliography of important research work from the last year listed by topic (e.g., digital/technology tools for literacy instruction, discourse/cultural analysis, literacy, literary response/literature/narrative, etc.). The bibliography is available on the website in PDF form, and hopefully it will eventually be searchable.
References


Guidelines for manuscript review

*Research in the Teaching of English* aims to publish articles that make significant research contributions to the theories that inform, and the practices of, teaching and learning English literacies. Research reports (using varied theoretical and methodological frameworks) comprise the vast majority of such articles, but other types of articles that make significant research contributions should also be considered.

The following are some key questions to guide your review. Generally, reviews that provide an elaborated and detailed discussion of key strengths and problems with the ms. and some integrated evaluation of its potential for publication (as opposed to simply brief answers to the questions) will be the most helpful to the editors in making a decision and to the authors as they revise the paper or engage in further research.

1. Is the problem this manuscript addresses a significant problem for the field?
2. Does the manuscript clearly explain how it relates to or extends current research and theory?
3. Does the manuscript clearly describe and employ a methodology consistent with the theoretical orientation that informs the investigation and the goals of the paper?
4. Does the manuscript analyze data? If so, are the data presented clearly and analyzed with appropriate tools? If not, how does the manuscript make a significant research contribution?
5. Are the conclusions insightful and clearly grounded in the manuscript?
6. Is the theory that grounds the article extended or reconceived as a consequence of the analysis?
7. Is the writing clear, fluent, and engaging?

As part of your review, clearly indicate one of the following recommendations:

- Accept with no revisions
- Accept with specified revisions
- Revise and resubmit with recommended revisions
- Do not publish, with recommended revisions and possible journals for resubmission

Some additional issues to note.

- We ask that, no matter how severe your judgment, you phrase your critique in a manner that the author(s) will find constructive—that is written supportively as well as critically. Recall that some contributors to scholarly journals are early-career researchers and that journal review is important in shaping the character and content of scholarly dialogue in the field.
- You may choose to identify yourself to the article’s author in your review. If you so choose, you might consider providing an e-mail address for further discussion. However, because RTE uses a masked review process, identifying yourself to the author will disqualify you from reviewing a revised and resubmitted version of this article.
- To streamline our review process, submit your review via e-mail. Make sure to include both your reviewer number and manuscript number on your review.
- Finally, remember that the manuscript is confidential. You cannot use or cite in any way a manuscript you have received for review.