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Front Matter

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JAEPL



The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

The Politics of Consciousness, Kurt Spellmeyer

Writing, Silence, and Well-being, Robert P. Yagelski

Writing as a Liberal Art in an Age Neither Artful nor Liberal, Douglas Hesse

The Tyranny of ‘Best Practices,’ Roger Thompson

SPECIAL SECTION: TEACHING AND LEARNING AS BODILY ARTS

Corporal Pedagogies: An Introduction, Wendy Ryden

**Embodied Databases: Attending to Research ‘Places’ through Emotion and Movement,
Kati Fargo Ahern**

**Embodied Ethos and a Pedagogy of Presence: Reflections from a Writing Yogi,
Christy I. Wenger**

**Rhetorics of Reflection: Revisiting Listening Rhetoric through Mindfulness, Empathy,
and Non-Violent Communication, Renea Frey**

**Performance and the Possible: Embodiment, Privilege, and the Politics of
Teaching Writing, Lesley Erin Bartlett**

**Un/learning Habituation of Body-Mind Binary through the Teaching/Learning
Body/Mind, Jeong-eun Rhee, Stephanie L. Curley, and Sharon Subreenduth**

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JAEPL

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL), an official assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, is open to all those interested in extending the frontiers of teaching and learning beyond the traditional disciplines and methodologies.

The purposes of AEPL are to provide a common ground for theorists, researchers, and practitioners to explore innovative ideas; to participate in relevant programs and projects; to integrate these efforts with others in related disciplines; to keep abreast of activities along these lines of inquiry; and to promote scholarship on and publication of these activities.

The *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*, JAEPL, also provides a forum to encourage research, theory, and classroom practices involving expanded concepts of language. It contributes to a sense of community in which scholars and educators from pre-school through the university exchange points of view and boundary-pushing approaches to teaching and learning. JAEPL is especially interested in helping those teachers who experiment with new strategies for learning to share their practices and confirm their validity through publication in professional journals.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

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- Imaging & visual thinking
- Intuition & felt sense theory
- Meditation & pedagogical uses of silence
- Narration as knowledge
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- New applications of writing & rhetoric
- Memory & transference



Membership in AEPL is \$30. Contact Jon Stansell, AEPL, Membership Chair, email: jon.stansell@gmail.com. Membership includes current year's issue of JAEPL

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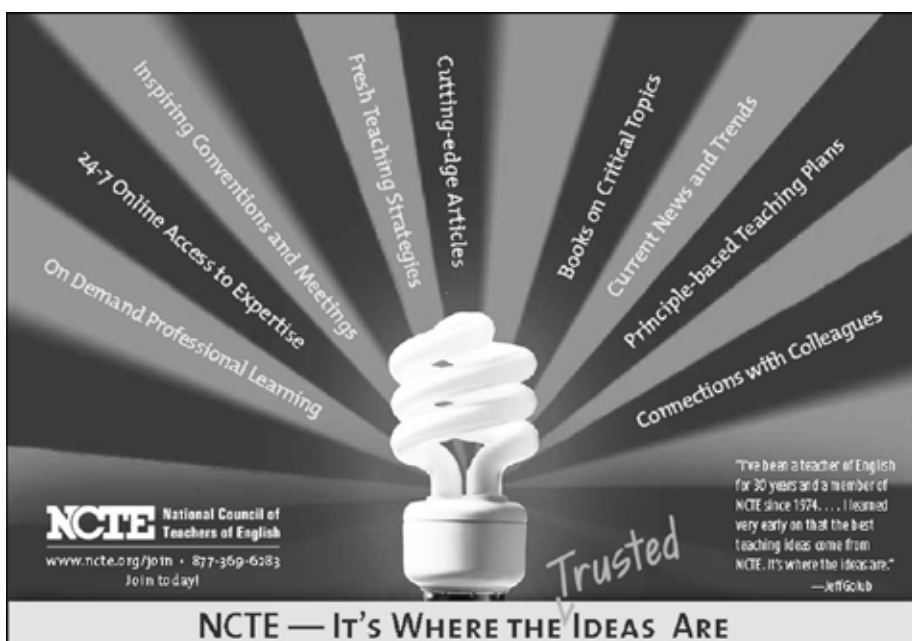
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—Jeff Gould

NCTE — IT'S WHERE THE IDEAS ARE

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A PARTING MESSAGE

As we complete our final term as editors of *JAEPL*, we cannot help but mark the irony of sending to press an issue that emphasizes our Assembly's perennial themes of mindfulness and corporeal learning. Meanwhile, our nation's President

seems determined to flaunt an alarming mindlessness on a daily basis. At the same time, our deeply divided Congress scraps over legislative acts that could secure an incomprehensibly heartless "victory" against the minds, bodies, and well-being of our nation's most vulnerable people. Some of them may be our students.

Nonetheless, we go forward in hopes that the citizens of this nation—and among them, you, our readers—will muster the mindfulness, bodily wisdom, and heart to prevail. It's uncanny how Lawrence Musgrove's *Tex*, to the left, has consistently provided us with the most apt visual aphorisms (and even a conscience) during our editorship.



Perhaps when this volume reaches your hands, the painful course that our country has taken will already have turned in a more compassionate and less chaotic direction. If not, we will cling stubbornly to the belief that our work together with you has still contributed to the common good in some small but meaningful way.¹

We are grateful for the opportunity you've given us. Our teamwork on *JAEPL* has been one of the happiest experiences of our professional lives, enriching our friendship with each other as much as our friendships with you. We leave behind a rainbow of eight volumes whose voices underscore the Assembly's conviction that innovative teaching and learning are among the noblest efforts we can make to liberate the human spirit. However, as many authors in this current volume point out, our profession must remain mindful that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."²

As a key speaker of the AEPL Conference last summer, Kurt Spellmeyer warns us in his opening salvo that other interests can appropriate our noblest efforts in a bid to serve far less admirable aims. We need to be on guard against letting a utilitarian mentality usurp our practices of true mindfulness, for instance. Otherwise, we risk teaching our students to engage in superficial complacency, instead of helping them develop the creative skills they need to confront the sharp conflicts that American culture thrusts upon them.

1. At this writing, our online partners at the Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange (TRACE: <http://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl/>) record 65,054 international downloads since *JAEPL* made its 2009 open-source debut—including 8,871 downloads just in the past year.

2. Often attributed to Thomas Jefferson, John Philpot Curran, and others, the exact source of this citation remains unknown.

Robert Yagelski, another key speaker, follows up with a discussion that began with an activity in which he engaged 2017 conference participants in the ways that writing in silence can create a strong sense of community. He describes how this same activity, focused on student and faculty concerns after the 2016 election, led from silence to active listening on his campus. Yagelski notes that such productive silence can become a powerful rhetorical response to the cacophonous polarization that grips our nation's public discourse.

We have been especially lucky to gather together work from all three of our key speakers this past year, including Douglas Hesse. Hesse's photo-essay takes a look at three instances where writing not only serves as means to enter public discourse, but also as a means to enrich our lives. His defense of belletristic prose explores writing in social media, writing in the profession and community, and writing as a focused meditation in the tradition of Solnit, Orwell, Iversens, and others. What do our students miss if we omit instruction that invites eloquence in personal communication and social connections from our classrooms?

In a thoughtfully disturbing essay that extends Hesse's critique of teaching composition primarily as a pragmatic and academic exercise, Roger Thomson urges us to review the history and notion of what we call our "best practices." He claims that even if we believe these practices will benefit students and enlighten our profession, if we unthinkingly replicate them rather than turn to them as useful guidelines for local inquiry and well-considered classroom adaptation, they may not only impede our students' learning but also undermine it.

This issue of *JAEPL* also heralds a transition. As you turn these pages to the special section on what Wendy Ryden christens *corporeal* pedagogies, you'll find that she has done a fine job of collecting together scholarship that ranges from technological to theoretical issues, illuminating how the body mediates teaching and learning from a distinctively AEPL perspective. Her introduction to this section stands in place of our usual "Out-of-the-Box" feature because it playfully foregrounds the journal's transition to her capable hands and presages her own editorial judgment—one that readers will enthusiastically welcome as she teams up with her colleague and another *JAEPL* author, Peter Khost.

Kati Ahern's exercise in "transforming" students into databases leads off the collection. She uses a bodily approach to address students' inexperience with the bewildering array of electronic information systems they need to explore as novice academic researchers. Yet readers will recognize that Ahern draws upon a technological rendition of Aristotle's *topoi*, raising students' awareness of how the rhetorical underpinnings of databases provide students with a new grasp of the places where they may turn to engage in invention.

Drawing upon her experience with another ancient practice, Christy Wenger returns to this journal with a discussion of how her students incorporate (in the bodily sense of the word) both a study and application of contemplative practices in their writing lives. A new understanding of *ethos* emerges. Wenger combines her commentary on her own

writerly practices with her students' commentaries to speculate upon ways that yoga and mindfulness also inform their conjoining of *ethos* with *pathos*. In the process, students develop a sense of presence in their written work.

In a lucid and compelling essay that grounds itself in the Ignatian *ethos* of a Jesuit university and again, the challenging rhetorical work of invention, Renea Frey provides the most well-conceived and intelligently scaffolded plans for teaching mindful, *irenic* argumentation that we have seen. We predict that *JAEPL* readers will return to Frey's work over and over, not only for its superbly integrated approach to the writing mind and body, but also for its deep resonance with Spellmeyer's opening essay in this volume. Simply put, Frey translates into practice what Spellmeyer advocates in theory.

Shifting the focus to teachers' bodies, Lesley Bartlett takes up the thought-provoking topic of how students, colleagues, and even we ourselves interpret our teaching bodies. With wit, candor, and a thorough anchoring in gender studies, Bartlett interrogates how the concept of "appropriate" gets applied in frequently worrisome and awkward ways—in general to the multifarious bodies of teachers who do not meet up with the expectation that appropriateness entails, and in particular to the bodies of teachers who may possess a mean left hook.

Deploying the multivalent, dense, and often disarming rhetoric of post-modern feminist cultural studies, education scholars Stephanie L. Curley, Jeong-eun Rhee, and Sharon Subreenduth also turn the lens on teachers' bodies—above all, the bodies of academic women of color. Aware that *JAEPL* readers seek a salient connection between experience and pedagogical theory, they depart frequently from their rhetoric of resistance to provide interludes of personal reflection that shed light on why they find such language necessary.

Our survey of this volume of *JAEPL* would fall short if we did not commend to you the selection of teaching tales that Christy Wenger has again assembled in the Connections section—although we suspect many of you turn to this popular feature first. We also welcome long-time AEPL member Irene Papoulis, who now oversees the journal's book reviews. You'll enjoy reading the commentators she has gathered together, along with the new studies they have perused.

The 2018 AEPL conference theme, "Re-Awakening Hope through Education," will feature four highly regarded speakers: Kathleen Blake Yancey, Vajra Watson, Paula Mathieu, and Krista Radcliffe. Once more, our venue is the inspirational setting of the YMCA of the Rockies, outside Estes Park, CO. Plan on joining familiar friends and meeting new ones, June 21-24, with a pre-conference workshop on June 20.

As we say good-bye, we bid you happy reading and leave you with a gentle reminder vis-à-vis our beloved Tex...



