Exit Self-Assessment

The assessment centers on your Synthesis experience, but allows room for you to review your CCT experience as a whole. A copy will be kept in your CCT file to help document the Program's effect on students. This assessment also serves as stock-taking to inform your future work; and to provide insight for the instructor, advisors, and for other interested parties. (Word version) The assessment, which is adaptable to any project of research and engagement, addresses two sets of goals:

- ## My Synthesis Product Shows That...

- ## Developing as a Reflective Practitioner

Describe for each goal

- a) something that reflects what you have achieved well related to this goal, and
- b) something you have struggled with/ need more help on/ want to work further on.
  (Even though you may have many examples for some items, one is enough. Download the handout from the website so you can prepare your own document.)

I. "My Synthesis Product Shows That..."

(adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course because these are also relevant goals for students' work in moving towards the synthesis product)

A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).
I want to influence my students by setting up effective writing environments and participating in writing communities with them. I want to influence my peers by sharing my experiences (good and bad) with them and hopefully working with them on ways to better impact student writing.

I still need to find more concrete ways to assess my students' writing. I engaged in a complete study of personal development, ways to set up good and effective writing communities, etc. I feel that I need more work in the area of assessing and creating good portfolios for student work.

B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.
I have a broad awareness of the research about writing instruction that came out of The Teachers Writing Project, and the band of individuals who worked with Donald Graves. The emphasis seems to be on the writer, not the writing. After taking a course with the Boston Writing Project, I've begun to additionally view writing as a means of learning across the curriculum. I need to better acquaint myself with the work of those individuals who are using writing for academic purposes beyond good writing and understanding—they're using it as a means of figuring out solutions and strategies in other academic areas such as mathematics, history, science, etc. This is an as of yet unexplored area of writing.

C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.
Some of this was certainly addressed in the previous question. I started with a project aimed at creating a workshop to aid educators in implementing writing workshops into their curriculum. I ended up on a deep, personal journey that broadened my understanding of what writing was all about. I found that I developed a new definition for what writing curriculum should be, and how it is most effectively facilitated in the school curriculum. With my focus on the writer rather than the writing, I hope to make some gains in engaging writers and helping them bring their products to the appropriate form of publication. I still struggle with the assessment aspect of this, and hope to direct energies and attentions in that area so that I may have a form of

justification for what I do to those who do not understand completely the scope of my writing curriculum.

D. I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

There are not really any objections to the content of my project other than the time issues. I believe that everyone understands that writing is important and necessary. Nobody will deny that writing can accomplish all that the research has shown that it is capable of. The problem is that I do not believe that all people agree just how effective and therefore vital it actually is.

E. I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

Product: My goal altered significantly from my project's origin to its completion (in this stage). My objective began as a goal to create a workshop for teachers to showcase what I've learned about the writing process as an instructor. The project became a personal journey, and somewhat of a case study of and for me. As this was one of the most effective means by which I began to understand my role as both a writer and as a writing instructor, I hope that my product will serve similar processes for others.

Process: I've come to understand process as ongoing and ever changing. I've looked into my own process as a writer, a writing instructor, and also into my process as a teacher-researcher. While I do not have goals to become a teacher-researcher-publisher, I do look forward to embarking upon research both inside and outside of my classroom with my students as subject matter as well as the research of others. I've learned a lot from the published work of other teachers, and I hope to use that to motivate me to create my own research, published or not.

Scheduling was very difficult for me throughout this process. I found that it was not a matter of time, but a matter of using my time wisely. I went through periods of high productivity followed by periods of next to no productivity. I learned that plugging away is helpful, and that if I mimic my research process in the manner of my writing process I will be much more effective.

F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

I gained information, models and, and experience from my own experimentation and implementation of practice. As much as I've read case studies, research, etc, the bulk of my project was knowledge generated from my own practice. As such, it is not available from other sources.

G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

I believe that my product takes readers on my journey and clarifies my overarching lesson/message that writing is much more than structure and grammar, and that the best way to support good and effective writing is through establishing good environments in which writers my flourish. Most of the research deals with the writer not the written product, and the writing community not the writing lesson. I think that these points are clear throughout my paper.

As I've mentioned before, a fault of my research for this project is that it feels a bit like a jump-start. I think that it is enough to get people interested in writing and writing communities, but I think that I need some more work on the actual implementation of these practices. This feels like it is just the beginning, and I need to take it further in areas of understanding actual implementation and assessment of that implementation.

H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

The personal narrative nature of this product is easily accessible to readers. I think that I put myself out on a vulnerability limb by exposing so much of my personal process that it allows readers to take the information I've learned and practiced without feeling as though they're being told that there is a right way to go about this process. It's accessible because it comes from a practitioner not an isolated researcher.

I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

As a part of my research and writing process I've engaged a number of my colleagues. All of them are excited about my project and were eager to receive updated editions of my text. This facilitated a lot of lunch room discussions, after school sessions, etc. I think that, as I said above, that in laying myself out for all to see, I took a risk that was received with respect and more importantly, with interest. I know that my classroom practices altered as a result of this, and I hope that my work environment with my colleagues will change as well with increased interactions and discussions concerning the best writing and learning environments for our students.

J. To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

I am very happy with my product, but I view it as the first step. Although I would like to take some time and step back from the research part of the project and work on implementation and understanding my writing and my students' writings better, I do also want to continue working on research to understand how to best assess that writing as individual pieces and as an entire portfolio.

II. Developing as a Reflective Practitioner, Including Taking Initiatives in and Through Relationships

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

    One of the most powerful CCT perspectives is that research is possible on many levels. All it takes to do good research is to have good intrinsic incentives—to find something you believe in and run with it. Prior to CCT, knowledge seemed relegated to higher up academics who'd left the profession of everyday practice in the pursuit of research. CCT brought the idea and implementation of research into my personal life and made it possible and viable. I view situations both personally and professionally in a new light as I consider my role in implementing change.

2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

    I certainly learned about my own process throughout the course of CCT. I learned about making subject choices for the right reasons—reasons based out of inquiry and interest as opposed to choosing subject matter because I thought that it sounded good.

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.

    I think that the most effective tool I've learned about organizing my time is that I have to be careful not to overextend myself. I was most productive when not much else was going on, and although I cannot rely on nothing going on whenever I chose to research, I can make sure that I am not scheduling additional courses or major (controllable) life events!

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

I really placed myself into the context of my research and used many of the tools about which I wrote. I've chipped away at the writing instruction I received as a student, and have begun to find my own voice through persistence in my writing attempts. Journaling and free writing have become regular parts of both my personal and professional life. My experiences alter the ways in which I read and view the world, and I find that I am much more inquisitive and observant about the happenings around me.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

For this, you can refer back to number 3. Clearing away distractions remains a struggle for me. However, I've also experienced great amounts of satisfaction at plugging away and just writing. CCT really instilled the necessity for that in me. While I do not always achieve success in my attempts at performing this, I find that when I do I see great results.

6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

Throughout the course of CCT, I came to rely upon my peers in the program for support and advise. I expected this to occur. What I did not expect was the support I received from my colleagues. When I began CCT and my project (the idea came in my second year of CCT) I really felt as though I had to work through my subject matter alone, because nobody at my school site was engaging in what I was researching (at least not to the degree of consistency I aimed for in its content). However, what I found was that people were very interested and supportive of what I was doing. I learned also that I can receive support and suggestions from people who can read and understand my viewpoints regardless of whether or not they adopt them or hold similar ones.

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for the them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

I'd love to point to something that hints that these statements might be true about me, but I cannot! I will say however, that I took the lead in the sense that I often found my own ways of working through issues in my writing. I still have a very strong tendency to resist showing my work until I think it is presentable. I choose to work and plug away, no matter how long it takes me, until I have something somewhat decent. While I think that this limits my ability to receive feedback during parts of my process, I think that it also forces me to be able to voice what I am doing when I finally do show it to an advisor. Additionally, I was very willing to show my work to my colleagues. I found them very helpful in providing an ear to hear what I was saying without my concern that it was somehow inadequate.

8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

Fortunately, this I can say is true of me. I made a good deal of serious revisions to my paper—revisions that really helped to both pull together the text as well as helped me to clarify in my own mind precisely

what I was writing. I think, however, that the most serious revisions for me were process revisions; that I began this project with one idea in mind but shifted when I saw that a shift needed to occur was really the biggest revision, if you will, for me. It is really difficult for me to let go of an idea, or to alter it prior to completion. However, since this is a big part of my project's content, I found that in my process, I had to actively engage in my text both in practice and intellect.

9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work--criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade.
I must say, for better or worse, grades were really not my concern. I believe that what I've internalized is that my own criteria for doing work is finding something that I believe in—something meaningful enough to pursue. When it is work that I think sounds good (as in my kinesthetic learning project), I'm not personally connected with it, and it seems like I'm doing research to get the work done. When I believe in it and engage in it, it becomes a part of me, and it drives me to continue. It then becomes a nagging reminder that I need to go on because I have work to do for my own growth, not for a paper to turn in.

10. I have approached the CCT synthesis course and the CCT program as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.
This feeds off of the prior question, but I will elaborate that finding a meaningful project means the work is never completed. Stages might be complete, but I look at it like I look at my classroom—whenever I do work to get ahead, I still find myself staying just as late to do new work. Getting ahead in my work is never going to save me time, because it will just open up avenues for me to continue with new work. I view this project in the same light. I've researched, engaged in, and written about a portion of the whole idea. I still have a lot of work to do and a lot of growth to make. I think that I've succeeded in exciting my colleagues and myself to the degree where the project is just gaining momentum, and I'm excited about where it will go.

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