

The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing: Scholarship and Applications, edited by Nicholas N. Behm, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and Duane Roen. Parlor P, 2017. 299 pp.

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In a political climate that continues to privilege standardization, assessment, and accountability in education, *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing: Scholarship and Applications* (hereafter “the collection”) features the voices of teacher-scholars who have a different vision of pedagogical practices—a vision driven by key habits and experiences that make rhetoric and composition an essential force in students’ learning and lives. The sixteen essays in the collection, edited by Nicholas N. Behm, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and Duane Roen, engage with the 2011 resolution *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (“*Framework*”), published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Writing Project (NWP). The *Framework* describes eight habits of mind deemed critical for college success and applies those habits to reading, writing, and thinking in the fyw classroom. To contextualize the collection, Peggy O’Neill, Linda Adler-Kassner, Cathy Fleischer, and Anne-Marie Hall’s foreword reflects on the origins of the *Framework* as a response to growing concerns from educators surrounding the finalization of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that were dominating policy decisions in 2010. The *Framework* has persisted beyond its original exigency, and the collection succeeds at further extending and developing the vision and scope by serving as both a “scholarly resource” and motivation for “readers to counteract and complicate the reductive and problematic conceptualizations of writing” (Behm, et al. xxxi). As rhetoric and composition continues to define and shape itself, this collection serves as a useful model for enacting a framework to engage with students, develop meaningful research agendas, and articulate disciplinary identity and values.

The *Framework* functions within a lineage of resolutions, position statements, and platforms issued by NCTE, CCCC, and CWPA—all intended to promote teaching, learning, and research within English studies. Similarly, the collection addresses a rich history of scholarship that grows out of these position statements, notably *Class Politics: The Movement for Students’ Right to Their Own Language*; *Labored: The State(ment) and Future of Work in Composition*, which considers the CCCC Position Statement on *Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing*; and *The WPA Outcomes Statement—A Decade Later*. Much like the “decade later” perspective on the WPA Outcome Statements, this collection considers the state of the *Framework*

“six years out” (O’Neill, et al. ix). Additionally, but less explicitly than *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies* or *Keywords in Writing Studies*, this collection invites the reader to consider disciplinary identity and expertise as well as core values and concerns that connect across educational levels, research interests, and writing contexts.

Although the collection, mirroring the title of the *Framework*, designates “postsecondary” as its focus, it addresses a broad audience including professors and college writing instructors, teacher educators, writing program and departmental administrators, and secondary education teachers and administrators. To appeal to a diverse readership, the collection includes eight essays on scholarship and eight essays on applications. The scholarship section provides both theoretical discussions of the *Framework*—examining and critiquing its content—and qualitative studies—designed primarily to investigate the “habits of mind” outlined in the *Framework*. The section on applications addresses pedagogical choices, curriculum and program design, and implementation of the *Framework* in secondary and postsecondary classrooms. The collection considers the scholarship on and applications of the *Framework* as avenues for change, and woven into the essays is a model for considering the ways frameworks, more generally, serve significant purposes for shaping classrooms, pedagogies, and scholarship in rhetoric and composition.

Often, professionals create task forces to develop goals, statements, and frameworks, but engagement with the ideals that serve as the basis for such goals sputter out after statements have been crafted. This collection tells a different story, demonstrating the *Framework*’s utility and lasting power as a living document within rhetoric and composition studies. Contributors to the collection explore the strengths and adaptability of the *Framework* to better articulate experiences, skills, and knowledges across diverse classroom and program contexts. Essays address the *Framework* as a key component of curriculum and program design (Townsend; Ingraham; Johnston Myatt and Shelton). Alternatively, Andrea Feldman considers the *Framework* in relation to second language learners, and Beth Brunk-Chavez and Angela Clark-Oates both use the *Framework* in online spaces, further exploring the breadth of the *Framework*.

The collection depicts the *Framework* as a living document, requiring flexibility for evolving needs and understandings of the discipline. The *Framework* was initially developed to articulate success in *writing*, but numerous essays in the collection give increased attention to the relationship between writing and literacy. Ellen C. Carillo acknowledges that, although the *Framework* does briefly include reading assignments, it does not fully address “the instructor’s job to deliberately and consistently ‘foreground and teach’ the connections between reading writing” (39). Alice S. Horning goes a step further and recommends

an entirely new section to the *Framework* for “Developing Critical Reading and Information Literacy Abilities,” increasing the focus on reading as an essential component for success in writing courses (63). Offering a critique of a different kind, Rebecca Powell celebrates the *Framework* for “prescribing actual ways of being in the world,” but, drawing on her study at a rural high school, realizes that the *Framework* falls short of this ideal (118). She says, “currently the *Framework* describes an ideal habitus shaped by ideal writing experiences provided by an ideal teacher. The structure to support those ideals is missing” (134). These essays offer critiques but suggest that the contributors perceive the *Framework* as a dynamic document, which invites revision.

The collection also points to new directions for continued implementation of the *Framework*. Although the *Framework* was initially written to support student success, Dawn S. Opel, Rodrigo Joseph Rodríguez, and Angela Clark-Oates each apply the habits of mind to teacher preparation, opening possibilities for the *Framework* beyond secondary and fyw classrooms. Faith Kurtyka examines the habits of mind in the context of a sorority, emphasizing the social aspect of writing and revealing insights into the habits that might transfer between the extracurriculum and the classroom. Amy C. Kimme Hea, Jenna Pack Sheffield, and Kenneth C. Walker use the *Framework* as a tool for (re)articulation of values, agency, and power dynamics, making practices in a program “visible” (31). They suggest that the *Framework* is robust enough to be used as a tool in diverse contexts to productively transform programs and curriculums (Kimme Hea, et al. 35). The essays of the collection make a call for applying the *Framework* to a range of classrooms and programs, using the habits of mind to structure research studies, and exploring the reach of the *Framework*—in essence, offering a model for how a framework might be used for pedagogical and scholarly purposes within the discipline.

The *Framework* was created as “a border-crossing kind of document” that would strengthen connections across educational levels (O’Neill, et al. xi). The outcomes of the document focus on fyw students’ knowledge and skills, but the *Framework* is positioned to ensure the success of those students *as they enter* the fyw classroom, suggesting the habits of mind should be learned and practiced during students’ secondary educational experience. Within the collection, the idea of “border-crossing” appears to an extent, culminating in the final essay by Lori Ostergaard, Dana Driscoll, Cathy Rorai, and Amanda Laudig on basic writing as a bridge between secondary and postsecondary education. However, the collection could have more fully addressed teaching and research at the secondary level, especially considering the focus of the *Framework* on the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. To fill this gap, scholars may take up questions such as the following: How do secondary English language arts teachers incorporate the language of the *Framework* into classrooms that

are overloaded with fluctuating vocabulary from educational policy, Advanced Placement, district curriculum, and school-wide initiatives? And, more importantly, how might the discipline assist secondary education teachers in using the *Framework*, particularly in terms of the supportive structures that Powell suggests are currently missing?

In a different consideration of scope, the collection does not directly address the habits of mind from the *Framework* in terms of disciplinarity. The habits of mind certainly play essential roles in the teaching and learning of writing, but they also apply to education more broadly, raising questions about the responsibility of English language arts teachers and fyw instructors to teach these habits. What is the scope of rhetoric and composition, and to what extent, if at all, do the habits of mind extend beyond that scope? The collection provides a foundation for asking disciplinary questions, but it falls short of fully developing answers. Despite this limitation, or perhaps because of it, the collection promotes the continued life cycle of the *Framework* as a dynamic and applicable document capable of fueling another generation of research.

The collection—particularly through the contrast between Kristine Johnson’s and Peter Khost’s chapters, which foreground the scholarship and applications sections, respectively—reveals a larger tension within rhetoric and composition: the tension between being and doing everything *and* clearly defining the scope of the discipline. Johnson cautions the discipline regarding the abundance of frameworks whereas Khost calls for action, advocacy, and the beginning of a movement, including “bumper stickers” to reach those not already on board with the *Framework* (147). Khost suggests making the *Framework* the agreed upon stance with which we push against uninformed decisions regarding standardization, assessment, and other concerns upheld by external stakeholders. We respect academic freedom, but it would also help us, as a discipline, to use a clear voice when questioning policies from external sources, a voice speaking with the authority of consensus. The collection productively challenges us, as teachers of rhetoric and composition, to further develop and implement the *Framework*. Underlying that challenge is the larger challenge to continue to define and shape our discipline, taking into consideration our areas of expertise, our responsibility across educational levels, and our balance between individual and collective strengths. The collection urges us to consider the positioning of the *Framework*, and implicitly any framework we use, as we negotiate tensions of our disciplinary identity, both articulated through and constructed beyond the *Framework*.

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