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Practicing What We Teach:
A Pedagogical Approach to Interdisciplinary Collaboration Among Faculty

Why study interdisciplinary collaboration?
- College graduates need to collaborate within and across disciplines
- Stakeholders remain invested in WAC/WID initiatives that support cross-curricular literacy
- Lack of institutional support demands individual faculty initiate and sustain interdisciplinary collaboration

What do we need to know?
- How to engage in day-to-day interactions with colleagues in other disciplines
- How to achieve characteristics of successful interdisciplinary relationships
- How interdisciplinary collaboration takes place on a discursive level
- How interdisciplinary collaboration happens in cross-curricular literacy contexts

Research Question: *How does interdisciplinary collaboration happen between writing specialists and disciplinary content experts in the context of cross-curricular literacy projects?*

Methodology
- Interdisciplinary collaboration as pedagogical activity
- Social constructionsim
- Sociolinguistics

The Study

5 Post-Secondary Institutions	Writing Specialists	Disciplinary Content Experts	Data Collected
-Private, 1,300 UG Only -Catholic, 6K -Public, MA, 9K -Research, 31K -Research, 55K	-WAC Directors (2) -Dir. Campus Writing Program -Dir. of Writing -Dir. of Freshman Communication -Grad. Student Admin -Undergrad Wtg Assoc.	-Art Education -Health Professions -Political Science (2) -Chemistry -Computer Science	-Surveys -Recorded Meetings (13+ hours) -Interviews (21+ hours)

Data Analysis

Discourse Analysis
- How participants' language grows from disciplinary discourses
- How specific discursive moves enable or constrain interdisciplinary collaboration

Grounded Theory
- Systematize knowledge about phenomena of interdisciplinary collaboration
- Generate imaginative interpretations that shed light on practices and actions central to interdisciplinary collaboration

<u>Initial Findings:</u> Writing specialists use a range of discursive strategies for the purpose of persuasion.

1. **Making Connections**: Writing specialist builds trust and "comradeship" by relating to a faculty member.

DCE: And I've noticed that as I get older and adopt more of a <u>maternal style</u>...I've gotten more positive feedback on evaluations.

WS: [I]<u>t's neat to hear you to say that</u>...as I've worked with the students in the college of education, which again, in some ways I <u>see so similar</u> [to nursing students you teach] ...I think it is <u>somewhat of a maternal - I care so much</u> about not just them and their education, but knowing they are going to be impacting--you know, the <u>exponential effect that you have</u> on people <u>is pretty significant</u>.

I have the <u>agenda to connect with them</u>. There are times when I will tell stories about students who frustrate me or things that students did that angered me because I'm trying to establish a sense of identification with what I perceive to be a frequent or normalized faculty discussion. (WS Interview)

2. **Affirming:** Writing specialist upholds, supports, or validates a practice or behavior about which a faculty member is unsure.

Computer science faculty member discussing a first-year seminar he was teaching on 1980's music culture:

DCE: Like I said, I'm so playing it by ear to see what I'm going to get...

WS: Well, some musicians in the 1980's, did they play by ear?

For her <u>to affirm</u> that the amount of writing that I expect is about appropriate and, you know, for her to say that she liked the ideas that I came up with for the syllabus. I found that <u>really helpful</u> in moving forward...so sort of <u>instead of questioning everything</u> I kind of <u>felt good about the feedback</u> that she's given me. (faculty interview)

3. **Reframing**: Writing specialist shifts perspective on an idea or practice.

DCE: I do see <u>my role</u> as helping [students] <u>refine their clinical writing skills</u> . . .helping them to see that you can be <u>writing professionally</u> in an <u>informal style</u> and writing professionally in a <u>formal style</u>...and that you should understand those two types.

WS: Mm-hmm. And that <u>you're also using writing for them to learn content as well</u>. So they're not only writing within the discipline, figuring out what that looks like, but also it looks like the <u>writing is helping</u> them <u>figure out</u> the <u>content</u>.

<u>Any opportunity I can have to help faculty</u> think about the thinking and <u>learning of content</u> that goes on in the act of writing that ...It's so much more than just completing an assignment...<u>It's really about thinking and learning</u>. That's where, I guess, my <u>underlying agenda in any</u> of my <u>interactions with faculty</u> would <u>be coming from that perspective</u>. (WS Interview)