



Changing the Way We Teach: Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants

Associate Professor Sally Barr Ebest

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Changing the Way We Teach: Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants draws on eighteen case studies to illustrate the critical role writing plays in overcoming graduate student resistance to instruction, facilitating change, and developing professional identity. Sally Barr Ebest argues that teaching assistants in English must be actively engaged in the theory and practice underlying composition pedagogy in order to better understand how to alter the way they teach and why such change is necessary.

In illustrating the potential for change when the paradigm shift in composition is applied to graduate education, Ebest considers recent discussions of composition pedagogy; post-secondary teaching theories; cognitive, social cognitive, and educational psychology; and issues of gender, voice, and writing.

Stemming from research conducted over a five-year period, this volume explores how a cross-section of teaching assistants responded to pedagogy as students and how their acceptance of pedagogy affected their performance as instructors. Investigating reasons behind manifestations of resistance and necessary elements for overcoming it, Ebest finds that engagement in composition strategies—reflective writing, journaling, drafting, and active learning—and restoration of feelings of self-efficacy are the primary factors that facilitate change.

Concerned with gender as it relates to personal construct, *Changing the Way We Teach* traces the influence of familial expectations and the effects of literacy experiences on students and draws correlations between feminist and composition pedagogy. Ebest asserts that the phenomena contributing to the development of a strong, unified voice in women—self-knowledge, empathy, positive role models, and mentors—should be essential elements of a constructivist graduate curriculum.

To understand composition pedagogy and to convince students of its values, Ebest holds that educators must embrace it themselves and trace the effects through active research. By providing graduate students with pedagogical sites for research and reflection, faculty enable them to express their anger or fear, study its sources, and quite often write their way to a new understanding.

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