Monroe Community College

SPRING 2022

If we listen from the mind of silence, every birdsong and every whispering of the pine branches in the wind Will speak to us. —Thich Nhat Hahn Vietnamese Monk 1926-2022

Comp Notes

All Things Composition

ways, and so have we. We are all exhausted from living during a pandemic. We

than 2 years of radical changes to the teaching and learning environment. Per-

all carry varying weights of health care concerns, social isolation, and more

haps the end of this pandemic is near, and more of what energized us pre-

pandemic will return in new and joyful ways. I hope so. Right now, in this

Our students have been impacted by the pandemic in unprecedented

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Monroe Community College PARE UNIVERSITY OF ARE YORK

Look inside for updates, connections, musings on the following composition and rhetoric areas of interest:

- Campus Resource Highlights
- Committee Events & Partnerships
- Comp Conferences
- Composition Myths Debunked
- Comp/Rhet. Scholarship
- Faculty Spotlight
- News
- Poetry & Art
- Student Voices

Contributors include: Ann Bauer, Pir Rothenberg, Heidi Kranz, Meghan Glaser, Catharine Ganze-Smith, Judi Salsburg-Taylor, Jason Anderson, and Gena Merliss. In striving for the elusive equilibrium that keeps a person afloat, I heard something impactful in yoga class that I think applies to teaching. Recently, my yoga instructor said "find that space between effort and ease." She was talking about physical poise in a crescent-lunge flow pose, but isn't the pointing out of the dynamic between states just lovely? It can be applicable in so many other avenues that need balance.

Take teaching writing about a current reading for example. Are we taking the time to carve space for ourselves and our students to find balance? When we read with students are we finding which parts create more challenges, which create more open connections? How do we offer a healthy concoction of both at the same time? Can we help students sort out their own connections to a reading and writing assignment so that they find what may take effort, and set a pathway that's workable to remain both steadily effortful without being overwhelmed? What might that look like in practice? I invite you to check out the pages inside for more.





Created by

moment, balance matters.

Angelique Johnston

Faculty, English & Philosophy Composition Coordinator 2021-2022 ajohnston@monroecc.edu





If you were

impossible situation, in an

unpleasant

place, with

people who

meant you ill,

and someone

offered you a

wouldn't you

escapist fiction

take it? And

is just that:

fiction that

shows the

opens a door,

sunlight outside,

gives you a place

to go where you are in control,

are with people

you want to be

with (and books are real places,

-Neil Gaiman

make no mistake about

that)

temporary escape, why

trapped in an

Faculty Spotlight: Catharine Ganze-Smith

1. What's your favorite text to teach?

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll and Coraline by Neil Gaiman

2. What's one thing you're grateful for during the throws of the pandemic?

Like many people, I have a love/hate relationship with Zoom, but I am thankful it exists!

3. What are you involved in researching lately?

I am currently looking at ENG 101's role as a foundational course for the Liberal Arts & Sciences General Studies degree program. I am learning more about how students' perceptions of the value of a course and their expectations for success influence their engagement in the material. I am also looking at how we can use empowering pedagogies to help students integrate their learning and see how the material is relevant to their future academic and professional goals.

4. What's one image that brings a smile to your face? Words or image works!

ZoZo!





Hmm.... Got a Question?

Wondering about something composition-related lately? Like how much weight colleagues give to grammar and sentence structure? What are best practices in teaching the use of commas? Looking for a new text to share with students? Drop me a note at <u>ajohnston@monroecc.edu</u>. Ask a question and we'll come up with responses from fellow writing faculty.

The Composition Cemetery... Myths About Composition Debunked

Myth #3: Writing in college means completing an academic essay in MLA style.

As a college English faculty member, I assign academic essays and teach MLA style. The course learning outcomes in English 101, which follow national standards in writing programs, include "supporting a well-articulated thesis statement by integrating information from source material" and "using a standard documentation style for source-based writing." This myth then seems, on the surface, to be obviously true.

But here's the thing: writing is more than just a product. At it's very essence, writing is a fluid process and writing is never done. Writing is a tool and a vehicle to share perspectives, present evidence, add a unique voice. In fact, the best definition for writing I've seen is from Professor Elizabeth Wardle and it states that "writing is not just how you say something (form) but also what you say (content), how you come up with your ideas (invention), how go through the act of thinking and writing (process), and whether what you've said and how you've said it successfully meets the current situation (rhetoric)." Writing itself is not one thing; it's many things, and as such it needs further descriptive parameters to truly define.

The best writing often depends on the situation. Who, what, where, when, why, how are you writing? What writing faculty routinely recite when students ask about writing sounds something like this: what is the purpose of a particular piece of writing? And who is the intended audience? Knowing these two things are key to how writers make moves forward, and having a clear purpose and audience allows writers to make decisions about which tools they might use to best communicate. For example, is a piece of writing intended as a professional report for a business; a letter to the editor aiming to convince; a documentation of a science lab; a work of art like a poem or a play; a narrative of creative non-fiction; a straight-forward, brief abstract based on research; a multiple source synthesis based on a research question; an oral debate; a multimodal powerpoint presentation or infographic; etc.?

Writing instruction that embraces the multiplicity of possible writing projects best allows for students to understand it's variability and it's potential for communicating significance in meaningful ways. Some writing teachers, like Elizabeth Wardle, espouse the value of teaching writing about writing, so that as students learn, they actively see how writing is about choices, a constant endeavor in examining form and function. Once students learn choices, and the right questions to ask, they can begin to meet the need for communicating what is necessary and important within those parameters.

How can we, in any discipline, help? Honor that writing is more than just essays. Teach process and choice and help students ask good questions so they might find the best method for showing others the insight they have to share. Encourage them to use their voice. *Democrat and Chronicle* journalist Mark Hare reminds us that "At our best, we use words to inform, to comfort, to challenge, to raise each other up, to hold families and communities together, to move nations, to preserve and share our history, to explain nature, to seek God." And, with such potential possibilities, the limits are like a sky full of stars. —*Angelique Johnston, ENG/PHL Faculty*



and more importantly, during your escape, books can also give you knowledge about the world and your predicament, give you weapons, give you armour: real things you can take back into your prison. Skills and knowledge and tools you can use to escape for real. As JRR Tolkien reminded us, the only people who inveigh against escape are jailers.

-Neil Gaiman



Connect with ALP: Explicit Reading Instruction



to be feminist in any authentic sense of the term is to want for all people, female and male, liberation from sexist role patterns, domination, and oppression. -bell hooks



As we move through ENG 101 course outcomes each semester, we have a unique opportunity to be explicit in supporting our students' burgeoning reading processes at the collegiate level. Throughout our composition curriculum, we devise assignments that showcase students' ability to effectively summarize, analyze, and synthesize as they read/think, among the many other skills of our ENG 101 course. Our instructional approaches and choices can serve to strengthen the reading/ thinking processes that result in students' success with these requisite skills. Infusing reading/thinking strategies as a tenant of our teaching allows for skill progression and intentional scaffolding so that students build and refine processes as task complexity increases within each unit of study.

As we infuse reading strategies, we directly support students' refinement of active reading habits necessary for success as scholars. We can support this practice through incorporation of an annotation rubric that outlines a "menu" of options for students to employ as they enter conversation with a given text. Then, after the initial active reading phase, and as students are collecting ideas for eventual summarizing, we might consider supporting their reading process by incorporating intentional color-coding of main ideas, or use of Cornell notes as students record "need-toknow" main ideas and any related context from the source text. As we move towards analysis, we might then build on this emerging repertoire to support students in organizing and nudging their thinking further. Consider introducing graphic organizers like this, or this, to lead to more traditional outlines as options to strategically collect thinking relative to analysis. This progression illustrates the goal of reading with the "end in mind". Students next move into significantly more complex assignments requiring synthesis of information across sources and in tandem with their own knowledge. Consider introducing matrices as a reading/thinking/organizing strategy that could make this highly complex cognitive task more visible and concrete. This approach can first serve to explicitly map out main ideas of each individual source. Matrices can then illustrate how connections/themes could be identified across sources and offer our scholars a way to build to synthesis by layering each step purposefully. Overall, students are able to reflect on their growth in both skills and process, which affirms that they have been climbing to this summit all along, step-bystep.

-Meghan Glaser, ESOL/TRS Faculty

Scholar Spotlight: bell hooks

"The word 'love' is most often defined as a noun, yet we would all love better if we used it as a verb," writes bell hooks, a poet, activist, teacher, scholar, feminist, anti-racist, cultural critic, and engaging speaker, who passed away on December 15, 2021 in Berea, Kentucky.

She studied English Literature at Stanford, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of California, Santa Cruz, and taught English, Ethnic studies, African American studies, and Women's studies from the 70s to the early 2000s at USC, Yale, Oberlin, City College of NY, and Berea College in Kentucky. Her name, spelled all in lower case, convey her connection to her grandmother and a desire for others to focus on her ideas rather than herself. Her many defining works in-



https://scalawagmagazine.org/2022/01/bell-hooks-appalachian-elegy/ Click here for a recent article on her poetry.

clude Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism, Feminist Theory from Margin to Center, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom, Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations, All About Love: New Vision, Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope, We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity, Belonging: A Culture of Place, and many, many more books on race, gender, class, and politics.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xeRj3Fntgso Click here for a video on Berea College's new bell hooks center

I first read hooks in graduate school while teaching in the EOP program at Binghamton University in the mid-90s. Her concept of critical pedagogy maintains that "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" and her understanding of the classroom space is a honest, accepting, and affirming one: "as a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence." May we

all remember her words, and keep love at the

center of our practice as teachers. —Angelique Johnston, ENG/PHL Faculty

Connect with CARE: Research from MCC



Care now lies Where Care was not, Shoved in the corner But not forgot— Care, in the corner.

I would call Laughter Out of the trees; But Laughter has bird-eyes And Laughter sees Care, in the corner.

> —Jante Norris Bangs

In the spring of 2019, a qualitative research project was designed to explore faculty-reported factors that may contribute to higher rates of student retention at MCC. This research was modeled after a study that identified classroom best practices significant to retention and led to the development of a drop

rate improvement program at Odessa College. Utilizing faculty interviews and classroom observations, the themes found in the MCC study were comparable to those of Odessa. These themes were subsequently framed as strategies that may improve retention, referred to as CARE practices: Culture/community should be developed and welcoming; Attendance in the course should be essential, but not overly punitive; Recognize the situational nature of instruction; and Encourage student independence with guidance. The outcomes of this project have been incorporated into TCC programming, both in the first- and second-year faculty series and more broadly through faculty/student sur-

CULTURE/COMMUNITY SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AND WELCOMING Make knowing your students well a top priority Engender an open and respectful community/environment conducive to learning Utilize humor to make students feel comfortable Extend the community beyond the classroom ATTENDANCE IN THE COURSE SHOULD BE ESSENTIAL, BUT NOT OVERLY PUNITIVE Build a sense of personal responsibility Make the classroom experience essential Monitor student attendance and step in, when appropriate RECOGNIZE THE SITUATIONAL NATURE OF INSTRUCTION Know that learning and learners are dynamic Note that tearling and rearries are dynamic. Teach to the students in your classroom Hold high expectations/standards/policies, but be reasonably fiexible depending on the situation Monitor students closely and provide assistance, even nonacademic, when appropriate ENCOURAGE STUDENT INDEPENDENCE WITH GUIDANCE Set students up for success in and out of the classroom Be willing to let go as an instructor while remaining accessible

veys and TCC professional development events. Additionally, these practices have been shared with departments in the hopes that they may be incorporated into departmental classroom observation protocols with the goal of making this framework part of the institutional culture at MCC.

-Jason Anderson, Chemistry Faculty

Want to learn more? See the actual study here: <u>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1okkEms01kDI71evAWttH9NKURrVhfbjuU</u> <u>cS-fUUX0Wk/edit?usp=sharing</u>



Scholarship: Raciolinguistically Just Literacy Education

Many of us in the composition, rhetoric, post-secondary literacy and similar disciplines have been intentional in recent decades about incorporating diverse voices and perspectives in our curricular choices. In this way, we intend to instill our students with a deeper respect for multiple viewpoints and broaden the literary canon. It's a pathway to revolutionizing the conversation around race and democratizing eduction. Personally, I have tried to be purposeful in

adopting pedagogies where women, first-generation, First People, black, brown, and other traditionally marginalized students know they have a place in the academy. Through the implementation of multiple theoretical frameworks, the practice of care with my students, and a mindful pedagogy of love, I want my students to feel that they are seen and heard, that they have as much right to higher learning as their more privileged counterparts.

While these theoretically-informed practices and deliberate curricular choices have had many positive results, I've subverted some of my ideologies by adhering to, requiring, and instructing students in Standard English. It did not dawn on me that by insisting on Standard English in student writing, I was perpetuating a system of power and white supremacy through language. (This speaks volumes to just how clueless I really am as a white woman, despite all the good intentions.) It so happens I serve on the Publications Committee of my professional organization, the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), and in 2021 we commissioned our annual white paper to address racism in language and teaching practices. I personally invite you to CRLA's 2021 white paper, "Raciolinguistic Justice in College Literacy and Learning: A Call for Reflexive Practice," by Suh, Williams, and Owens, and welcome ongoing discussion about how we, as practitioners, might help break down white supremacy in our classrooms and in the academy, with the ultimate goal of transforming our larger society.

In the paper, Suh, et al., asks the reader to examine conventional practices in college literacy and learning and its inherent embodiment and perpetuation of racism. Indeed, most of us have been indoctrinated to experience race through language and language through race. Just as our social systems have perpetuated oppression, Suh, et al. call on practitioners in literacy and language to contribute to "decolonizing our profession and our professional practices." The paper explores a raciolinguistic praxis through "critical language awareness," "antiracist education," "codemeshing," and by "disrupting the myth of linguistic homogeneity." The paper draws heavily on Williams's Raciolinguistically Just Literacy Education where pedagogical practices encourage linguistic dexterity, honor the humanity of language practitioners, and promote agency in students' rhetorical choices. These practices are applied to student writing, speech, reading, and all academic endeavors. Inherent in the practice of raciolinguistically just literacy education includes a redefined assessment process that recognizes bias, expands the conventions of language use, and upsets racial superiority. As a model for practitioners to broaden the norms of academic publications, the paper is constructed with regular interludes asking the reader to "pause, breathe, reflect". In brief sum, the paper creates an argument about the academy's use of Standard English as a way of perpetuating white supremacy, examines theory and pedagogical practices that address race and language, and offers specific methods of applying a raciolinguistically just literacy practice.

I hope you will join me and some of my TRS colleagues as we think through these ideas. Together, we can do our part in dismantling an unjust and racist system and help create a more equitable academy. This white paper can be accessed at <u>https://www.crla.net/images/whitepaper/</u> <u>CRLA_2021_WhitePaper_Raciolinguistic_Justice_FA.pdf</u>

—Judi Salsburg-Taylor, ESOL/TRS Faculty



Dr. Jeanine L. Williams, Professor and Program Director, Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Maryland Global Campus, visited MCC to facilitate our weeklong ALP course design in Summer 2017. Check out her webpage for more on her work on culturally responsive teaching at:

https://williamshighered.com/////



Reflective Practice Groups



Often when we meet colleagues in the hall or on Zoom, we get the chance to have a quick conversation about something that happened in our classroom, but we are starved for in-depth, productive conversations in a supportive environment. A Reflective Practice Group is the perfect place to indulge in those discussions to improve our practice and act on our commitments to educational equity.

Please join us to see what it is like to be part of a Reflective Practice Group. We welcome trained coaches, members, former members and total newbies. Reflective Practice Groups use a professional development model established to improve student learning and success by supporting educators reflecting on and improving their practice.

-Gena Merliss, Coordinator, Teaching and Learning Center

Leading Effective and Impactful Meetings

The beauty you see in me is a reflection of you.

—Rumi

The Teaching and Creativity Center is pleased to introduce a new four-part series: *Leading Effective and Impactful Meetings*. Drawing on the experiences of many of our Reflective Practice Group coaches, we have designed bite-sized interactive workshops to help support your leadership while planning and facilitating meetings. You are welcome to come to any or all of these workshops, they are designed to standalone and complement each other:

·Building community

·Developing effective agendas

·Fostering deep listening

·Structuring productive conversations



Join us for the first workshop in our four-part series Leading Effective and Impactful Meetings on Wednesday, March 30 from noon -1 pm. We will meet in 2-423 in the Brighton Campus Library.

In the *Building Community* workshop, participants will consider how trust impacts collaboration while experiencing several community building exercises. We will practice applying new moves to potential meeting scenarios. To close, participants will reflect on how to use what they learned in preparing and facilitating their own meetings.

-Gena Merliss, Coordinator, Teaching and Learning Center



Using Universal Design for Note-Taking

Working with disability services is a great way to support students. When students have known accommodations, there is collaboration with the support of Disability Services that helps our students succeed.

Access to quality notes can be one of the strongest tools a student has in their academic experience. However, many students struggle with effective note taking and do not end up with the course content that will serve them best. Additionally, note taking accommodations are among one of the most common for students with disabilities.

Using a universal design approach not only reduces the need for note-taking as an accommodation, but also is beneficial for a variety of students. All students are encouraged to be actively engaged with course materials, and taking notes is one of the many ways this occurs. There are a variety of options instructors are able to provide lecture notes to the class. Lecture notes can include:

- An instructor provides each student complete faculty notes.
- Notes that include blank spaces where students can complete notes during the class.
- A detailed outline of the lecture, with completed notes to be posted after the class.
- Guided notes This is essentially using a skeleton outline listing the main points. Guided notes use an open- ended approach which allows students to add stretches of notes independently. It is important when developing guided notes to adopt a consistent set of organizational cues (e.g. blanks, asterisks, bullets) to alert students about where, when, and how many concepts to record. Guided notes can be used for lectures, audiovisual presentations, or readings.
- Use a PowerPoint as a visual supplement to the lecture, and make it available to students.
- Some instructors may provide lecture notes and an audio link to their lectures on their course website.
- Crowdsourcing of lecture notes- This was originally developed by Dr. David Rose from Harvard. Crowdsourcing lecture notes involves having students, who are attending classes and taking notes anyway, share them. This is most easily done by students posting their notes to a designated space. Once posted, any learner in the course can access the notes and use them to study.
- Another variation may include assigning students to teams and rotate responsibility for each team to create a complete set of notes for posting each week (This approach has the added benefit of having students work in teams and share accountability for each other's learning.) *—Heidi Kranz, Counselor, Disability Services*



Creating a culture of inclusion is not an optional exercise; it is the indispensable precondition that enables us to capitalize on our diverse skills, perspectives, and experiences. —Dr. Susan Hockfield, MIT's 16th President



TAAC Spotlight: Pir Rothenberg, Writing Consultant

1. What's your favorite text to teach?

My favorite text to teach and share with students is called *They Say, I Say*, by Graff and Birkenstein. This small book offers clear descriptions of the writing moves all students need in order to master academic writing. It's full of templates that students are encouraged to imitate until the structures become second nature. Here's one example: "When it comes to the topic of _____, most of us will readily agree that _____. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of _____. Whereas some are convinced that _____."

2. What's one thing you're grateful for during the throws of the pandemic?

Vaccines!

"When you forget all your dualistic ideas, everything becomes your teacher." Shunryu Suzuki

3. What are you involved in researching lately?

I'm also an editor who edits health and wellness textbooks, so I'm always researching health issues. The last issue I heavily researched was why some people refuse to get the vaccine. The short answer is: misinformation and distrust in public institutions.

4. What's one image that brings a smile to your face? Words or image works!

Aphorisms put a smile on my face. Here is one of my favorites: "You are perfect as you are, and you could use a little improvement." -Suzuki Roshi

OCC Collaboration: Campus Visit & Curriculum Day



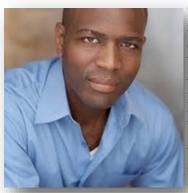
Did you know that Onondaga Community College in Syracuse has become a leader in innovation in composition? Want to learn more about their updated curriculum, small class sizes, and open enrollment for all? Email me to join us for future discussion and collaboration with our SUNY Colleagues to the east.

OCC Campus Visit (in-person): Wednesday, 3/30 from 4-9pm OCC Curriculum Day: Monday, 4/11 3-4pm on ZOOM

Want to join us? Drop me a note at ajohnston@monroecc.edu



Highlight: Code-meshing by Dr. Vershawn Ahsanti Young



Check out 2016's University of Washington, Tacoma Symposium on Writing's video presentation with Dr. Vershawn Young, Professor, Departments of Communication Arts and English Language and Literature at University of Waterloo His research argues for "the concept of code-meshing, where he ad-

vances that writers and speakers should use their home linguistic backgrounds to communicate, particularly in high stakes communication situations."

Watch his conference presentation at the event entitled "Black Lives Matter in Online Spaces: Lessons for Critical Literacy Education" talks about "pedagogies of possibil-

ity." Check it out here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToyvwytSdUw

His thinking engages with our article from January highlighting anti-racist teaching, Dr. Asao Inoue. Missed our event? Check out the PPT from our event that shows discussion points from colleagues at:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Lg06x4g5EK0rzCDxoRAlE4uVBGBMSnY0246JF3Jft3E/edit?usp= sharin

Highlight: Anti-racist Teaching with Dr. Asao Inoue

At our Composition January PD with our department and WAC colleagues, many insights and perspectives about grading and feedback on writing were shared. Want to join the conversation? Check out the link to the brief video shared on youtube <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WYodByXcSg</u>

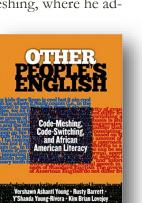
by the author Asao Inoue, Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at Arizona State University.

His video entitled "Why Writing Teachers Should Know About Race and Racism" addresses faculty and students alike. He encourages us all to consider how "the judging of language is a racialized and political act." How can we reconsider writing assessment to address historical conditions of white supremacy and systemic racism?

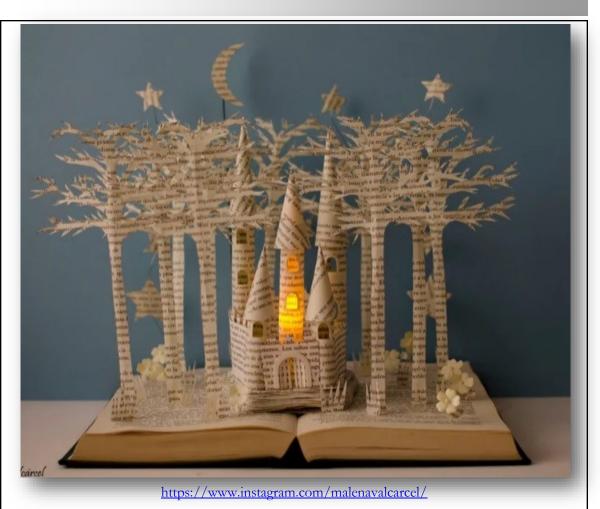
Please watch the 7-minute video if you missed it, and share it with students.

Thank you to a packed house of 28 attendees. I've gotten many emails to talk about ideas presented there and want to consider what we might explore next with ENG/PHL, ESOL/TRS and WAC colleagues. *Please take the survey emailed you to this week (March 1, 2022) to help support future programming.*





Book-Themed Art



Don't tear up the page and start over again when you write a bad line—try to write your way out of it. Make mistakes and plunge on.... writing is a means of discovery, always.

-Garrison Keillor

Composition at MCC can use your help! Please share what you can, when you can to make the newsletter informative and helpful as we aim to support our students.

Thank you!



Books are a uniquely portable magic. – Stephen King, On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft

Student Voices: Beyond the Red Ink.

"Beyond the Red Ink: Teachers' Comments through Students' Eyes" is an 8-minute video created by Nancy Sommers that uses student voices to show their perspectives on how much they value engaged teacher feedback on writing:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rNT-2PAGUA

How might our comments in the margins impact a student's writing process? How do we encourage growth beyond the focus of the grade? While faculty have largely given up the red pink years ago, how might we still address the value of **transparency, encouragement, starting with warm feedback, and the principle of "less is more"**? The video is filmed at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, MA.



Celebration of Writing for Emerging Scholars

Please look for an upcoming flyer in your email about a new event tied to this year's Scholars Day at MCC:

Celebration of

Writing

Weds, 5/11

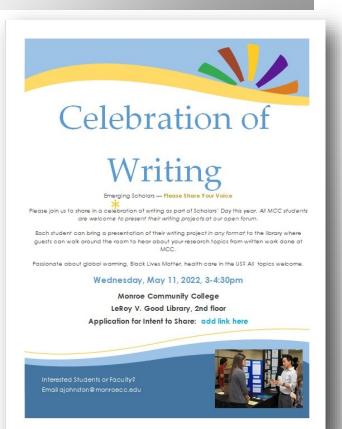
3-4:30pm

Leroy V. Good

Library

Please be on the lookout for students to invite.

Questions? Email ajohnston@monroecc.edu



When teachers begin to look at what students understand, know, and can do, it changes the way the teacher and their students approach learning. The teacher begins to leverage what students know as a means for moving learning forward. For students, small successes lead to larger ones and help develop belief in their own capability as well as the willingness to engage when learning becomes difficult. When students are made aware of how they can learn, they take another step toward being independent, self-regulated learners.

—Angela Di Michele Lalor https://www.edutopia.org/article/3steps-developing-asset-basedapproach-teaching