



# ELA REPORTER

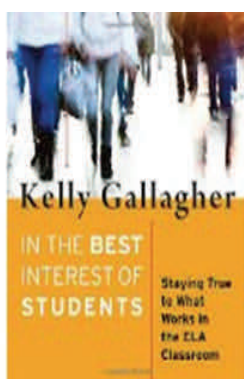


follow us on Twitter

@GADOEELA

YOUR PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY

## BOOK REVIEW OF KELLY GALLAGHER'S *IN THE BEST INTEREST OF STUDENTS: STAYING TRUE TO WHAT WORKS IN THE ELA CLASSROOM*



Kelly Gallagher continues to publish books that resonate with English teachers. His *Readicide* (2009) exposé revealed many “dirty little secrets” inside English classrooms and confirmed my suspicions that many of our best intentions are counter-intuitive to authentic student learning! If, for any reason, you missed this book, head straight to the library and check it out!

Recently published (2015), Gallagher's new book, *In the Best Interest of Students*, reminds us to “stay true to what we know works in the teaching of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.” Available from Stenhouse Publishers, the editors call this book “provocative and insightful” and provide a summary list of what Gallagher advocates:

- ◆ Dialing up the amount of reading and writing students are doing
- ◆ Balancing rigorous, high-quality literature and nonfiction with high-interest, student-selected titles
- ◆ Giving students much more choice when it comes to reading and writing activities
- ◆ Encouraging readers to deepen their comprehension by moving beyond the “four corners of the text” (also urged by Doug Fisher & Nancy Frey) [Editorial. C.Waters]
- ◆ Using modeling to enrich students' writing skills in the prewriting, drafting, and revision stages
- ◆ Helping young writers to achieve more authenticity through the blending of genres (Gasp! How long has it been since we felt the freedom to teach authentic writing?) [Editorial. C.Waters ]
- ◆ Resisting the de-emphasis of narrative and imaginative reading and writing
- ◆ Providing students with more opportunities to sharpen their listening and speaking skills
- ◆ Planning lessons that move beyond Common Core expectations

For more on Kelly Gallagher's new book, visit <http://www.stenhouse.com/html/in-the-best-interest-of-students.htm>

This book is replete with great, practical classroom wisdom; it's an inspiring and refreshing look at our classroom practice! C.Waters



Georgia  
Department  
of Education

Richard Woods,  
Georgia's School  
Superintendent

*"Educating Georgia's Future"*



Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent  
*"Educating Georgia's Future"*

### Inside this issue:

Book Review: In the Best Interest of Students	1
The Need for Cursive Writing	2
The Coach's Corner: Time for Reflection	3
Resource We Recommend: Read Works	4
Contact Information	4

## THE NEED FOR CURSIVE WRITING

Cursive writing is included in the Georgia Standards of Excellence in third and fourth grades: ELAGSE3L1j *Write legibly in cursive*; ELAGSE4L1h *Writes legibly in cursive, leaving spaces between letters in a word and between words in a sentence*. Even in the digital age, there is a need for teaching students how to read and write in cursive. For example, students can read historical documents, signatures, class notes, and letters from grandparents. Furthermore, being able to communicate in a variety of forms is essential to business and industry.

### *Purpose of Teaching Handwriting*

Research indicates that handwriting influences reading, writing, language, and critical thinking abilities (*Handwriting in the 21st Century? Research Shows Why Handwriting Belongs in Today's Classroom*, 2012). According to the researchers who presented at the 2012 Educational Summit for "Handwriting in the 21st Century?", teaching keyboarding skills, while valuable, "in lieu of handwriting can leave students at a disadvantage." Among their findings, some of the benefits for teaching handwriting have shown to increase brain activity, impact performance across all disciplines, and provide a foundation for higher-order skills.

At the time the Common Core State Standards were adopted, states could "choose to teach manuscript handwriting, cursive handwriting or a combination of both by invoking the right to augment the standards with an additional 15% of content they deem appropriate" (*Handwriting in the 21st Century? Research Shows Why Handwriting Belongs in Today's Classroom*, 2015).

The Georgia Department of Education's Curriculum and Instruction division added standards for handwriting and cursive writing. Within the Language Standards of the Georgia Standards of Excellence, teachers will find the following that supports handwriting and cursive writing:

#### *Standards*

**ELAGSE1L1k** Print with appropriate spacing between words and phrases. (First grade, page 59)

**ELAGSE2L1g** Create documents with legible handwriting. (Second grade, page 42)

**ELAGSE3L1j** Write legibly in cursive. (Third grade, page 42)

**ELAGSE4L1h** Write legibly in cursive, leaving spaces between letters in a word and between words in a sentence. (Fourth grade, page 40)

The [Teacher Guidance Documents](#) offer grade-level instructional strategies for teachers. The pages for the guidance document are given in parenthesis above. Some of the things to consider when teaching cursive writing are listed here:

- ◆ Time to teach
- ◆ Encourage students to use their best handwriting so others can read their work.
- ◆ Model writing legibly in cursive for students and require them to write in legible cursive.
- ◆ Find opportunities to practice cursive writing skills, (i.e., writing across content areas; writing journal entries; taking notes; writing letters)
- ◆ Explain that students may need to understand the need to read and write cursive.
- ◆ In some cases, students only need to be able to write their signature.

### *Purpose of Guidance Document*

With Input from our ELA Advisory Council, our DOE curriculum staff is preparing a resource to provide teachers with guidance for cursive writing instruction from Grade 3 to Grade 5 to use in support of the Georgia Standards of Excellence for English language arts (to be published in May). Classroom instructional plans include careful selection for when and how to teach cursive writing. This guide will not advocate the use of any particular program for teaching cursive writing. The sole purpose is to give teachers *guidance* for teaching cursive writing. Local districts are free to choose the program that best meets the needs of its students. The process for the cursive writing instruction from Grade 3 to Grade 5 includes the following:

- ◆ Local School Board policy for evaluating and approving locally selected writing materials
- ◆ Parent awareness and participation in handwriting instruction
- ◆ Interests of individual students in the classroom
- ◆ Alignment of writing resources to the appropriate standards

### *Need for Cursive Writing*

Even though it appears that technology dominates the written word, many scholars believe there is a need for cursive writing. according to Steve Graham, a professor of special education and literacy at Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, Tennessee, "We don't live in a handwriting world, and we don't live in a digital world. We live in a hybrid world" (Zubryzcki, 2012). For that reason, many believe handwriting is essential.

~Stephanie Sanders



## THE COACH'S CORNER: MAKE TIME FOR REFLECTION

Stephanie Sanders

As school comes to a close for the 2014–2015 school year, there are a few things I want you to be mindful of as you dismantle your rooms, preserve the model work to show next year's class, clean out your desk drawer, and look forward to those post-planning days. The summer is a time for rest, and for some a time for reflection. Summer is a great opportunity not only to reflect on your students' performance but also to reflect on your own performance.

Reflection is not a new concept nor a current buzz word. The research behind the idea of reflection was articulated in the ASCD 2009 issue entitled *How Teachers Learn* in the article [Fostering Reflection](#) by Lana M. Danielson (click on title for the article). While the article is an older piece, the idea of reflection is yet relevant to our practice as teachers whose work is grounded in the classroom. In order to improve upon our practices, we must be willing to ask and answer questions that cause us to think through and react with concrete responses.

Danielson proposes four modes of reflective thinking (I won't delineate them here; you can read them in the article). Danielson (whose article is associated with the work of John Dewey) posits that "[e]ffective teachers suspend making conclusions about a dilemma in order to gather information, study the problem, gain new knowledge, and come to a sound decision. This deliberate contemplation brings about new learning."

I encourage you to ask yourself some questions about your classroom practice. Use these prompts Danielson suggests to promote reflection:

- ⇒ What worked in this lesson? How do I know?
- ⇒ What would I do the same or differently if I could reteach this lesson? Why?
- ⇒ What root cause might be prompting or perpetuating this student behavior?
- ⇒ What do I believe about how students learn? How does this belief influence my instruction?
- ⇒ What data do I need to make an informed decision about this problem?
- ⇒ Is this the most efficient way to accomplish this task?

Danielson offers that when we use the four modes of thinking, they help us understand our own practice and, ultimately, foster the intentional competence necessary for accomplished teaching.

Reflection can be a powerful tool for professional learning. This simple technique can lead to higher levels of thinking and learning about what we do to impact student achievement and can lead to self discovery. Additionally, to make this tool even more powerful, discuss your thoughts with a trusted teacher friend. Perhaps the two of you can talk through these questions and answers to help you further see and understand how to achieve "accomplished teaching."



### ELA/Literacy Team Has Joined Forces with Georgia Public Broadcasting!



The English Language Arts division of Curriculum and Instruction has just received funding for this [ELA/GPB Project](#) in order to create an online repository of videos to show Georgia teachers what a strategy or standard looks like in an authentic classroom setting. We have an opportunity to accomplish the following objectives: *to build a video library of master teachers demonstrating best practices for teaching the concepts in our Georgia Standards of Excellence (2015-16) in order to "show" teachers how these standards "look" in the classroom.* We are ready to move from the *theoretical* to the *practical application* in our classrooms. The final project will include video-taped segments for professional learning. The sessions should be **engaging** and evince **creativity, innovation, and enthusiasm** and meet the following criteria: lessons will be (1) standards-based, (2) performance-based, (3) research-based, and (4) TKES aligned.

Our long-term vision includes linking the videos to the specific standards they illuminate. Once the new **Georgia Standards of Excellence** are posted, each standard will include a link to the specific pages in the (to be) revised Teacher Guidance Documents that will clarify the standard (as requested by teachers during the revision process) and another link to a short video with downloadable resources teachers can use! Stay tuned....

## Resource We Recommend

[Read Works.org](http://ReadWorks.org)

### The Solution to Reading Comprehension

*The non-profit ReadWorks is committed to solving the nation's reading comprehension crisis by giving teachers the research-proven tools and support they need to improve the academic achievement of their students.*

*ReadWorks provides research-based units, lessons, and authentic, leveled non-fiction and literary passages directly to educators online, for free, to be shared broadly.*

*The ReadWorks curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the standards of all 50 states. Most importantly, ReadWorks is faithful to the most effective research-proven instructional practices in reading comprehension.*

[View the site for free resources](http://ReadWorks.org) and to learn more about ReadWorks.

## Join Our ListServ and Check out our Wikis

One of the best ways to stay connected for information specific to your grade band is through our listserv (email list).

No username or password required

- ELA K-5 [Join-ela-k-5@list.doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Join-ela-k-5@list.doe.k12.ga.us)
- ELA 6-8 [Join-ela-6-8@list.doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Join-ela-6-8@list.doe.k12.ga.us)
- ELA 9-12 [Join-ela-9-12@list.doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Join-ela-9-12@list.doe.k12.ga.us)
- ELA District Support [Join-ela-districtsupport@list.doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Join-ela-districtsupport@list.doe.k12.ga.us)
- ELA Administrators [Join-ela-admin@list.doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Join-ela-admin@list.doe.k12.ga.us)

**Wikis:**

- High School Wiki: <http://elaccgqs9-12.wikispaces.com/>
- Middle Wiki: <http://georgiaelaccgqs6-8.wikispaces.com/>
- Elementary Wiki: <http://georgiaelaccgqsk-5.wikispaces.com/>

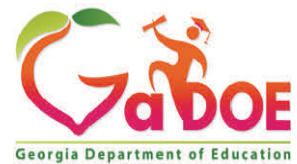


## English Language Arts and Literacy

1754 Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

FAX: 404-651-8582

[www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)



Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent  
*"Educating Georgia's Future"*

### How Can We Help?

**Carolyn Waters, J.D., Ed.S.**  
English Language Arts  
Program Manager  
[cwaters@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:cwaters@doe.k12.ga.us)  
(404) 463-1933—office  
(404) 567-0124—cell

**Stephanie Sanders, MPA**  
English Language Arts  
Program Specialist  
[ssanders@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ssanders@doe.k12.ga.us)  
404-657-9811—office

**DOE ELA Home Page:**  
[http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ci\\_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServEnglish](http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_services.aspx?PageReq=CIServEnglish)

**GeorgiaStandards.Org ELA Page:**  
<https://www.georgiastandards.org/Common-Core/Pages/ELA.aspx>