Teaching English in Middle and Secondary Schools

Fourth Edition

Rhoda J. Maxwell

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For my children,
Bill and Becky—R. J. M.

For my grandsons,
Max and Benjamin—M. J. M.

Preface

Teaching is a complex task, and no one text can answer all of the questions facing secondary teachers, especially novice teachers, in today's challenging classrooms. For this reason, we are quick to point out that this text is not a panacea. At the same time, we believe that this fourth edition does offer a comprehensive and realistic view of teaching the English language arts in middle and secondary schools. In providing thoughtful and practical approaches to both curriculum and instruction, this text does address, we believe to a large degree, the questions and concerns of those just entering the profession.

In this fourth edition, we have made significant changes through new chapters and new segments in every chapter. But once again, we reaffirm the value of an integrated approach to teaching the English language arts. Although we divide the language arts into separate chapters (e.g., oral language, writing, literature), we do so only to explore each area in some depth. Further, we bring the strands back together in every chapter, underscoring that we teach best when we recognize the potential for both oral and written language in every lesson or unit that we develop and implement. We also reaffirm a *constructivist* approach, where students use the language arts to make meaning—not to be handed meaning. The question that underlies every chapter is not "What can I teach?" but rather, "How can my students best learn?" Reflective practice is, then, at the core of this edition.

The most effective teachers are usually the most reflective among us; they are not afraid to question materials, instructional methods, or themselves in the daily process of working with young learners. To encourage thoughtful reflection, we ask our readers to interact with the ideas presented, whether it be to affirm, to question, or to challenge. For this same reason, we include problem solving and application as a major part of this new edition, incorporating segments that we have named **Reflection** and **Exploration** into every chapter. We have also added more student units for analysis and decision making about content and instructional methods, and we have balanced the number of middle and senior high school units. Through these, we hope that the newest members of our profession will gain useful experience, as well as the most practical of habits, thoughtful reflection and confident problem solving, as they work through this text.

The Fourth Edition: Organizational Changes and Emphases

In this new edition we have added new chapters, and to ensure a logical flow, we have changed the order of chapters. However, with few exceptions, the organization of this text is completely flexible, allowing instructors to follow their own course structure and wishes. For teachers with a single, two-, or three-credit English methods course,

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we believe this fourth edition will be ideal, comprehensive but not overwhelming. Further, its tone throughout welcomes student readers and celebrates their intelligence and dedication to their goal of teaching the English language arts.

In Chapter 1, *Becoming a Teacher,* we ask our readers to explore their motivation and goals: Why do they want to be English language arts teachers? At the same time, we describe personal and professional traits that will serve them well as teachers of adolescents. In the third edition, we used this chapter to close our discussion; here, we open with it. Why? Because we realized that this chapter, with its friendly and supportive tone, welcomes readers to the profession but also asks them to think about themselves in rather specific ways. In chapters that follow, we then ask them to extend and expand those reflections, another new feature of this edition.

We also realized that we might close this text in another very personal and pragmatic way: We take our readers through student teaching experiences. Chapter 14, *Your Starting Role: Student Teacher,* is rich with the voices of our former student teachers, who kept weekly e-mail logs, specifically to share their experiences with others. Through them, we have recreated the world of student teaching for those about to enter it. In this chapter, we don't just present our students' voices; we ask our readers to respond, to figure out the situation presented, to suggest solutions to typical problems, and to take on the role of a student teacher in the safety of their methods class. We have not made up scenarios, nor have we altered what our students told us. Consequently, we believe that this new chapter is unique among contemporary methods texts.

Another major change involved dissolving the third edition's Chapters 1, 3, and 4 into a new chapter, Chapter 3, *Understanding Curriculum, Instruction, and Planning.* Although some methods texts address these core language arts areas, we again believe that we have approached them rather uniquely in this new edition. Here, our former students' work is the foundation for understanding and applying knowledge, for making decisions about content and method. In Chapter 2, *The Students We Teach,* we added a section implementing students' activities based on theories of learning. Chapter 2's essential information about middle and high school students now folds into Chapter 3's decisions about materials, pacing, teaching strategies, and activities. The richness, once more, of student work and student voices invites not only analysis but also realistic decision making about lessons and units for senior high school.

Chapter 4, *Understanding Language, Teaching About Language,* has been updated and moved to position it as a foundation for the language arts to follow. For mainstream teachers, it offers a strong response to questions of working with second-language learners. Students who do not take a separate course in first and second language acquisition, or teaching writing to ESL students, will find in this chapter both background knowledge and teaching strategies. Chapter 5, *Oral Language: The Neglected Language Arts,* has two new features. The first addresses "the" speech, as it is often known in senior high English classes. Using a speech unit from an area high school, and a series of reflections and explorations, we ask our readers to evaluate in some cases, try out some teaching ideas in others. The second new feature is a tenth-grade playwriting and informal drama unit that uses Japanese folktales and art as its base. Here, readers will once again have the chance to apply knowledge from previous chapters, as well as that of oral language for adolescent learners.

Chapters 6 through 9 concentrate on writing, with Chapter 9, *Writing Research Papers,* a new addition. Additions to Chapter 6, *Teaching Composition,* are examples of students' demonstrating the writing process in classrooms. One example includes a teacher's comments as a model. More examples of revising strategies and response and editing guides are included. English education students have more opportunities to respond to writing classroom samples. A chart of writing levels relating to purposes of writing provides a guide for writing student assignments. Chapter 7, *Understanding Grammar,* is now placed within the composition sequence. We believe that the knowledge and issues in this chapter are essential to teaching composition, and thus should be within the sequence of those chapters. Chapter 8, *Writing for Learning,* as the title implies, focuses readers on another requirement of composition instruction, one often ignored in methods texts. Chapter 8 is expanded to include a published article so English education students have the opportunity to apply study skills that they in turn will teach. How to teach persuasion and classification are added with student papers provided. Chapter 9, *Writing Research Papers,* a new and critical addition to the text, focuses attention on appropriate methods of research and research writing—an area that has typically been the bane of both senior high teachers and students alike. Purposes of writing research papers help students through a process for teaching research. Internet sites are provided as well as handouts to guide their future students in using Internet sources. A complete student research paper is included. In the composition chapters, we use authentic student work, along with reflection and exploration, as a way to involve our readers in a careful analysis of teaching writing in secondary schools.

Additions to our literature chapters include new student units, useful Web sites for teachers, new considerations of literature, especially multicultural selections, and again a great many reflection and exploration segments. Chapter 10, *Selecting Literature,* continues its emphasis on the literature of American minorities and women without neglecting other areas such as classic, young adult, and world literature. Updated references on censorship are added. In Chapter 11, *Teaching Literature,* students learn more specifically how to design and implement literature lessons and units. Additional teacher assignments and activities are provided, including one on *Hamlet.* A student writing represents the classroom assignment. Through evaluating authentic student units, they have the opportunity once again to apply knowledge gathered through earlier chapters.

Issues of and strategies for assessment are addressed in Chapter 12, *Evaluating English Language Arts,* and are applicable to both oral and written language. Several examples of scoring guides are provided. A literature assignment is evaluated using writing levels. In Chapter 13, *Developing Units,* students learn more specifically how to design and implement instructional units, an invaluable preparation for student teaching and beyond. Teaching activities for *To Kill a Mockingbird* are greatly expanded. New units on *The Scarlett Letter* and Historic Homes are included. Internet searches are added throughout the units. Although students may study unit design in general education classes, we have found that they need such experience in English methods courses, supported by language arts specialists, models, and discussions that go to the core of the discipline itself.

THE FOURTH EDITION: NEW AND UNIQUE FEATURES

For this new edition, we have updated and revised each chapter. Here are the most significant changes:

- **Comprehensive**, addressing not only the major strands of the language arts but additional areas critical to effective teaching today.

  New chapters:

  Chapter 3 Understanding Curriculum, Instruction, and Planning
  Chapter 9 Writing Research Papers
  Chapter 14 Your Starting Role: Student Teacher

- **Purposeful**, asking students to look through the lens of the teachers whom they aspire to be.

  New student units for *analysis and realistic problem solving:*

  Chapter 3 In Constant Search of Perfection: Benjamin Franklin
  Chapter 3 *All Quiet on the Western Front* and WWI Literature
  Chapter 5 *Kwaidan:* A Lesson in Playwriting and Classroom Drama Integrating Japanese Legends and Art
  Chapter 5 "The" Speech: A Guide for Tenth Grade
  Chapter 9 The Research Paper: Full-length Student Paper
  Chapter 13 *The Scarlet Letter*
  Chapter 13 Historical Homes

  New student unit segments or texts for *analysis and response:*

  Chapter 3 *To Kill a Mockingbird*
  Chapter 6 Additional Student Papers and Examples
  Chapter 6 Writing Image Poetry
  Chapter 8 Student Papers
  Chapter 11 *The House on Mango Street*
  Chapter 13 *To Kill a Mockingbird*

- **Interactive**, involving students in their own learning.

  Chapter 1, Becoming a Teacher: Questions of personal motivation, traits, and goals central to being a teacher; student voices, secondary and college, throughout.

  Chapter 14, Your Starting Role: Student Teacher: Analysis and realistic problem solving based on authentic semester-long student teaching experiences.

  Every chapter: Two new features which relate to the information or situation just presented:

Reflection: What do you think about _____? What might you do if _____? How would you handle _____? What has been your experience with _____? Your observations about _____? How does _____ influence your ideas about _____?

Exploration: Evaluate _____, Revise _____, Design _____, Develop _____, Apply _____.

We have worked hard to make this text truly a new edition, and we believe it will resonate with the students for whom it was written, tomorrow's teachers, and their instructors, whose task we hope we have lightened somewhat.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Again, we thank our own students for having provided us with opportunities to learn with them—and from them. Without them, this text would be less rich, less authentic, and, more important, less fun. From middle school to senior high school to graduate school, these students remain in our memory, and here, in our text.

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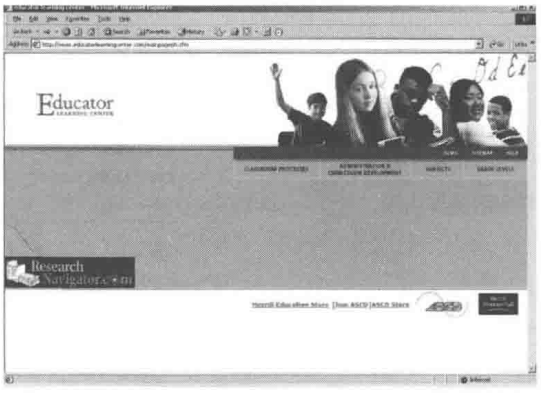

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