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## 23 Months x 22 Scholars: Collaboration, Negotiation, and the Revision of a Position Statement on Technology in English Language Arts

[Lauren Zucker](#)

*Northern Highlands Regional High School*

[Troy Hicks](#)

*Central Michigan University*

This article explores the writing processes of 22 English education scholars over the course of 23 months, resulting in the 2018 publication of an updated National Council of Teachers of English position statement, *Beliefs for Integrating Technology into the English Language Arts Classroom*. Through a qualitative approach, authors investigated the ways in which scholars (N = 22) examined theory, collaborated across institutions, and utilized technology. The discussion offers recommendations for teacher educators and researchers engaging in collaborative scholarship in a technological era.

In 2005, nearly 80 English education faculty members and graduate students from around the country were invited to Atlanta for a Leadership and Policy Summit hosted by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) constituent group, the Conference on English Education (CEE), a group now known as English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE). Held at Georgia State University, its specific goal was to “assemble a collective knowledge base and series of written products to guide the future efforts of CEE in English teacher preparation and development and to support NCTE in its professional development initiatives” (Miller & Fox, 2006, p. 266), and multiple subgroups were convened.

One subgroup, cochaired by Janet Swenson and Ewa McGrail, was designed to explore the intersections of literacy and technology, focusing specifically on the implications for English education. The work of this group led to two publications, the first which was published in *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* ([Swenson, Rozema, Young, McGrail, & Whitin, 2005](#)), and the second in *English Education* ([Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006](#)).

Here is where our current story begins, as we trace 10 years of change, within our profession and in the wider conversation about technology and digital literacy. We held biannual meetings in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015, where CEE members had reconvened, often noting the changes in technologies that had transpired in 2 years and considering the possibility of revising the original statement; yet, no revisions came to pass. Thus, in over a decade, no serious attention had been given to reconsidering these initial statements. The stark realization that technology, connectivity, and the nature of digital literacies continued to evolve in the intervening years prompted members of CEE's commission on New Literacies, Technology, and Teacher education to decide that a revision of the original document was in order.

It was, fittingly, at the 2016 NCTE Annual Convention in Atlanta, with the support of commission cochairs Ryan Rish and Kathy Garland, that a conversation about revising the statement came to fruition. Commission members had gathered enough momentum to begin a serious conversation about revision and two members who were willing to facilitate the process. From the fall of 2016 through the tenure of commission cochairs Amy Piotrowski and Katie Rybakova in 2017, Tom Liam Lynch and Troy Hicks facilitated a collaborative effort of over two dozen scholars that led, ultimately, to the publication of [\*Beliefs for Integrating Technology into the English Language Arts Classroom\*](#) (Lynch et al., 2018)

The 2005 statement was organized around four foci, with several beliefs articulated beneath each focus. For the 2018 update, we revised the four foci (see Table 1) and wrote bulleted lists of recommendations geared toward three audiences: K-12 English teachers, English teacher educators with preservice and in-service teachers, and English and literacy researchers.

**Table 1**

The Four Foci of the 2005 Position Statement vs. the Four, Updated Beliefs in the 2018 Position Statement

2005 Foci	2018 Beliefs
. Newer technologies v. newer literacies.	. Literacy means literacies.
. The influence of newer technologies on theories informing our thinking about text, language, and literacy.	. Consider literacies before technologies.
. Composing with multimodal and multimedia technological tools.	. Technologies provide new ways to consume and produce texts.
. The political, economic, and socio-cultural influences operating under the practice of new literacies with new technologies.	. Technologies and their associated literacies are not neutral.

In this manuscript, led by coauthors Lauren Zucker and Troy Hicks, with contributions from nine of the additional contributors to the 2018 revised statement, we report our examination both of the context that led to the revision and of the process of collaboratively writing the document. As a reflection and analysis, we employed qualitative methods to explore the contributions that were made by these contributors.

Using first names throughout the piece, we (Lauren and Troy) hope to catch some of the collaborative spirit and energy that occurred during the process of drafting the 2018 position statement as well as the article itself. To begin, we present a brief timeline of key moments in NCTE/CEE (ELATE) history leading up to the 2005 statement, the period of change our field experienced from 2005 and 2016, and a number of key moments in the process of creating the 2018 statement. It provides important background and context for the remainder of this article:

## **Literature Review**

From a historical perspective, the methods we undertook for this collaboration were arguably timely, purposeful, and, indeed, necessary. At this moment in technology's continual march forward, members of the Digital Literacies and Teacher Education Commission (D-LITE) are keenly aware of the power that cloud-based computer applications, especially collaborative word processing and synchronous and asynchronous communication tools like email and video conferencing all offer us, both as teacher educators and as researchers.

Though a literature review did not yield examples of other scholars in English education doing the kinds of work described in this manuscript, we can draw from research on collaborative writing done in the workplace and by students as a way to examine the process we undertook over 2 years. In examining the literature, we identified three broad themes: collaborative writing, coordination of efforts, and the role of collaborators, each of which is described here, in turn.

First, with the task of collaborative writing itself, we agree with Franceschet and Costantini (2010), whose work on collaboration in academic contexts was presented in the *Journal of Informetrics*. They conclude that "collaboration has clear advantages, like division of tasks ... but also possible inconveniences, like lack of understanding and integration among collaborators" (p. 552).

Moore (2016) echoed this sentiment in stating that any group must work to discover "the tech tools that best help us cultivate relationships with any collaborator and reduce the uncertainty and apathy that creeps into asynchronous online collaboration" (p. 234). No easy pathways exist to generating a collaborative document, simply from a workflow standpoint, and additional complications can arise with coordination.

Coordination, from determining who will write what, when groups will meet, and who will ultimately be in charge of final revisions and copyediting, presents numerous challenges and negotiations. In thinking about the ways that technology can be used to support collaboration, our colleagues have noted many changes that have happened in the past decade. While focused more on undergraduate students and their collaboration, Pigg et al. (2014) concluded that

... written coordination not only aligns people into social formations but also provides college students an active means for organizing "things" that matter to them within the contexts of the goals, identities, and domains that are meaningful

to them: projects, internships, information, personal memory — even their own learning trajectories. (p. 108)

Scholars, too, have “things” that matter to them, most notably the kinds of materials such as articles, conference proposals, and other artifacts that can lead to reappointment, tenure, and promotion. The process of creating this position statement, then, needed to reflect these things. As Caspi and Blau (2011) noted, part of collaboration includes “experiences and feelings (like difficulty or enjoyment), involvement in the learning, or a feeling of innovation” (p. 285). The extent to which the process was, indeed, enjoyable and fulfilling will be explored in the findings section.

Thus, a third point from the literature becomes clear. The role of the collaborators in the process is crucial, as is a clear understanding of the social dynamics at play in the work. Voss (2018, p. 20) made the case that “shifts in groups’ working structures illustrate concerns about equity of learning opportunity in digital collaborative projects” (p. 72). While focused on the process of group work from an advanced composition classroom, Voss raised a critical point about collaborative digital projects that we, too, must ask of ourselves from this working group. Just as we would want for our students, as scholars we must “be more aware of how cultural capital structures collaborative digital work, shifting how [we] think of their existing skills and experiences and how [we] select project responsibilities” (p. 74).

Indeed, though we thought we had cast a wide invitation to scholars within and outside of ELATE, when we looked at the composition of our working group, we saw disparities. Two white, midcareer men were in charge of the entire project, and of the 22 scholars who worked on the entire project, we are not sure that any would identify as people of color. As Voss noted, Jenkins et al.’s idea of a “digital participation gap” is quite real, and one that we need to address within ELATE and NCTE.

Thus, collaborative writing has always been a challenging task, made more convenient by the influence of technology, but not necessarily more efficient. In fact, as we documented here, the process of collaboration around the 2018 Beliefs Statement produced moments of productive tension within and across the subgroups and for Tom and Troy as project managers. Still, we are happy to have embraced the opportunities for a long-term, long-distance collaboration with over two dozen English education scholars.

## **Methods**

To recruit participants for this manuscript, we emailed (Jan 24, 2019) all D-LITE commission members ( $n = 58$ ), describing plans to compose a reflective piece about the process of composing the Beliefs Statement (Lynch et al., 2018). We came to call this manuscript “the Process Piece,” for short, and commission members were asked to list their name on a Google spreadsheet if they wished to be involved. Two commission members who were not authors of the Beliefs Statement offered to join, but due to the reflective nature of the work, we decided to limit participation to those who had firsthand knowledge of the writing process ( $n = 22$ ).

The 22 original authors of the Beliefs Statement, representing a variety of institutions across the country, collaborated both virtually and face to face. Additionally, the composing process was informed by the responses of four external reviewers, after initial invitations were sent to seven potential reviewers by Lynch and Hicks.

For an interactive map featuring the original authors and reviewers (as well as contributors to this CITE special issue), their locations, affiliations, and contact information view this [Google Map](#):

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XkZ\\_9rBPLsMn\\_4ziEUBAMTyRuWK5jql6&usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XkZ_9rBPLsMn_4ziEUBAMTyRuWK5jql6&usp=sharing)

Of the authors who contributed to the original piece, nine scholars initially signed up to work on the process piece. We directed participants to work in subgroups according to which of the four beliefs they focused on in the original piece. When it became clear that some groups had more representation than others, two additional participants were invited in order to have at least two writers per belief. Our intention was to add reliability of the accounts and the richness of the data. Ultimately, a sizeable subset of scholars representing 50% of the Beliefs Statement authors agreed to work on the process piece ( $n = 11$ ).

We then sent follow-up emails (February 4, 2019, and February 7, 2019) laying out a rough outline of the manuscript, asking participants to begin drafting reflections upon their subgroup's writing process. These reflections are documented in the findings section. After further discussion, and initial review of the reflections, we drafted a set of three guiding questions for the group members to use to frame their writing, and sent out the questions via email (February 14, 2019).

The following questions were written for dual purposes: to serve as research questions for the overall piece and to function as an organizing framework for each group's additions to the findings section.

1. As you reviewed the initial statement – and considered the changes in our field over the past 12 years – what were some of the primary ideas, trends, and new lines of inquiry that guided your revision?
2. Consider the ways in which your group collaborated. What was challenging about the process? What was effective and/or rewarding? You might address the following questions:
  - Who contributed and in what ways?
  - What were tasks at hand? How were they divided and managed?
  - In what ways did you hold one another accountable?
3. Consider the ways in which your group used technology to facilitate the work. What was challenging about the process? What was effective and/or rewarding? You might address the following questions:
  - In what ways did your group write and communicate?
  - Which technologies and/or platforms facilitated your work?
  - Did you write synchronously? Asynchronously? Face-to-face? Virtually?
  - What factors guided these choices?

After all groups submitted their drafts, we gave a round of feedback in order to develop consistency across groups (e.g., referring to writers by first names and adding figures) and asked groups to revise for clarity. They were invited to elaborate with more detailed responses to the questions, as well as to condense certain sections to keep the drafts within the word count limitations.

Once all groups submitted second drafts of their sections, we approached the data analysis. In a new document, Lauren juxtaposed the groups' responses, reorganizing them by research question. To increase reliability, we [Lauren and Troy] then each individually coded the groups' responses inductively by question. We then met and compared codes. In

all but one case, we agreed on the codes we had independently assigned, though for some codes, we had applied different labels (e.g., “Hangouts/Zoom” vs. “video conferencing”). In the one case when we disagreed about a detail, we consulted the document together to reach 100% consensus on all codes. Finally, all coauthors were asked to review the full manuscript as a member check for accuracy.

Several measures were taken to increase the trustworthiness and reliability of the data. As mentioned, multiple authors per group were included in order to provide dynamic, multifaceted accounts of the process. During February and March 2019, we offered additional feedback to the findings section authors. Our goal was to provide a light touch, helping coauthors to clarify their accounts of the process and bring thematic unity to the subsections of this manuscript without sacrificing the subjectivity of their individual perspectives.

However, we had not initially set out to write a metanarrative of our writing process, as the document was in progress from 2016 to 2018. Accordingly, the retrospective nature of this project may have affected the accuracy or comprehensiveness of participants’ accounts. Artifacts such as Google docs and email chains served as additional data points and helped to validate participants’ accounts and stimulate their recall of past events and decisions. The autobiographical nature of these reflections and the juxtaposition of many voices enhances the richness of the data.

Also, due to our participants’ dual roles as participant-observers, and different from many collaborative pieces that aim to craft a unified voice, we chose to maintain the uniqueness of participants’ voices and perspectives. Thus, the reflections in the Findings section were written by representatives of each group. In light of the coauthored nature of this writing, we sought to properly acknowledge all contributors. Ongoing dialogue with *CITE Journal* English Language Arts Education editor Nicole Mirra helped us recognize that existing conventions of citation style are sometimes insufficient to capture the nuances of collaborative authorship. To that end, recommended citations for each group’s reflections appear beneath each subheading, and we encourage those who might reference from these sections of the work to cite the individuals accordingly.

## **Findings**

### **Group 1 Process Narrative: Technology, Theory, and the Expansion of Digital Literacies**

#### **[Belief 1: Literacy means literacies.]**

Mary Rice  
*University of Kansas*

Ewa McGrail  
*Georgia State University*

**When citing from this section, please use the following convention:**  
(Zucker & Hicks, 2019, Group 1 Process Narrative by Rice & McGrail)

In the beginning, there was a Theory Group, but the group disbanded when a consensus was reached among all groups that theory should be embedded in all the beliefs. Richard

Beach, Sean Connors, Troy Hicks, Karen LaBonte, Tom Liam Lynch, Ewa McGrail, Mary Rice, Ryan Rish, and several others took charge of Belief 1: Literacy means literacies.

Mary and Karen discussed major issues with theories of technology integration and literacy, including the fact that literacy is a derivative field – theories from other fields and disciplines are applied to English language arts (ELA) education work. These fields and disciplines include education, cognitive development, neurological development, anthropology, psychology, and more. We puzzled over how to think about theories as they have been borrowed or as they have been translated for literacy even as we were reconstituted into Belief 1.

Ewa, Ryan, and others in the group provided frequent reminders of these recent, derived theoretical perspectives and paradigms on technology's role within the ELA discipline. They included hybridity, public and community engagement, and interdisciplinary orientations (Canagarajah, 2012; Compton-Lilly, 2014; Erstad, Gilje, Sefton-Green, & Arnseth, 2016). We also considered examples of theories and conceptual models that examined the “intra-and-inter-personal dimensions of technology use” as well as learning and communication “across spaces, timescales and trajectories” (Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2017, p. 247) learning lives (Erstad, Gillje, Sefton-Green, & Vasbø, 2009), cosmopolitanism, connectivism, transliteracies, cross-cultural and transnational ethos (Stornaiuolo, Smith, & Phillips, 2017), and critical media studies (O'Halloran, Tan, & E., 2017).

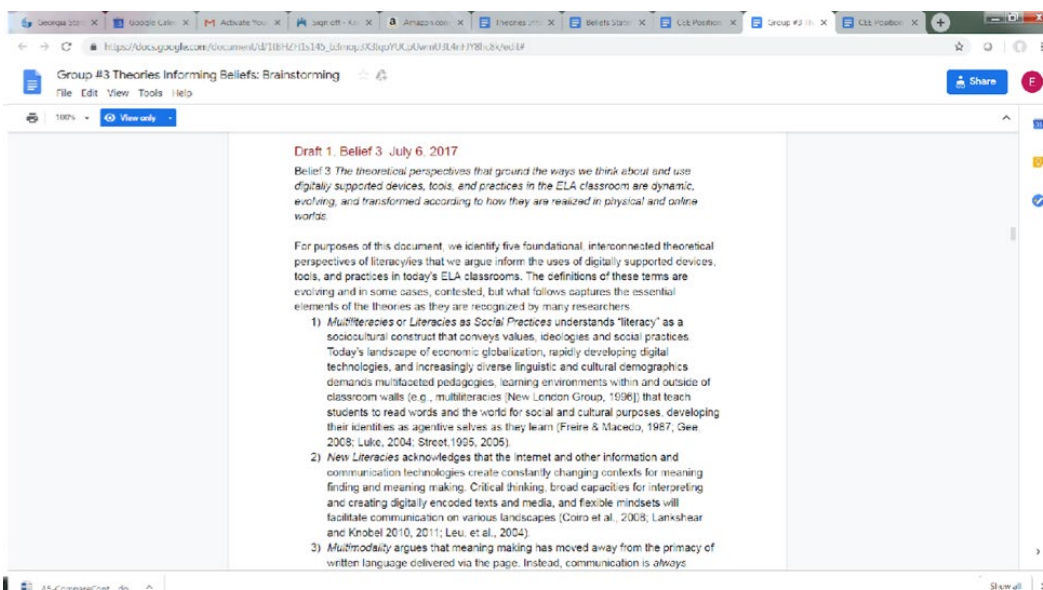
One of the challenges we faced was determining the format for the beliefs statement. We spent quite some time thinking about this question. We considered adopting the original beliefs statement framework/structure and only updating the document with new information. In the end, we decided against doing that, and we developed a new format/structure for the revised beliefs statement.

The process was iterative, took some time, and involved a great deal of negotiation within small groups and across the whole group. Many different ideas were proposed, including a multimodal document with links to other resources and videos with examples. In the end, due to our own timing restrictions and the parameters of publishing on the NCTE website, we designed an expansive document with many resources listed and citations offered. This document reflected our collective expertise, our understanding of the field, and was inclusive of a variety of theories and orientations (See Figure 1).

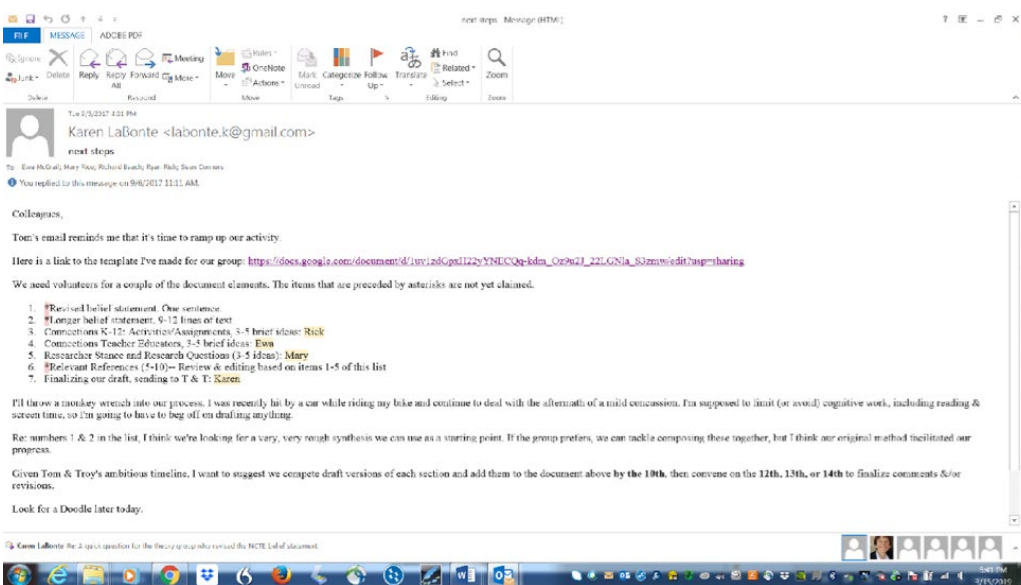
As we were expecting to be finished, we found out that, although our document was appreciated, we would need to distill it and remove a lot of the length and elaboration. We were asked to rework our ideas to fit into a more standardized template provided by Tom and Troy. None of the members of the group demonstrated a strong emotional reaction to the request that we should revisit the document.

Moreover, some of us wondered how the message could have not come to us about formatting until we were on the precipice of finishing. As some consolation, we considered what we had learned in the process as well as the potential that we might use the material we generated later for future collaborative projects.

Instead of collaborative writing the second time around, different members of the group accepted various assignments and completed them asynchronously (see Figure 2). Other group members were invited to enter the document and make suggestions to the final wording.



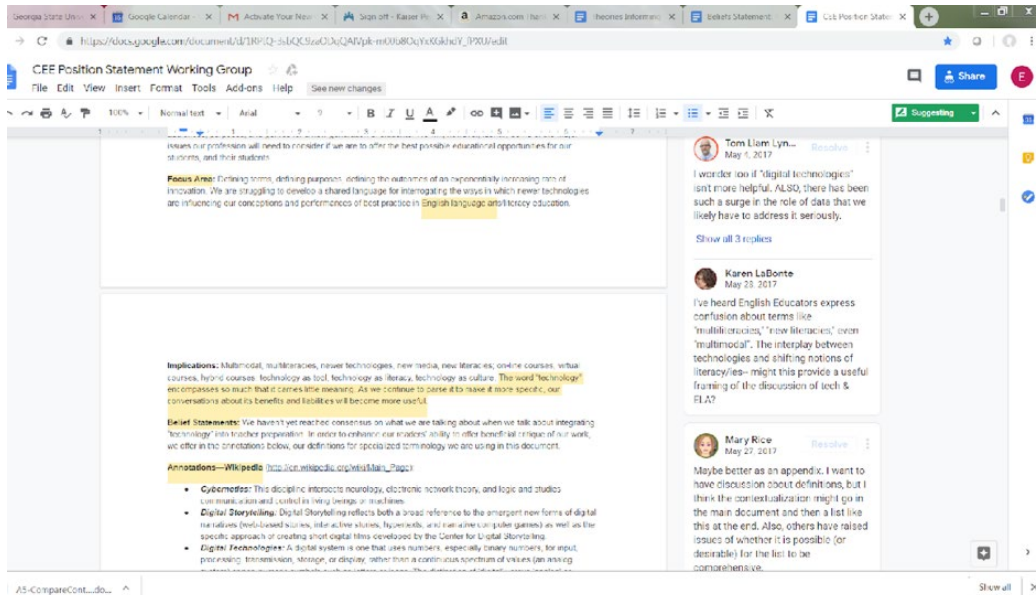
**Figure 1. Theories informing revised Beliefs Statement.**



**Figure 2. Regrouping and next steps.**

To do our work, we read carefully, section by section, individually and collaboratively, the original (2005) beliefs statement and annotated it, indicating areas that needed clarification or areas that were missing. We also noted changes in thinking and technologies used back then and now, suggesting the new structure or framing, additional areas of emphasis, or raising questions and concerns. The original statement that was annotated in this fashion recorded 290 coauthored revisions in our shared Google document, including comments, insertions, deletions, substitutions, and recommendations of additional sources, theories, and practical ideas (see Figure 3).





**Figure 3.** Annotated 2005 Beliefs Statement.

Many group members also anchored their understandings to their teaching experience, teacher educator experiences, and research. People cited examples from these places along the way. Even though this was a theory group, we felt that supporting the practical engagement with theory was a critical part of the task.

The group wrote and communicated mostly through email. We used Google Documents and Google Hangouts for sharing and communicating and used polling applications to find good times for most members of the group. In between face-to-face meetings at conferences, we had two synchronous meetings during July and August 2017. During one of these meetings, we used Google Hangouts to converse with one another while working on a Google Document (see Figure 3). During the second meeting, we mostly wrote synchronously with little conversation.

Our group took the approach of writing an extended document with an extensive bibliography that we whittled down under the guidance of Troy and Tom, who were in contact with NCTE and had explicit instructions for how the position statement needed to look and how long it needed to be. The implications were written asynchronously. The face-to-face time was crucial in the beginning to establish relationships and ensure that leadership had been established. As the project moved forward, it was less important to meet face to face or synchronously, as people fell into roles and managed them successfully.

**Group 2 Process Narrative: Prioritizing Literacy Practices: #literacyb4tech [Belief 2: Consider literacies before technology.]**

Jonathan Bartels  
*University of Alaska Anchorage*

Nicole Damico  
*University of Central Florida*

Sunshine Sullivan  
*Houghton College*

**When citing from this section, please use the following convention:**  
(Zucker & Hicks, 2019, Group 2 Process Narrative by Bartels, Damico, & Sullivan)

As access to modern digital technologies – particularly the internet – rapidly expanded, a digital turn was seen in the field of literacy studies (Mills, 2010), along with broad promotion of technologies in education. Over the past decade, these technologies have continued to expand to the point of becoming a near ubiquitous component of daily lives within Western society. Within the field of education, new technologies have historically been promoted as both the savior and the downfall of education and society. In the ELA classroom, technology is not a replacement for sound pedagogy (Hicks, 2017; Hicks, Young, Kajder, & Hunt, 2012; Koehler & Mishra, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

The previous belief statement addressing technologies began, “Focusing on teaching new technologies rather than English language arts/literacy learning is short-sighted since many newer technologies have relatively short lifespans” (Swenson, Rozema et al., 2005, p. 217). While we fully agreed with the sentiment of the previous belief statement – technology should not be the central component of ELA instruction or simply included for the sake of including technology—we found the statement to have more of a negative approach to technology than we were comfortable with.

In our first discussions, it was immediately clear that we all believed that technology has incredible potential to transform literacy instruction. We shared with one another the ways in which we explored these powerful tools with our teacher education students. We all agreed, however, that literacy, namely our students’ diverse and expanding literacies, must be the central component.

We joked that we were simply going to revise the title of this belief statement to “#literacybeforetechnology.” Our revision work was guided by the wealth of new literacies research that has emerged in the past decade. Of particular note was Lankshear and Knobel’s (2011) framing that new literacies is informed by new-technos and built on new-ethos (p. 29).

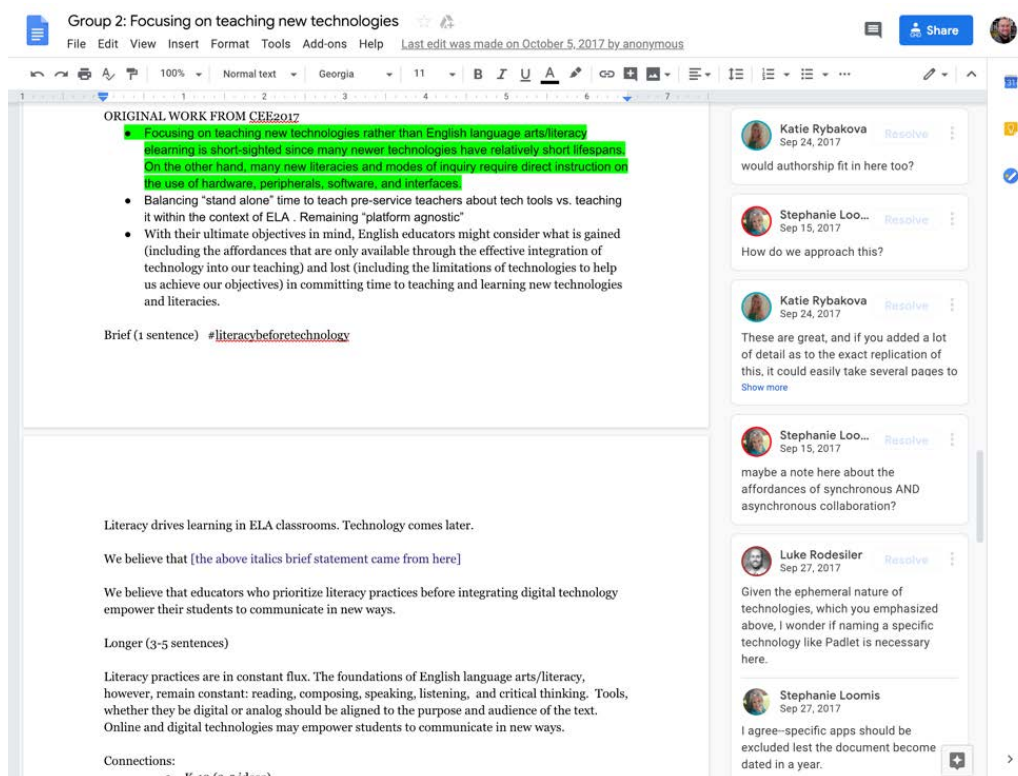
The central group working on Belief Statement 2 was comprised of four professors and one doctoral student (Jonathan Bartels, Nicole Damico, Stephanie Loomis, Sunshine Sullivan, and Stephanie Thompson) brought together at the 2017 ELATE Summer Conference. Nicole agreed to serve as the lead for our revising work. During our working time together, we created a rough draft of a brief narrative and bulleted key related concepts centering on the idea that the transformative potential of technologies can be realized only when literacies practices are at the center of instruction.

Moving forward from our work at the summer conference, we needed to flesh out a rough outline. The most challenging aspect of this work was simply scheduling times that multiple group members could meet. We used a Doodle poll to determine a common time frame for synchronous collaboration. As a result of conflicting schedules – complicated by coast-to-coast time zones – only one synchronous meeting was held, and only three of five group members were able to attend. Through this meeting and follow-up emails, we agreed to each take turns reviewing and revising the draft in a type of round-robin revision process based on our individual schedules and availability (see Figure 4).

- Beginning-ish of Sept (Sept 11th - Sept 17th): Nicole Damico
- Mid Sept (Sept. 18th - Sept. 24th): Stephanie Thompson
- End of Sept (Sept. 25th - Oct. 1): Sunshine Sullivan
- Beginning of October (Oct. 2 - Oct. 8): Jonathan Bartels
- Middle-ish of Oct (Oct. 9 - 15th): Stephanie Loomis

**Figure 4.** Drafting round robin schedule.

Each member spent the week they signed up for looking at the document holistically and making changes/edits as necessary and, as appropriate, posing new questions, concerns, and notes in the document's comments for the next author. We shared this draft with Tom and Troy, received constructive feedback from them, and then went in individually to make changes that addressed the feedback and retained the collective voice of the group. Throughout this next revision round, several colleagues working on other belief statements contributed to our thinking, posing questions and giving recommendations (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Belief 2 revisions in drafting document via <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FyYpUpQV2GWFSMJk6ujOLFcgVV7r-vd1W6ub1HLYoc4/edit?usp=sharing>

The feedback and round-robin revisions continued through September and October of 2017. One final revision and editing session took place at the NCTE Annual Convention following a discussion at the D-LITE commission meeting. At this time, Nicole and

Jonathan (other group members were not available or present to participate) worked together in the conference center to address any unresolved comments or questions in the draft of the revised belief statement and handle minor editing issues. They also built out the reference list for the citations included in the statement as well as additional recommended scholarship.

The most rewarding aspect of this process was that it was truly a collaborative effort. As we worked through the round-robin revisions we were able to build on each other's perspectives as well as incorporate input from additional readers. Through engaging in this process, the final product does not represent the perspective of any one author; instead the statement represents the perspective of a collective and, we hope, our larger field.

Without question, this work would have not been possible without the digital tools we had available to us. Our synchronous meeting times and reviewing schedule were finalized in Doodle. All of our writing took place in Google Docs. One document was used to conduct our initial drafting at the ELATE Conference and during our round-robin revision cycle. Nicole and Jonathan opted to create a new document for the final revision, simply to have a clean canvas to work on without resolving or dismissing the comments made on earlier drafts:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lxdEHOw-jE41abE9E9iUVRfQuw2vPknCPk8GkHKxZZU/edit?usp=sharing>

Nearly all necessary communication about the work was handled through email; discussions about the draft itself were conducted through the commenting feature within Google Docs. While all members of the group were familiar with using Google Docs to write collaboratively, one technological challenge was keeping the multitude of documents related to the project organized and accessible. Our group held one synchronous meeting via Google Hangouts to discuss how to approach the revision process.

Interestingly, throughout this writing process, which lasted for months, the only time synchronous composition occurred was when we were physically in the same space. This choice was not a result of a lack of desire to cocompose or a limitation of the technology; it was simply an issue of scheduling. The technologies themselves posed no additional challenges or complexities to our work at hand.

**Group 3 Process Narrative: Tracing the Evolution of Digital Technologies' Impact on Text Consumption and Production**  
**[Belief 3: Technologies provide new ways to consume and produce texts.]**

Carl A. Young  
*North Carolina State University*

Clarice Moran  
*Kennesaw State University*

**When citing from this section, please use the following convention:**  
(Zucker & Hicks, 2019, Group 3 Process Narrative by Young & Moran)

Belief 3 looks at the production and consumption of texts and the way in which digital technologies have altered the composing and reading processes associated with texts. The

belief states, “Technologies provide new ways to consume and produce texts,” and considers both print and digital texts (Lynch et al., 2018).

We sought to make clear that analysis, production, and comprehension of all texts rely on similar processes and might vary somewhat based on context, but that many best practices still hold true. We wrote that “some principles of consumption and production transfer across different types of texts,” whether the text is a canonical novel or a recently released film clip.

We emphasized that K-12 teachers, teacher educators, and literacy scholars should not abandon sound pedagogical strategies when producing and consuming digital texts but continue to lean on those research-backed methods that contribute to deep understanding. From crafting a multimedia composition to promoting critical digital literacy, the production and consumption of digital technologies requires creative, innovative, and possibly new thought, as well as a consideration of well-tested ideas. At times, it might even require a repurposing of existing or developing technologies (Mishra & Koehler, 2009).

This evolution is a sharp departure from the original 2005 belief statement, which proposed a more linear approach, in part, stating that “Digital technologies change print-based concepts of text. Digital technologies change print-based concepts of reader. Digital technologies require new literacy strategies” (Swenson, Rozema et al., 2005, Focus 2). While the original belief statement is more linear, the new belief statement is more nuanced and recognizes the complexity and recursive and evolving nature of composing and consuming in the digital age.

In writing the revised belief statement, we wanted to emphasize the research-backed strategies that have contributed to meaningful conversations about print literacies can also be effective when considered for and applied to digital technologies. We sought to emphasize an affordances and constraints approach in which both the benefits and the disadvantages of digital tools are considered.

Recent scholarship and thinking about the ELA classroom has pointed to this approach, and Belief 3 relied on the notion that digital technologies can enhance the ELA classroom but are not the end goal. Instead, essential skills in reading, writing, speaking, and language use remain ever important (Hicks et al., 2012).

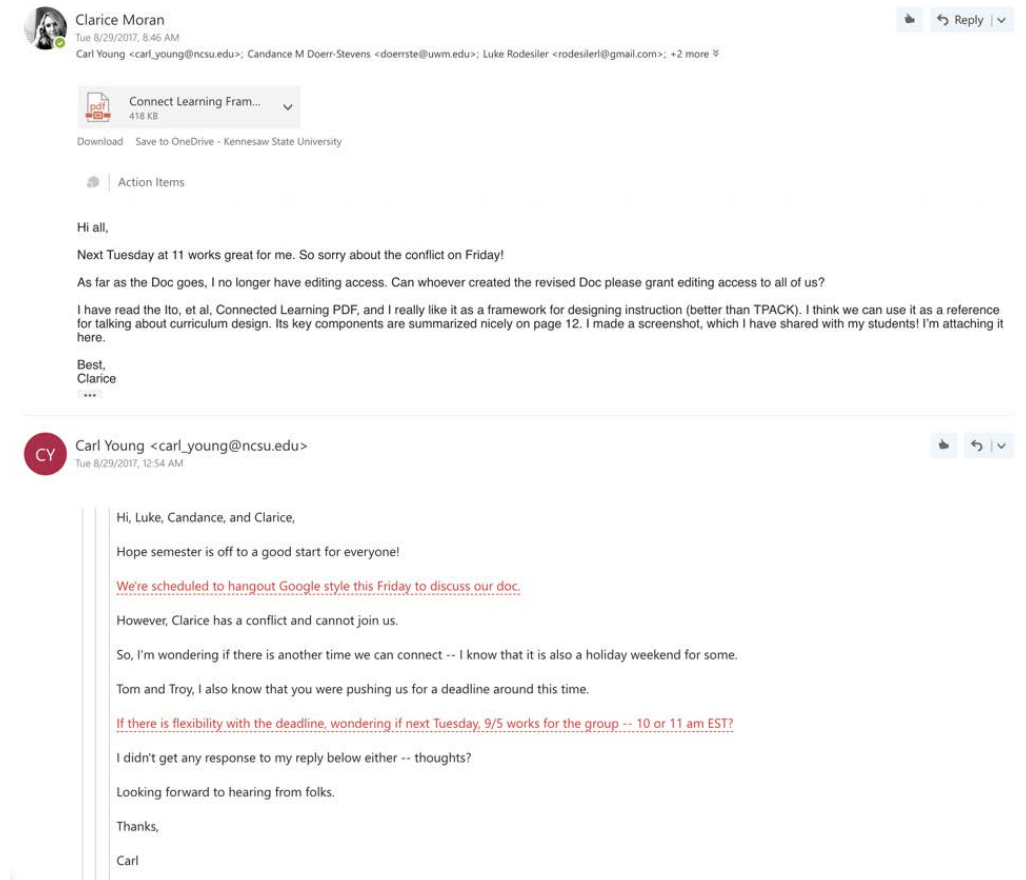
The initial draft for the revised Belief 3 was written during a long meeting over sandwiches and iced tea at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, at the CEE meeting summer 2017. During the lunch meeting, lead author Carl Young drafted the statement on his laptop computer while Clarice Moran contributed ideas. After the initial statement was completed on a Google Doc, Carl and Clarice took the work-in-progress to a roundtable session at the conference.

In the session, they partnered with Candance Doerr-Stevens and Luke Rodesiler, with whom they continued to discuss the statement’s semantics and basic tenets. During this session, they also began to add specific scholarship that informed the belief statement. Carl, Clarice, Candance, and Luke made synchronous edits on the main Google Doc while discussing their ideas.

Later that summer and into autumn 2017, the group of four conferred with each other via email. On September 5, Carl, Clarice, and Candance met in Google Hangouts and discussed issues with the draft, which included citation of scholarship. Carl, Clarice, and Candance felt that more scholarship could be added to bolster the idea that digital literacies and

practices meant the use of a wide range of digital tools. In addition, the three agreed to meet up at the upcoming NCTE conference in St. Louis to finalize minor revisions.

Carl and Clarice met at the CEE roundtable session at NCTE 2017 in St. Louis and discussed all of the belief statements along with a large group of attendants at the session. No revisions were made at this point as they felt the statement encompassed everything it needed to have. In December 2017, Candance contacted Carl, Clarice, Luke, and Troy via email after conducting a final read-through on the Google Doc. She offered suggestions for clarity. After these were incorporated (see Figure 6) and emailed to Troy, the statement was considered final.



**Figure 6.** Screenshot of part of the group's email conversation suggesting we meet up through Google Hangouts. The email at the bottom is the first in the thread.

Like many texts, the initial draft of Belief 3 was created rapidly through a burst of inspiration. Later, the perspiration came as group members wrangled over word choice and added scholarship to support their assertions. The initial thrust of inspiration was supported by a legacy of collaborative writing between Carl and Clarice, who already had a process for creating mutual scholarly work and had published together. This process was enhanced by Candance and Luke, who contributed thoughtful and insightful commentary that tweaked the original draft.

Aside from edits at the initial meeting at OSU, all of the revision was done asynchronously through Google Docs as group members were able to carve out time. Carl held the group

accountable by setting specific deadlines, and the team collaborated well in developing the revised statement utilizing many of its tenets in the process.

Our group found the online word processor Google Docs particularly helpful in drafting our belief statement. Since we live and work in different parts of the country (Carl is in North Carolina; Clarice is in Georgia; Candance is in Wisconsin, and Luke is in Indiana), the online affordances of writing on our own time, but on the same document, were essential. If we had been forced to communicate solely through a Word document attached to an email, we would have worked much slower and with more frustration as we waited for others to finish. We also likely would have bogged down over multiple iterations of a document, potentially losing some of the edits in the process. Google Docs allowed us to work asynchronously from different corners of the country.

Google Hangouts, an online communications platform, also was helpful for a live chat between Carl, Clarice, and Candance. Sometimes talking together is the best collaborative tool. Hangouts facilitated this live conversation and provided human connection.

Our greatest challenge was our hectic teaching and work schedules, which made finding a mutually agreeable Google Hangout time difficult. We also ran into a small snag when editing access was removed from the original Google Doc. This meant that we could not alter or edit the text. After a short email exchange (see Figure 6), editing access was restored. Overall, we all enjoyed the opportunity to work together on a shared task and to collaborate with colleagues from across the country.

#### **Group 4 Process Narrative: Toward Equitable Technology Integration [Belief 4: Technologies and their associated literacies are not neutral.]**

Katie Rybakova  
*Thomas University*

Amy Piotrowski  
*Utah State University*

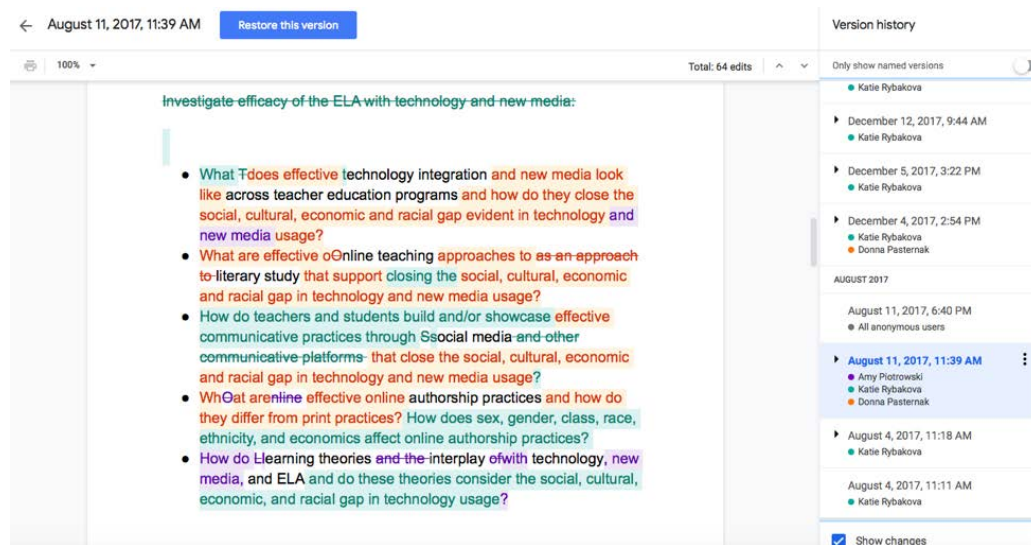
**When citing from this section, please use the following convention:**  
(Zucker & Hicks, 2019, Group 4 Process Narrative by Rybakova & Piotrowski)

In unpacking belief statement 4, we (Katie Rybakova, Donna Pasternak, and Amy Piotrowski) who elected to discuss inequity and inequality of technology as it pertains to ELA, began by unpacking the “who” in regards to social inequity. Who is left out of digital literacy practices and learning, and why are these individuals left out? While 12 years ago the focus was just starting to move away from the physical notion of access to technology tools (Jenkins, 2006), the scholarship landscape on inequity, ELA, technology, and access still reflected relatively little.

To further complicate the already slippery term of *inequity*, we could not find an explicit enough definition for access that we agreed upon. What we ultimately pinpointed was that access transcended the traditional notion of physicality and included how digital literacies and traditional literacies, such as communication in traditional English, affected linguistic and cultural access.

During a later conversation at a D-LITE commission meeting at NCTE, a leading scholar in equity and social justice (Mary Rice) encouraged us to expand the population subset to

include age, disability, immigration status, and socioeconomic status. This suggestion, ultimately, morphed the initial, relatively short blurb to a lengthier paragraph intended to address any and all subsets of the population that could be limited in regards to access and inequality (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** The face-to-face edits of Belief 4 at CEE 2017.

Despite the wordiness of the statement description, we felt strongly that these concepts needed to be explicit to encourage further work in these areas – as social justice permeated conversations at both CEE (ELATE) and NCTE, secondary and higher education instructors turned to the scholarship to find that there was relatively little in the research on digital literacies that focused on issues of equity.

As we took the work online, it became clear that a thorough investigation of the literature was necessary prior to delving into the practical suggestions for teachers, researchers, and teacher educators. Each of the subsets (sex, gender, age, class, etc.) needed relevant scholarship tied to it so that readers did not fall into traditional notions of these concepts simply because we failed to define them. Combining the population with the topic – ELA technology integration – yielded the scholarship that then guided the writing of the literature review and the practical takeaways, which Katie, the group lead author, began writing in an actionable way with smart verbs.

Because the focus was not to write a literature review but rather concise yet explicit guidelines for the belief statement, Katie and Donna decided to abandon the literature review midway through it, leaving gender and age citation-less (Figure 8). The focus then became unpacking and making actionable the core belief for different audiences. Katie and Donna (Amy was unavailable to chat except for the first meeting) scheduled several hour-long Zoom meetings, during which we synchronously wrote the actionable connections to K-12 educators, teacher educators, and educational researchers. Through this process, we noticed that getting to write together provided us with opportunities to bounce ideas off each other, while difficulties finding time when we could all work together proved to be a challenge.



- **Sex-** Sexuality and/or sexual orientation is tied to identity, and thus is tied to the ways in which identities fluctuate in an online environment (more research is needed in this area: see Brock, Borti, Frahm, Howe, Khasilova, & Ventura-Kalen, 2017 for more on identity).
- **Gender-** We recognize that gender identity is a personal choice and is fluid-- this impacts the ways in which students and/or educators identify themselves both face-to-face and online (citation).
- **Age-** Age and ageism impacts and influences the ways in which technology is communicated, consumed, and utilized (citation). We recognize that even though digital natives and digital immigrants are pervading terms in regards to age and technology, educators must not assume that those considered as youth proficient in technologies and vice versa (citation).
- **Class-** Intertwined often with economics, class is subjugated by status quo norms. Supported by the research of scholars such as Morrell and Scherff (2014), critical media literacies allow for instruction to harness technology as a lens to investigate class injustices.
- **Ethnicity-** The cross-cultural connections possible through the use of technologies opens the dialogue between previously unheard voices and the status quo. Technology bridges the barriers between different ethnicities, whether in the function of bridging those from different locations or differing mobilities. Borrowing from Wargo and DeCosta (2017), "Being mobile is increasingly the norm of navigation for today's learners" (p. 104). Additionally, mental health, while not a notion dictated only by ethnicity, "is an essential aspect of multicultural education" (Smagomisky, 2014, p. 15), and is a factor educators should be aware of when utilizing technological tools and online forums to encourage conversation.

**Figure 8.** An excerpt from the start of a brief literature review for Belief 4, which was later abandoned.

Amy contributed to the first Zoom writing meeting as well as in dialogue and in editing the work. She contributed several sources to the list of resources, which had ballooned from three after NCTE to over 15 after the attempt of the literature review. While group members fluctuated to include voices of those who met face to face at the conferences, the initial three group members (Katie, Amy, and Donna) were those who wrote the document.

The major challenge in collaborating was one that is cited often in education – lack of time. Between finals week, sabbatical travels, and time differences, it was hard to find a time to meet synchronously – at the same time, we knew it was the best way to contribute to this work successfully.

Katie took initiative to build out the literature review that was discussed at NCTE in a Google Doc, but several members struggled to have the time to add to it, and since it was aside from the task and only stood to inform it, it was abandoned as the group refocused. The bulk of the writing was done via Zoom synchronously – Katie and Donna took turns talking through the implications of the belief statement and typing out the actionable items as they related to the three different audiences. Pausing only to discuss semantics, we worked efficiently to complete the document, which was then edited and sent back to the

original authors (Tom and Troy). Using Zoom enabled us to write and talk together through the process.

The choice to write the belief statement synchronously revolved around the notion of staying formulaic while including various voices and expertise. For Katie and Donna, it was the fun part, and for two colleagues who knew each other only by name at first, a great way to collaborate and learn from one another, both in regards to writing and content. The cohesiveness of the piece came together when Amy edited and polished the document. Using Google Docs helped by enabling us to work on a document together both synchronously and asynchronously (see Figure 9).

As Tom and Troy tinkered and revisited all of the separate documents, they continued to be transparent with the lead authors for each section – in the case of Belief 4, Katie also doubled as one of the D-LITE commission co-chairs.

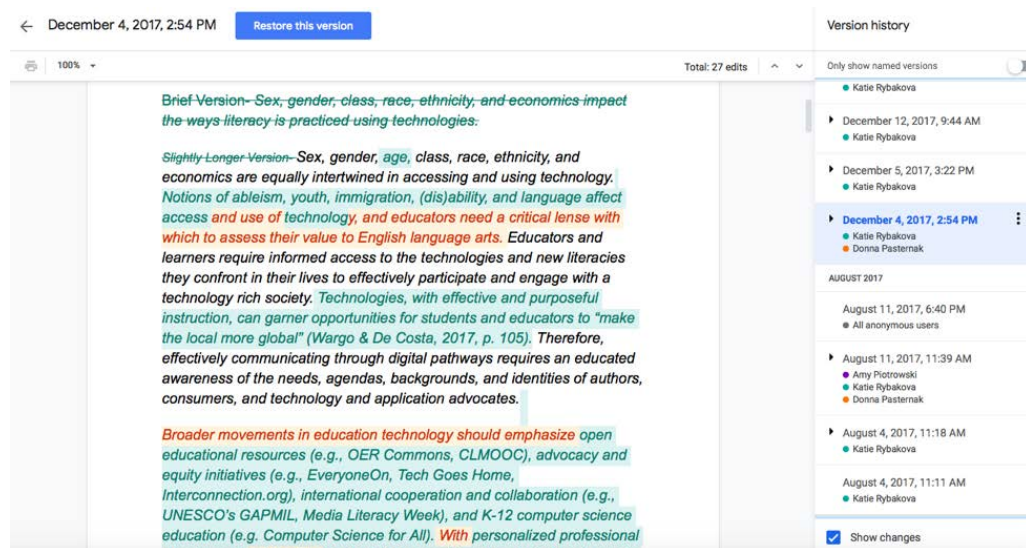


Figure 9. Virtual synchronous edits by Donna and Katie.

## Discussion

### Research Question 1: Theoretical Influences

Reflections on theoretical influences yielded comments from all four groups about the complex nature of literacy. Group 1 referred to literacy as a “derivative field,” applying theory from multiple fields and disciplines. Group 3 described their broadened approach to literacy: “While the original belief statement is more linear, the new belief statement is more nuanced and recognizes the complexity, and recursive and evolving nature of composing and consuming in the digital age.” If anything, we are continually reminded of the fact that literacy does, indeed, mean *literacies*, and the field of English education continues to grow more and more interdisciplinary.

Groups 1 and 4 explicitly referenced the abundance of theory that emerged in the years since the original publication (2005) that necessitated significant revisions and expanded

views of the original statements. Group 4, in particular, noted increased attention to issues of equity and diversity, which required their referencing of recent scholarship.

Moreover, two groups described efforts to significantly reframe the original belief in a dramatic way. Group 2 noted efforts to deliberately shift the tone of their statement from negative to positive language around the affordances of technology (and its potential “to transform literacy instruction”), as well as their intentional efforts to reverse the statement to prioritize literacies before technology (“#literacybeforetechnology”).

Similarly, Group 3 referenced their efforts to focus on pedagogy before technology, while directly addressing the affordances and constraints of technology. Group 3 described efforts to veer away from the original statement’s notion that digital technologies require uniquely new literacy strategies in favor of a position that recognized the relevance of more traditional strategies that could be applied to both print and digital reading and composition.

## **Research Question 2: Approaches to Collaborative Work**

All groups’ reflections on their approaches to the collaborative work references various applications of synchronous and asynchronous work sessions. All groups worked together synchronously at first and then negotiated time and space for collaborating thereafter.

Unsurprisingly, all groups referenced timing and scheduling as a challenge and cited various technologies that allowed them to meet and work asynchronously. As Group 2 explained, they were limited in their ability to schedule synchronous meetings “as a result of conflicting schedules – complicated by coast-to-coast time zones.” Group 4 echoed this sentiment: “Between finals week, sabbatical travels, and time differences, it was hard to find a time to meet synchronously – at the same time, we knew it was the best way to contribute to this work successfully.”

More specifically, Group 1 held two synchronous meetings, though their group had the most fluid membership. Group 2 settled on a round-robin style schedule for editing, where each member took a turn drafting and then handed it off to another group member. Group 3 wrote a full draft synchronously in person, and then wrote all edits asynchronously. Last, Group 4’s two members wrote synchronously over several, hour-long meetings and then gave the draft to their third group member for subsequent revisions and additions to the references.

In all cases, groups had issues with partial attendance at their synchronous meetings; Group 1 did not report their attendance, Group 2 had two or three of five members present, Group 3 had three of five members present, and Group 4 had two of three members present.

In contrast to groups that described a preference for synchronous work, Group 2 touted the benefits of their asynchronous, round-robin revisions:

The most rewarding aspect of this process was that it was truly a collaborative effort. As we worked through the round-robin revisions we were able to build on each other’s perspectives as well as incorporate input from additional readers. Through engaging in this process, the final product does not represent the perspective of any one author; instead the statement represents the perspective of a collective and, hopefully, our larger field.

Recalling Moore's (2016) point that cultivating relationships is critical to the overall success of a technology-infused collaboration, and Voss's (2018) argument that there should be equity of learning opportunities, Group 2's reflection is poignant. They highlighted the ways in which leveraging each other's strengths and perspectives created a generative, "collective" product.

Two groups faced the particular challenge of major redefinitions of their task. Group 1 first focused on theory, then refocused on Belief 1 to write a first draft; after completing their draft and sharing it with Tom and Troy, they were asked to restructure it entirely when they thought the draft was nearly finalized: "Some of us wondered how the message could have not come to us about formatting until we were on the precipice of finishing." Group 4 began by devoting their attention to a formal literature review that they ultimately decided to abandon (though the sharp increase in scholarship on equity and diversity made their literature search particularly necessary).

Last, all groups referenced group leaders who helped to manage their tasks. For example, Group 1 noted that "face-to-face time was crucial in the beginning to establish relationships and ensure that leadership had been established." Group 3 also referenced the importance of having a clear leader: "Carl held the group accountable by setting specific deadlines."

### **Research Question 3: Use of Technology**

All groups reported using word processing and video conferencing programs in order to collaborate, both synchronously and asynchronously. For word processing, every group used Google Docs; for video conferencing, three groups used Google Hangouts, and one group used Zoom.

Groups individually reported a similar workflow: they began synchronously (face-to-face) at the 2017 summer CEE conference by reading and commenting on the 2005 position statement, then completed various portions of their drafting in person, continued editing and writing virtually (synchronously and asynchronously), and ultimately submitted a document for the full commission to review (face to face) at NCTE 2017.

Groups' uses of video conferencing varied across groups: Some groups reported using the time to write synchronously, others described using the time for conversation, and some referenced reading and editing together. Though all groups used video conferencing, they approached their meetings differently, defining their own tasks with different purposes for writing and conversation, and varying forms of attention to the document itself.

Group 1, for example, used video conference time for synchronous writing over two sessions. During the first session, they talked through ideas while working together on their collaborative document. During their second session, they "mostly just wrote synchronously with little conversation." After their collaborative, synchronous work, Group 1 chose to approach their work asynchronously: "As the project moved forward, it was less important to meet face to face or synchronously as people fell into roles and managed them successfully."

As Caspi and Blau (2011) noted, "experiences and feelings" matter during collaborative work. In this case, Group 1 chose to use their time online in a manner different than we would normally expect; they spent time silently writing and working as compared to using video calls for active discussion around the text. Acknowledging the need to spend focused time working, they were able to use their time in an appropriate, useful manner.

By contrast, Group 4 used conversation as a component of all of their video conferencing. They described a sequence of taking turns “talking through the implications of the belief statement and typing out the actionable items,” and noted, “Using Zoom enabled us to write and talk together through the process.”

Group 3 was emphatic about the necessity of collaborative talk during video conferencing: “Sometimes talking together is the best collaborative tool. Hangouts facilitated this live conversation and provided human connection.” This group’s reference to the importance of the “human connection” made possible by video conferencing was also expressed by Group 4, who described video conferencing as a chance for collaborators to build relationships: “For two colleagues who knew each other only by name at first, [it was] a great way to collaborate and learn from one another.”

Part of the learning, for our colleagues, was then similar to what Pigg et al. (2014) described for undergraduates, in that identity formation and relationships were equally as important as the final, written product. Both Group 3’s and 4’s experiences remind us that technology, a tool in and of itself, can facilitate meaningful identity and relationship development.

Group 2 used their video conference meeting to discuss a plan for divvying up the writing between group members, settling on a round-robin approach.

The only time synchronous composition occurred was when we were physically in the same space. This was not a result of a lack of desire to co-compose or a limitation of the technology; it was simply an issue of scheduling.

When they moved towards a final draft, they created a new Google doc to “have a clean canvas to work on without resolving or dismissing the comments made on earlier drafts.” In this case, the technology allowed the group to save, access, and archive multiple drafts to best meet their needs as writers collaborating across time and space.

### **Implications for Teacher Educators and Literacy Researchers**

Rather than list a lengthy set of recommendations here, we reflect on our collaborative experience and — in the spirit of the position statement itself — outline a few brief implications for teacher educators and literacy researchers.

First, for teacher educators, we must encourage our own preservice candidates to engage in substantive collaboration on writing projects that have professional purposes within and beyond the classroom. In addition to using a tool like Google Docs to plan lessons or curate curricular resources, we also need preservice candidates to engage in the give-and-take negotiations of genuine work. In other words, the use of a collaborative tool needs to be more than perfunctory, instead inviting candidates to think about the tensions and possibilities evident in professional dialogue. If we ask teachers to exercise creativity and critical thinking skills through collaboration, then we need to make those practices explicit, both through a close examination of the tools themselves and the process by which we use those tools.

Researchers who are, themselves, engaged in collaborative scholarship would be wise to consider the specific features and general affordances of collaborative technologies (such as collaborative word processing programs and video conferencing). More importantly, even in a blur of emails, document updates, meeting notifications, and deadlines, we are reminded that technology only enables the collaboration. Indeed, attending to social-emotional skills required to negotiate a project with multiple authors has become even

more complex, and essential, in our networked era. While it may be expedient to use such tools, the work of literacy scholarship is, at the core, about the relationships we find between words, ideas, and people.

### **Both Technical and Humane: Collaboration Among Contemporary Scholars**

Since 2005, our principles related to technology in ELA instruction have evolved, as have the tools and processes for collaboration. Over 23 months of concerted effort (preceded by nearly a decade of discussion), 22 scholars engaged in a collaborative writing process that both represented the best of what we could accomplish with contemporary technologies while, at the same time, also engaging in the very human (and humane) work of collaboration.

Multiple conference meetings in three different cities, numerous video calls and emails, as well as untold numbers of tracked changes and comments across multiple documents all accumulated in the publication of “Beliefs for Integrating Technology into the English Language Arts Classroom” in October 2018. This process demonstrated one of the main arguments from the position statement itself, in that English educators should “harness online platforms for collaborative writing to invite teacher candidates to examine the composing practices of students and create peer feedback partnerships.”

Indeed, in telling the story behind the document itself, we hope that other ELA teacher educators will choose – through their own teaching and scholarship – to engage in digital literacy practices, both technical (using collaborative word processing and video conferencing) as well as humane (expressing empathy, substantive dialogue, and genuine collaboration). In doing so, we can best serve the evolving needs of our teacher candidates, in-service colleagues, and K-12 students themselves as they, too, learn to live and work in a digital world.

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