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(Re)defining Writing Instruction: Implementing an Anti-racist Approach to Writing Instruction and Assessment in the Secondary English Classroom

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Dedication

My master's thesis is dedicated to the students I have once had and the students yet to come.

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Abstract

The traditional writing workshop model and assessment practices commonly used in secondary classrooms are systematically racist and harmful to the development of young writers. To counter the damaging effects of racially discriminatory practices in secondary writing classrooms, educators must review and redefine their pedagogical approaches to create a safe, anti-racist environment for all students. By centering the scholarship of Felicia Rose Chavez and Asao Inoue, this thesis establishes a model of anti-racist pedagogy in the secondary classroom to help educators dismantle white supremacy in writing instruction and assessment so that students are empowered to find their voices without the fear of discrimination based on their abilities to write within a white supremacist system. To create this anti-racist writing workshop, I argue writing educators need to disrupt the abundance of power teachers possess in the classroom, establish and grow student writers' autonomy, and evaluate how they perceive the final submission of a student writer's work. Furthermore, educators need to review their grading practices and consider replacing traditional assessment rubrics with a labor-based grading system to promote inclusion and equity in student evaluation. In the creation and implementation of an anti-racist writing workshop and equitable assessment practices, student writers are encouraged to explore their identities and experiences as writers without the pressure of racist practices infiltrating their learning environment, which ultimately facilitates a growing interest in writing arts for all students.

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Chapter 1: Introducing Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Popular writing pedagogues such as Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle dominate writing classroom strategies with a force that overshadows many writing educators with authority in writing instruction. In particular, the most celebrated writing educators are white and therefore tend to obscure writing pedagogues of color which creates a racial imbalance in writing ideology that has led to the manifestation of white supremacy in writing methods. While numerous writing educators would like to believe themselves anti-racist in their approaches to teaching writing, teacher-educator Bree Picower asserts, "All teachers can reproduce racism in their curriculum" because of the internalized ideological belief that American education should structure itself in a Eurocentric (white) viewpoint (4). While educators, including white educators who identify as racial justice allies, likely believe themselves immune to the perpetuation of racism within their classroom, they can easily fall victim to the racial paradigms set forth within educational curriculum and praxis. Without an active awareness of anti-racist pedagogies in their writing instruction, writing educators are not inviolable to integrating racist practices within their classrooms. It is imperative that writing educators look at their approaches to teaching and assessing writing to determine if their classroom is actively anti-racist or marginalizes students of color.

Nevertheless, this integration of racist ideology can be difficult to discern because traditional writing workshops and grading practices taught to preservice educators uphold predominantly white ways of thinking, learning, and writing. For instance, teacher-author Kelly Gallagher tells teachers in his book *In the Best Interest of Students: Staying True to What Works in the ELA Classroom* that they should provide models for their students to emulate. He even lists authors to emulate when he tells his readers that his "job is to build young readers and

writers, which is why I want them to consciously and unconsciously emulate the mannerisms of… the John Greens, the Laurie Halse Andersons, the Chris Crutchers" (129). While using mentor texts to help students guide their writing may not be overtly harmful to the students at first glance, Gallagher cites three white, young adult writers and rarely mentions any writers who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) when discussing authors in his book; and when a well-known, published pedagogue lacks diversity in their texts, then it is likely that the teachers buying and reading the books are also lacking in knowledge of English writing pedagogy by diverse authors. The lack of diversity creates a classroom where students are not given a chance to learn styles of writing from BIPOC authors while being denied the accessibility of BIPOC stories.

Then there are writing pedagogues, such as Penny Kittle, who focus on a student's language, creating a barrier to success for students who are either non-native English speakers or students who did not grow up around academic language usage. For example, Kittle tells teacher-readers in *Write Beside Them* that "I get students to really pay attention to mechanics by holding to this standard that I explain during our first week of class: It is impossible to get an A on a paper that has more than a few mistakes" (192). Here, Kittle focuses on Standardized American English while assessing a student's work. In the Conference on College Composition and Communication's 1974 position statement, "Students' Right to Their Own Language," the composers proclaim that standardized English is a myth with no validity (3). Yet, because of writing pedagogues like Kittle, who publish pedagogical texts expecting students to uphold white language supremacy, several writing educators are learning and supporting Kittle's stance on mechanics instead of the CCCC's belief in a student's right to their own language. When a writing pedagogue as popular as Kittle lacks the acknowledgement of language diversity within

the secondary classroom, they perpetuate white supremacy within the writing classroom by centering white, European language, and cultural usage over any other language within the classroom. Furthermore, Kittle recommends that a student's aptitude for writing is heavily reliant on grammar, negating both the content the student writes and the student's natural dialect, creating an environment of failure for any student who struggles with language studies because the educator is eliciting an elitist attitude in language acquisition and usage against non-white, European, English language structures (CCCC 13). In turn, allowing educators to create a space where students need to "decode" their language usage and experiences to better fit the white language expectations that an educator imposes on their students, silencing student autonomy in the process (Brown 53).

Therefore, instead of becoming trapped in the white hierarchy of writing pedagogy, I urge writing educators to develop an anti-racist pedagogical approach to teaching and assessing writing to serve each student better. Using the foundational frameworks of Felicia Chavez and Asao Inoue, I establish a model for anti-racist writing education in the secondary classroom to help educators dismantle white supremacy in the writing workshop model and assessment, which Asao Inoue describes as an anti-racist ecology, or living network —allowing students to better find their voices in writing workshops and assessments without the fear of discrimination based on their prowess in writing in a white supremacist system (*Classroom* 377).

In Chapter 2, I explore the traditional writing workshop model by giving educators numerous ways to reconstruct the writing workshop, breaking the chapter into three distinct sections: power, autonomy, and process. In the power section, I focus on the power structures in the writing classroom and how an educator can distribute this power throughout the writing experience. I then focus on the methodology an educator needs when approaching student

autonomy in the classroom, ensuring that student voices are centralized—guaranteeing that every writer can use their autonomy within the classroom. Chapter two concludes by looking at writing products to encourage educators to teach writing as a process. By exploring an anti-racist workshop model, educators will have enough information to begin implementing an anti-racist workshop by dismantling their traditional writing workshops to unburden students from the stifling white supremacy found in the traditional workshop model.

In Chapter 3, educators are encouraged to consider labor-based contract grading—a new approach to assessing writing—to safeguard students from racist assessment ecologies in secondary writing classrooms. However, before delving into what labor-based contracts are and how they apply to the secondary writing classroom, I walk the reader through the evolution of contract grading and why the labor-based contract is the best model for an anti-racist educator to use in their secondary writing classroom before listing ideas on how to change Asao Inoue's labor-based grading contract to fit the secondary classroom.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I assert that if an educator claims to be an anti-racist pedagogue and a provider of educational equity, they must constantly evaluate and criticize their pedagogical practices within their classroom. If they do not, they will likely continue to uphold white supremacist notions of writing that will continue to hinder their students' growth as a person and a writer, even if the teacher considers themselves "not racist." The educator must also be diligent in seeking anti-racist pedagogues who are BIPOC to learn about writing instruction and assessment to avoid white supremacy in the classroom.

Moreover, when writing teachers can establish an anti-racist pedagogy through constant learning and reassessment of their pedagogical practices, they are intently dismantling the racial inequities within the writing classroom. In turn, these educators help students realize their

potential as writers and the importance of what they have to say. Moreover, when students are comfortable with who they are, they learn to be writers who write for themselves because their teacher deliberately takes the time to understand their needs. In the act of dismantling white supremacy by putting students first, the educator is an anti-racist pedagogue fighting for equity in the classroom. When the educator knows more and is learning to accept their part in upholding white supremacy in a traditional writing model, they can change the system that openly disregards the voices of the marginalized.

Clarifying Terminology

Before moving onto Chapter 2, I find it valuable to define the terminology of racist, anti-racist, white supremacy, and white gaze in the context of how these four terms are used throughout this thesis.

For racist and anti-racist, I will use the definition offered by Ibram X. Kendi in his book, *How to be an Antiracist*. For Kendi, a racist is someone "who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea" (25). In this way, a racist is not only a person who actively fights against equality, but an individual who does not make an active choice in fighting against racism. Further, identifying as *not racist* is insufficient to label oneself anti-racist or an ally against oppression. Instead, the individual is continuing to uphold white supremacy and racism by not dismantling systems of oppression. The fight against oppression distinguishes an anti-racist from a racist since an anti-racist "support[s] an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea" (Kendi 25). In other words, an anti-racist does not allow racism to continue through passivity. In education, a racist educator would be someone who does not fight to undo white supremacy within their classrooms and school settings. In contrast, an anti-racist educator will learn and change classroom policies and

procedures to better support the growth of their students through the dismantling of white habitus, “or linguistic, bodily, and performative dispositions” (Inoue, *Labor* 5). An anti-racist educator would also be an individual who continues to fight for equity outside of their classroom by questioning school district policies and national policies and becoming an advocate for all of their students. Anti-racist advocacy should also include policies and procedures that may not directly affect their classroom but would put an undue racist burden on their students.

For the term white supremacy, I reference Derald Wing Sue, who suggests that white supremacy is “a doctrine of racial superiority that justifies discrimination, segregation, and domination of persons of color based on ideology and belief systems that considers all other non-White groups inferior” (155). In the secondary classroom, white supremacy would be the standardization of white language habitus, as well as the writing assessment process that evaluates students through their knowledge of the white language habitus instead of their growth and development as a writer.

When using the term white gaze, I will be using Bree Picower’s definition from *Reading, Writing, and Racism: Disrupting Whiteness in Teacher Education and in the Classroom,* which states that the white gaze is a “tool [that] teaches students to think like those in power, in turn, preparing students to empathize with oppressors rather than those marginalized by power” (43). When used throughout this thesis, the white gaze will describe how writing practices uphold white supremacy by asking students to view their writing through the white gaze to suppress other cultures' writing and other linguistic backgrounds.

Chapter 2: Anti-Racist Writing Workshop Model

The writing process that countless writing educators now understand as essential to learning can stem back to the late-1930s. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Norman Forester was a major influence in the creation of the writing workshop model (Donnelly 38). Working with the University of Iowa, Forester helped create a program for post-secondary writers looking for a place to develop their craft of writing. In the 1940s, Forester was joined by Paul Engle (Donnelly 38), and the pair was able to manufacture a space where talented writers could have their work critiqued, much like the European cafes where artisans were able to converse and share work with each other—something the United States lacked at the time (Swander 168).

As Forester and Engle worked, both men were distinctly under the impression that their students were established as strong writers who were looking for a place to share their work to further their proclivity in the artistry of the written word. Mary Swander asserts that Engle saw his program as "a kind of boot camp where [his students] would be toughened up to the brutality of the enemy: the attacking critics. He thought that his students should be given harsher criticism—for their own good—than any they would receive in the outside world. Then later, they would be able to take it. Like a man" (168). In other words, Engle uses the military as a model for how a writing classroom participates should behave. Students are expected to listen to an instructor and agree with what they are saying, take criticism without having any ability to converse with the critic, and degrade the writer in the hopes the writer is rebuilt into the type of writer the teacher wants them to be, thereby depleting the writer of their creativity.

From Forester and Engle, the writing workshop model slowly trickled down through varying colleges and universities into the secondary writing classroom because graduates at the University of Iowa were taking Forester and Engle's approach to writing to their new jobs in

academia (Swander 168). However, the type of writing workshop model created by Forester and Engle was problematic for a few reasons. First, most of the participants were white men whom the G.I. Bill sponsored, having fought during World War II (Swander 168). With several of the students trained by the military, students were already used to following strict orders and guidelines and being criticized for stepping out of line, or in the case of writing, writing outside of the prescribed guidelines. Instead of a nurturing approach to writing, Forester and Engle took on a degrading approach to writing in hopes of building thick skins for their students to begin the standardization of writing.

As white men within the dominant societal structures, Forester and Engle's approach to writing through criticism created a harsh environment for writers, particularly marginalized students. As Felicia Chavez tells her readers, BIPOC voices are often discriminated against in the writing classroom for their language usage. The discrimination happens because of the perception that a BIPOC student's lived experiences are exaggerated compared to their white peers (Chavez 3), quieting the voices of BIPOC students when they do not want to participate in the "destructive[ness of] institutions that routinely disregard the lived experiences of people who are not white" (Chavez 2). BIPOC students learn that staying quiet and choosing not to disrupt the racialized status quo is better than questioning the teacher or school system that would believe the student to be aggrandizing themselves or being difficult for no reason. Forester and Engle's writing workshop is white supremacist due to the silencing of authors and the acceptance that the educator is the only person with any authority to dictate if a student's writing sample is proficient or not. Since the education workforce in the United States is predominantly white, we must begin to question the representation of BIPOC students and staff within the traditional writing workshop model (NCES).

After Forester and Engle, Donald Graves, a writer and pedagogue, reinvented the writing workshop by exploring the implications of the writing workshop model to conclude that writing should be a process. Specifically, Graves is credited with creating the "process approach to writing" from his publication of *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (Wyse 83). Graves also won the 1974 Promising Researcher Award from the National Council of Teachers of English for his research and publications, such as "An Examination of the Writing Processes of Seven Year Old Children" (Wyes 83). As a result of Graves's work, modern-day educators are also taught the familiar approach to writing as a process, which includes brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revisioning, editing, and submitting (Perdue). A process so ineffaceable that state standardized tests, Common Core Standards, and PRAXIS teacher certification tests all have sections that ask the test taker to recognize and use the different parts of the writing process to delineate one's knowledge on the subject.

When something becomes overly standardized, like the writing process, the usage of the process is no longer a process but a mechanical output of texts. Standardization poses several problems because it commonly "incorporate[s] social, cultural, and racial bias which cannot hold for all students," isolating and failing students based on their relationship to writing without understanding who the writer is (CCCC 16). The process of standardizing writing is troublesome because someone must set the standard. In the case of Graves's model, a cisgender, heterosexual, white, affluent male sets the standard, which means that any student who does not fit the same description as Graves automatically becomes disadvantaged because they are not a part of the standardization since they were not involved within the creation of the standard. Instead, schools expect students to achieve this dominant writing style to make every writer the same. However, when educators negate a student for who they are and force them to be

something they are not, they reinforce the ideology that the writing arts have forgotten and ignored diverse voices. The creation and standardization of writing philosophy and practice to this moment in time have led to an atmosphere where BIPOC writers are expected to "accommodate [the] ignorance" of teachers who have only been subjected to white language and ideology, thereby continuing to uphold white supremacy in the writing workshop (Chavez 6). In turn, a student's lived experiences are dismissed while their writing process is forced to fit the white habitus of writing instruction, negating the writer's creativity and autonomy for the standardized approach.

Therefore, using Felicia Chavez's writing workshop model as a guide, I will address how secondary educators can better advocate for their students by addressing three succinct and racist writing workshop ideologies that have been inherited within teacher education programs as to begin the process of dismantling teaching power, developing student autonomy, and creating a writing process that allows for student success while also decentering whiteness to "deconstruct bias to achieve a cultural shift in perspective; Design democratic learning spaces for creative concentrations; Recruit, nourish, and fortify students of color to best empower them to exercise voice; [and] Embolden every student to self-advocate as a responsible citizen in a globalized community" (Chavez 8). When the writing workshop model is re-envisioned to be a community-building tool to help support students within the writing classroom, students will grow as writers within the environment that empowers students to use their writing judgments without the fear of being disenfranchised by whiteness.

Relinquishing Teacher Power

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, educational scholar Paulo Freire describes two distinct versions of education. The first type of pedagogy that Freire described is named the banking

model of education (72). In this model, teachers stand in front of the classroom and spew information at the students who are receptacles for knowledge instead of active participants in their education (Freire 72). The banking model of education is based on the belief that the educator is superior to the students. When looking at the banking model of education through an anti-racist lens in the writing workshop, students internalize one viewpoint, which is harmful when the student does not fit the criteria for each teacher. For example, I view the world through a particular lens as a white, cisgender, heterosexual, agnostic female who grew up in white suburbia. Add my love of reading, writing, photography, dancing, and traveling, and my view of the world becomes even more narrow. If I were practicing a banking model of education, I would instill the viewpoints of my specific worldview onto my students and force them into accepting everything that I am saying is true, ultimately destroying student autonomy and thought.

Opposite of the banking model is Freire's problem-posing model of education (81). In the problem-posing model of education, students are active participants in their learning and redistribute teacher power to each individual in the classroom (Freire 81). In this way, Freire views problem-posing education as an act of revolutionary pedagogy because the educator is using liberatory humanitarianism to strive for critical consciousness—which Freire terms *conscientization*—to lead to revolution and fight against oppression (Freire 35). Regarding the writer's workshop, Freire's *conscientization* is similar to Felicia Chavez's ideology behind creating an anti-racist writing workshop model because, as Chavez says, "It is time to admit that writing is a political, historical, and ideological act steeped in identity politics. It's an essential act, an act that cultivated critical mass since the traditional writing workshop model was first developed" (10). The anti-racist educator will recognize that a classroom is a place of political power used against students to continue to cater to the oppression of marginalized students. By

engaging in an anti-racist writing workshop model, the anti-racist educator consciously fights against racism due to teacher hegemony, or "the idea that one group can consolidate power and dominance not just by force but also by manipulating mainstream ideology in such a way that makes an imbalance of power seem right, natural, and necessary" (Picower78-79).

To fight the teacher hegemony's in the classroom, an anti-racist educator will begin by looking at their current process in the writing workshop model and determine which practices should be changed. As Asao Inoue argues in *Classroom Writing Assessment as an Anti-Racist Practice: Confronting White Supremacy in the Judgements of Language,* "We live, learn, and teach not simply in the racist ruins of bygone eras but in schools and disciplines firmly built and ever maintained by white supremacy" (373). If secondary writing teachers want to implement anti-racist writing strategies, the educator must critically look at their workshop models to determine which of their practices are racist.

In the case of the traditional writing workshop model, the educator holds an abundant amount of power over their students' work. If an anti-racist educator wants to create a problem-posing space where teachers and students are learning and working together, then the educator must be willing to give up the power they hold as a teacher of writing to dismantle the power dynamic within the classroom where the assumption is that the writing educator is the only person in the classroom that genuinely knows best—an unsurprising notion given that many secondary English educators likely grew up in an educational system that asked students to defer to the assumed authority of an educator and express themselves in a similar manner to the teacher of the class.

To combat the traditional power structure in the writing workshop that Forester and Engle initially set at the University of Iowa, later reframed by Donald Graves, educators must

first acknowledge and identify the specific lense through which they view their students' writing. If students do not have the exact same experience as the educator, their knowledge base will not be the same. Teachers give different—and sometimes conflicting—advice, so students learn how to move from teacher to teacher by copying what the educator wants instead of exploring their writing. When an educator acknowledges that their students will know how to use their voice better than the educator could, the teacher renounces some of the teacher power that the traditional writing workshop model asks educators to wield. In turn, they present that power back to the writers, who should have had control over their own narratives all along.

One possible way a teacher can begin to remove the teacher power structure in the writing classroom is by eliminating prompts that ask for a particular writing task. For instance, Learning Express, a company that publishes preparatory standardized test workbooks, published a collection of writing tasks entitled *501 Writing Prompts*. In this guidebook, there are 501 writing prompts that teachers can use in an assortment of classroom settings. One of these prompts read: "Many people believe that television violence has a negative effect on society because it promotes violence. Do you agree or disagree? Use specific reasons and examples to support your response" (Learning Express 1). When reading a prompt like this, the writer knows precisely what the teacher will ask: do you agree with the statement or disagree? However, the prompt makes several assumptions about the writer. Some of these assumptions include, but are not limited to: the writer has access to television, the prompt's idea of violence is the same as the writer's, and this work will produce insightful research and reasoning. Yet, if the student has little or no interest, experience, or shared values with the prompt, how can an educator expect their student to create a piece of writing they are proud of? Here is where the power of the educator lives. When asking students to write to an overly specific prompt without any leeway

on the chosen topic, the student's autonomy is negated for the teacher's power. The teacher can dictate exactly the content and the style of the writing without needing the students to consider writing in their context, which is exactly what the banking concept of education expects from its educators and students. Domineering teachers and docile students uphold the teacher's power. The anti-racist educator, in wanting to prevent the imbalance of power between teacher and student, will want to work towards changing their mindset about writing prompts to ensure they are not teaching their students to quiet their voices to appease all authority. Anti-racist pedagogy is revolutionary because a teacher makes the active decision to fight against systems of oppression. Moreover, in the case of teacher power, that system of oppression is teaching students to work within pre-described lines at the word of the teacher in charge.

To make the television prompt actively anti-racist in pedagogy, the teacher can look at what the prompt asks. In this case, the television violence prompt asks students to examine a debated topic and take a stance. Instead of dictating what the students can discuss (television and violence), an educator could allow students to choose a topic of interest that teaches the writer how to take a stance on an argument. Instead of television, maybe one student wants to discuss why student-athletes should be paid in college because they hope to play sports one day for a university. Perhaps a dancer, who has struggled to find tights that match their skin tone, wants to write about the racist tendencies of clothing manufactures for dance apparel. Maybe one student loves playing *Call of Duty* and wants to write about how violence in video games does not lead to violence. No matter the topic, students are still focusing on a rhetorical essay. When given more freedom, students can focus on a topic that they find interesting and exciting and invest more time in the writing process and their research. Additionally, this freedom encourages all students to succeed, and foster a community within the classroom. Students can develop their

rhetorical analysis on a topic most meaningful to them, unhindered by the banking model's way of teaching. Instead, the student engages within the problem-posing model of education that supports the anti-racist pedagogical ideology that students should be an active part of the learning process instead of passive bystanders. As such, because the student engages within their learning, the educator recognizes their role is more of a guide than a dominant presence for the student.

The television prompt is only the start of why writing prompts are harmful and not a product of anti-racist writing pedagogy. There are prompts in teachers' classrooms that not only remove student autonomy due to lack of choice but also degrade students by asking them to participate in racist ideology and the Othering of themselves. To illustrate this point, Bree Picower references a poster project written for an elementary classroom in Edmunds, Washington that was worded as, "You are a wealthy Southern plantation owner who had several slaves escape and head to the North. This is severely hurting your profits. Make a poster advertising for slave catchers to go find your runaway slaves. Be persuasive, make your poster stand out, and be sure to put in an incentive" (44). When students are asked to engage in a writing activity like the one mentioned, the students are expected to be looking at slavery through the white gaze, asking students to view the runaway slaves as an inconvenience for the white plantation owner instead of asking the students to recognize why the slaves ran away in the first place. In doing so, students of color are asked to "develop the White Gaze by going outside themselves to see their own people as problems and to empathize with, identify with, and think like the very people responsible for their oppression" (Picower 47). If students are asked to write about the captivity of runaway slaves, the students are actively participating in racist ideological beliefs that Black people are lesser than white people. BIPOC students are subsequently

traumatized because they are forced to write about slavery in this way. An educator who wants to be considered an anti-racist pedagogue needs to recognize the harmful words their writing assignments can produce because of the white lens that education is generally filtered. To actively fight against racism and the oppression of students within the writing classroom, the anti-racist educator must review all curricular materials, including writing assignments, for language that may be harmful to the students or uphold white supremacy and racist ideology. If not, then the educator, when using Kendi's definition of racism, is not anti-racist and is instead racist because they are tacitly allowing racism to partake within their classrooms.

Besides extracting an overly specific prompt and revoking racist language in writing assignments, an educator can also change the way they grade and move away from rubrics to dismantle the power structure in the secondary writing classroom for a healthier balance between teachers and students. While rubrics will be discussed further in Chapter 3, rubrics are also essential to note here because a rubric is the ultimate clutch of power. With a rubric, a teacher judges their student's work based on columns of categories. Students are held to arbitrary standards that can change from teacher to teacher. Furthermore, anti-racist educators must ask themselves whose standards are being used? If education is ultimately drenched in white supremacy because American education upholds white values, then the rubric does the same.

Moreover, a student is taught that a single mistake on an essay can drop their letter grade. An occasion for this occurrence may be seen if a teacher is using the Common Core standard CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.D: "Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing" when assessing a student's work in their rubrics (National Governs 9-10.1.D). Using a section of a

writing rubric that I have used in my classroom, noted in Figure 1, notice that the word choice is subjective and mostly inconsistent in nature, leading to haphazard grading from the educator because their interpretation of the rubric can quickly change from student to student; especially if the educator is biased (cognizant or not) from student to student because of the indiscriminate nature of grading rubrics. Students who are not inherently a part of the white language habitus may be perplexed to learn why they are marked at a lower grade compared to their peers who are fully emersed within the white language habitus because the student may not understand that their teacher could have misinterpreted their language usage in the written assignment. This grade discrepancy is especially true for BIPOC students, as April Baker-Bell, a teacher-researcher-activist, attests to in her article about Black language in education, "We Been Knowin: Toward an Anti-Racist Language and Literacy Education". Baker-Bell states that

	4	3	2	1
Formal Tone	Student tone is maintained throughout the entirety of the essay. There is no opinion visible throughout the argument, using only facts.	Student tone is mostly formal throughout the essay. There may be some opinion within the essay, but is mostly factual.	Student tone is inconsistent between formal and informal expression. There are more opinions throughout the essay than facts.	There is little to no formal tone throughout the essay. The student uses their opinions throughout the essay instead of using facts.

Figure 1: Persuasive Essay Excerpt from Emily Wisniewski. Persuasive Essay Rubric. Kennett High School. Kennett Square. October 2018. Print.

> despite there being decades of research on Black Language, despite its survival since enslavement, and despite its linguistic imprint on the nation and globe, many ELA teachers leave their teacher education program without knowing that Black Language is a rule-based linguistic system that includes features of West

> African languages and has roots as deep and grammatically consistent as Scottish, Irish, and other world Englishes'. (6)

If educators are not aware that Black language has its own rules, or if an educator does not recognize Black language as an acceptable language in the classroom, then educators must also be missing engagement with other languages and cultures—such as the languages and cultures of Native Americans, Asians, and Latin Americans—to instill white language superiority. The Conference of College Composition's "Students' Right to Their Own Language" states that "the question, then, is not whether students can make language changes, for they do so all the time, but whether they can step over the hazily defined boundaries that separate dialects" (8). In other words, the CCCC questions the student's success in the classroom when the white language habitus determines a student's writing ability instead of assessing students on their language usage. When "many speakers of divergent dialects are denied opportunities that are readily available to" the European, American English speakers , students are ignored or labeled as bad students when the reality has little to do with the student, but rather the systemic oppression of non-white, European languages within the writing classroom (CCCC 22). To help negate the inferiority that comes from using rubrics, the teacher should disregard rubrics in their writing workshop to better support students find their voice and realize that their language is valid.

As for the racist writing prompts or questions that appear, the student may have little recourse in these types of situations if the teacher is not anti-racist and therefore harms the student mentally and hinders their education. Prompts or questions like the runaway slave poster usually occur because of the white gaze. The ultimate goal of the white gaze is to promote Whiteness, placing a psychological burden on BIPOC students that could eventually lead to the jeopardization of their education (Picower 47). In this way, the anti-racist educator needs to be

aware of the white gaze because “what teachers choose to teach represents their individual ways of thinking about race, which have been influenced by broader racial ideologies” (Picower 62). By a teacher’s carelessness in their expression of prompts and questions, students will find that their power is completely taken away because the teacher is not taking an active stance against racism, and is instead showing a preference for one identity over another. Once the teacher identifies themselves as racist (or some other form of oppressor), the teacher has harmed the student and their relationship with that student that may be impossible to repair. The anti-racist educator will ensure that the white gaze does not seduce them and instead will ensure that their assignments are inclusive to every student within the classroom, ensuring they are not asking their students to take a particular racial stance to dehumanize another.

Finally, to help teachers negate their supreme power in the writing classroom, teachers need to allow students time to explore and workshop together. In a traditional writing workshop model, the student regularly writes on their own. Maybe there is an occasional teacher conference, but a student writes and the teacher grades. In an anti-racist writing workshop, however, students are taught to interact and help each other grow and develop during the writing process. When given class time to sit and write, the students are working in a collaborative atmosphere that allows them to ask each other for advice, read each other’s work, and become a part of a community of writers. In this community, the teacher takes a back seat. They allow the students to work and to collaborate without the need for teacher intervention. The teacher is in the classroom, but instead of the person with ultimate power, they allow their students to take an active role in speaking to each other as writers. When students are writing on a topic of interest and can express that interest in writing, without feeling stifled by the teacher’s prompts and expectations, students can begin to explore writing in a way that suits them as a writer. By

trusting students to decide what is best for them, they gain autonomy and allow their voices to fill the page. When the educator dismantles the power structure, the educator is dismantling a piece of the institutional racism that asks students to be quiet and quell their opinions and curiosities, creating a problem-posing classroom environment instead of the oppressive banking model.

Giving Students Back Their Autonomy

In a traditional writing workshop model, the student, when under the strict rules and expectations of the educator, loses their autonomy as a writer when they are writing to what they believe the teacher wants them to write. Their voices are stifled, they lose confidence as writers, and they produce lifeless essays that show little to no intricacies of themselves as writers. When creating an anti-racist writing workshop model, an educator should not only be diminishing their own power in the classroom to create a more balanced atmosphere, but the educator must also allow their students to grow and develop their voice as a writer to deconstruct the writer's passivity in the traditional writing workshop to actively work towards anti-racism.

A passivity in writing also creates an environment where essays sound similar to each other because the students are trying to mimic the teacher's writing style. However, growing a student's voice in writing can be challenging given their past experiences. Until the student enters an anti-racist writing workshop model, the student is very much dependent on the teacher's grade more than anything else. Students are afraid of writing, whether the fear is from the teacher or their peers. Even the perceived strongest writers in the classroom care little about investing in themselves as writers when they receive a high letter grade because they are under the false pretense they should be writing for the teacher instead of for themselves.

To help relieve the pressure of writing, one approach an educator can take to their classroom is to ask students what makes them good writers. In *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop,* Felicia Chavez writes that she asks her students at the beginning of the semester to list all the ways they are writers (56). She does not care what they say as long as the students can write at least one way they are a competent writer. For some, they may say that they write poems on the weekend when they go hiking. Others may say that they know they should capitalize *I* in a sentence. Either way, the student must figure out what makes them an effective writer. Then, the students are asked to share with the class why they are considered a good writer. To build community, I would further suggest glorious applause for everyone in the classroom after sharing because admitting to characteristics indicative of a successful writer may seem unnatural to students who are constantly told they are not. An anti-racist educator will not allow a student to fall into that pitfall in their classroom. Instead, they will help lift the student's confidence by showing the student that they are stronger writers than they give themselves credit for. In turn, the teacher is then helping students understand that good and bad, when describing yourself as a writer, is haphazard at best. Therefore, an educator who wants to be considered anti-racist will avoid labeling students as good and bad writers to avoid the white language habitus that the teacher has grown accustomed to using.

Chavez also suggests that teachers collaborate with students about what makes a student worry about writing (64). In the secondary classroom, an anti-racist educator can take a few moments (maybe even use a writing journal entry) to ask students to list all the ways they worry about writing. Some students may say they worry about getting a bad grade, and another student may say that they worry about having a peer read their essay, while others may say they worry about the content of their compositions. The anti-racist educator should give their students time

to write and think about why writing can be complex or scary for the writer. Then, the anti-racist educator will make a class list of the student's responses to the prompt, leading to a discussion on the worries of the writers. When students share their concerns, the anti-racist educator will address those concerns in the classroom to ensure that community is built within the classroom and that the student's needs are being acknowledged to distribute the power structure within the classroom to everyone instead of a singular person as the anti-racist writing workshop suggests from the previous section.

For instance, if a student says they worry about peer-reviewing, tell them that they will learn how to look at writing differently and peer review effectively over the next few weeks. Though the educator does not have to go into deep reasoning at that moment, giving the students the space to air their worries and hearing their teacher address those concerns can be a cathartic experience for the writer, especially for writers whom past educators may have marginalized due to their perceived ability as a writer. Then, after addressing the worry, the educator must ensure that they do what they say they will do. If an educator is going to teach students how to discuss a peer's essay, then the teacher must take the time to teach those new methods. It is imperative to teach students about the white racial habitus within writing and language during these lessons. While an educator may not need in-depth terminology, anti-racist educators should make their students aware of biases in the peer review process and steps to avoid these pitfalls.

The collective sharing is vital for students to understand that everyone has strengths and fears in writing. By asking students to share what they think they have done well and what they are worried about in their writing, the educator allows their students to experience their first moment of autonomy in the new writing environment through a shared community. Students may not be used to sharing their perspectives on themselves as writers other than what their past

teachers thought of them as writers. In particular, students of color have spent much of their education “decoding” what they believe the teacher wants of them or how they should respond in class (Brown 53). The BIPOC student may not even know their autonomy in writing if they are asked to write against their better judgment for what a previous teacher wanted. By asking the student to share their successes and worries, the educator enacts an anti-racist practice that puts the student’s autonomy at the center of their methods and decentralizes the teacher.

When a student is centered in their own writing practices, the educator creates an anti-racist space that allows students to take risks and try something new in writing. The educator also sends a message to their students that they care about what they have to think about themselves as writers. Unlike the traditional workshop model that “silences the author during workshop” (Chavez 10), this anti-racist approach of fostering autonomy “empowers the author” to use their voice in the workshop and to express themselves both on the page and through other written and verbal activities (Chavez 10). Once a student can identify their writing strengths and worries, the best thing to do is get the students writing. In a writing classroom, if the only time a student is writing is a graded assessment, the student cannot fully develop as a writer because they need time to explore and learn from themselves as they go. When the student arrives at the more formal essay, they have become more confident about writing. Confidence is usually shattered by the traditional workshop model, which tells students they are not writers because they cannot achieve the white habitus.

Even if an educator’s time in class is short, five minutes at the start of the day can get the students writing to explore who they are and who they want to be as writers. When the student is not turning these writing activities in, they can write without fear of failure. As a student writes without fear of failure, then the task of writing becomes more accessible. When writing is more

manageable, the students can choose who they are as writers without worrying about who the teacher wants them to be. This writing-for-self practice is crucial for writers who come to the anti-racist educator's classroom believing they have nothing important to say or cannot write their authentic thoughts because of their experiences in past classrooms. The job of the anti-racist educator is to calm these fears in their students by modeling that writing education can break the white habitus that has been formed and that students will not be judged on their language usage. When students can use their own voices in their own way, they are given autonomy in the secondary writing classroom, combating the traditional writing workshop model's tendency of silencing the writer's voices and upholding the white supremacy of the white language habitus.

More Than Product and Other Reflections

When Donald Graves mass-produced the writing process, which he defines as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revisioning, editing, and submitting, he likely did not envision that his writing style would become a common writing strategy throughout most writing classrooms (Perdue). The Common Core State Standards even use varying degrees of Graves's writing process to produce evidence of writing ability. For instance, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5 states that a student should be able to "Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience" (National Governors 9.10.5). Without using the exact language of Graves's writing process, the above standard is following Graves's ideology by expecting students to start writing in the brainstorming stage before writing a draft and making revisions to work.

While Graves's original intent may not have been to standardize the writing process in a clinical way, the fact remains that the writing process has become a lifeless entity that continues

to perpetuate the white rigidity of the creative process, emphasizeing white values because the writing process has been created and taught by a predominately white group of educators. When marginalized students are asked to adhere to a process that was not made for them, students may struggle with finding their voices due to the over-demanding power of the teacher's voice. At the same time, the educator asking their students to follow a stringent writing process also curtails the students' cyclical approach to their writing processes. While Graves's writing process may have been a perceived order, I argue that students need more flexibility to participate in their writing process to achieve an anti-racist writing workshop model.

Many students, unconsciously, may have developed a process of writing that does not meet the teacher's prescribed notions of the writing process. Students can pre-write, draft, and revise in numerous ways. The secondary writing classroom tends to diminish the creativity of the student's writing process while also silencing the voices of marginalized groups who do not think and express themselves in the same way as the white, male standard that created the writing process, which is particularly saddening in the writing classroom because "writing and making are human endeavors that stand the test of time" (Stockman 152). The traditional writing workshop model diminishes the writing and creating process to produce a final product that is sent to the teacher to grade. There is no blame on the students for this ideological mindset, since educators have allowed students a nugatory experience in writing.

To rectify the menial writing experience students have and to change their view of writing, I suggest the creation of a makerspace in the classroom. According to Angela Stockman in *Hacking the Writing Workshop: Redesign with Making in Mind*, a makerspace environment encourages students to explore design in new ways (14-15). There are always materials for the students to use as inspiration to design an exciting adventure into creativity. Writing can be the

same way. When students can move around the classroom, choose their own topics, and are inspired by their space, the student can create writing that develops during a process of non-cyclical writing. By helping students learn that writing can be done in any order before the finished process and are allowed to explore their writing, the anti-racist educator is breaking the traditional workshop model that keeps students in an overly structured format.

The anti-racist writing educator is also implementing, in the makerspace, a place for students to create beyond a typical print-exclusive essay. In a makerspace, students are encouraged to explore varying modes of writing that surpass the normalized academic stance. For instance, a student may make a collage of words and pictures to describe who they are as a person, or they may begin to explore a difficult concept in the classroom by building something that will help them understand the topic. No matter what the student makes, they are creating with their hands and exploring their process in a new, exciting way, which is wonderful for a student to experience because a student may not regularly examine the multimodalities of writing since students are not usually encouraged to do so. Providing opportunities for students to explore their writing is an anti-racist approach to writing because a makerspace allows students to dismantle the power of the traditional writing workshop that asks students to write for their teacher instead of for themselves. When promoting a makerspace within the writing classroom, the anti-racist educator is demonstrating to students that writing is more about the student and their process instead of what the teacher dictates to them, which allows students to explore writing in a safe space that is decentering whiteness instead of creating receptacles who memorize and produce cloned essays that withhold white supremacy.

Furthermore, by creating a space where students are allowed to explore their writing in a process that is tailored towards the student as a writer, then teachers are cultivating an

environment that allows developing writers to experiment and fail. A student may fear perfection early in the class, but the anti-racist teacher helps students dissipate this fear when encouraging the student's voice to grow. Students can develop who they are and whom they want to be as writers because the educator is no longer assuming that all writers "share identical knowledge of the craft," or will use the craft in the same way, depending on their life experiences(Chavez 10).

Once students break free from the standardized writing workshop model of creating products of writing, then the student can be engaged further through writer conferences because they are no longer held to standards that they may not meet given their familiarity with the white habitus of the writing classroom. Instead, students are allowed to explore their words in their way, without fear of being discriminated against. The student has learned to defend their writing process in ways the traditional writing workshop does not account for due to the inflexible nature of the structure situated in white writing ideology that began with Forester and Engle and continues in usage today, including interactions that students have with their teachers in the classroom during writing conferences.

In a traditional writing workshop model, writer conferences are usually teacher lead because the teacher is the one who reads the writer's work and gives feedback, silencing the writer's voice to engage in discussion with their assessor—the same ideology of the Forester and Engle model of writing that tore students down instead of fostering their growth, militarizing the writing classroom. Marginalized students are notably affected given that the white students are more secure in their use of language when developing their writing because they are the ones that the white language habitus values. However, the anti-racist educator, who does not want to silence the voices of their students by participating in the white supremacy of the writing conference, will change the writing conference model to help students become more engaged

within their writing process, ensuring every student can participate and be heard as writers instead of being viewed as lesser when compared to their peers because of standardization that was not created for the marginalized student in the room. Instead, expecting students to conform to the white habitus or be constantly trailing behind their peers.

To offset the white habitus in a traditional writing conference, in which students are being talked at and given explicit instructions and expectations, an educator can delineate the power of the writing conference to allow the student to talk and set the expectations. Felicia Chavez tells her readers in *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop* that she asks her students to come to their writing conference with ideas the writer wants to talk about (151). To keep her voice from overpowering her writing students, she allows the student to decide the direction. By having the students think about their writing process pre-conference, the students can assess and analyze their needs for that particular assignment. In turn, by asking students to lead the direction of the conference, the educator is breaking a tradition of silencing the author during a writing conference. Instead, by allowing the student to set the parameters of the writing conference, the anti-racist educator has "empower[ed] the author to moderate their own workshop," continuing to create a community of learning instead of a forced subjection of learning (Chavez 10). These writing conferences are also important for the marginalized voices in the room because the educator has created a space for developing critical consciousness for their students. After all, the teacher is listening to their students. At that moment, the student can develop their critical consciousness because the educator is dismantling the traditional writing workshop model that centers the supreme power of the educator and the educator's writing process.

Students having a say in the feedback process is also incredibly important for building self-worth and their autonomy as writers for the dismantling process of white supremacy in the

writing classroom. If a teacher wants to discuss comma splices, but the student is asking the conference to rework their introductory paragraph, then the student's conferencing ideas should be at the forefront of the conference because they are the writer. If an educator feels the need to make a comment during a feedback process that was not explicitly asked for, then the educator should ask for the writer's permission before giving unsolicited advice. Yes, writing educators have a skill set that can help their students, but ensuring students are engaged within their writing takes precedent in an anti-racist writing classroom because writing teachers with an anti-racist writing pedagogy will ensure that their students' voices are heard and acknowledged within the writing process instead of upholding the silencing ideology of the traditional conference model.

Engaging students within the writing process also helps students better understand how to participate in the peer-review process, something that a number of students genuinely struggle to understand because every model of writing they have experienced has taken them out of the process. The writing in a traditional writing workshop is more segmented, and the feedback process is quiet, where the student is taught voicelessness and accepts whatever critique comes their way. However, an anti-racist educator will want to ensure that their students know how to conference by holding a class discussion about what a peer conference should and should not be—preparing students to think beyond the traditional writing workshop model and into an equitable mindset. These expectations can be taught and discussed, but also demonstrated through interactions. When a student comes to a one-on-one writer's conference with a list of topics, they learn how to do the same for their peers. While doing so, students are continually engaged in an environment that supports and foster a learning community that is dedicated to helping each student grow as writers instead of suggesting to the writer that they are not writers,

as the traditional writing workshop approach does through the teacher's power, a lack of student autonomy, and writing products for the sake of production.

Chapter 3: Anti-Racist Assessment Strategy

After the anti-racist educator has created a space for writers to flourish and explore writing without fear of failure, the assessment practices of the student's writing will also need to change and adapt into a more anti-racist writing practice. Grades are a part of an educator's power within the classroom. Students must figure out how to write for the teacher by following rubrics and commentary. However, holding students accountable for specific writing and ignoring the rest of the text is harmful and just as likely to strip a student of their autonomy as not. Also, if an educator wants to prove to their students that writing is not a product, then the grading process should also reflect that ideological belief.

Changing how a teacher grades can be complex, especially in a school system that believes grades are the most important part of schooling. However, the anti-racist educator knows and understands that "an overemphasis on assessment can actually undermine the pursuit of excellence" (Maehr and Midgley). An anti-racist educator also knows "students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are disproportionately placed in lower-track classes; they are often plagued by lower expectations for their work, which are centered around water-down, test-prep curriculum" (Leekeenan and Holland 96).To combat the lower expectations on students and the undermining of success, an anti-racist educator needs to reevaluate how their writing assessments are viewed within their classroom. By evaluating their system of grading, the anti-racist educator can create an assessment ecology that will "resist White language supremacy and racism that [is] structurally embedded in the academy and our society" (Inoue, *Labor* 13).

The assessment strategy that secondary English educators can use within their classroom to ensure anti-racist grading practices is the labor-based contract, which focuses on the labor a

student produces instead of asking students to adhere to capricious grading standards on a rubric. However, changing to a labor-based writing contract in the secondary classroom may be difficult for some educations because it can be difficult for an educator to understand how the traditional grading model of writing assessment seeps from white supremacist ideology. Still, the uncomfortable truth is that many of the grading practices within the writing classroom are a part of an educational system that supports and prompts white language and white thinking, forming a white habitus within the writing assessment process. When an educator is not aware of the systemic racism that actively plays a role in their traditional grading practices, then an educator allows white students to succeed over their non-white peers because the traditional assessment practices support white language usage. At the same time, non-white students are trying to work within a system that actively works against their success, creating an academic imbalance between students in the classroom. In this way, students are then led to believe that receiving an "A" on a rubric equals quality work while anything below a "C" means subpar quality. In reality, the student's grade may be defining the student's use and understanding of white habitus instead of some profound skill they hold over their classmates.

For instance, an educator may write on their rubric that to receive a 4 out 4 on the grammatical section of the writing rubric, a student must demonstrate proficiency in the English language by showing no more than two grammar mistakes. Anything more than two mistakes automatically moves a student from a 4 out of 4 score to a 3 out of 4 score. A white student who grew up within the white language habitus has grown up with the language rules of whiteness indicative of traditional Western academia (Inoue, *Labor* 43). While not every student will know every grammatical rule, they are more likely to understand how to write the rules in their essay even if they cannot name the rule they are using. In most cases, a white student who grew up

around the centralized white habitus of writing practices in secondary schools has to learn about grammatical rules when they are constantly using them in their speaking and writing up until the point of submission (Inoue, *Labor* 38-39). A white student in the white habitus will also have a more robust understanding of what rules should be followed based on their previous success (Inoue, *Labor* 43). Students who seem to excel in writing may also have to worry about the way their writing assignment is written because of their immersion within the white language habitus, allowing the student to focus solely on content and worrying about the copy-editing later on in their process. As a result, students can engage with the content of their work because they are meeting the skills the teacher believes are required in the white language habitus. The student can then focus their effort on building their argument without worrying how their argument will come across because they instinctively know they are already meeting or succeeding expectations in their verbiage.

However, suppose the student comes from a non-white dominant language background. In that case, they may not recognize the grammatical mistakes as easily or may not understand that their writing may be different from what a teacher is looking for on a rubric category that asks for less than two mistakes to receive full credit. For example, the adjective appears before the noun in dominant, white English, i.e. the blue cat. However, in Spanish, the adjective comes after the noun: *el gato azul*. A Spanish student may write the adjective after the noun because that is the rule of the language that they have learned. However, in a rubric that allows little or no room for error, then the Spanish-speaking student, who is attempting to write in another language, is already at a disadvantage on the rubric because their teacher is assuming all of their students have an understanding of English syntax.

To avoid assuming a student's language, an anti-racist educator in the secondary writing classroom will move away from the traditional grading rubric to find an assessment strategy that works towards building confidence in students as writers without allowing the white language habitus to deconstruct the value of student writing thereby, giving students control over their personal writing preferences without the worry of becoming a failure in the eyes of a traditional grading model. In creating a new system of grading for their classroom, the educator can move beyond the typical teacher-controlled assessment strategies of the writing assessment process while working outside of the confines of the white habitus.

Educators who want to be anti-racist should look to change their assessments to uphold their values of equality and accessibility within the classroom for all students by implementing grading contracts within their classroom, which have been used in some colleges and universities for a couple of decades. Yet, the utilization of grading contracts within the secondary classroom is naught because secondary schools are overly standardized, dictating that teachers grade in similar fashions using a system that prompts the white habitus.

Whether the secondary teacher is consciously aware of the act of inequity while they assess writing or not, the educator is participating in what scholars Erhabor Ighodaro and Greg Wiggan calls "curriculum violence," stating the educational system in the United States makes a "deliberate manipulation of academic programming in a manner that ignores or compromises the intellectual and psychological well-being of learners" (229). When a student is deliberately manipulated by a school system that upholds white supremacist values (given the nature of pedagogical practices and systemic practices such as the Common Core and the teacher's grading practices), then a student is also asked to uphold the white values in learning and language to become successful while forfeiting their self as a student, writer, and person.

However, if an educator wants to move away from the white supremacist tendencies of the traditional grading scale, then a grading contract offers a pedagogical alternative that provides flexibility in assessing student work.

What is a Grading Contract?

The premise of a grading contract is simple: an agreement between an educator and their students stating that the student will be recognized for their labor (as Inoue says, a student's "experience of languaging") instead of meeting subjective criteria that is usually found within traditional assessment rubrics (*Labor*, 129). However, not every grading contract is created equal and can also utilize the same strategies of white writing standards based on a student's understanding of the white language habitus. It is essential to understand how grading contracts have evolved to better understand how to incorporate anti-racist pedagogical ideology within the contract that an anti-racist educator will set forth within their classrooms. The first pedagogue to introduce grading contracts is John V. Knapp, who argued for grading contracts to make the writing process less lonely through conferencing. Peter Elbow and Jane Danielewicz then change the focus of the grading contract from conferences to labor-based grading. Finally, Asao Inoue incorporates the contracts of the past with an anti-racist approach to assessing students. This section concludes with an explanation of how secondary English educators can take the contract given by these college professors and pedagogues and create a contract supported at the secondary level.

John V. Knapp

John Knapp is a professor and pedagogue who, in 1976, wrote, "Contract/Conference Evaluations of Freshman Composition" for *College English*. Knapp describes the need for a

conference-based approach to writing assessment because he saw writing as a lonely process. A student writes in isolation, and then a teacher, also in isolation, grades. While there may be some workshop time in class presented to the students in a traditional writing workshop model, most of the professor's assessment is done outside the classroom. Then, students receive feedback with comments like "Expand" or "Why?" without much explanation. In this way, students and educators are going through two separate sessions of the writing process without much overlap with each other (Knapp 649). The lack of overlap Knapp notices is also important for an inspiring anti-racist educator because a teacher who spends little time conversing with their writers has little accountability to prove their grading practices are fair and equitable for each student. Without accountability for the educator's assessment strategies, an educator's conscious and unconscious bias can influence how and what they grade, especially when comparing students who regularly utilize the white language habitus and those who do not.

In his essay, Knapp noted two important details when making the switch from his traditional assessment strategies to a contract/conference grading system: 1) he spoke with the writer while the assessment was happening to help engage the writer with Knapp's feedback, and 2) students showed an increase in engagement within the writing and revision process, negating the adverse effects of a traditional assessment approach to writing (649). For an anti-racist educator, involving students in assessing their writing is important to help negate the teacher's power in the classroom. Involving a student within the assessment process also allows students to dictate what they want the educator to focus on in their writing for their growth as a writer. Helping students become more involved in their writing process is also an anti-racist writing strategy because students are invested in their writing, growing the student's autonomy when

they oversee their process and words. However, Knapp's model, while seemingly anti-racist in philosophy, still has a major flaw that makes his assessment strategy racist in nature.

In Knapp's assessment model (Figure 2), a student starts the class with a "D." The more assessments a student completes, the letter grade will increase. However, in Knapp's contract, a student can only move from Paper #1 to Paper #2 after Knapp deems the student ready to move on to the next paper. If a student's work is deemed incomplete, then Knapp provides his student a list of improvements and is sent off to rewrite part of or all of it, whichever is appropriate, returning the next week for the second scheduled round of conferences. The number of rewrites, the number of barbarity of mistakes are never counted against the student. All that matters is arriving at an acceptable draft" (Knapp 651). Anti-racist educators, while recognizing Knapp's attempt to change writing assessment, will note that Knapp's process does engage the student within the assessment process more than the traditional assessment process—where the teacher assesses alone. Still, Knapp continues to use a grading scale that hinders students.

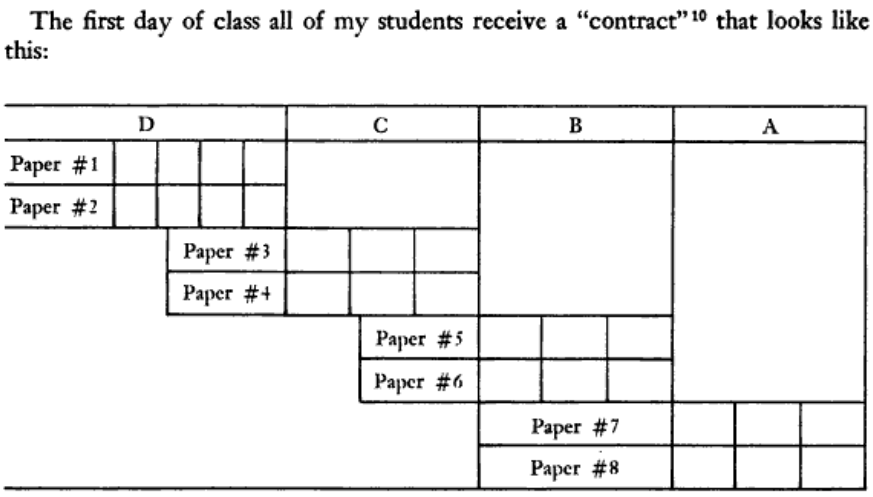


Figure 2: Knapp's Grading Scale from John Knapp. "Contract/Conference Evaluations of Freshman Composition." College English, 37, 7, 1976, pp. 647-653.

Whether Knapp uses a rubric or oral guidelines, students can become entrapped by the scale if the student does not have a deemed proficiency within the white language habitus. Knapp

may give suggestions to a student to improve their writing, but if Knapp is looking for his students to always write in a particular way, then Knapp is overshadowing a student and their language habitus instead of his own beliefs. The anti-racist educator can see the white language habitus overshadowing Knapp's grading when Knapp uses words such as "barbarity" and "acceptable" when describing the language of his students because Knapp is deeming certain language usages acceptable and others as unacceptable.

The inequitable experience is only heightened further for the BIPOC students in the classroom who may not have the same level of handling of the English language in the way Knapp expects his students to write. While those students may work hard to write in a way the professor deems acceptable, the professor ultimately withholds grades from their students because of his opinion. Moreover, there seems to be little guidance on what the criteria is to move from one section of the conferencing contract to another, hiding the teachers' intentions and reasoning between passing one student and failing another, leading to the continuation of inequitable assessment practices within the writing classroom because of an educator's limitless power in a traditional classroom.

Though Knapp does prompt a wonderful strategy in conferencing with the students to open dialogue (a component of anti-racist writing pedagogy presented in Chapter 2), trying to demystify the process of grading with his students, ultimately, Knapp's conference grading contract still holds flaws that would not make his model the best fit for an anti-racist educator trying to change their grading strategies, but it is a start. A start which Peter Elbow and Jane Danielewicz build upon in "A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching".

Peter Elbow and Jane Danielewicz

In the early 1990's, Peter Elbow, professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, began to tackle the problem that Knapp had with his contract: grading on a unilateral scale when writing is subjective. Elbow believed that grading students' work on a unilateral scale was harmful because students were not given the credit they deserved when building their process as writers. Elbow also believed that the traditional grading system within writing education equated good writing with high grades. If a student wrote an assignment and received high marks in each rubric category, they must be a good writer. However, given the subjectivity of writing, a student may go from one classroom with an "A," to another classroom where the student maintains a "C" average.

When Peter Elbow paired with Jane Danielewicz, an associate professor at the University of North Carolina, the two wrote "A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching" to challenge educators to think of grading differently. Elbow and Danielewicz ask their audience to stop grading the subjective material that grades and rubrics give students but instead grade on the amount of work a student completes. Explicitly stated in their grading contracts, Elbow and Danielewicz mention to their students that the student is guaranteed a "B" for the class if they are doing the work asked of them in the spirit that it is asked.

Specifically, Elbow and Danielewicz write in their contract that the students must do the following to garner a "B" in their class:

1. Attend class regularly—not missing more than a week's worth of classes;
2. Meet due dates and writing criteria for all major assignments;
3. Participate in all in-class exercises and activities
4. Complete all informal, low stakes writing assignments (e.g. journal writing or discussion-board writing);
5. Give thoughtful peer feedback during class workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks (e.g. sharing

papers, commenting on drafts, peer editing, online discussion boards, answering peers questions);
6. Sustain effort and investment on each draft of all papers;
7. Make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;
8. Copy-edit all final revisions of main assignments until they conform to the conventions of edited, revised English;
9. Attend conferences with the teacher to discuss drafts;
10. Submit your midterm and final portfolio. (1-2)

Elbow and Danielewicz created this system for their students for a few reasons. They wanted their students to engage in the writing process more than they were. For countless students, writing is hard and takes an abundance of time and effort. Elbow and Danielewicz believe that guaranteeing students a "B" would allow the students to stop focusing on grades and workload so they can become improved writers. By ensuring a "B" to all students based on their effort, Elbow and Danielewicz believe they are fighting against the mindlessness that ensnares students who only write for the teacher and not themselves. In turn, Elbow and Danielewicz are fighting against the standardization of writing education, which also resists the racist tendencies that appear in writing assessments. However, while Elbow and Danielewicz make great strides towards creating a more equitable experience for their students than the traditional writing assessment rubric and grading practices, Elbow and Danielwicz still uphold white language habitus when moving their students from a "B" to an "A."

In Elbow and Danielewicz classes, a student must be deemed exceptional in their writing process, completing feats that their peers are incapable of producing to receive a "B." Yet, little is explained in the grading contract on how students can advance their grades for the course taught using an Elbow and Danielewicz grading contract model. Even more disheartening is the fact that Elbow and Danielewicz proudly state in their essay that receiving an "A" is not a phenomenon that often occurs because of the high standard they hold their students to. In

Elbow's case, he will tell his students that to receive an "A" in his class, they must submit "genuinely excellent work and exceed the requirements for the contract. If you have enough of these performances—and if your portfolio reflects this level of excellence—you will get a grade higher than a B" (Elbow and Danielewicz 9). However, Elbow and Danielewicz are unmistakably upholding the white supremacy of writing assessment practices by setting undisclosed standards that the educator creates to deem a student successful enough to receive an "A" in the classroom. When students are denied the ability to succeed to the highest degree possible, then the students are engaged in another inequitable grading practice because the student is once again caught within a system that judges them and "interpellates them [...] as failures" due to the student's relationship to the white habitus that the educator is setting their standards (Inoue, *Labor* 33). In this distinction, Asao Inoue, a professor and the Director of the Washington University Writing Center, created the idea of labor-based grading contracts to use the idea of Elbow and Danielewicz's grading contract to ensure an equitable writing experience within the classroom and an anti-racist pedagogical paradigm.

Asao Inoue

Inoue's grading contract system is similar to what Elbow and Danielewicz had created. The students in Inoue's labor-based contract are guaranteed a "B" if a student does "all that is asked of [them] in the manner and spirit" of how the assignment is asked (*Labor* 331). However, unlike Elbow and Danielewicz's contract that asks students to meet a standards-based rubric to achieve a grade higher than a "B," Inoue allows his students to generate more labor to increase their overall grade in the class. Specifically, Inoue states in his labor-based contract:

> Higher grades than the default, the grades of 3.4, 3.7, and 4.0, however, require *more labor that helps or supports the class* in its mutual discussions and examinations of rhetoric or the myths of

> education, literacy, and identity. In order to raise your grade, you may complete as many of the following items of labor as you like (doing three gets you a 4.0). Each item completed fully and in the appropriate manner will raise your final course grade by .3. (*Labor* 333)

In *Labor-Based Grading Contracts*, Inoue argues that focusing on labor instead of rubrics for grades above a "B" creates an equitable experience for all students within the classroom because they are not reaching for an unknown white habitus dictated by educators. Students who are not a part of the dominant white discourse of the classroom can perform well and achieve a higher grade within the confines of the current educational system without being blocked to the highest-grade achievement possible, as in Elbow and Danielewicz. The teacher can then use an equitable grading assessment model because all labor is considered equal. When all labor is considered equal amongst peers in the classroom, then equity is possible for students who do not meet the linguistic competencies needed for the traditional grading methodology within the traditional writing assessment.

Teachers who use Inoue's labor-based contract are also able to fight against the white language privilege that occurs within evaluation practices of the traditional classroom writing model because students have diverse linguistic legacies and bring different linguistic styles into the classroom. By focusing on a labor-based contract that asks the students to put in the labor for their grade and providing more labor for a higher grade, allows students to focus less on meeting the white supremacy of standards on a rubric and instead ensures that each student, no matter their linguistic background, will be able to achieve the highest grade possible for the classroom. Implementing the anti-racist ideology encourages students, without the fear of a grade hovering above them, to take risks, expand their writing horizons, and become experts with an aptitude for writing (Reichart).

Furthermore, by allowing students to work towards their goal as labor-based assessments, teachers and students can achieve a right to their language in a similar manner that the CCCC had wanted in 1974 because the students and teachers are allowed to explore their own language and habitus without being penalized for their voices, which allows a safe space for students to be able to try new approaches to their writing without worrying about failure. In contrast, the traditional grading model amounts to a student's success at achieving a specific goal. In a labor-based contract, the student is not penalized even if a student finds their approach does not work in the way they thought it would. Instead, the student is given the opportunity to try something else in their writing to recognize all of the work they have already done.

Not being considered a failure allows students to become writers without the pressure of implementing the white language habitus perfectly. They are given a chance to explore their own language, their own structures, and their own desires when writing. By creating a classroom environment where students are freely asked to explore, to learn, and to grow their craft as writers, the teacher has allowed equitable and fair practices to develop within their classroom environment that help students feel less pressure to be "the best" writer of the class when they are being treated with the same level of respect in their labor.

However, while Inoue's labor-contract is the first contract that addresses the needs of diverse learners while also dismantling the white language hierarchy in the classroom, Inoue still has equity issues that could hinder a student from succeeding, even after addressing the racial inequity within assessment practices due to language and the systematic racism in secondary education. One instance that needs addressing is the extra labor that students are completing outside of the classroom. An educator implementing anti-racist assessment strategies should be aware that students have different home lives that may interfere with their ability to produce

labor outside of the school setting. As an anti-racist educator, it is important to know that students may be entering a classroom with housing insecurity, as a financial contributor for their households, or cohabitating with people who value education differently than the educator. When students are dealing with systemic issues outside of the classroom, the classroom is not always a priority for that student. While Inoue states that the labor-based contract ecology "does not control the outside forces that limit students' time," I insist that an anti-racist educator at the secondary level must make sure that their students have an opportunity to succeed despite the outside influences on their lives to fight against systematic racism in and around the classroom (*Labor* 222).

The issue of work outside of the classroom becomes even more problematic when one remembers that people within the United States are more likely to view the socioeconomic backgrounds of "African Americans with the low end of the wealth spectrum and European Americans with the high end of the wealth spectrum," emphasizing a homework issue for all students, but especially for BIPOC students (Burkholder et al. 652). An anti-racist educator committed to student success must provide time in class to work, including the extra labor for an "A." Without the additional labor built into the classroom schedule, an educator is once again withholding a student's ability to achieve the highest achievement possible without being hindered by their livelihoods outside of the school day. As a result, the educator is engaging in anti-racist practices because they adhere to the extenuating circumstances that may affect a student's grade outside of the classroom.

To better safeguard anti-racist assessment practices in the secondary classroom, the educator can also allow students to turn in the extra labor to receive an "A" at any time during the set grading period. By allowing students some space between the final due date of an

assignment and the end of term, the student can continue to learn and grow as a writer before returning to an old assignment. While some educators may see this as a way to cheat the system or view it as additional labor at the end of a course's grading period, I argue that it should not matter when a student works if they are meeting the guidelines set forth within the grading contract. The goal is for the student to learn and develop as writers and explore their processes. Some students may need to learn all they can before attempting a new rewrite because they may learn a new skill on their subsequent writing assignments that they did not yet know. The more a student writes, the more the student learns. When a student learns, then they are growing as a writer. As they grow as writers because the educator allows them to engage in the writing process as they need to, the educator is incorporating anti-racist pedagogy into their classroom. If the student chooses to complete extra labor at the end of a grading period, are they not still completing the labor that the contract has asked in the first place?

In *Labor-Based Grading Contracts*, Inoue does not address the issue of digital equity. Given that the United States is now in the 21st-Century, digital equity is a concept to understand and manage. Digital inequity is important to be aware of in the secondary writing classroom that asks students to create projects online with different programs. If a student does not have the knowledge or understanding on how to complete an assignment because of the medium being used, then the educator is creating an inequitable experience that does not follow the pedagogical stance of an anti-racist educator. The lack of access to the technology beyond the classroom and knowledge of how to operate that technology is akin to the students who have to fight against the systematic racism of standard-based grading. Assuming students can access and use a plethora of educational programs and devices without confirming this information continues to uphold systematic oppression. If the educator does not teach the program, then the educator is upholding

elitist values between the student who can and the student who cannot use the programs. It is the job of the anti-racist educator to make sure that a student's technology knowledge is suitable for assignments, not the reason a student is unsuccessful with their classroom.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to discuss teachers who are looking for change for change's sake instead of being committed to an anti-racist assessment strategy. Labor-based contract grading is not just a way to change one's grading practices because they want to grade less or are looking to shake things up and grade in a new way. When I created my contract, Appendix 1, I researched varying labor contracts and their verbiage. I had to decide what worked best for me and my classroom as well as ensure that I was implementing anti-racist policies within my contract. Then, the teacher must share their contract with their students and collaboratively rewrite sections to serve the students from their perspectives. This process will take time, and the educator has to be willing to give up class time to review and compose the grading contract with their students adequately. Furthermore, while there may be a considerable amount of work for the educator in the beginning, the contract should never fully be "done" because teachers should be willing to put their pedagogical practices, interpretations, and assignments in front of others for evaluations and scrutiny to find any biases that may be present in one's work (Osman and Hornsby 401).

Nevertheless, if the educator wants to be an anti-racist educator, the labor is already there for the teacher. Creating and implementing an anti-racist pedagogical approach to their writing assessment practices takes constant reflection and reworking to ensure that every student is succeeding without being left behind because of who they are as an individual. When the educator is actively engaged in creating an anti-racist approach to all they do in their educational praxis, then the educator is actively working to be anti-racist.

Lingering Questions About Labor-Based Contracts

Inoue's labor-based contract is a viable anti-racist approach to assessment in the secondary classroom after some revisions to better suit the needs of this particular context. The following section addresses concerns that a secondary educator may have when implementing a labor-based contract, to better assure the educator of the merits of the labor contract and its implementation of the assessment practice in the secondary writing classroom. The reader of this thesis can also find a copy of a labor contract that I created to fit the needs and accommodations of my students in Appendix 1.

Won't My Students Panic Over Their Grades?

When introducing a labor-based contract at the secondary level, an educator should prepare students wary of the change. Up until their first labor-based grading contract, students are inundated to believe that their grade is equal to who they are as an individual in the classroom. Students with an "A" are seen as intelligent and capable young people, while a student barely passing is likely seen as a failure to the school system. Yet, as previously discussed, a student's performance in school may have little to do with who the student is and is instead the representation of the educator's grading system. When an assessment is focused on a white habitus that the student is not a part of, the student may have difficulty adjusting to the educator's expectations due to the difference in understanding the schooling system and the language being used.

When engaging in an anti-racist pedagogical approach, such as the labor-based contract, not only is the educator advocating for their students who may be disenfranchised by the schooling system given their racial identity, the educator is helping assure that all students are

being freed from a system that criticizes a student for one mistake and rarely acknowledging that making mistakes is a part of the learning process because a grading contract does not punish a student for their racial, gender, sexual, religious, economic, etc. identity or the types of classes they are in, i.e., regular, honors, advanced placement (Feldman 30). Students of all backgrounds and statuses can explore their writing without a grade defining who they are as a student (Melzer et al.*)*. A labor-contract evens the playing field for students of all backgrounds, giving them a chance to explore their role as writers at their level of success without the pressures of the white systemic approach to grades in the classroom. It is also important for the educator to work with the students to help them understand that a labor-based contract is task-oriented and that it is by the student's motivations that they achieve the set goals to accomplish the work, not the white racial habitus in writing instruction and assessment (Melzer et al.*)*.

Overall, while a labor-based grading process may be new and intimidating to students who seek satisfaction by checking their grades, helping a student understand the purpose of the labor contract and the reasoning behind the grade shift will help students better understand why the educator has introduced this type of grading style into the classroom environment.

It Sounds Like 180 Days is a lot of Time for One Contract.

The National Education Commission of the States (NECS) stipulates that most states require their students to be in the classroom 180 days a year (1). In that time, schools may ask teachers to input several grades during a marking period, trimester, or semester to track the student's progress in a class over the school year. When implementing the anti-racist assessment approach of a labor-based contract, teachers should consider modifying and revising their contract through their school schedule.

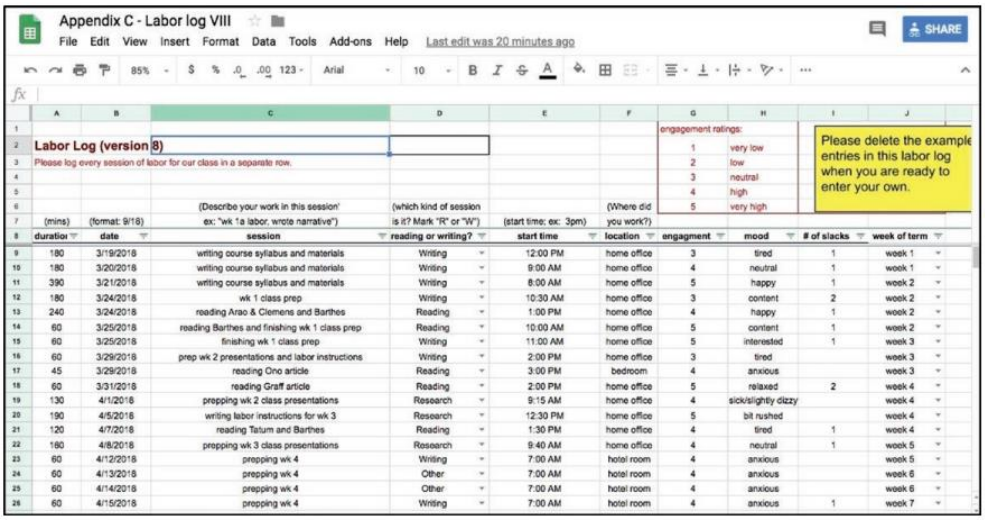
In my school, the students' 180 school days are broken into four marking periods. At the end of each marking period, I readdress the labor contract with my students to verify that what we contracted in the last marking period (or beginning of the year) is still an equitable practice for them because I want to follow anti-racist pedagogical practices in my classroom. I want to ensure that my students' voices are heard, and a new contract is recreated if needed. In doing so, students, who are often left to wonder about their grades, are continually involved throughout the process, which is an important facet of the anti-racist writing workshop and assessment practices.

Revisiting the contract during the course of the school year also ensures that the educator is being held accountable for their anti-racist assessment practices for educators must constantly reevaluate their own pedagogical practices to ensure they are not "maintaining [their learned] Whiteness through policies, practices, silences, and inactions," an effect of the traditional writing workshop and assessment model that silences the writer to gain the submission of students (Sarigianides and Banack 18). In addition, educators are not only reaffirming their anti-racist commitment to grading in an inequitable schooling system, but they are also working with students to understand that they are more than a letter grade. An educator who does not actively engage with anti-racist policies within their classroom is then taking the racist approach to writing instruction because they are simply ignoring the greater systematic problems in play. To avoid passively ignoring the systematic racism within the classroom, the anti-racist educator will learn how to implement a new grading system that works for them within the time limits.

How Do You Track Labor?

When working with secondary students, the idea of labor may be challenging for them to process, given they are used to being graded on how correct they do something instead of the work they put into the assignment they are working on. To help students track their labor, Asao

Inoue gives each of his students a labor log (Figure 3) where students are asked to track their labor (*Labor* 339).



Appendix C - Labor log VIII

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was 20 minutes ago

SHARE

Labor Log (version 8)

Please log every session of labor for our class in a separate row.

engagement ratings:	
1	very low
2	low
3	neutral
4	high
5	very high

Please delete the example entries in this labor log when you are ready to enter your own.

	(mins)	(format: 9/18)	(Describe your work in this session' ex: "wk 1a labor, wrote narrative")	(which kind of session is it? Mark "R" or "W")	(start time; ex: 3pm)	(Where did you work?)				
	duratio	date	session	reading or writing?	start time	location	engagment	mood	# of slacks	week of term
9	180	3/19/2018	writing course syllabus and materials	Writing	12:00 PM	home office	3	tired	1	week 1
10	180	3/20/2018	writing course syllabus and materials	Writing	9:00 AM	home office	4	neutral	1	week 1
11	390	3/21/2018	writing course syllabus and materials	Writing	8:00 AM	home office	5	happy	1	week 2
12	180	3/24/2018	wk 1 class prep	Writing	10:30 AM	home office	3	content	2	week 2
13	240	3/24/2018	reading Arao & Clemens and Barthes	Reading	1:00 PM	home office	4	happy	1	week 2
14	60	3/25/2018	reading Barthes and finishing wk 1 class prep	Reading	10:00 AM	home office	5	content	1	week 2
15	60	3/25/2018	finishing wk 1 class prep	Writing	11:00 AM	home office	5	interested	1	week 3
16	60	3/29/2018	prep wk 2 presentations and labor instructions	Writing	2:00 PM	home office	3	tired		week 3
17	45	3/29/2018	reading Ono article	Reading	3:00 PM	bedroom	4	anxious		week 3
18	60	3/31/2018	reading Graff article	Reading	2:00 PM	home office	5	relaxed	2	week 4
19	130	4/1/2018	prepping wk 2 class presentations	Research	9:15 AM	home office	4	sick/slightly dizzy		week 4
20	190	4/5/2018	writing labor instructions for wk 3	Research	12:30 PM	home office	5	bit rushed		week 4
21	120	4/7/2018	reading Tatum and Barthes	Reading	1:30 PM	home office	4	tired	1	week 4
22	180	4/8/2018	prepping wk 3 class presentations	Research	9:40 AM	home office	4	neutral	1	week 5
23	60	4/12/2018	prepping wk 4	Writing	7:00 AM	hotel room	4	anxious		week 5
24	60	4/13/2018	prepping wk 4	Other	7:00 AM	hotel room	4	anxious		week 6
25	60	4/14/2018	prepping wk 4	Other	7:00 AM	hotel room	4	anxious		week 6
26	60	4/15/2018	prepping wk 4	Writing	7:00 AM	hotel room	4	anxious	1	week 7

Figure 3: Student Tracking Log from Asao Inoue. Labor-Based Grading Contracts. WAC Clearinghouse, 2019, pp. 339

In asking a student to track their labor, the educator is engaged in an anti-racist practice because they trust their student to put in the work they need to be successful without dictating what the work should look like because the teacher is afraid to give up their authority on writing assignments. Labor tracking is also important because it allows students to self-report their own thought processes, which may not always align with an educator's expectations. For instance, an educator may watch a student accomplish little in one class period, but they are unaware that they had an argument with someone important in their life and cannot focus on that day. Yet, in the next class, the student is over the argument and can get a great deal done within the class time.

If an educator is not actively monitoring their students' every moment of class, the educator may catch a student who seems unfocused, but just needs some time to think before putting words down on paper that day. It does not mean the student is unable or incapable of writing, the student just needs another space or time to write. By asking students to track their labor, an educator can see how much work a student has accomplished, but also the amount of

time they worked and how they were feeling for the day. The educator can then use that information to see if a student is struggling with their work or needs some space and will return to class the next day ready to write, in turn, guarding the student against inequitable assumptions based on one moment in time.

This process of a labor log also allows students to take ownership of their labor. If a student wants to receive at least a "B" on the labor contract, that student, given the discussions in class, is aware of their expectations to complete work. It becomes their responsibility, not necessarily the educators, to track and to be honest with themselves, implementing another anti-racist technique of letting the students be in charge of their autonomy in the classroom.

Further, an educator should not only be asking students to keep track of their labor while they are working; educators should be tracking the assignments that the student has submitted by the deadline asked. As noted in Appendix 1, a part of the student's grade is submitting assignments on time. When using the contract, following the guidelines set forth by the educator, the educator is ensuring they are engaging in anti-racist assessment practice strategies for assigning letter grades instead of engaging in the more traditional grading approach by keeping the grading process secretive.

Will Students Take Advantage of the System?

When discontinuing a traditional grading assessment ecology for the anti-racist strategy of the labor-based contract, an educator will be concerned with the possibility that students will be apt to put in less work and cheat the system to receive an inflated grade that they did not earn.

However, I would caution against this type of thinking within the secondary writing classroom. By coming to class with the assumption that students will try and cheat the system, the educator is already delineating in their head the type of students who will follow the rules

and the students who will not. Likely, most of the students they are worried about are "trouble-maker" students with a history of not doing well academically or mismanaging themselves in class. Yet, I assert that the argument in itself is racist. By arguing that certain students cheat the system, the educator is not valuing the labor the student is creating but the power the educator holds over the student's grade. When expecting a student to act in a specific way (especially negatively), the educator is already creating an environment where the student is unlikely to succeed based on the teacher's bias.

I also argue that students can take advantage of the traditional grading assessment practices as well. Students who know how to engage in the white habitus of the writing classroom can already exploit their means of earning a grade. For instance, if a student knows that they can write a paper in a few hours and receive full credit, then the student will not be challenging themselves or trying something new in their writing. Instead, they will produce what they know their teacher expects to receive the grade they want. In this case, the final grade is not based on learning but on the systematic system of success deemed necessary by academia, which is features white supremacy due to the prominent white habitus in the writing curriculum.

What makes a labor-based contract different when evaluating students is that it does not penalize students for what they do not know or understand in writing. Instead, students are encouraged to grow and develop their writing skills without the pressure of failure. When students are less worried about failing due to their perceived lack of knowledge, then the educator has created an anti-racist space for social change within the secondary writing classroom.

Chapter 4: The Anti-Racist Educator

Anti-racist practices established today may not work in the future. The world of education learns more, grows more, and demands more every day. It is up to the secondary writing teacher, who strives to be anti-racist in their practices, to educate themselves to continue best practices in anti-racist pedagogy. The anti-racist educator must be willing to embrace the change as it comes and accept that what one knows today may be changed tomorrow. As Chavez tells us in her book, anti-racist education is a form of aggressive activism that demands an obligation to take a stand for their students (14). By changing the traditional writing workshop model and assessment practices of the secondary writing workshop and by actively seeking the voices of non-white scholarship (and the voices of other marginalized groups such as those who identify as LGTBQIA+, female, non-Christian, etc.), the educator is participating in a revolutionary act within itself because non-revolutionary actions do not actively fight against the systems of oppression within the school system. Non-revolutionary acts do not try to acknowledge or change any of the issues within the schooling system the teacher was once a beneficiary of as a student.

By disrupting the traditional writing workshop model and assessment ecologies, the anti-racist educator can grow their students into writers that flourish their voices instead of the white voice that is deeply ingrained in the writing classroom, allowing students to engage in their own form of activism by writing outside of the traditional ideology of what writing is and is not. Even in a system that demands teachers follow a standardized approach, students can still be held accountable for their growth as a writer over the year without having to be held directly to the Common Core standards that are stifling inside of the classroom.

I implore all educators in the secondary writing classroom to stop focusing on what students “have” to learn and cramming information. Students will grow and develop the skills they need to be successful without adhering to the whiteness that surrounds the writing process. Students will learn different aspects of writing by exploring what writing means to them while not being graded on capricious rubrics that hold little meaning or value to the writer, especially for those writers who want to develop another skill that is not being assessed on a grading rubric.

Most importantly, focusing on being an anti-racist educator not only betters the educator but betters the students as writers and human beings because students learn how to stand up for themselves, how to use their voices, articulate what they need to in their own way, and learn their words matter and are powerful. By giving them a sense of purpose and self-awareness, the anti-racist educator helps create better twenty-first-century citizens actively working against their oppressions.

Ultimately, all anti-racist educators should want these goals for and from their students. The anti-racist writing instructor does not want their students to be replicas of the teacher. The anti-racist educator wants to see their students try something new and explore writing in ways the student has never done before. Writing can be exhilarating, but a student held to traditional writing pedagogies will never truly feel the exhilaration that an anti-racist writing pedagogy will bring because students will be held to the white language habitus that marginalizes a myriad of students.

To be the change their students need, an anti-racist writing educator must realize that most of what they have been taught is oppressive to non-white writers (and other non-dominate identities). To rectify that, one must change and seek new ways of viewing their teaching and assessing writing for Kendi tells us that anti-racist individuals are constantly adopting and

adapting anti-racist practices to be actively disengaged within the racist discourse of traditional writing classrooms (25).

Change in educational practices can be challenging, but an anti-racist educator will question their practices to be the change in education their students desperately need. Students deserve educators in their lives who are willing to go the distance and fight against the oppression that can overwhelm them. By evaluating their practices, the anti-racist educator creates a space for learning and can impact their students in ways the traditional writing classroom model does not allow. When an educator is constantly redefining their pedagogical practices, researching, and learning new ideologies from the voices of BIPOC scholarship, then the educator is expressing their anti-racism through actions instead of allowing racism to overshadow the process of writing and the growth of writers, therefore allowing the educator to move beyond simply being not racist and, instead, being an anti-racist educator.

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Appendix

Labor-Based Grading Contract

English 12 – Popular Literature

A student asked his Zen master how long it would take to reach enlightenment. "Ten years," the master said. But, the student persisted, what if he studied very hard? "Then 20 years," the master responded. Surprised, the student asked how long it would take if he worked very, very hard and became the most dedicated student in the Ashram. "In that case, 30 years," the master replied. His explanation: "If you have one eye on how close you are to achieving your goal, that leaves only one eye for your task" ~ (Kohn, The Case Against Grades *28-33).*

When it comes to classwork within Miss. Wisniewski's classroom, there is one important idea that I want you to take away from this class. Writing is hard, writing is a lot of work, and writing takes time. Which is why you will be graded on the amount of labor you put into your work instead of solely focusing on the final submission on its own. We will be looking at the labor you create before your final submission because the work you put into the final draft of your writing is just as valuable as the final submission.

English 12 has been designed in a way that allows you to engage in the process of writing. Each marking period, you will do two major writing assignments, writing journals, classwork, class readings, and a few other assignments throughout. These assignments have been created to reward you for your labor instead of focusing on the final submission. In doing so, I hope that you will try new writing techniques, push yourself to learn new ideas, and to grow as a writer.

It is my hope, that together, we will create a classroom environment where you will all collaborate with each other, take creative liberties in your writing, ask questions, and take new risks without fear of being punished for those risks. For a labor-based grading system does not just take in your final submission, but your entire journey throughout the process of your writing. As long as you do what is asked of you in the manner that is asked, you will find that your final grade for this class will have less to do with what you submit at the end of your process, but how you completed the process along the way.

I know this system will be new for us, but together, I believe that you will find that system grows your confidence in yourself as a writer, so you leave my classroom just as prepared as any other class. All I ask of you is to honor the craft of writing and I will honor your craft as a writer.

How Grading Works

In a labor-based contract, you are not graded on every individual assignment, but instead scored on the completion of work. If you complete all the work that is asked of you, in the manner that the worked is asked, then you will be guaranteed a "B" for the marking period. In this way, the opinions of your classmates and myself will not matter towards your final grade for the marking period. Together, we may conference, and you may disagree with the suggestions

that are being made and that is okay. You are not penalized for making a mistake in your writing or disagree with a critique. Instead, as long as you complete all the labor that is asked of you, then you receive the "B."

If you would like to receive a grade higher than a B, you will simply complete more labor. The extra labor may be a reflection on an assignment, extra work during the assignment, or rewriting and resubmitting an assignment. Each extra labor will be given to you at the beginning of each marking period, so you know exactly what labor you need to complete to earn a grade higher than a B.

**Please know that all accommodations will be met on this contract. Please see Miss. Wisniewski if you would like to speak specifically about your accommodations.*

***If you are under any extenuating circumstances that affect your ability in this class, please speak with Miss. Wisniewski directly.*

General Terms of Agreement

Class Participation

- **Attendance:** Students agree to attend class and to arrive to class on time to ensure that they are receiving all necessary instructions, materials, and time to complete their assignments. Students who are absent should communicate with Miss. Wisniewski and consult Schoology to make-up any missing materials when absent. Students are not penalized for missing a due date if a student is absent as long as the student communicates with Miss. Wisniewski.
- **Participation and Collaboration:** Students agree to actively participate in class discussions, peer reviews, and conferences. You agree to work with small groups and partners during the writing process and to give thoughtful feedback that helps your classmates grow their craft as a writer.
- **Materials:** You agree to bring all materials to class. This may be hard copies of drafts, objects to bring to class, or the reading material.

Work and Labor

- **Assignments:** Students agree to turn in all assignments on time. All assignments that are submitted must meet all the requirements asked and completed. If you are absent, you are responsible for submitting the work that is due on time on Schoology.
    - **Late Assignments:** A late assignment is any assignment that is submitted late but submitted within 48-hours (2 days) of the original due date. 4 late assignments are permitted each marking period without penalty.
    - **Make-Up Assignments:** A make-up assignment is an assignment that is submitted after the due date and surpasses the 48-hours of a late assignment, but before the end of the marking period.
    - **Ignored Assignments:** An ignored assignment is an assignment that is never submitted. One ignored assignment will automatically drop your grade from a "B".

    - *Important Note: Drafts of major essays or presentations cannot be submitted late. If drafts are not submitted on time, they will be considered "ignored."*
  - **On-Time Assignments:** On-time assignments are assignments that are submitted by the due date.
  - **Complete Assignments:** Complete assignments are assignments that have completed every task that is asked of the student in the manner that the task was asked.

- **Improvements:** As mentioned above, you will not have to worry about anyone's judgement or standards when your assignments are submitted. However, you are expected to listen to the feedback from your writing peers and be engaged within the writing process.

- **Extensions:** Students agree to contact Miss. Wisniewski before an assignment's due date to ask for an extension. Miss. Wisniewski agrees to give students an extension if the student has had an extended absence or needs extra time as long as the student contacts Miss. Wisniewski prior to the due date.

Grading Contract Chart

	# of Late Assignments	**# of Make-Up Assignments**	**# of Ignored Assignments**	**# of Extra Assignments**
A+	4	0	0	4 of 4
A	4	0	0	3 of 4
A-	4	0	0	2 of 4
B+	4	1	0	1 of 4
B	4	1	0	n/a
B-	4	2	1	n/a
C	5	2	1	n/a
C-	5	2	2	n/a
D+	6	3	2	n/a
D	6	4	3	n/a
D-	7	4+	3	n/a
F	8+	4+	4+	n/a

By being in this course, you agree to all of the terms above and I agree to keep track of the above details responsibly and enforce them democratically. We will revisit this contract each marking period to ensure that we are all aware of the contract expectations and revisit the negotiation stages of this contract during that time. Any issues with the contract during the contract negotiation times will allow us to modify the contract as needed.