



Student Agency in the Age of AI

Implications for Writing Instruction

Featuring:

- Dr. Tanya Baker
- Dr. Chris Sloan
- Dr. Paige Whitlock
- Mr. Joseph Wiederhold



noredink



Dr. Tanya Baker
Executive Director
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Project



**Dr. Paige
Whitlock**
Literacy Director
NoRedInk



**national
writing
project** + **noredink**



**national
writing
project**



Our Vision

The National Writing Project (NWP) envisions a future where every person is an accomplished writer, engaged learner, and active participant in a digital, interconnected world.





Our Mission

Through its mission, NWP focuses the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of our nation's educators on sustained efforts to help youth become successful writers and learners.





What We Do

NWP works in partnership with local Writing Project sites, located on over 150 university and college campuses, to provide high-quality professional development in schools, universities, libraries, museums, and after-school programs.



The logo for 'noredink' is centered within a white, rounded rectangular box with a dashed white border. The background consists of a solid blue field with a teal abstract shape in the top-left and a teal shape in the bottom-right, both outlined with dashed lines. The text 'noredink' is rendered in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters 'no', 'red', and 'ink' are colored in a vibrant pink, while the letter 'd' is colored in a dark grey.

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Our Mission

NoRedInk's mission is to unlock every writer's potential.



Choose Interests

Choose your interests and you'll see them in some of your assignments!

My Interests

Fill the bar all the way up by selecting your interests.

The interests you choose will show up here.

→ Continue

Movies and TV

TV Shows and Movies

Animated Characters and Superheroes

Actors

Video Games

Sports

Other Interests

Friends

Pets

TV Shows and Movies



Shrek



Encanto



SpongeBob



Avatar: The Last Airbender



Minions: The Rise of Gru



How to Train Your Dragon

All Assignments

Writing Portfolio

School year

All school years

Status

Published

Print

?

7

Published

1★

Featured

1,252

Words

Untitled

The text "Wordy Birds" shows us how Alex the parrot was able to teach scientists about how smart birds really...

?

Let Teens Vote!

Have you ever wanted the ability to make your voice heard as a teenager? There is a new hot topic on whether o...

★

?

Let Teens Vote!

Have you ever wanted the ability to make your voice heard as a teenager? There is a new hot topic on whether o...

?

Brrrr!

Reading about the man and his dog in the cold made me feel really cold too! The way the writer described the ...

?

Harry's Friend Mira

I would add a new character named Mira to Harry Potter. She's a 12 year old girl with curly black hair, freckles...

?

Tragic Love

Gatsby and Daisy have a sad love story that was impactful. For example, Nick says Gatsby "came alive to me, ...

?

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Assignment Results > Jessica Giraffe

Change student

Jessica Giraffe

Submission

Prompt

Copy essay

Print

Insights

Likes Boost Confidence

Getting likes on social media is a hot topic these days. In my opinion, social media sites should keep showing the number of likes a post gets. First, they boost the user's confidence. For example, when I see that a lot of people liked my pictures or video, I get a warm and fuzzy feeling inside. Likes also help show what's popular and encourage people to post more. Maybe a person sees that cute cat pictures are getting a lot of love, so they decide to share a pic of their own cat.

0 1 2

Comments

Good job stating a claim that answers the prompt. However, your claim should be the first sentence of your paragraph.

Evidence supports the claim (at least two pieces)

0 1 2

Comments

Nice work! You supported your claim with evidence.

Explanation connects the evidence to the claim

0 1 2

Comments

Great job! It's clear how your evidence supports your claim.

Post grade and comments

Send back for revisions

Return to student

Topic sentence states a claim that answers the prompt

0 1 2

Comments

Good job stating a claim that answers the prompt. However, your claim should be the first sentence of your paragraph.

Evidence supports the claim (at least two pieces)

0 1 2

Comments

Nice work! You supported your claim with evidence.

Explanation connects the evidence to the claim

0 1 2

Comments

Great job! It's clear how your evidence supports your claim.

CCSS 1.B

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Today



NWP + NRI Webinars



Pulse check



Voice, choice, and student agency



Approach to AI



Teaching Practices and Student Reflection



Q&A



Choice, Voice and Student Agency

Choice

Offering opportunities for students to choose topic, task, or process
→ Students decide how and when AI enters their writing process

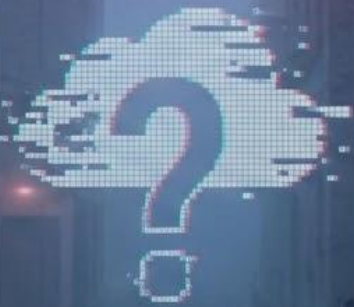
Voice

Providing a safe space for students to express their input, feedback, and ideas
→ Students critique, revise, and reshape AI output

Student Agency

Empowering students to feel responsibility and ownership of their education
→ Students remain accountable for decisions, revisions, and final meaning

AI = UNCERTAINTY

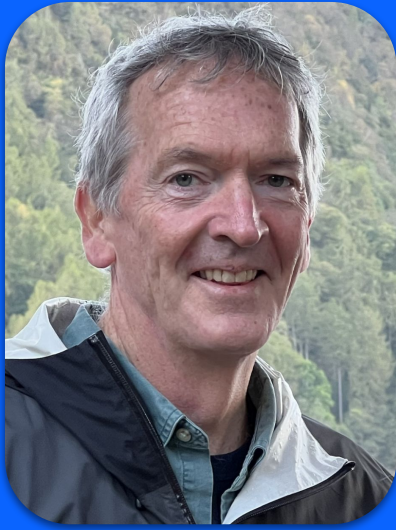


Approaching change



**Joseph
Wiederhold**

- ELA teacher grades 7-12, Provo
- Associate Director, Central Utah Writing Project
- PhD candidate in Composition and Applied Linguistics, Indiana University of Pennsylvania



**Chris
Sloan, PhD**

- AP English Language, and photography, Salt Lake City
- PhD Educational Psychology & Educational Technology from Michigan State University
- Teaching Consultant with NWP since 1993

How has new technology changed your teaching, and what have you adapted, adopted, or abandoned along the way?



Agency in Practice: Centering Student Thinking with AI

Now you know, and knowing is half the battle

GI JOE

A REAL AMERICAN HERO



The logo for A.I. JOE features the text "A.I. JOE" in a bold, italicized, white sans-serif font. A small white star is positioned above the letter "I". To the right of the text are three horizontal blue bars of varying lengths, creating a wing-like or motion effect.

A.I. JOE

KNOWING IS
HALF THE BATTLE





When would you make it from scratch, from box, bakery or grocery?

**INTELLIGENCE****CO-PILOT****TOOL**

How do these metaphors shape the way ...

- we think about AI?
- engage with AI?



INTELLIGENCE

Suggests
human-like
cognition or
understanding



CO-PILOT

Frames AI as
equal partner,
collaborator,
teammate



TOOL

Positions AI as
neutral, controllable
instrument

Student Responses



“The way you label it changes who is responsible for the writing.”

“Thinking of AI as ‘Intelligence’ could be a form of not really evaluating what it is generating for you, you just trust that it will make no mistakes.”

“... puts false responsibility on the AI, while all responsibility should be on you.”

Student Responses



“... if we think of AI as a tool we would take its output more like suggestions or add our own ideas back to its output.”

“... ‘tool’ assures that you're the one doing the writing and you're using AI in the same way you use the spelling and grammar check.”

“... makes it seem like you can use it to help you out but not rely on it as a crutch.”

Prioritizing Student Voice

1. Students wrote dialogue only scene
2. Students read/acted it out
3. AI added dialogue tags with scene descriptions
4. Students evaluated / rewrote dialogue tags

Nobody Has To Know

by James D. Macdonald and Debra Doyle

"What do you know about vampires?"
 "Not much. They drink blood. They turn into bats. They die if they get hit by sunlight."
 "Where did you learn that?"
 "It's what I see in the movies. Why?"
 "They have it all wrong, you know."
 "Have what?"
 "The sunlight. If you believe the movies, sunlight burns vampires, or explodes them, or makes them melt."
 "That's wrong?"
 "Yeah. All daylight really does to a vampire is make him ordinary. He can't change his shape into a bat or a wolf, he isn't any stronger than he was during his other life, and he ages one more day."
 "Sure. So what's the point?"

4 /

VAMPIRES

"Just trying to explain why you never see me at night, that's all."
 "Are you saying that you're a vampire?"
 "That's right. Nights, I turn into a bat and go hunting for blood. Days, I go to school and get a little older. I want to look a little more mature."
 "Why are you telling me all this?"
 "Because I like you is why. Nights, you guys are lunch. Days, you're safe. See? No fangs during daylight."
 "This is about the weirdest story you've ever told, and you've told some weirdies. There's no such thing as vampires."
 "If you say so. You don't have to believe me. Just so you know what's true. You know why I'm doing so well in history? For me, all that stuff was current events."
 "Too freaky. Listen, there's the bell. Let's get to class."
 "You know the thing you were talking about the other day?"
 "You mean me being a vampire?"
 "That's right. Why did you tell me?"
 "I wanted you to know."
 "Why?"
 "Gets kind of lonely, nights."
 "Listen, I got to go. See you later."
 "Yeah, later."

Student Generated Dialogue



“Are you still mad?”

“I’m hungry actually.”

“You embarrassed me in front of everyone.”

“And now you are blocking the knife drawer.”

“You can’t just ignore me.”

“I’m not. I’m prioritizing protein.”

“Seriously?”

“Bread. Peanut butter. Other bread. It’s not complicated.”

“Did you mean what you said?”

“Strike that. Huge complication: crunchy or smooth?”

“Stop deflecting.”

“You’re right. Gotta go with crunchy.”

“Just say you’re sorry.”

“I said what I meant.”

“That’s not the same as being right.”

“I didn’t say I was right. I said what I meant.”

“And you don’t regret it at all?”

“I regret crunchy. Should have gone smooth.”

“I just want to hear that you didn’t mean it.”

“Then you want a lie.”

AI Generated Dialogue Tags

Sam pushed his shoulders back and leaned into the counter, the kitchen light glinting off a smear on the fridge door, “Why don’t you go start to clean up stuff from the car and once I’m done, I’ll come out and help. Including taking out the trash.”

How do the dialogue tags match how you had envisioned the scene?

Which lines do you like, which would you change?





“We looked at what the AI did and then how we would change it to better fit our vision. We still stuck to what we wanted to do, we still used our brains to help us create something that was meaningful to us. We didn't just let the AI do all the work for us, we still made it our own, and I think that form of AI usage is ok because it helps us get ideas and it also helps us see what things we would change.”

Agency in Practice: Authentic Writing with AI Support

Legislative Letter

Assignment: In this four-week unit you will research a local issue you care about and compose a letter to your elected representatives to share your views about pending bills in the 2026 Utah State Legislative Session.

Your handwritten letter will be hand delivered to state legislators on February 26, the week before the session ends.



Choices students can make

AI SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATIVE LETTER

Task	Human Intelligence	Artificial Intelligence
Identify a topic	Search the state legislative website for issues that are important to you and are currently being discussed	I care about [your topic]. What state policy issues in the 2026 Utah State Legislative Session connect to that? Can you point me to some articles about [your topic]?
Understand the language of bill	Highly proficient, effective reader. Comprehend technical vocabulary, make inferences & connections	Can you put this into plain English that a high school student can understand?
Find resources, articles, different types of evidence	Search browser or databases like EBSCO, SIRS, Gale	Can you point me to some resources about [your topic]
Research sponsor of the bill or letter recipient	Look at the representative legislative biography and their campaign website	This bill was written by [name]. Who is this person and why do you think they are sponsoring this legislation?
Role play the recipient of the letter	Practice empathy, look at previous legislation, anticipate objections, make concessions, counter concessions	Role play the audience & Write 3-5 sentences imagining the response you might get from the recipient of your letter

Conversations with AI

Student prompt to AI:

What are some bills in the 2026 Utah State Legislature that directly affect high school students and young adults in Utah? Can you point me to some articles about these issues?



AI response:

- You're looking at a fast-moving target: in the 2025 session, Utah lawmakers introduced 238 education bills and passed 136 and in 2026 it's shaping up similarly so it helps focus on a big few big themes that touch high school students and young adults directly ((Cunningham, Push Pause, 2026)).
- One live 2026 Bill tied to schools is HB 36, the “Gold Medal Schools Pilot Program,” which is in the House Education Committee and would set up health/fitness-focus pilot program in public schools, affecting what some students see and their daily school environment ((LegiScan, UT HB0036, 2026)).
- For students closer to college age HB 265 (past earlier) is reshaping higher education by moving \$60 million into a strategic reinvestment fund and discouraging low-wage degree paths, which could influence which majors and programs stay strong or get caught by Utah colleges and universities you might attend ((Utah House of Representatives, H.B. 265, n.d.)).

Instead of me making a list for you, try this: pick ONE issue that feels most real in your life right now (mental health at school, social media limits, college costs, juvenile justice, or something else), then free-write what you've seen or felt about it for 5–7 minutes—what do lawmakers probably not understand about how that issue actually hits teens and young adults in Utah?

Conversations with AI

Student prompt to AI:
Let's focus on HB 36

AI response:

- Focusing on HB 36 is smart because it's concrete and you can trace exactly how it would change day to day school life for real students
- HB 36 (“Gold Medal Schools Pilot Program”) is a 2026 Utah bill that would create a health/fitness pilot program in some public schools with goals like more physical activity, nutrition education, and wellness tracking for students ((LegiScan, Utah HB0036, 2026)).
- The state board would pick certain schools to participate, set standards (like minutes of activity, or what counts as a “gold medal” school and then report back to lawmakers about how it affected students and whether to expanded statewide ((LegiScan, Utah HB0036, 2026)).
- This kind of bill can shape how much PE are Wellness time you get, what kinds of food or health messaging show up at your school, and maybe even which schools are labeled as “healthy” or “high-performing”



Conversations with AI

Student prompt to AI:
Can you provide me
with articles that
discuss the bill?

AI response:

- The official Utah legislature page for HB 36 gives you basic information (titles, sponsor, status) and links to the full bill text and fiscal note, which are your most important primary sources right now (Utah Legislature, HB 36, 2026).
- FastDemocracy has a short public-facing tracker for HB 36 that shows actions, links to the PDF text, and gives you a sample “what stage it is at?” timeline: (FastDemocracy, HB 36, 2026).
- Because HB 36 is basically a 2026 re-run of the “Gold Medal Schools Pilot Program” idea from 2025 (HB 371) the Provo School District Explainer on the earlier bill works as a background article on what this kind of program is trying to do in schools: (Provo City School District, 2025 Education Bills, 2025).



If you skim ONE of those pages—maybe the Utah Legislature page first—would you be willing to write out, in your own words, what problem you think HB 36 is trying to solve for actual students (and whether that matches your real experience)?

Conversations with AI

Student prompt to AI:

So you can't find me any news articles that talk about the bill?



AI response:

- You're right to that question because they're actually are a few short news/summary pieces that mentioned this bill or the same "Gold Medal Schools Pilot Program" idea.
- KLS.com did a big preview of the 2026 Utah session and has a section called "Focus on exercise" that talks about a bill to require the State Board of Education to run a "Gold Medal Schools Pilot Program" and pick up 50 schools that need the most health help ((KLS.com, Utah's 2026 legislative session could remake public education, 2026))
- CitizenPortal has a recap of the November 19, 2025 committee meeting where Rep. Katie Hall presented the three-year Gold Medal Schools Pilot explaining the idea (fitness criteria, up to 50 schools, up to \$5,000 rewards, yearly progress reports) ((Citizenportal, Committee approves 3-year Gold Medal Schools pilot, 2025.))
- Another CitizenPortal piece looks at the early 2025 version of HB 371, and it frames it as a response to worries about childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles, which helps you to see the "why" behind the 2026 HB 36 re-try ((CitizenPortal, Utah launches Gold Medal Schools Pilot Program, 2025)).

Choices students can make

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Legislative Letter

Student directions: [Use the following as a guide](#) to apply what you know about rhetoric and rhetorical choices in a letter to your elected representatives. And [here's how to find both your district representative and state senator](#). Your goal is not only to express what you believe, but to:

- Make strategic rhetorical choices
- Use evidence ethically and persuasively
- Build credibility (ethos)
- Construct logical arguments (logos)
- Appeal to shared values and human impact (pathos)
- Adapt your writing to a formal civic audience



Student AI Inquiry

I'm writing a letter to Representative ----- about H.B. 287, Immigrant Driving Amendments. Can you recommend ways for me to anticipate the response of the legislator who I'm writing to and point me to resources that will help me to know how to appeal to this person?



Conversations with AI

You're doing some thoughtful work here—your letter already follows the framework really well. Now you're asking the next-level question: "How will **he** likely see this, and how do I meet him where he is?" That's exactly what this assignment is trying to get you to practice.

Here are some ways to anticipate his response and adjust your appeals:



AI response:

- **Look at bills he's sponsored to see how he argues.** For example, he has sponsored bills on lobbying rules and housing that frame problems in terms of fairness, rule-following, and data-based solutions rather than just emotions ([Utah Legislature, H.B. 138](#); "[Utah lawmakers say no to 'preemption'...](#)").
- **Anticipate the likely pro-H.B. 287 arguments and answer them directly.** The sponsor, Rep. Trevor Lee, is pitching this and his other immigration bills as "stopping incentives" and "putting Utahns/Americans first," focused on enforcement and deterrence ("[Utah lawmaker wants no vaccination and food aid for undocumented immigrants](#)"; "[Bill that would end driving privilege card program for immigrants is in committee](#)").
- **Use Utah-specific safety and pragmatism evidence.** You can point to reporting that the driving privilege card was originally created as a pragmatic safety measure, and that tens of thousands of cards are issued each year so people can be trained, licensed, and insured ([KUER on privilege cards](#); "[Jon Huntsman Jr.—Immigration](#)").

If you look back at your letter and the framework handout, what is one specific sentence you might add or adjust so that you both respond to those "law-and-order / safety / fairness" concerns and keep your own values clear—and do you want to keep revising with Continue with AI here, or jump over to Create Document to keep going there instead?

Draft Student Letter

Dear Senator _____

I am writing to you about the Driving Privilege Card program, which allows undocumented immigrants to obtain a Class D license that permits driving a motor vehicle but cannot be used as identification. This program is directly affected by H.B. 287, ...

So far, there is the original bill and three substitutes that would take effect if it passes ...

This issue is important to me because we see these individuals daily; they are our neighbors, classmates, coaches, mechanics, farmers, grocers, and even the families on the corners of the streets who sell fresh fruit. It's vital to our community and economy..

I respectfully urge you to vote against this bill because of its potential harm to our friends and loved ones who keep our community rich with diversity and who stand by hard work.

As a high school student who is going to be able to vote soon, and as a woman of Latin American culture, growing up alongside this community, I hope that you can provide me with your reasoning and choice on this bill.

Respectfully,

AI Response as Student Thought Partner

*You've built a clear, grounded letter that already does a lot of things well for a "good enough" draft. I'll stay in comment-mode and focus on choices you **might** play with, not things you "must" fix...*



“I actually really loved this unit. I think it was cool to write about something we cared about and actually put it into the functioning world. Very informative and made me feel like I was doing *some* of my part in society.”



“I liked this assignment but did not find the use of AI necessary.”

“I liked the AI helper overall, I thought it did a good job of explaining my bill. I thought I understood it on my own, but I was not fully sure. It provided some good reassurance.”



Q & A

Kids need a
voic



Supporting writing in classrooms and communities



Teacher Leaders:

Dr. Chris Sloan, ccsloan@gmail.com

Mr. Joseph Wiederhold, josephw@provo.edu

AI in the Writing Classroom

Principles of Ethics in AI

<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div> <p>Writing is Thinking and Reflection</p> <p>Writing is a reflection of one's thoughts, experiences, and growth. It is a pathway for thinking and for communicating. Voice is vital. Model for students how AI can help develop but not replace original thought.</p>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div> <p>AI is a Support, not a Substitute</p> <p>AI can help brainstorm, organize, and revise—but it should never replace individual learning and skill acquisition. Model appropriate use of AI by clearly communicating the purpose and expectations for assignments.</p>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div> <p>Purpose and Struggle Matter</p> <p>Use AI when it supports growth. Don't use it in ways that skip the hard work needed for learning. Identify essential learning targets that should not be outsourced.</p>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div> <p>Critical Reflection is Essential</p> <p>Students' critical thinking and writing improve most when they evaluate their decisions as writers, specifically by examining and explaining their choices regarding AI-generated suggestions.</p>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"> </div> <p>Transparency is Key</p> <p>Teach and model transparency with AI use. Teachers build an environment of trust over surveillance; operate on a system of honor and accountability, not punishment or suspicion.</p>
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