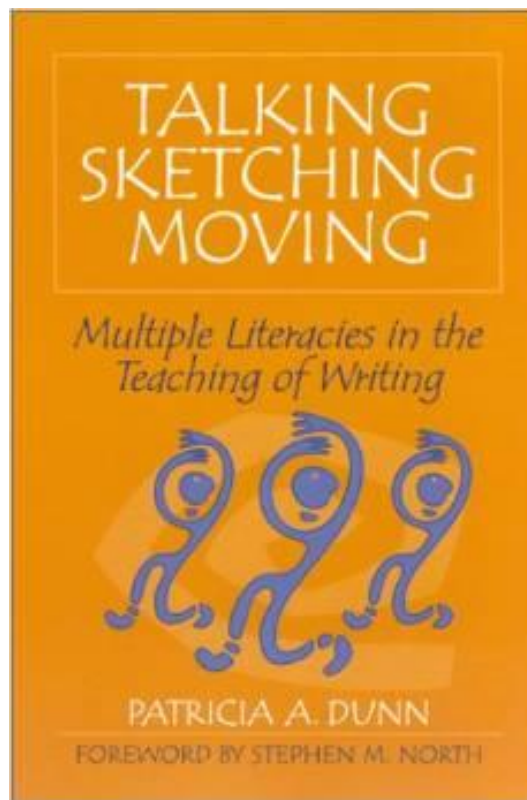


***Review of Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in
the Teaching of Writing***

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Every year as a new semester dawns, teachers in higher education exchange, post, and discuss the Beloit College Mindset List. The list for the class of 2017 reminds us of the frames of reference of our current students. #1 tells us Eminem and LL Cool Jay could show up at parents' weekend. According to #7 and #13, while the students in our classrooms won't have had chicken pox and they won't have known pen pals, they will know Chicken Run and PayPal. The intent of the list is to help us traverse the ever-growing distance between our students and us as teachers. Pedagogically, this list of 60 touchstones should give us some common ground on which to better understand them and reach them. But how would that look in the classroom? What would we do with this information to reach student writers?

Last fall, as I was working with my first year composition classes, we explored the question of the value of higher education prompted by Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst's composition textbook *They Say, I Say*. We spent some time exploring a set of TED talks by Robinson, Gates, and others that were pretty persuasive in arguing for the need to revise higher education or education in general to meet the needs of current students and future generations. But as I plan my composition course, what should I be doing?

It was a relief to read Patricia Dunn's *Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in the Teaching of Writing* because she offers the practice to address the theory we know to be true—we need to meet students where they are--and helps to alleviate some of that anxiety. Her work diagnoses the problem and limitations with our current theories of composition but doesn't stop there. She not only addresses the problem and contextualizes the origin of the problem but also proceeds to offer us solutions just when we find ourselves outdated and out of synch. The developments in technology since this book's 2001 publication only make it more relevant--as the evolution only argues more forcefully for the need for these literacies. However, the developments in education in assessment make that need and this solution that much more difficult to measure.

So far as I write this and think about my composition classes from a mid-career vantage point, I feel anxiety: Anxiety that I am not doing this right... Not doing comp justice or not my students justice. In the preface to Dunn's text, Stephen North diagnoses the anxiety and irony we must face as we, the successful products, of previous education systems inculcate students who are not as successful and, therefore, meet an impasse when they don't succeed in a system we conquered. He suggests "If I am to help them learn to write, therefore--and not, say, confirm for them (again, probably) that my world of print-based writing simply isn't their kind of place--then I need to devise a pedagogy that not only recognizes those inclinations and aptitudes, but seeks to harness them." The argument of the book is that we can alleviate that anxiety and overcome that impasse when multiple literacies are incorporated into the teaching of writing.

Dunn begins by critiquing the tunnel vision that has prevented multiple literacies from being explored and the ironies revealed there. Many great thinkers developed their ideas (Darwin, Einstein, and countless mathematicians and physicists) through conceptualizing visually. However, certain commonplaces prevail about the primacy of the written word and about the nature of intelligence. Meaning making does not have to happen through language, but of course, as the field of composition has defined itself, in part out of self preservation and self definition, it has defined itself through how knowledge is constructed linguistically. Other fields have recognized other ways of knowing. The situation of Temple Grandin offers one such example: "[a]n autistic person who thinks in vivid pictures, Grandin uses her visual thinking to reform the cruel, stress-inducing physical path cattle take on their way through a slaughterhouse... While her extreme form of visual thinking has hindered has hindered her in other areas of her life, it enables her to 'see' every image each animal sees on its way through the process" (25). In taking a page from Grandin's book and other fields of study (even driver's education as Dunn shows us in Chapter 2), compositionists have an opportunity to broaden their visions.

Interestingly, our discipline has buried or overlooked this latent opportunity. The work of Paulo Freire offers an excellent example of our field's predilection for cherry picking. His multiple channels of communication are an essential part of his notion of praxis and have been overlooked and undervalued. His use of dialogue and dialectic and culture circles demonstrates the use value of alternatives to writing in literacy development. And he is not the only "lost thread" Dunn teases out as she pulls from the WAC movement, Emig, Vygotsky, Britton, and others. As we broaden our vision to disciplines beyond composition, her recommendation is we look with new eyes, re-vision, voices of our own.

After establishing the context for valuing "talking, sketching, and moving," Dunn offers strategies for doing so in Chapter 3. This first set of recommendations helps us re-imagine the prewriting process to generate and organize text. The sections on Rhetorical Proof Cards, Sketching-to-Learn, Oral Outlining or Previewing, Oral Journals, Moving-to-Learn, and Peer Responding outline the practice through classroom examples. Dunn allows us to see how these practices work through figures and illustrations of her own students writing.

The next set of recommendations is for revising: at the heart of the idea is that essays are made of moving parts. Dunn encourages us to demonstrate that or embody that for our students through cutting and pasting paragraphs, sketching and crossing out drafts, hunting for padding, padding with a purpose, listening to drafts, and considering metaphors. She asks, "How do we really revise?" But this practical discussion is grounded in the larger context of the "revising/editing/grammar/correctness debate." Dunn recommends that when we talk about revising and editing with our students, we situate this discussion rhetorically so understanding how to revise becomes a matter of audience or appropriateness and not just a matter of class or taste. This discussion may also need to take place with constituencies beyond our individual classrooms: "Editing and revising is a drama about power. It has simple or elaborate costumes,

depending on the play, and its success depends on its debut city and sophistication level of its audience. Instead of simply being given a list of which lights to dim or which curtains to draw, students should be given "a backstage tour of the whole production, as well as a peek at the financial backers" (p. 126). Students should be invited to understand the "culture of power" that underlies "propriety."

In order for students to be able to envision what they write and why, Dunn reminds us to open reading up as an avenue for access. Her Chapter 5, "Using Non-Writing to Analyze Reading," relies on the work on multi-modal strategies already done at the secondary level by Smagorinsky in *Expressions* and Kirby, Liner, and Vinz in *Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing*. She calls to mind the English Journal issues on multiple intelligences to outline her recommendations for companion pieces, parallel stories, six-headed debates, talk shows, sketching or mapping a reading, acting out scenes, multi-modal rounds, and sketching as exams.

While the technologies described in this edition may come across as dated, more current technologies such as Siri and Google Docs may make the ideas behind the recommendations more current than ever. Ultimately, the assessment conversation should also become a part of the "Handling Professional Issues" discussion in Chapter 6. How can the efficacy of these practices be accounted for or measured as we participate in these challenging conversations?

I used this text in a composition studies course a few years back. Students were assigned to book clubs and were to create a workshop inspired by one of five books they had read to allow the class to experience in practice the theories espoused in each text. Dunn's work was the most exciting for these aspiring teachers: their energy and expertise has given my own composition classes a new direction. Their work learning to teach in that course, using Dunn's book, showed this teacher she had something to learn.