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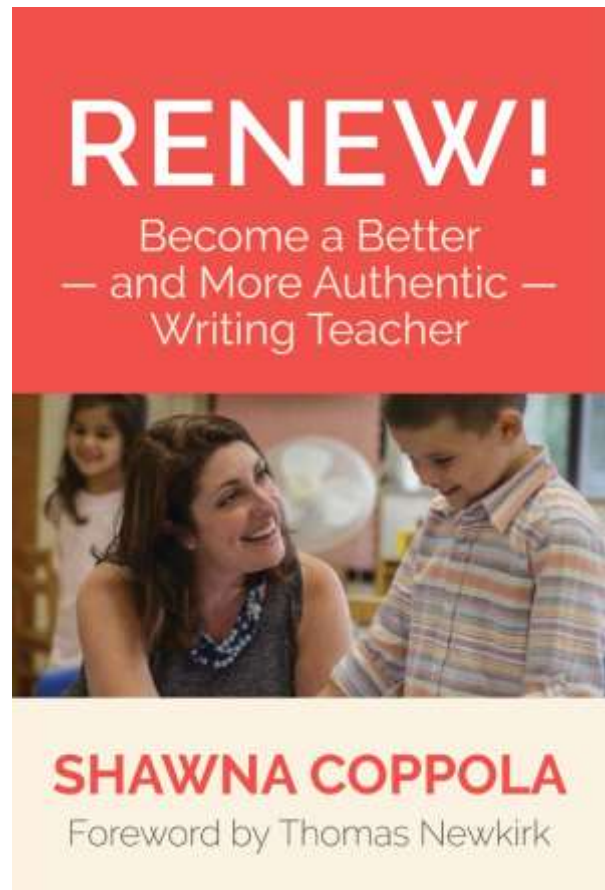
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In *Renew! Becoming a Better and More Authentic Writing Teacher*, Shauna Coppola explains that although there is nothing wrong with relying on timely writing instructional strategies, it just may be time to “shake up your writing instruction.” She emphasizes the need to rethink writing strategies along with other important components of your skill set such as tools and goals. In her introduction, Coppola makes the connection between writing instruction and parenting, as she and her husband were questioning the parenting of their daughter, Sydney – teachers must question their teaching of writing much like parents must question their parenting style on occasion. She explains the need for teachers to rethink “our most pervasive educational practices,” and in this case, writing instruction. Each organized chapter starts with a quote from a well-respected author, and then includes images, charts, graphs in an easy to follow format.

Coppola references her 15-plus years of teaching experience to help the reader “renew” writing best practices. She has the necessary



background in writing; she works as a K-6 literacy specialist in Rollinsford, New Hampshire, and she teaches in the NH Literacy Institute and the University of New Hampshire's Professional Development and Training Program. The author has provided a well-researched book with many references to the gurus of writing instruction such as Donald Graves and Donald Murray, as well as educational theorists like John Dewey and Louise Rosenblatt.

Renew provides a chance for Coppola to share with readers that the focus on writing instruction in schools is not “real world writing” since traditional instruction limits the kind of writing that students are exposed to. To make writing relevant to today's students, she is eager to connect her topic to trade book authors like Kwame Alexander, Rainbow Rowell, and Jenni Holm, all of whom share their views on writing. Alexander (*Rebound, Solo, The Playbook*) explains that his favorite part of writing is coming up with ideas in his head, which can last for months or even years. In contrast, Powell (*Eleanor and Park, Fangirl, and Attachments*) is not a fan of the prewriting phase since much of the planning phase takes place in her mind, and she simply wants to have everything on paper with something to work on. Finally, Holm (*Sunny Side Up, The Fourteenth Goldfish, and Swing It Sunny*) compares writing to swimming, in that you fail at everything you try the first time, but you will make it to the deep end (the finished product) eventually.

Coppola insists that it is time to rethink traditional writing instruction; if not, we “rob ‘today's’ students of the tomorrow (that today's students deserve)” (p. 10). These chapter titles are reflective of her why, how, and what approach to rethinking it:

- Why It's Important to Continually Rethink, Revise, and Renew our Practice as Teachers of Writers
- Renew How We Teach Writing Process

- Renew What It Means to “Write”
- Renew the Tools We Use to Teach Our Student Writers
- Renew How We Assess and Evaluate Student Writing
- Renew Our Role as Teachers of Writers

The most effective chapter for teachers would be chapter 1: the need to continually rethink, revise and renew writing instruction.

Educators often settle for writing techniques that are traditional in nature for example, ask their class to read a book such as *The Scarlet Letter*, conduct class discussions surrounding the book, and solicit writing responses in a variety of ways. But Coppola explains that “there are ‘good’ teaching practices, and there are better, more powerful ones – ones that are far more authentic, engaging, and responsive to students” (p. 13). To become more powerful writing instructors, she offers a framework that teachers can use to question their writing instruction and reflect on issues such as, “does this match my current students’ needs and interests, and how might I incorporate students’ needs and wants into my practice?” (p. 17). These are important reflective questions since teachers are encouraged to make effective connections to students’ interests in instruction. In addition, teachers must start with what students need or time is wasted for both the teacher and the student.

Educators will appreciate the chapters on tools and ways to assess/evaluate writing. The tools chapter lists options to the traditional graphic organizers, story starters, and “words to use instead of” displays. Coppola suggests reading mentor texts to find common features and traits, “mining interviews with authors and illustrators to document the many ways that they generate ideas” (p. 69), and completing a focused word study of effective words in students’ independent reading or class read-alouds. Many teachers will benefit from new ways to make writing more authentic, although

it may take valuable time away from teachers who are not familiar with technology. Coppola suggests safe blogging tools such as Kidblog, Edublogs, and Weebly, which would only be sharable to approved audiences. Another authentic writing response would be a class Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat account where students share their writing on publicly accessible social media platforms. It is important to remember the intrapersonal learners in the classroom, and she suggests the writer's notebook as a way to write for discovery and write to think about an idea.

For assessing/evaluating student writing, she questions what kind of message we send to students when teachers evaluate student writing with an overall score. Instead, we can offer students feedback through what she calls "noticings" and conferring with students during class time. For conferring, Coppola offers three professional resources which have transformed her practice: *Watch Katie and Matt*.....*Sit Down and Teach Up*,


How's It Going, and *Let's Talk: Managing One-on-One, Peer, and Small-Group Conferences*. Although she found value in all three resources, *Watch Katie and Matt* would be the most valuable due to its multimedia approach that includes videos and the fact that it is relatable to **all** teachers even though it is geared toward K-2 educators.

All in all, the book provides an in-depth review of the need to rethink our writing instruction, along with identifying the tools and resources to implement a new and effective writing approach. All of the takeaways are what wonderful teachers already do and need to be reminded to do it: reflect on instruction, find ways to connect with students, access new and exciting professional development materials, and incorporate authentic ways to share writing. This short text is an easy read with a direct, to-the-point style, perfect for the seasoned K-12 writing teacher who needs new approaches to writing instruction.

About the Reviewer

Darryn Diuguid, Ph.D., is an associate professor at McKendree University where he works with preservice teachers in the areas of language arts, children's and adolescent literature, learning environment, and the edTPA. He previously taught second grade at two elementary schools in a high needs school district.



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