Words are power(ful). As teacher-writers, we know the power of crafting our world by strategically crafting our words. We wish for our students to realize this power, but too often, they experience the opposite. Rather than crafting words for meaningful and important purposes, they write with neither conviction nor commitment: to placate their teachers, to get a grade, to just get it done.

In inviting submissions for this issue, we hoped to receive stories of classrooms where students engage in authentic, world-changing writing. We asked, "How do teachers inspire their students to take ownership of their words, say something important, and add their voices to the conversations around them?" The articles in this issue answer these questions in ways that inspired and sometimes surprised us. In curating the issue, we have sought to share a wide range of voices and a wide range of possibilities for empowering adolescent writers. Through spoken word poetry and blogs, and—yes—even through grammar instruction and standardized tests, student writers are using words to craft their wor(l)ds, both in and outside of school.

While the articles in this issue offer a variety of perspectives, they also reflect some common themes. First, young writers are empowered when they learn to co-opt traditional texts and processes for their own purposes. Mike Miller’s students reasserted their individuality and voice by writing alternative genres on standardized tests, while those in Ben Roth Shank’s classroom used an ancient rhetorical heuristic—Aristotle’s enthymeme—to empower their argument writing. Victoria Johnston Boecherer argues that students can “exceed [their] formulaic limits” when they read texts closely and value their own thinking, rather than imitate the traditional five-paragraph theme. In fact, even grammar instruction can empower: Michelle D. Devereaux and Darren Crovitz explain how students can intentionally and subversively use grammar as a communication tool. In addition, Amber Warrington, Lauren Graeber, Holland White, and John Saxton explain how to transform classroom writing assessment into an opportunity for students to take risks and take up writerly identities; David Narter explains how to transform traditional modes of feedback into multimodal feedback that can help...
Fellowship Opportunity

Cultivating New Voices among Scholars of Color (CNV) invites fellowship applications for its 2018–2020 cohort. This NCTE Research Foundation–supported program provides early career scholars of color with support, mentoring, and networking opportunities. In the program, doctoral candidates and doctoral graduates who have completed their dissertations up to two years prior to application cultivate their ability to draw from their own cultural/linguistic perspectives as they conceptualize, plan, conduct, and write their research. For more information on the program and guidelines on submitting an application, go to http://www.ncte.org/research-foundation/cnv. Completed applications are due March 15, 2018.

2017 NCTE Paul and Kate Farmer English Journal Writing Award

Congratulations to Nicole Boudreau Smith from Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Illinois, for her article “A Principled Revolution in the Teaching of Writing” (Vol. 106, No. 5, May 2017), which has been selected for the 2017 NCTE Paul and Kate Farmer English Journal Writing Award.


The award recognizes outstanding English Journal articles written by high school teachers and is named after Paul and Kate Farmer, founders and donors.

The award presentation took place at the Secondary Section Luncheon on Saturday, November 18, 2017, during the NCTE Annual Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. Learn more about these award winners at http://www.ncte.org/second/awards/farmer.