

WAC Seminar on Developing and Hosting Graduate Writing Retreats

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Graduate Student Writers Are Also Apprentice Writers

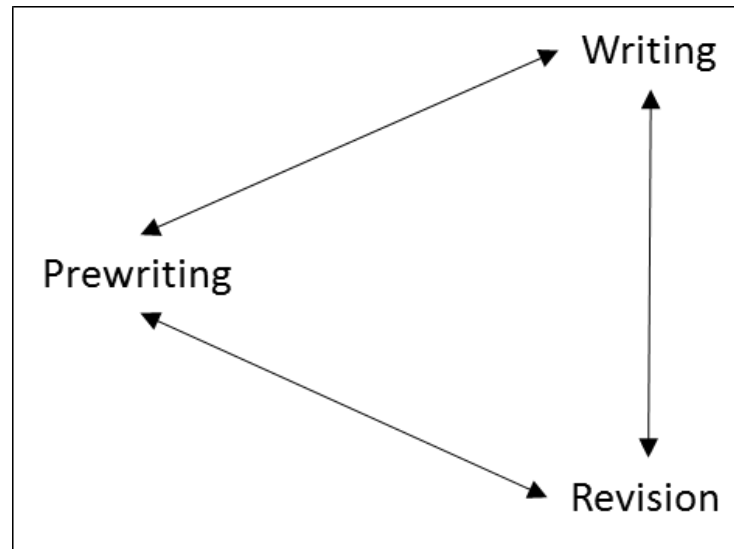
- Like all students, they are learning how to write in new, more complicated genres.
- They may have mastered the writing they had to do in their undergraduate courses – and even their graduate courses – but now we are asking them to do something even bigger and more complicated.
 - A Master's or Doctoral-level thesis, project, or dissertation.

Which Means We Shouldn't Forget Some Basic Truths About Teaching and Learning How to Write

- Students learn how to write in new genres *in process* – while they are doing it.
- Like a coach, we can't just show film and put them in the game and expect them to succeed.
- Nor can we just run drills (grammar drills!) and put them in the game and expect them to succeed.
- But we can –like a coach – break down the process and engage with our graduate student writers as they write real documents for real audiences.



We Should Help Our Students Fully Engage in The Writing Process

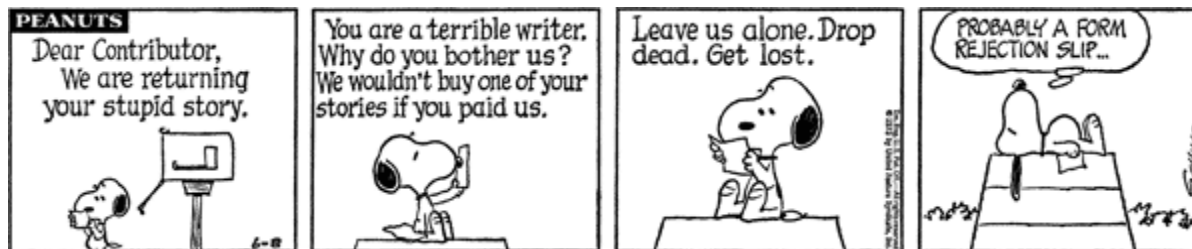


How?

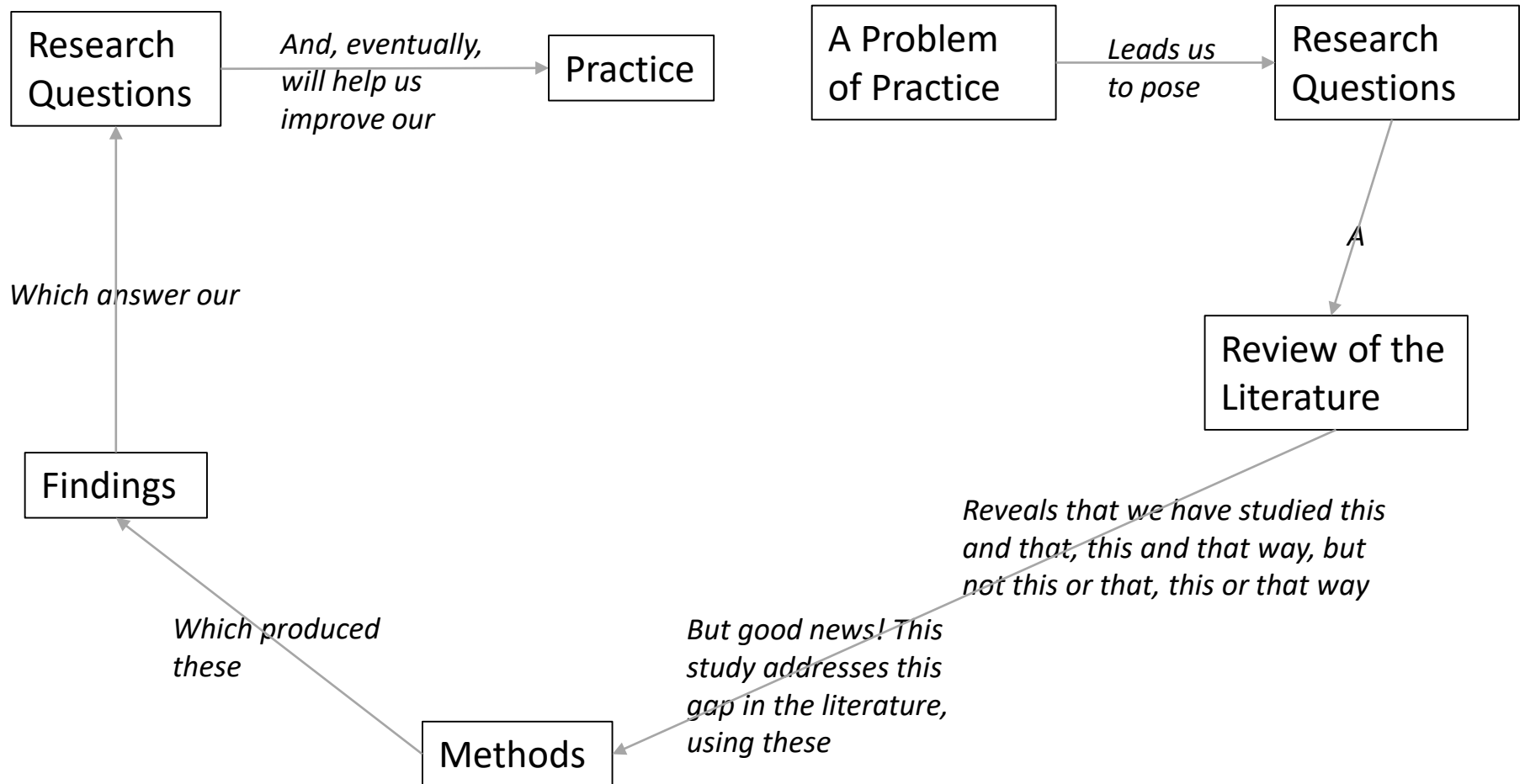
- By giving students the chance to write – and have their writing responded to – as a recursive, iterative process
- By breaking assignments and projects down into parts (abstracts, introductions, methods, results, analysis, discussion, implications, etc.) and phases (invention, organization, drafting, polishing).
- By giving writers opportunities to get feedback throughout the process.

Why?

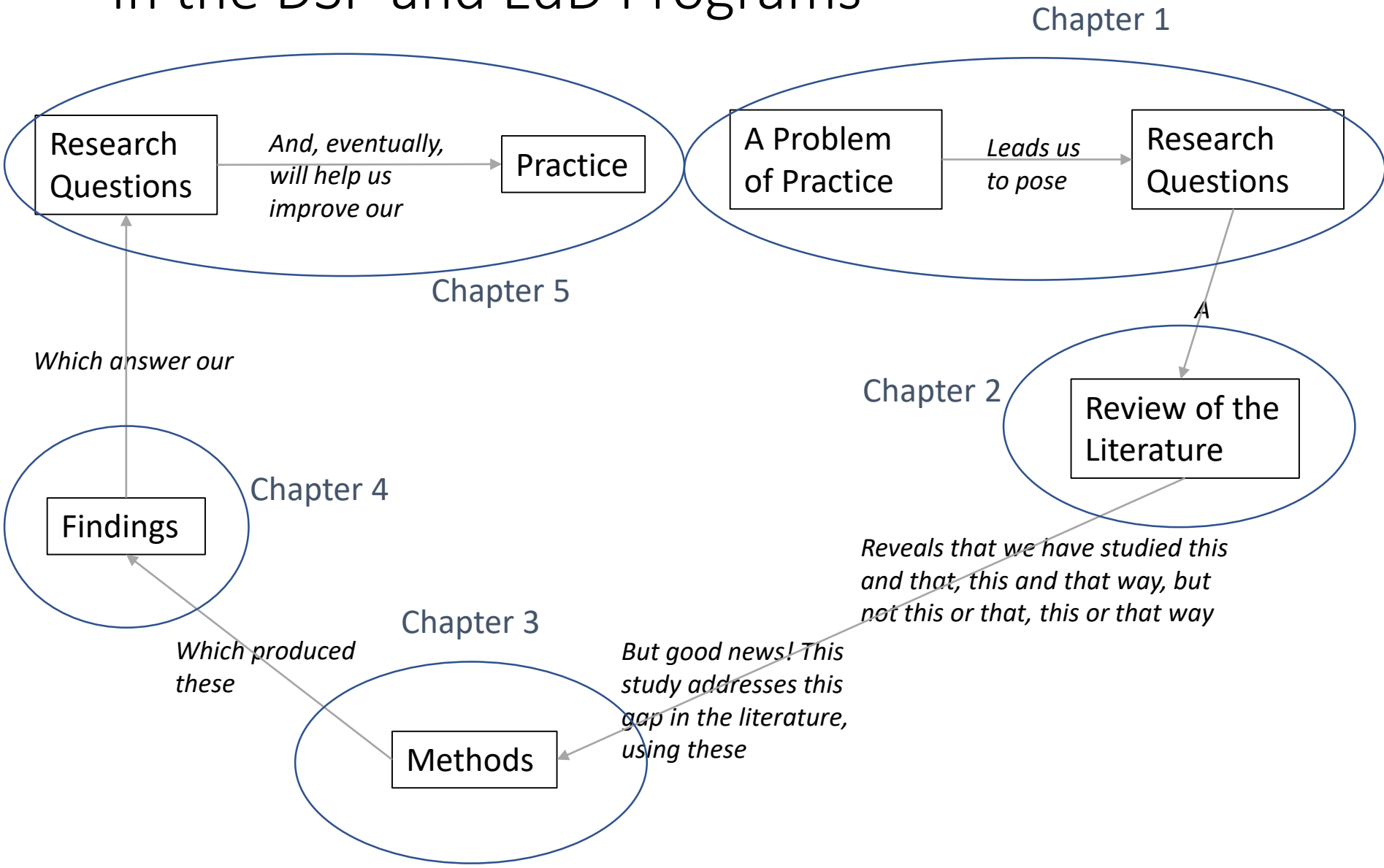
- The most productive writers:
 - Regularly share drafts and partial drafts with teachers and peers.
 - Understand that writing is an iterative, recursive process. It is not a one-shot process, and it is not linear.
 - Receive feedback designed to help them make progress from where they are now. Not feedback designed to inform them how far they are from acceptable.



The Dissertation Process In the DSP and EdD Programs



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What Does Your Discipline's Thesis or
Master's Project Process Look Like?

Let's Draw Some Other Models on the White Board

A Graduate Writing Retreat Can Be
A Powerful, Energizing, Momentum-Building
Experience in This Process

Let's Get Busy Planning One For Your Students

Three Phases of Your Retreat

Before the Retreat

During the Retreat

After the Retreat

Three Phases of Your Retreat

Before the Retreat

- Researching your students' needs
- Timing your retreat in their project process
- Choosing a retreat type
- Recruiting students
- Pre-retreat activities for participants: planning documents, meetings, timeline
- Planning infrastructure needs

During the Retreat

- Schedule
- Activities
- Real time assessment and adjustments
- Ground rules for participants

After the Retreat

- Assessing your retreat:
 - right afterward and longer-term assessment
 - kinds of data you can collect (opinions, quantitative data)
 - Challenge – and value – of measuring momentum and longer-term effects
- Learning from your retreat
- Planning and sustaining future retreats

Researching Your Students' Needs

- With a partner, consider the following questions:
 - Who can we talk to in order to learn about our students' needs?
 - What can we look at/study to learn about our students' needs?
 - What might we ask them? What kinds of data are we hoping to get from them?
 - What are we hoping to learn from things we look at?
 - What would be the best way to ask them these questions? Gather this data?
 - How will we analyze the things we look at?
 - How will we use their answers to help us design our writing retreat? How will their answers, and what we learn from the things we look at, inform our design of our writing retreat?
- *Remember: The goal of a writing retreat is to help students make progress on, and build momentum for completing, a significant writing project (like a dissertation, thesis, or Master's project).*
- *And: One-size does not fit all. Different kinds of students will benefit from different kinds of retreats. So think about how you can get to know **your** students and design a retreat that will help **them**.*