The POWER of Writing

Presenter: Brittany Rosen

Moderator: Kim Pawlak, Associate Executive Director, TAA

Moderator: Welcome to a podcast of The POWER of Writing, presented by Brittany Rosen. This podcast was recorded at the 2013 TAA conference in Reno, Nevada.

Brittany Rosen: Thank you so much for being here at The POWER of Writing. I'm actually supposed to make this presentation with Patricia Goodson – she's actually the one that came up with this writing model that I'm about to talk about – but unfortunately she couldn’t be here.

But this is a model, the POWER writing model as we like to call it and POWER stands for the Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research. Basically this is a writing model to help alleviate stress during writing, to really help you be productive and also to help with the quality of your writing. It’s a set of principles and practices for promoting writing productivity and quality writing.

For this presentation I want to discuss the theory behind POWER and I want to discuss the research behind POWER. After this presentation you will be able to utilize the POWER principles to increase your writing productivity.

The theory behind POWER really comes from Peter Elbow’s writing process and what Peter Elbow talks about in Writing with Power – it’s actually a book, so I couldn’t use that title, Writing with Power because Peter Elbow already used it. But Peter Elbow talks about having control over the writing process, knowing yourself as a writer and
having control over yourself and your writing process and not feeling like you’re stuck and helpless.

In order to have control over the writing process really there’s a need for bad writing. What I mean by that is... Does anybody in here do photography or know about photography? Okay, good. So for photographers you know that you have to take a hundred pictures to get one good picture. You have to take a lot of pictures. You’ll see those pictures in National Geographic and be like, “Oh, it’s so pretty. All these people take really pretty pictures.” Well, they took 100 to 200 pictures just to get that one shot.

Well, the same with writing, you have to write 100 to 200 words just to get one good idea. So, there’s this need to write badly first and then to actually share that bad writing in early drafts and also in later drafts. As you become comfortable with this the writing process actually becomes more enjoyable.

Once you become comfortable with writing and putting out initially messy drafts you’ll look forward to actually sharing those messy drafts with your readers and getting that feedback. Then you actually are excited to take that feedback and incorporate that into your writing to make your writing even better. That’s really when the writing process starts to become enjoyable.

A little bit of the research behind the POWER writing model comes from psychology and neuroscience. In psychology there’s been a lot of research looking at what creates elite performers. Is it genetics or is it practice or behavior? A lot of psychologists have found that it’s actually practice; it’s deliberate practice. With this deliberate practice it creates these elite performers. The difference between non-elite performers and elite performers is this actual practice.

So let’s say two people want to learn golf and you have your non-elite performer and you have your elite performer. What happens is the non-elite performer practices golf until they get to a satisfactory level. This elite performer gets to the satisfactory level, but continues working on their skills and abilities and then you have people like Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson, who are the elite performers. That’s because they’ve continued to work on their skills and their deliberate practice.

Additionally neuroscience has also looked at what causes elite performers. Similar to psychology it’s deliberate
practice or what they call deep practice. If you have heard of *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle, he actually found that it's not necessarily the practice itself that causes elite performers, but it's what happens in the brain that causes the elite performers.

What happens in the brain is you have the synapses and the neurons, but then you also have this substance called myelin, which is the insulating substance around the nerves that go to the brain. Practice allows us to fire specific circuits in our brains repeatedly and it develops more myelin. In turn myelin leads to faster, more optimal firing of circuits thereby developing skills. So elite athletes or professional athletes they've practice this skill over and over. For instance Nolan Ryan throwing a fast ball at 101 mph, he's practiced this over and over and he has super-duper nerves and myelin.

Additionally an example of this deep practice is if you look at the Brontë sisters, Emily, Charlotte and Anne were all considered extremely good writers and just naturally gifted. But really when you look back at their history and you look back into what they were doing as children they had a lot of practice. They did live in a very literary nurturing environment, but again, it was that practice. If you read some of their earlier stories they're actually very bad stories. Again, that goes back to Peter Elbow's need to write badly in order to write well.

You might be thinking to yourself that's great and wonderful what all this information tells me about deep practice, but what does that mean for me as an academic writer and how do include this information in my academic writing? Well, we need to commit to practicing our academic writing and that includes obtaining feedback and I'll explain why in a minute. Committing to practice will actually help with our writing and our productivity will improve.

You might be saying, okay, that's great, but how do I practice writing other than just writing? This is what the POWER model helps with. It will provide you with practices and behaviors that you can use to engage in these exercises and you can make mistakes and then you can correct those mistakes to again help your myelin improve your skills.

This deliberate practice exercise will help these specific dimensions of writing and obtaining feedback. Really the term ‘deliberate practice’ refers to practice undertaken
with a specific goal in mind to improve. The learner will mindfully engage in practice designed by an instructor, coach, mentor or tutor who provides the corrective feedback as encouragement to excel. That’s why it’s so important to obtain that feedback.

Let’s talk about some of these principles and practices that I keep bringing up for the POWER model. The first one is you have to schedule your writing time. This is the most important and biggest practice that you can do to improve your writing productivity, is to schedule your writing time. Scheduling time to write establishes all of your writing exercises that I’m going to talk about. It is the key to success and productivity.

A lot of research on faculty members who are productive has shown that the number one theme or the most common theme that comes about is that these faculty members who are extremely productive schedule their writing time. They find time when there is none. They create that time for their writing and you too must create writing time in order to be productive.

It’s highly recommended that you write at the same time every single day, so what you can do is pull out your green sheet. You can tell I’m in education because you have multiple colors of handouts; it’s so easy to say pull your green sheet out. This sheet is Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM schedule.

I want you take a minute and think about when are you most productive during the day. Are you most productive in the morning, very early before 8:00 AM? You can put 7:00 or 6:00 AM in your little schedule if that’s when you’re most productive. Or are you productive later in the afternoon at 3:00 or 4:00 or 5:00 PM? I want you to go ahead and schedule in that time for writing all the way across through the rest of the week.

**Audience:**

You don’t have 8:00 PM to midnight slot in here for us night owls.

**Brittany Rosen:**

I know. I’m sorry. I actually created this off of my own schedule, so that’s why it only goes to 8:00 PM. Once it’s 8:00 I’m done. You can add lines. If you want to get up at 4:00 in the morning, you can add that line in there. I know some people who do that. Alright, so now that you’ve scheduled a time, the same time every single day you have
just taken the first step in scheduling your writing time. Yay!

Now I want you to take three minutes – I have three questions up here, so one minute per question – and I want you to think about and write down on your green sheet what does it take to get me to write, to begin and/or continue to write, what keeps me away from writing and how have I been treating my most important academic tool.

Let’s take a look at what does it take to get me to write, to begin and or continue. Would anybody like to share what they wrote for that item?

**Audience:** Deadlines.

**Brittany Rosen:** Deadlines.

**Audience:** A little bit of inspiration. It might be a turn of phrase, an idea or an article, something to get excited about.

**Brittany Rosen:** Something to get excited about – inspiration. Okay.

**Audience:** Back at the first edition, the second edition of preparatory work.

**Brittany Rosen:** Preparatory work.

**Audience:** And having the writing console surrounded with the broad sheets, the outlines of the work and then get into it.

**Brittany Rosen:** Okay, so being prepared and getting ready to write. Okay, good. And what keeps me away from my writing?

**Audience:** Just about everything.

**Brittany Rosen:** Just about everything. Anything and everything. I read somewhere, somebody wrote something about if I want to
clean or like cleaning is more fun that writing. Even cleaning your own house is more fun than writing.

Audience: Polishing the silverware.

Brittany Rosen: Polishing the silver.

Audience: Not getting enough sleep and not being in a good location.

Brittany Rosen: Not being in a good location and not getting enough sleep.

Audience: I’m working on my ninth edition. You learn your procrastination methods. You see yourself coming down the road and that’s an interesting dialog. Whereas at the beginning you don’t know those and so the garage is really clean and the furniture is tidied up and the laundry is done. But you learn those and it becomes part of your game plan.

Brittany Rosen: So procrastination mechanisms?

Audience: Learning them.

Brittany Rosen: Learning your procrastination mechanisms.

Audience: Well, what’s interesting the answer to the first one and the second one are exactly the same schedule. One keeps me going for it and the second one I back off because of probably anxiety.

Brittany Rosen: So you notice that having a schedule helps you, but also having a schedule freezes.

Audience: Yeah.

Brittany Rosen: Okay. Interesting. Well, I think that’s good that you’ve recognized that, though. That’s the first step. We’ll do one more and then we’ll go to the third question.
Audience: It can be a torturous process for me. It really takes a lot of procrastination and chores, etc. But once I’m in the zone it’s like a high and sometimes don’t know when to stop, so I will sometimes go all night because I wouldn’t get any rest. I think I need a schedule.

Brittany Rosen: Yes.

Audience: Just one quick point about what she said about the insecurity. You’ve got to accept insecurity as the copilot sitting next to you. That is a given. It’s always there. It’s a tool. It’s an energy source. That’s the copilot.

Brittany Rosen: Definitely and we’re going to talk about how to curb the insecurity or trying to write it perfect the first time. And then the third one, how have I been treating my most important academic tool? But really quick, before we get to that, who immediately thought that writing was your most important academic tool? Who made that connection? Three people. Okay, good. How many of you thought something else was an important academic tool? What did you think was the most important academic tool?

Audience: Increase scholarly reading

Brittany Rosen: Increase scholarly reading, okay. A lot of people when asked what their most important academic tool is, they’ll say research skills, teaching methods or knowing how to teach, but hardly anybody ever says writing. And it’s so important that we recognize ourselves as writers, especially in academia because that’s what we do. We write for publication. We write for grants. I still write my lesson plans down. I think that that’s extremely important, especially when I want to go back and change something.

We’re constantly writing. We are writers. Whether you think we are or not, we are. We write for a living. It’s extremely important to know that writing is your most important academic tool, so tell me how you have been treating that tool.
Audience: About a week ago I had something pop into my head that describes perfectly and I call it ano-write-xia, you know write. Book-limia, that’s how I call it. Binging and purging, that’s what I’ve been doing.

Brittany Rosen: Binging and purging, okay. Anybody else want to talk about how they treat their most important academic tool?

Audience: I’ve described it already. That’s it.

Brittany Rosen: You’ve described it already as…

Audience: It’s a torturous process.

Brittany Rosen: ...a torturous process.

Audience: I should have a more regulated or regular method, but I don’t.

Brittany Rosen: So it’s a torture tool?

Audience: Yeah. I mean I’m successful; I do well, but it is causing me also a lot of stress.

Brittany Rosen: Okay, perfect.

Audience: You don’t need that stress.

Brittany Rosen: No, no you don’t. No stress; I’m all about low stress, lots of rest and low stress.

Audience: Writing is the medium; it’s the conduit through which the reading passes. It’s the ambience; it’s the given.

Brittany Rosen: Okay, good. I want you to keep these ideas in mind because in the next principle we’re going to talk about them just a little bit and how do you adjust for these.
Now that you’ve scheduled your writing time you want to increase your writing time. What you might want to do is for those people who don’t write a lot or you binge and purge and you don’t write for a long time and then you’ll write for five hours and then for three months you won’t write at all. What you can do is you can schedule 15 minutes every day. And for people who are actually used to writing on a regular basis you can schedule 30 minutes every day.

The point of this is you want to actually add one minute of writing time to your regular writing session one session at a time. So for instance let’s say on Monday you get back and you’re like, “The POWER of Writing was awesome. I love those principles and I’m going to implement every single one of them. The first thing I’m doing is scheduling my time and now I’m going to write 15 minutes.”

Well, Tuesday you would add 15 minutes plus one, so on Tuesday you would write 16 minutes. Wednesday you would take 15 minutes plus two, so Wednesday you would write 17 minutes. 18 minutes on Thursday, 19 minutes on Friday and you’d continually do this until you get to about 45 minutes to an hour. Dr. Goodson, who came up with the POWER model, she likes to do no more than 45 minutes in a writing session. I like an hour because 45 minutes is nice and round, but I think an hour is more round because it goes all the way around the clock.

I really encourage you to buy a timer for this. And during this time what you want to do is you want to do nothing else but write. How many of you distracted by email? How many of you check your email while writing? Yes, it’s okay; I do, too. Facebook anyone? Yeah, I totally check that online.

No, stop. During this time you don’t check your email, you don’t check your email, you don’t check Facebook and you don’t check your text messages. There are ways to help yourself not check your email. Turn off your email. Turn off your internet. I know a lot of us have wireless internet, but I actually still have the internet that hooks up to my computer, so I will unplug my internet so that I’m not distracted.

If you’re doing this for 15 minutes, you’ve got to stay focused for those 15 minutes. If you’re only doing this for 30 minutes, you’ve got to stay focused for those 30 minutes.
So when you get back on Monday and you’re implementing these strategies the first writing session that you can do is you can actually look at the three questions that I’ve asked you and come up with strategies to make your writing better. So when I asked you, what keeps me away from my writing and you said it’s a torturous tool and you binge and purge, well one of the strategies is to create a schedule. That’s what I encourage you to do on Monday when you start implementing these strategies. Go back and take a look at those questions.

The next step is you want to keep and share your writing log. You might be saying to me, “Well, Brittany, doesn’t that seem like more work? I already have to write for 15 minutes, 30 minutes and now I’ve got to keep this writing log.” I’m all about cutting down work – trust me.

Keeping a writing log does three things. First it helps you keep track of your writing and it keeps you accountable to yourself. So when I say, “Oh, I wrote an hour today,” I can actually see I wrote an hour because I kept that in my writing log.

It also is positive reinforcement because when I get to Friday and I’m like on Monday I decided I wanted to have 15 hours of writing and when I get to Friday I see I’m at 14 hours already, I’m like, “Yes! I only have to write one hour today,” because I will have hit my goal for writing hours for the week. It also keeps you accountable to other people, such as your students and your colleagues.

There has been research showing that keeping a writing log makes you four times more productive than a person who does not keep a writing log. And the same research showed that if you share your writing log, you are nine times more productive than people who did not share a writing log.

**Audience:** [Inaudible audience question].

**Brittany Rosen:** Okay, sorry. I mixed that up. Sharing your writing log makes you even more productive, that’s the main point.

Now you might be saying to me, “Brittany, that’s great, but I don’t know how to keep a writing log. What do I do I need to keep in that? I don’t understand. What does one look like?” Well, if you pull up your coral handout and you
look at the Excel sheet side; this is an example of my writing log. It’s important that you write down the date.

You can see I have here what I worked on; you see a lot of dissertation, chapter 4, dissertation, chapter 4, dissertation, chapter 4, dissertation, chapter 4, dissertation, chapter 4 and 5. I was obviously working on my dissertation a lot, but I also included the time that I started, the actual time, so 8:00 AM or 9:07 AM and I stopped writing at 9:27. I recorded how many minutes I wrote within that session and then I wrote next to it what I actually accomplished.

Those are the kinds of things that you should be keeping track of. Now some people like to keep track of how many pages they wrote or how many words they wrote, but this can be a little bit more challenging when you’re starting to edit your paper because you are starting to delete things. I don’t know how you keep track of how many words you deleted or how many pages you deleted, so I like to keep track of minutes.

Then on an Excel sheet you can very easily add up the minutes and then know at the end of the week how many hours you’ve written. At the end of the month you can see your total hours as well. I actually have been doing this for over a year and you can see that very dark purple line right in the middle. That was actually how many hours I wrote throughout the whole year and it was close to 500 hours total, so I was averaging about 40 hours a month. I was pretty excited.

If you’re old school and you want to keep it in a journal and write down. That’s fine; you can do it that way. I like to do it on Excel because it calculates it for me.

The next principle and practice within this POWER model is you want to document your writing projects in what I like to call a writing journal. You document pretty much every decision that you make within this writing project and it’s a tool to help you document what’s going on in your projects. All writing projects have their own journal. Dissertation, Chapter 1, it had its own writing journal. Dissertation, Chapter 2 had its own writing journal.

In here I included the date, the writing session goals or what I was going to accomplish that day, what tasks I completed and then what I wanted to work on next. If you want to look at your same coral handout, but on the other
side, I have an example of my writing journal for Dissertation, Chapter 3.

You can see for March 1, 2003 I have today, that’s what I want to accomplish today; those are my goals – keep working on introduction based on the literature that I’ve read. ‘Did’ is what I accomplished and I worked through one sentence. That was a very short writing session. And tomorrow I want to keep working through the intro.

Basically you can be as detailed or not as detailed as you want. I didn’t need to be very detailed on March 1st, but as I continued through March 12th and March 13th, I started to become more and more detailed, especially in my ‘tomorrow’. Tomorrow is what you need to do next. ‘Tomorrow’ might not necessarily mean tomorrow; it might mean the next time you work on it. This is extremely helpful because you’re not stuck on where did I stop last, where do I need to pick up.

This tool right here has helped me so much. It helps with writer’s block as well because you’re not stuck. Again, you know exactly where you’re picking up from and you’re able to move immediately and you’re not wasting time. This is an amazing tool and I love using the writing journal. When I first heard of it I was like, that’s really weird. How do you do that? I don’t understand. But I highly recommend this in order to help you not waste time.

So you’ve scheduled your writing, you’re increasing your time, you’re keeping a writing log of every time you write and you have your writing journal pulled up and ready to go. The next step is warm-up writing. You want to do a warm-up before each writing session of five to ten minutes. I usually like to keep it about five minutes unless I’m reading and then I do ten minutes because I don’t read fast.

In warming up you can do a couple of exercises, dumping, copying a new vocabulary word or reading and I’m going to talk about each one of these. In dumping, what you want to do is you just dump all of your thoughts onto a paper if you’re handwriting or you can do it on the computer. The key here is you do not stop. You don’t go back. You don’t pay attention to mistyping a word, misspelling a word. If you don’t have any thoughts then you just start writing “I don’t know what I’m thinking.” You do not stop. That is the whole concept of dumping.
You can write about whatever you want. If you just had a fight with your partner, your spouse or your kids, you can dump about that. Get that all out before you start your writing session. Or if you're like “You know what? I have a really good idea for a new research project,” you can dump about that and get that out as well. It can be about whatever you want it to be about.

Copying – I’m not suggesting that you copy somebody’s work and pass it on as your own. This is not what this is about. Copying is actually taking somebody else’s writing, somebody else’s writing that you want to imitate and you slowly copy their work one word at a time, once sentence at a time for about ten minutes.

What this does is it actually exposes you to somebody’s writing, but you’re really paying more attention to their sentence structure, the words that they’re using, the order of how they are using these words. You’re not memorizing anything. You’re not memorizing their work; you’re just copying and you do this for about five to ten minutes.

A new vocabulary word – you can get a new vocabulary word or find a new vocabulary word every day. You look up the word. You look up the origin of the word and what the word means. Then you’ll write three to four sentences using this word that you might write in journal or in research grant that you’re trying to do. This can really help you increase your vocabulary.

Then one of my favorite writing warm-ups is to actually read about writing. You might say to me “How do I read about writing? What’s a good book to read about writing?” It’s really any book that motivates you to write, any book that you are reading and you’re just like, “Man, I can’t wait to try this new exercise out,” or “Ooh, I just really liked this part of the book and it talked about the struggles and the joys of writing.” I encourage you to read that.

I’m actually reading right now Bird by Bird. I also encourage you to read How to Write a Lot, Revising Business Prose and then of course Dr. Goodson’s Becoming an Academic Writer, which goes into more detail about the POWER model than what I’m going to. I have the book up here and we can talk about it more after the presentation.

I’d like you take your blue handout. Sure.
**Audience:** You’re saying warm up for five to ten minutes, but your session is 15 minute long, so does that mean five...?

**Brittany Rosen:** If your session is 15 minutes long, you’d do probably five minutes at the most, you could even make it three.

**Audience:** [Inaudible audience question.]

**Brittany Rosen:** Right. But let’s say you’re doing a 16 minute session, you can warm up for ten minutes. So just adjust it according to how long your writing session is going to be. Thank you for bringing that to my attention.

I would like you to go ahead and pick if you want to do dumping or you can do copying. I actually have a little paragraph here from Dr. Goodson’s book that you can copy. I also have a new vocabulary word. I don’t know if any of you have heard of Visual Thesaurus, but you can get a new word every day. For about $20 they’ll send you a new word in your email and you can use that. They sent me a new word and it was ‘impuissance’. I put the definition here and you can write three or four sentences.

I’m going to set the timer for five minutes and I would like you to practice one of these warm-up exercises. Ready. Begin.

Alright your time is up. That is just an example of what you can do for a warm-up. How many did dumping? A lot of people did dumping. How many did copying? And then how many did a new vocabulary word? Did you come up with any good sentences?

**Audience:** Yes, I actually analyzed my own powerlessness. It was interesting.

**Brittany Rosen:** You analyzed your...?

**Audience:** My own powerlessness about writing. It was fairly interesting. I did a little conflict management with myself there.

**Brittany Rosen:** Oh, good, okay.
I realized that the powerlessness is fear based, so I actually took the word and used it around my own work. So, thank you.

Brittany Rosen: Yes, of course. We’re actually going to talk about that. The next strategy is how to help with that fear and to help with the writer’s block.

We want to write quickly and edit slowly, which is the next PowerPoint slide and those phrases go together – write quickly, edit slowly. We’re going to talk about writing quickly first.

It’s extremely important that we separate writing or generating or generating from editing. These are two distinct tasks and generating takes a creative component from you mind. Editing is an analytic and repetitive task. When you try to do these two tasks at the same time they’re very conflicting because you’re trying to be creative, but you’re trying to be analytical as well.

We really need to make sure that we break those apart and do them separately. This will also really help with writer’s block. Part of writers block is trying to create that perfect first sentence or that perfect paragraph. You’re sitting in front of your computer and you’re like “Well, I don’t know. Maybe it’ll sound good if I... No, I don’t like that. Maybe I’ll type that out. No, I don’t like that,” and you delete it. This is what’s called “The Dangerous Method”, by Peter Elbow and that’s trying to write it right the first time.

So what we do is we dump. I see that a lot of us did dumping, so we’re not going to do that exercise, but that’s what you would do. You would get ready for your writing session and you would let’s say be focused on a lit review. You’re starting it and you would just dump for five to ten minutes anything and everything that you’re thinking about that lit review. You’re not going to pay attention to your grammar, your sentence structure. You’re not going to pay attention to even your paragraphs. You just dump everything out quickly.

You’d probably do that for about ten minutes, 15 minutes if you’re really good at generating and then you’re going to edit slowly. You’re going to go back through your dumping and you’re going to look for good ideas that you want to keep. Then you’re going to start looking to place all these similar ideas together and then begin organizing your text.
Of course, as we know with writing, you might start editing, but then you might need to generate a little bit more in order to create those transition sentences or to connect two pieces together. And that’s okay because this is an iterative process; you’re going to go back and forth. You just need to make sure that you’re keeping them separate. When you’re trying to write that transition piece don’t sit there and think about it in your head, just generate it. Write it out and then you can go back and edit it.

Really this is about accepting and organizing your messy drafts. Like I talked about in the beginning, the need for good writing starts with writing badly. We talked about the Brontë sisters and how they had poor writing when they first started and then with practice they got a lot better. So first you need to accept your mess drafts. And as we talked about, within your messy draft you’re going to find ideas to keep.

Let’s say you dumped for about ten minutes and that got you about 500 words, so that would be two pages. First you would start with one page and you’re going to go through and you’re going to read your ideas and you’re going to say, “Oh, I really like this,” and you’re going to highlight your idea that you want to keep.

You’re going to open up a new Word document and you’re going to drag this new idea that’s highlighted over into this new Word document. Then you’re going to keep reading and look for any new ideas that you want keep, but you’re also going to look for ideas that are similar to the idea that you just highlighted. You’re going to go through this whole process one page at a time and lump similar ideas together. This is really going to help you organize your text.

This is more of a practice, so as you continue to practice this and use this in your writing you’re actually going to get better at organizing. I know at first that might seem a little scary, but the more you actually do this the better that you will get at organizing.

Let’s look at one together. If you would, take out your other white sheet that does not have the PowerPoint on it. This is actually a messy draft that I had. I was in Dr. Goodson’s class and we were to do a book review. It was for Predictably Irrational, which is really a great book; I encourage you to read it. I was starting to write this book
review and I needed to dump. I needed to get going and get started, so I dumped and this is what came out.

As you can see, I did not care about spelling, grammar or even paragraph form and it’s one paragraph. I want to show you what I was just talking about and how to organize the messy drafts. I want to let you know that I am a human sexuality educator, so I talk about sexuality in here. I just don’t want anybody to be surprised.

Let’s begin. “So fart his is a great book.”

**Audience:** This looks a lot like my kid’s final papers.

**Brittany Rosen:** Oh, that’s... No, that’s just sad. I cleaned it up; I didn’t turn this in. “So fart his book is great.” Obviously I didn’t go back and correct that; I just wrote that out. “It’s really been blowing my mind away with the some of the way people behave and how they are predicted irrational. I like in his chapter about free was very interesting and really applied to health education and the incentives we can use. Also approach of social and market we could be applying these type of information to our health education studies.”

So let’s say I was like, well, this looks really good. I like this about the free and then apply to health education. So I’m going to highlight that. Then I’m just going to bring up another Word document here and I would cut and paste. Then we continue reading. “And the incentives that we can use also approach of social and market.” So I might say okay, I like approach of social and market, so I’m going to cut that because I think it goes with this idea.

“However I do have to disagree with him on the making of every type of healthcare, colonoscopy, mammograms free because I know I’ve heard somewhere that people do better and take care of those things even when they pay a dollar. I need to find this research. Maybe something toward participatory action research with [Dr. McGuire].” So that to me is a new idea and I might highlight half of it. Then bring this over and that’s how you would begin to organize your text.

**Audience:** Is there a reason why you cut rather than copying?
Brittany Rosen: I like to cut rather than copying just because I like to shorten my text. I like it to get smaller, so that I know that I’m actually moving along. But if you would rather just copy than cut, you can do that. That’s fine. I just like to see my text get shorter because I like to see how much I’m leaving behind and then how much I’m actually taking with me.

Audience: [Inaudible audience question.]

Brittany Rosen: Yeah and that’s true, too. So I might dump one day and then that’s my session for then. Then the next day I might come back to that and what I do is every document I have I save the date, so it’s a new version every date that I work on it. Yes?

Audience: So instead of working with two documents going back and forth, what I usually do is I take the stuff that I don’t like and I move it down to the bottom of the page. That way I’m taking away and leaving what's good, but not getting rid of it in case I change my mind later.

Brittany Rosen: Yeah and I definitely don’t want you to – when I say ‘get rid of’ you’re not deleting it. You’re keeping in the trash file. But you could do it that way as well, putting it at the bottom of the document. You never want to throw any of your thoughts away. Even though you might think at this point I might not be a good idea and one you want to keep, later it could. I actually have a trash document for every project that I work on as well and there have been times when that trash document has saved me. Yes?

Audience: Some of this seems to be a decision about voice. These are things that even on the dump it’s good to have voice in mind, so that at least the voice is present in the dump. For instance, it says “It has really been blowing my mind away,” instead of it blows my mind. So your dump at least has some style parameters that are controlling it. Otherwise that allows a bad habit to persist.

Brittany Rosen: Yeah, definitely. I really encourage you when you’re dumping to just... I write how I talk when I’m dumping. It just comes out the way I would be talking, so I think that’s
really important. It really helps you keep your voice when you’re starting to organize the text.

**Audience:** You’re saying the opposite, right?

**Audience:** Yeah, I’m saying some parameters need to be set ahead of time.

**Brittany Rosen:** Oh, so you think that it should not have a voice?

**Audience:** Oh, it should have a voice. The first draft should be throw up. I call it vomiting. The idea of persisting with inactive voice, which is a common flaw in writing; I think it’s good to have that, so that at least there’s a level of quality to the dump.

**Brittany Rosen:** Oh, yeah.

**Audience:** So would you then edit as it you’re putting it into the new file?

**Audience:** No, you want to be at a point where it was the very nature of the thing that you speak in active voice.

**Brittany Rosen:** When I’m pulling things out I don’t change the voice until I actually go back and I’m reading through and I’m trying to actually organize all those like ideas together. That’s when I start polishing and writing in an active voice, not when I’m pulling things out. After dumping you might find that you have the same idea written three different ways, but it’s the same idea three times. So you don’t want to change anything until you’ve started pulling all of your ideas together and making sure you have all of your like ideas.

**Audience:** The other quick point is about when you say you write like you speak. The reason it doesn’t work to record a lecture and type it up and there’s chapter 1, is that words need to carry the eyebrow energy, hand gestures and everything you do when you’re talking to somebody like I am right now. That has to be built into the words because there are no eyebrows or hand gestures. So the idea of even on the
dump having a level of expression that encompasses that – but anyway.

Brittany Rosen:

Thank you. Another principle is we want to write to clarify our thinking. A lot of times we don’t really think of writing as a tool to learn. I would highly encourage you to choose an unfamiliar topic, something that you might have always wanted to learn about. So if you’ve always wanted to learn about crochet or bowling or if you have a research topic that you’re just starting on or a literature review that you’ve been dreading I would encourage you to take this topic and write about it for ten to 15 minutes every day.

First you would just start writing about what the topic seems to be about, how you feel about this topic, what you know about this topic and what you want to learn. Then you would actually take this ten or 15 minutes after you’ve written all your feelings down about it and you would read and do research. As you’re reading and doing research, write about what you’re reading. Write about your interaction with the text. Write about your new discoveries. You will soon learn that when you’re writing very easily about it is when you actually understand it.

Lastly, you want to find writing support, getting feedback. This is extremely important because you need that feedback in order to correct your mistakes. Correcting your mistakes actually makes you a better writer. The best way to get writing support is to have a writing group or a writing circle. I’m not going to go into detail about that because Jennifer Travis is doing a roundtable tomorrow on supportive writing groups and creating them.

But they are extremely important because you can get regular feedback, but you can also provide regular feedback. Sometimes providing feedback is a lot better than actually getting feedback because you start to identify other people’s writing mistakes and think to yourself, “Oh, I’m doing the same thing.” You didn’t even realize that you were doing that. I know this from firsthand experience because I have done that. I’m reading somebody else’s paper and I’m like, “Oh! Oh! I do that. Oh, no!” And I’ve gone back and changed it because I saw it in somebody else’s paper.

Lastly I think it’s really good to schedule a reading appointment. So if you have somebody who you think is a phenomenal writer and you really want them to look at your stuff schedule an appointment with them because if
you try to send it to them they won’t read it. You can also say, “Dr. Goodson, I would really like for you to read my Chapter 2 dissertation and I would be willing to read something of yours,” and you’d swap with them. A lot of people are extremely willing to do that. If you’re willing to read their paper and give them feedback then they’ll be willing to do that with you as well.

To wrap of the POWER model, you have a copy of this. Any questions? Yes?

**Audience:**

This has been very exciting and inspiring and I really want appreciate these ideas. The place where I’m stuck in my writing is I follow the Peter Elbow writing freely and I end up with really wordy drafts and I have a lot of trouble getting from that to the edited version because I write in a style that sort of flows from idea to idea. It’s not discrete sentences so much, so I can’t just pick out a good sentence and leave the rest. I don’t know if anybody has any thoughts on that.

**Brittany Rosen:**

Really what Dr. Goodson talks about in this book, and again this is all based on POWER, what I think would be very helpful is to identify one key sentence and then you write a sentence for that paragraph. Let’s say you write three sentences for that paragraph and you have a key sentence idea, so you have four sentences. The rest of those three sentences must connect to that key sentence and they cannot go off on a new idea.

What I find in my writing is sometimes I’ll have my key sentence and then two sentence that are connected to the key sentence and they’re very tight and they’re really good. Then I’ll have that third sentence that is connected to the key sentence, but it starts a new idea. And then I realize this is a new idea. This needs to be a new paragraph. This needs to be a new key sentence and I need to come up with more information to build this new idea up. She talks about that strategy in here.

**Moderator:**

This has been an educational presentation, brought to you by the Text and Academic Authors Association.

[End of Presentation]