

Writing with Student-Athletes

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28 November 2022

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Challenges

- Inconsistent attendance and participation due to travel, injury (and treatment), and/or exhaustion.
- A sense of inadequate preparation for academic writing.
- A prioritization of athletic over academic work.
- Cultural antagonism or "conceptual disjuncture" between the classroom and the court.
- The (often implicit) valuation of cognitive over embodied activity.

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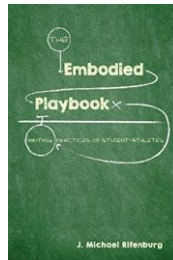
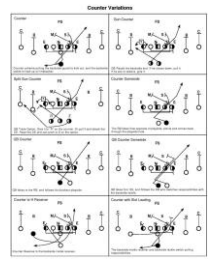
Cognitive Deficit vs. Extracurricular Literacies

There is a tendency to interpret these challenges through the framework of a cognitive deficit model: "here is what they cannot do, here is what they don't know" (Rifenburg 4).

Drawing on recent work in composition studies, I argue for a different approach rooted in the concept of extracurricular literacies—those (often embodied) rhetorical competencies that our students bring into the classroom, from "waiting tables, styling hair, playing video games" (Roozen 6) to baseball, volleyball, cheer, and sprint football.

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The Scripted Play as a paradigm of the athletic text.

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The Scripted Play as Text

- "[S]cripted plays are multimodal texts, dialectically constructed, historically situated, and anticipative of competitive bodily enactment" (Rifenburg 36).
- Multimodal:** The play exists in several media: hand-drawn, digitally reproduced, condensed (or "resemiotized") into verbal cues, physical signals, or placards prior to enactment.
- Dialectically constructed** as a collaboration between coaches and players.
- Historically situated:** plays "draw from a rich repository of historical modes of meaning making" (Genre, influence, translation, adaptation).
- Anticipate bodily enactment:** "The body is the driving rhetorical force behind the creation of a text. Text is created for the body."

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Helping students recognize athletic literacies

- Self-consciously expanding the definitions of "writing" and "reading" to encompass a range of activities.
- Encouraging the recognition of embodied knowledges as forms of expertise.
- Facilitating the translation of these knowledges into more familiar academic contexts.

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Transferring Athletic Literacies

- **Transfer:** The "transfer question" typically focuses on "how [teachers] can help students develop writing knowledge and practices that they can draw upon, use, and repurpose for new writing tasks in new settings" (Taczek, et al., 2). The other side of this question, however, involves helping students bring what they already know into the classroom.
- Calibrating assignments to the development of a play through scaffolded situations.
- Studying "the tape": Including activities that allow students to reflect on past writing and set goals for future development.

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References

- Rifenburg, J. Michael. *The Embodied Playbook: Writing Practices of Student-Athletes*. Utah State UP, 2018.
- . "Student Athletes' Metacognitive Strategy." *Composition Forum* 43, 2020.
- Roosen, Kevin. "Journalism, Poetry, Stand-Up Comedy, and Academic Writing: Mapping the Interplay of Curricular and Extracurricular Literate Activities." *Journal of Basic Writing*. v. 21, n. 1, 2008.
- Kara Taczak, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson. *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2014.

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