

Student Organizing & Op-Eds

The rhetorical moves of student organizers can help re-shape the writing classroom with an ally (accomplice) classroom pedagogy, particularly in considering the texts we read and the kinds of writing assignments we complete. When a writing teacher assigns petitions, op-eds, and other community-based writing assignments, the work of student organizers can give a new lens for seeing and transforming those writing assignments and texts for the course. In such a classroom, the community writing teacher needs to consider what it means to be an effective ally (or accomplice) with students who are confronting different kinds of oppression and discrimination.

An ally (accomplice) pedagogy is one that values student expertise and takes an intersectional approach. The ally (accomplice) sees student concerns as a central part of the course content and finds ways for the writing classroom to be a place for students to address issues of change that matter to them. This writing pedagogy/curriculum highlights the skills of student organizers in addressing change on and off campus. In addition, the writing teacher can follow the lead of students and ask student organizers how allies can help. The ally (accomplice) teacher also recognizes student organizers within a movement may have different approaches to an issue.

My goal, then, in discussing an ally (accomplice) pedagogy for the writing classroom is not to create a general pedagogy for all writing teachers—that seems impossible and counter-productive. However, I hope that discussing how student organizers have impacted my pedagogy will connect to a larger movement for our field to invite more student organizing voices into the writing classroom. In my presentation, then, I will discuss one assignment in detail, the op-ed. Although the op-ed writing assignment is a common one, this presentation will explore how student organizers take a different approach with the op-ed.