

ABSTRACT

DISCONNECTS, FISSURES, AND FRACTURES: VERTICAL ARTICULATION IN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE COMPOSITION

This thesis explores the role of autonomous literacy practices and its relationship with secondary and university student writing practices. Autonomous literacy models purport knowledge as fixed or stable. Advocates of these models encourage learning to be just as rigid. Through analysis of economic and social influences of American education, I identify how autonomous literacies are supported both inside and out of the education system and how students rely on formulated approaches in school. Students, then, are not prepared to move between different contexts as they repeatedly try to perform in the same way. This leads colleges to blame high schools for failing to prepare students for academic life. To deal with this “gap” between secondary and university education, many have called for vertical articulation. Because vertical articulation is deeply rooted in autonomous literacy, I argue for a new rhetorical literacy to help students move between high school and college. Because knowledge is contextual and performances are best situated in a particular context, rhetorical literacy is the best option for our students—for their writing, coursework, jobs, and citizenship.

Andrea Michelle Osteen
May 2009