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Introduction from the Editor's Desk

In the classic rap song “Juicy,” The Notorious BIG makes the paradoxical statement “If you don’t know, now you know.” This statement delves into the complex nature of knowledge and understanding by suggesting that we can be both aware and unaware at the same time. As English educators, we work in the field of knowledge, but the concept of knowing can be more nuanced than it appears at first glance. We might “know” a text thoroughly, but is that the same thing as knowing how to teach it? Teacher preparation programs implore future teachers to “know their students,” but what is the best way to use that knowledge to facilitate students’ successes?

Reflecting on the complex nature of knowledge can prompt us as English teachers to consider thought-provoking ideas, such as:

- What do we want our students to know?
- What ideas have we reflected on and potentially reconsidered during our teaching careers?
- What are our philosophies of instruction and how have we formed them?
- How do we help our students understand the variety of ways to make sense of a text?
- How do we empower our students to bring their personal experiences and out-of-school knowledge into our classes?
- What does effective teaching look like to you and how do you know if your instruction is effective?

I am proud that the Summer 2018 issue of the *Virginia English Journal* features manuscripts that consider the idea of knowledge in the English classroom in its wonderful complexity. The ideas, insights, and suggestions shared by the authors of these outstanding pieces make important contributions to the body of literature on effective English instruction. In addition, this issue contains an excellent poem by David Black and thought-provoking book reviews by Jill Perttula and Susannah Goldstein that discuss exciting young-adult novels.

Thank you for your support of the *Virginia English Journal*. See you in Winter 2019 for the *VEJ*'s next issue!

All the best,

Sean

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Learning In Between: Partnerships as Sites of Discovery

Abstract

This article explores the benefits of one-to-one, undergraduate partnerships with public school students in teacher education courses. These partnerships, enacted through letter writing in paper notebooks and through a digital internship, involved teacher candidates communicating individually through writing and in product creations with public school students. The teacher educators unpack the discoveries they think enhanced the learning for teacher candidates including one-to-one teaching, asynchronous timing, authentic purpose, and coconstruction of knowledge. A goal of the partnerships was to make purposeful experiences for teacher candidates in the spaces between their own school experience and their future teacher selves; which is, in large part, the work of teacher education.

Learning In Between: Partnerships as Sites of Discovery

Teacher candidates start out in between. They are college students, practicum students, student teachers, and finally teachers. In the ordered progression of schooling we think of these as linear steps, yet the roles and expectations overlap and mingle. They create particular challenges to navigate. Even the past younger student self remains an aspect of identity that teacher candidates revisit. Making purposeful experiences for

teacher candidates in the spaces between their own school experience and their future teacher selves is, in large part, the work of teacher education.

Just as the marginal spaces between varied climates create biodiversity, the spaces between being a student and being a teacher are rich with possibility. What teacher candidates need to know (among literary themes, grammar rules, standards, & policies) is how to make connections in unexpected places, how to apply learning from one area to another, and how to develop self-awareness. Teacher candidates are students, and the work of becoming classroom leaders involves an intentional shift from the role of student to the role of teacher. A teacher candidate does not flip the switch from one to the other, but navigates in between in intentional and unintentional ways.

Simply having experiences in schools does not automatically generate insightful knowledge of people, systems, and self that teachers need to succeed in ever changing school settings. Studying educational theory informs practice only when applied, and writing partnerships, as alternative forms of field experience, provide a valuable means of developing knowledge of self and others in nuanced and meaningful ways (Barksdale, Watson, & Park, 2007; Pope, Beal, Long, &

McCammon, 2011; Wilford, & Oberhauser, 2012). These partnerships, functioning in the space between student and teacher, are rich with opportunity. The partnerships benefit not only teacher candidates, but teacher partners and school students. This article focuses on the benefits of partnerships for teacher candidates who interact with middle schoolers through digital and notebook partnerships.

Background

We, Beth and Jenny, are former English teachers in secondary classroom settings. We transitioned, through varied career paths and further studies, into roles as teacher educators in small liberal arts teacher education programs. Recently, we became colleagues at the same institution and discovered that during our time in higher education we separately generated similar partnerships linking teacher education students to secondary school students through writing. Each of us was driven by concerns that teacher candidates needed more mediated and reflective interactions with students. We were, and remain, committed to the idea that teacher education programs strive to connect with schools in meaningful, reciprocal ways.

Both of us had experience with teacher education and secondary education partnerships as doctoral students. Beth, as the result of a writing tutorial field placement “falling through” at the last minute, innovated to develop a partnership between teacher education students in Methods of Teaching Writing and ninth grade students required

to retake English. The partnership was built on the collaborative and reciprocal concerns shared by Beth and the high school English teacher. Both were National Writing Project Teacher Consultants and participated in a teacher research group. That initial partnership was rich for all involved, and the discoveries and observations of that context led Beth to develop a similar partnership that functioned for five semesters, pairing teacher education students in Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum and Middle School Methods courses with 8th graders required to take a reading support class.

Jenny also experienced a partnership, specifically a digital internship that was embedded in a graduate teaching assistantship. The course was entitled Teaching Adolescent Readers and the partnership involved graduate students mentoring ninth graders on a poetry unit via a course wiki. In another course she cotaught, Teaching Composition, the graduate students mentored high school seniors on an Othello unit via a Ning. Both partnerships involved the same high school and teacher at a private school. Initially, Jenny suspected the private school setting was the source of success in the digital internship, and that a public school may not permit a digital internship for security reasons. Seven years later, after implementing a similar online partnership between undergraduate teacher education students and public school middle schoolers, she realized that the authentic interactions could come to fruition in a public school setting.

Beth's Letter Writing Partnership

Beth's first 8th grade-teacher candidate writing partnership emerged from a serendipitous conversation with a teacher that revealed shared desire to better connect students to resources in the community and to expand teaching and learning experiences beyond the limits of the classroom. The teacher, Margot, was teaching 8th graders required, due to standardized test scores, to take reading support. The class replaced what would otherwise be student selected electives, and the students enrolled were racially and linguistically diverse. Margot did not want students to experience the class as the punishment it seemed systematically poised to be. She also wanted students to see the possibility of college in their futures. She wanted to acknowledge, celebrate, and develop characteristics often marginalized at school. These efforts could be supported by teacher candidates. Margot's teaching interests and convictions about equity compelled her to take the extra steps a partnership requires.

Beth was working with a group of teacher candidates in a Middle School Methods course. The group was predominantly white with a pattern of easy success at school. She wanted them to look beyond stereotypes and assumptions about adolescents and middle school. She wanted them to see middle school from the perspective of students who were different than the teacher candidates. She wanted them to develop an assets-based view of individuals and school communities

of varied racial, linguistic, academic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Like Margot, Beth viewed teaching and learning as immersed in social systems with opportunity to increase equity. Their driving desires were a perfect fit for partnership, so they planned and launched a semester of letter writing between their students and between themselves.

The steps of the partnership, while outwardly simple, were complex. The gist is that paired students received a marble composition notebook and developed a pattern of sending letters back and forth. They launched the letter exchange with the teacher candidates meeting their partners at the middle school and wrapped it up with the middle schoolers visiting the college campus. Each visit included a campus tour, icebreaker activities, writing in notebooks, and food. The topics of letters ranged and included general introductions, interests and hobbies, family life, information about books read, and advice for future teachers and college students.

The experience of the first semester proved so successful toward the established goals that Beth and Margot decided to revise and continue the process. Compelling to each of them, professionally and personally, they repeated the process for five semesters. When Margot moved from that teaching role, she connected Beth with the new teacher who picked up the partnership seamlessly. Particular adaptations included transitioning the partnership to teacher candidates in

Reading and Writing across the Curriculum. This fostered more written exchange about books and writing. They also continued to tweak the prompts for letter writing to provide a general purpose from which partners could personalize their communication choices. They invited partners to include drawing, graphics, and collage. They considered online forums but decided to continue use of paper notebooks. Participating middle school teachers felt strongly about wanting students to write in notebooks, and teacher candidates and 8th graders reported that handwriting made the partnership distinct from other kinds of exchanges.

Each semester involved some trouble shooting, too. Sometimes teacher candidates were asked to be flexible and pair up as writers or to exchange letters with more than one partner. We managed issues of school cancellations and altered schedules by adjusting our swap dates. If teacher candidates were late in submitting letters, Beth would not deliver any notebooks until a letter was written to each 8th grader. Sometimes a middle schooler was absent for an extended time or the roster changed. Teacher candidates had to adapt to these classroom realities and navigate the spaces between teacher and student, speaker and writer.

Jenny's Digital Internship Partnership

Jenny's first partnership emerged in graduate school, and the partnership originated before she arrived on campus. Using the social

media platform, Twitter, an English teacher had tweeted her interest in finding a partner in higher education to collaborate on a unit with her high schoolers. The professor of record for Teaching Adolescent Readers and Teaching Composition responded to the tweet and a lasting partnership formed.

Jenny's current partnership launched in a similar way in her second year at her current college; the teacher contacted his alumni college's education program. Mark, a 7th grade social studies teacher, hoped to discuss blended learning, and a colleague of Jenny's connected them through email. After a brief email exchange, Jenny sent a calendar invite to Mark via Google Hangouts to discuss blended learning. During the meeting, Mark described his blended learning classroom, where students did part of their coursework online and part in small groups with teachers in the classroom. After conversing about blended learning, Jenny described her experience with digital internships. While Mark had not experienced a digital internship, they decided to embed one in his 1920's unit the following semester, giving plenty of time to plan. One video conference later, a new digital internship was in the works. Jenny sent Mark another Google Hangout calendar invite, this time leaving enough time in between for ideas to steep.

The first unit paired undergraduate teacher candidates in Educational Psychology with Mark's 7th grade students in a history class. Jenny hoped the digital internship would

provide teacher candidates with hands-on experience integrating technologies into a blended instruction experience that focused on enhancing student engagement, making learning more efficient, and increasing equity for K-12 learners.

After talking with the college's grant director regarding funds that may be available to support the digital internship, Jenny discovered that this new digital internship worked to further the college's efforts from an earlier grant to provide systematic training to teacher candidates on how to move beyond simple competency and familiarity with technological tools, into a thorough understanding of how to employ these tools to enhance student learning. Jenny learned that all of the funds from the 2011 grant were not used, and she was able to write a reproposal to use the remaining funds in 2016. Mark and Jenny began this first digital internship with goal setting. We aimed for teacher candidates to be challenged to contemplate how this process and these technologies might be used in their future practice to support the learning of K-12 students as they mentored the 7th graders in developing greater familiarity with: (a) critical thinking skills; (b) problem solving skills, (c) social skills - interaction on Google Slides; (d) persistence, (e) creativity, and (f) self-control. Teacher candidates faced these goals while developing knowledge of a U.S. History topic.

Each semester, Jenny housed the digital internship in her Educational Psychology course, but for Mark, the units changed as

did the class where the 7th grade digital internship was embedded. Depending on the number of students in the classes, teacher candidates mentored one student or more. As an asynchronous collaboration, students and teacher candidates had time to think, time to create, and time to provide careful feedback.

Values of Learning in Between

Our experiences with teacher candidates as writing partners demonstrated to each of us particular skills and understandings that we want to foster in teacher candidates. Our partnerships fostered such growth and awareness because they exist in the space in between institutions and between the roles of student and teacher. Specifically we noted that the partnership work generated positive results for teacher candidates because the projects involve:

- One-on-one teaching
- Asynchronous timing
- Authentic purpose
- Coconstruction of knowledge

The following sections present further exploration of functions, outcomes, and discoveries of these elements of the partnership work.

One-on-one teaching. Beth and Jenny deeply value the relational work of the teacher, especially as relational understanding can be the site of appreciating differences. Brown (2016) makes a particular case for the teaching of writing as a one-on-one

endeavor in which teachers resist bias and build trust. Beth and Jenny teach candidates to value relationship through readings and demonstration, but knowing about relationships and building them are not the same. The first step in relationship building is being open to the humanity of another. One outcome of the partnered relationships was humanizing school-based relationships, as one candidate noted, "I benefitted by just 'humanizing' middle schoolers. They have real feelings, hopes, and problems." Another noted that the partnership helped them to see middle schoolers as "more real and complex."

The digital internship provided healthy challenges while working with developing individual student writing and self-regulation skills in this mentorship experience. One student's reflection revealed the way many of the students felt: "Throughout this whole process I completely felt out of my comfort zone. I did not know the writing standards for seventh grade and so I was not sure if what I was saying was completely going over their heads, or if it was not enough. However, I think that is what made this experience so unique and helpful...being paired one on one with a student who is counting on us to help them succeed, really brings teaching to a whole new level of reality." This student's reflection is important because it shows the teacher candidate is challenged with real world teaching and learning and the importance of beginning with the learner and helping them move forward academically. This is also the teacher candidate doing the difficult work of relationship building.

Working with one student partner over time also allowed candidates to notice students who engaged minimally with writing or with school in general. Teacher candidates would have already learned through coursework that the relational foundations for learning must consider the strengths each student brings and build an asset-driven view of students, even students who may, for the moment be failing a class or having behavioral challenges. One of Beth's teacher candidates noted that her partner did not write much at all. Another noted that his partner's "whole life seem[ed] to be outside of school." This is a significant observation that the student's world is important, and the teacher needs to look for relational and connected ways to link home and school. Such insight is developed effectively by supporting one student over time, especially in written correspondence.

Asynchronous timing. These partnerships provided teacher candidates an exchange with students that did not happen in live time. Teacher candidates, still students themselves, need practice in discerning what to say and what not to say when responding to students. In the in between spaces of writing partnerships, as in the classroom, there is value in learning to expect the unexpected (DiPardo, Staley, Selland, Martin, & Gniewek, 2012). Beth and Jenny appreciated the response time that the asynchronous partnerships allowed.

Because Beth planned class time to read, discuss, and respond to partner letters, students shared their concerns. One ninth

grader wrote about discovering she was pregnant and lying to her mother about that. These are the complex details of students' lives that teachers encounter. In the context of the writing partners, we had time to consider the situation. Beth encouraged the teacher candidate to value the student and the risk she took in sharing the story. The teacher candidate was humbled by such personal sharing. She also noted that the work needed substantial conventional revision. We discussed how teachers both appreciate a student's story and respect the student as a writer with supportive critique. This would have been difficult, and quite likely less effective, if the teacher candidate had to respond on the spot.

In Jenny's digital internship, teacher candidates gave feedback to the 7th graders as they developed a product. The product varied (e.g. MLA annotated bibliography, radio broadcast script), but it was always created based on research from a topic of their choice within the unit. The asynchronous timing gave the teacher candidates time to study Mark's unit, and research the student's topic. For example, with the Industrialization Unit, the 7th graders signed up for a Robber Barron to research. While the 7th graders created the first draft of their MLA annotated bibliography, teacher candidates created a "research page" to familiarize themselves with 7th grader's chosen person. During the 1920s unit, students chose a topic to research during this time period; in this case the teacher candidates helped some of the 7th graders to narrow their topic (e.g. the movie industry,

washing machine ads, football). In cases where there was little information on a topic, the teacher candidates advised the students to change topics altogether. Point being, the asynchronous timing enabled teacher candidates to research the 7th grader's topic; create their "research page" with links and fast facts; help them be more confident when guiding the 7th graders.

The time lag also created space for Beth's students to determine the nuances of language and information that shape relational interactions. In the moment, teacher candidates might be dumbfounded by illegible handwriting, references to music and sports teams they did not follow, or questions about their romantic lives. The time in between letters allowed for informal research into sports teams and decision making about the boundaries of personal and professional life. While reading letters in class, we looked up soccer scores and played new music. Once Beth played a song rather loudly in a classroom in the library. A bit of "not school appropriate" lyrics made teacher candidates laugh uncomfortably, and then the group discussed how they might cope with such moments in their own classrooms and still connect by students sharing various interests. Such interests are the connections students and teachers make in the in between time.

Authentic purpose. Many sources (Applebee & Langer, 2013; Graham & Perin, 2007) remind English teachers that writers benefit from an audience that extends beyond the teacher and even beyond the

classroom. Writers in general craft their texts in more meaningful ways when writing for authentic purposes. The recipient of the teacher candidates' letter were also individuals to whom teacher candidates had a responsibility. As a teacher and mentor they were expected to lead and engage with their partner.

Initially, some teacher candidates reached out to their partners by aligning with them as fellow students. Early letters included statements like, "My teacher told me I should write to you..." Beth initially interpreted such statements as teacher candidates resisting their leadership role. Over time, it was clear that connecting with the audience of their partner in this way was strategic, a connection made through similarities in status as students. One teacher candidate's wish for a more engaged and motivated partner, created the space to explore, "How does one teach to students reluctant to engage?" In the writing partnership, teacher candidates practice, as they will as teachers, looking for new angles and connection points, even with a reticent partner.

Being responsible to their writing partners also meant that teacher candidates had to meet deadlines. Beth would not take a partial set of notebooks to the 8th grade partners, so any late work messed up the plan and left all partners waiting. Since Beth shuttled the notebooks to the middle school, a missed deadline resulted in a conference with Beth. One teacher candidate, in such a conference, highlighted how the writing partnership deadlines required a different

attention because of the waiting 8th graders. This teacher candidate didn't realize until the conference that writing a letter in a notebook needed to take priority over seemingly loftier assignments. The teacher candidate sat with that new idea for a moment and realized the degree of adjustment this required in his work habits. "All my school work before this was about me, me, me," he said. If he passed or failed, it only impacted him. The letters to 8th graders, like the work of the teacher, were different. If teacher candidates need to learn and practice this degree of looking at the value of their work beyond themselves, practicing it with one person in a dialogic letter notebook proved a rich way to discover this concept.

One way, over time, that Jenny improved the digital internship meant seizing the opportunity for the teacher candidates to create instructional videos. Teacher candidates come into the teacher education program having made plenty of videos, but, when asked one semester, only 1 in 50 of her students said they had made a video to teach someone how to do something. Recognizing the need, Jenny asked the instructional designer in the technology department at her school to visit her class and present on the various tools teacher candidates had free access to for creating instructional videos. Instructional videos play an increasing role in teaching and learning, and teacher candidates appreciated having an opportunity to practice this skill while creating something to assist and encourage their 7th grader. Teacher candidates created screencasts with voice over for how to do an

MLA bibliography. Another semester teacher candidates created “how to write a 1920’s radio broadcast script.” In the videos, Mark requested that the teacher candidates not only give instructions for content, but also encourage the students to do their best work.

Coconstruction of knowledge. We think of teaching and learning as two sides of the same coin. In the language of teacher education we link teacher and learner. It doesn’t matter how great the teaching is, if the learning is weak, the teaching is ineffective. The work of teaching and learning (and dialogic letter writing) must be coconstructed. Working as partners invites teacher candidates to not only lead but to learn with and from student partners as colearners and constructors of knowledge.

Guiding the student creation of products in Jenny’s digital internship meant honoring the student and the problem-based scenario the cooperating teacher had designed. When one teacher candidate perceived that her suggestions helped the 7th grader in advancing the student’s product, she expressed her enjoyment in beginning to step into the role of being a teacher. “I remember what it was like to be in 7th grade and I always looked up to upperclassmen and adults to help me with my work...I love helping others and being able to help these students with a creative assignment and see what they bring to the table really allowed me to step into the shoes of a teacher.” When teacher candidates scored their students

using the teacher-provided IB rubric, a mixed response of pride and disappointment came with evaluating their products. The teacher candidates sounded invested and wanted the 7th graders to score well.

Jenny’s classes coconstructed knowledge in a different manner when one semester Mark asked her classes to create a learning experience for their Westward Expansion Unit. Two different classes used Google slides and teams to break up the responsibilities to create a learning experience that was provided to the students with interactive slides (see Figure 1).

1. Go to the map and pick a state west of the Mississippi River during 1890. If you are having trouble finding a state, [here](#) is a list of states west of the Mississippi River.
2. Once you have picked a state, select a county from the [map](#) inside of that state. If you have problems using the map and changing the dates the way you need, click [here](#). It will show you how to change years and select the thing you want to see— population density.
3. Then, find the population density (how many people per square mile) for 1890 for county and the state that you have picked.
4. Lastly, pick a job that you would like to have. What would be a good job to have in the city and state that you have picked?

Figure 1. Part of the Westward Expansion learning experience created by college students for 7th graders.

As the partnership developed, Jenny and Mark realized the myriad of ways teacher candidates can coconstruct knowledge through project and problem based scenarios.

Beth’s writing partnership invited teacher candidates to share a notebook with students. Each wrote letters that generated a response. The collection required the involvement of each party in order to grow

into something larger than either could create alone. In coconstructing letters in a notebook, partners cocreated a dialogue in which each helped the other to see things in a new way. The partnership invited participants to learn in a shared space between their school settings, and to cocreate new ideas for their futures. Teacher candidates noted that their partners gained new insights for the possibilities of being a college student. And the middle school students helped to generate teacher candidates' future selves as teachers. Teacher candidates were grateful for this. One summed it up by saying that through the partnership "the possibility of being a middle school teacher has opened up for me."

Conclusion

Beth's reaction to the partnership experience echoes that of a teacher candidate, "YES! I loved this. The only thing I would suggest is more visits/writing." The process overall was generative in many ways, those described here and beyond. The writing notebooks themselves, in the context of higher education are a space in between past practices and current technology. They are a space between formal writing assignments and personal journaling.

Jenny has trouble imagining her class without the partnership. The digital internship creates the space to bridge theory and practice, allowing for a common language when learning about content of the development of the learner in Educational Psychology. When teacher candidates can apply strategies for providing specific

feedback and apply strategies for motivating learners in this one-to-one partnership, the classroom becomes dynamic.

It is true that we don't have long term data that allows us to report that these partnered experiences have lasting impact on teacher candidates' teaching and learning outcomes after they become teachers. It is also true that we appreciate the power of both writing and relationship as part of the school experience. We do observe that writing is a tool for building relationship and teaching in a meaningful one-to-one model (Brown, 2016). We observe that this partnered and digital internship writing demonstrates what Sincoff calls writing at relationship (2016).

We conclude that the shift to completing a series of assignments that are built on relationship and responsibility toward a student who needs support helps turn the attention of teacher candidates toward an understanding that their success is built in the way they support the learning and engagement of others, not only the value of their own good work. It also provides an experience in which outcomes and products are meaningfully coconstructed with students. The accomplishments of the partners could not be achieved alone.

We also advocate that in teacher education programs such partnerships be regarded as valuable forms of field work, practical experiences during which we can coach and support from within teacher education. Our partnership efforts grew from asking questions and chance encounters. We continue, and invite you (see Appendix),

to be on the lookout for partnerships and opportunities in the in between places of your educational lives.

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Appendix

Planning a Writing Partnership

- Consider what groups or classes will work well as **partners**.
- Expect to take **time in class** to plan, reflect, and write.
- Be intentional in setting **goals and purposes**. Goals will be different for school setting and teacher education.
- **Teacher collaboration** is essential to the partnership. Expect and enjoy collaboration with your teacher partner.
- Establish a **regular pattern** of correspondence in advance. Do not feel bound to it.
- Consider an **online forum**, but don't assume it will be better. **Paper and pencil** offer a different style of interaction.
- Offer guidelines, but do not too heavily dictate the content of correspondence. Partners formed **their own styles** of interaction.
- **Vary the purposes** for writing mentorship. Include friendly conversation, coconstruction of a product, future goals, and discussion of reading and school.
- If partners have a common **language other than English** and interest in writing in that language, invite sections of their correspondence to be written in that language.
- Plan to **meet**. Meeting once at the start and once at the end worked well. Video-taping and webcams could be employed.
- Allow **as many exchanges as possible**—start early in the semester and go through the end. Participants wished they had more interaction.

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- Be **flexible** and respond to needs as they surface. (If numbers don't match, teacher education students can manage more students. If benchmark testing pops up, flex the due dates. If students move, assign another match.)
 - **Guide teacher candidates' reflective and analytic processes.** Coach toward assets-based appreciation of students and conversational style.

*Beth is currently an Assistant Professor of Education at Bridgewater College and teaches secondary curriculum, instruction, and management courses. Past research focused on competing narratives of urban high school reform related to educational equity. Influenced by the National Writing Project, current research interests include the functions of historical narratives in educational communities, writing partnerships and identity development of beginning teachers. Beth earned her doctoral degree at Indiana University. Recent publications include a 2016 article "Young Adult Literature as Equal Opportunity or Privileged Engagement?" in *Educating for Equity: A Forum of VA-NAME* and a 2015 article "The Things We Carry: Artifactual Literacies in the English Classroom" in *Virginia English Journal*. 65 (4-11).*

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Speech and Intelligence: Does My Use of Colloquiums Label Me Incompetent?

Abstract

According to linguists, Black English is an American dialect that receives overt prestige because of its lack of informational origin. It is a dialect that is perceived as “uneducated,” “lazy,” and “sloppy” because of its distinct morphological, lexical, phonological, and syntactic features. Many linguists have done studies to see if people believe that Black English affects success. My study was primarily focused on how individuals perceived speakers of Black English and whether the individuals believed that it hindered their success. I conducted a Google Forms survey which asked participants key questions regarding dialects, primarily Black English, and how they look at the dialect as a whole. I found that most people find that the use of Black English makes the speakers sound uneducated which results in issues with success.

Introduction

While sitting in one of my English literature classes, I overheard a few students discussing how this African-American student spoke. They were calling the language unprofessional, slangy, and inappropriate. Even though the student was not speaking to a professor or discussing the literature, people viewed the student as uneducated. I started to think if professors thought the same way when they hear students talking to their friends in the hall

or on campus. Throughout life, I have always been told I speak “White”. I never knew what people meant by that. I suddenly realized that people associate my intelligence with the way I speak. So, by them saying I speak “White”, people were implying that they believed me to be intelligent.

Black English is a nonstandard American dialect that receives negative connotations because of its distinction from the standard dialect taught in school systems. If spoken, negative perceptions are concluded about the speaker. This dialect, much like other nonstandard dialects, are given backlash because of societal and political reasons. Linguistically, one dialect does not have more prestige than another. I conducted a study to find out if individuals found speakers of Black English to be unintelligent thus hindering them in success. My study proved my hypothesis to be correct. Individuals do view speakers of Black English as uneducated and many have stated that this causes them to suffer from the “glass-ceiling” effect.

Review of Literature Dialect Formation

According to linguists Curzan and Adams (2012), “A dialect is a variety of a language spoken by a group of people that is systematically different from other varieties of the language in terms of structural or lexical features” (p. 347). Language dialects

are results of regional differences and social reasons. In the case of Black English, "variation [is] partially rooted in geography, but now largely independent of region" (Curzan and Adams, 2012, p.347). Dialect includes phonological variations which we refer to as accents. Many languages have accents, but also differentiate bases on morphology, syntax, and lexicon. Curzan and Adams give examples of these in *How English Works*:

- Phonological differences---
Realization of /ð/ as [d] in African American English and other dialects
- Morphological differences---
a-prefixing in Appalachian English (e.g., "We were a-huntin'[sic].")
- Syntactic differences--- use of habitual be in African American English (e.g., "He be working at school these days [sic]" (p.348).

Dialects are classified as standard and nonstandard. Standard English often refers to the one taught in school systems, used by upper-class citizens, and media. "Many linguists argue that standard varieties are idealizations: no speaker speaks "perfect Standard English"... (Curzan and Adams, 2012, p.349). According to Curzan and Adams (2012), "Standard English could be generally described as the "prestige social dialect" in the wider speech community--that is, the dialect that most speakers assume isn't a dialect and the one they accept as authoritative..." (p.36). Nonstandard English is linguistically equal to Standard English but not socially equal. Often, Nonstandard English is stigmatized

as "bad," "uneducated," or "lazy" (Curzan and Adams, 2012, p.350). It is not that Nonstandard English is not correct because there is just the idea that Standard English is correct, but the fact that Standard English is the one taught in school systems it inevitably gives the dialect overt prestige.

African American English Features

African American English goes by many different names. Black English, Black English Vernacular, African American Vernacular English, and Ebonics. All of these labels are terms used to define the dialect. The question if African American English is a dialect or just slang is constantly prosed. According to Curzan and Adams (2012), "[Indeed] the fact that AAE includes slang of its own is one indication that it's a dialect" (p.404). African American English is the most known nonstandard American dialect. It is, in fact, a social dialect which means that it is generally spoken by members of a relevant social group (Curzan and Adams, 2012, p.404). AAE has all the features of a dialect ranging from phonology, morphology, syntactical rules, and lexical features, but it does not have a clear geographical isogloss which makes it stand out more to others. Some do not even realize that Standard English itself is a social dialect. When referencing AAE, most people assume that only African Americans speak the dialect. That is not factual. Majority of AAE speakers are African American, but not all African Americans speak AAE and not all AAE speakers are African American. This is one assumption that people generally make.

Some phonological features that AAE has are shared with Southern dialect, but there are distinctive features as well. "In AAE, the voiceless /θ/ is often realized as [t] or [f], as in *wit* 'with'..." (Curzan and Adams, 2012, p.407). Consonant clusters in AAE are sometimes reduced to one consonant depending on if the consonants are both voiced or unvoiced. This feature is rule-governed depending on the word and the tense in which the word is in. Morphological and syntactical features in AAE have received a lot of attention for scholars because of the verb system, absence of third-person singular -s in the present tense, and multiple negations. AAE uses the "habitual be" for example, "I be eating spaghetti at school" for "I eat spaghetti at school". An example of the absence of third-person singular -s is "He raise his hand." instead of "He raises his hand." Just as other regional American English dialects, AAE uses multiple negations such as "I ain't never been to the fair in my life." One lexical feature of AAE is for example the use of steady to describe something that is continuous (e.g., She steady talkin' to me).

History of Black English

According to Orlando Taylor (1969), "... The study of Black English can be viewed as a part of the contemporary Black Power Movement..." The use of Black English asserts that African Americans do have a culture and that it should be viewed as such. Blacks were brought to the Americas from western Africa in the 17th century without one central language. They possessed many different languages, but the languages contained some of the same phonological

and syntactical features. The downfall, however, was the lexical features. Because they could not clearly communicate with others, they pidginized, a form of speech that is a mixture of two or more languages used to communicate between groups speaking different languages, which became useful to them when trading started to occur. The first Europeans to encounter West Africa were Portuguese. For trading purposes, Africans learned Portuguese to communicate and that became the first language of West Africa. But, "Metropolitan Portuguese is a highly inflected language with a complex morphology" (Taylor, 1969), so the Africans simplified the language into their own. This language known as Black Portuguese became the lingua franca, a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different. They used this language because it did not require much use of rules and was easy enough to get a message across.

When the Dutch took over the Portuguese they inflicted their language upon the Africans and resulted in Black Dutch being born, but as that was happening France and England were claiming power in Africa and starting a language all of their own known as Black French which emerged mostly in the Caribbean. Black French is spoken in places like Haiti and Louisiana. According to Taylor, "Unlike Black Portuguese, however, Black English was widely established in the New World..." (1969). This is because Blacks had to encounter white plantation owners often. Black English has changed over the centuries as a result to educational and

economic systems. These pressures come from programs that, “deny cultural pluralism in favor of a “you people are (or should be) just like us” philosophy” (Taylor, 1969).

According to Curzan and Adams (2012), “AAE is a dialect with a history” (p.408). It continues to develop into this prominent nonstandard dialect that people view as sloppy or lazy. But the question is why is only AAE disrespected regarding being an accepted dialect? The answer is because of the politics involved with dialects and language. There are much more social and political factors that go into language and how people perceive it rather than linguistic factors. There have been two hypotheses about AAE coming to surface. First, the Anglicist or Dialectologist hypothesis and second, the Creolist hypothesis. The first states that AAE can be traced back to Europe referring to the British dialects. When African Americans were brought over to America they had no choice but to learn American dialects to communicate with slave owners. Because of this, they abandoned their native languages and ultimately having it disappear from their memory totally. The Creolist hypothesis, however, states that AAE was born from creole being spoken on plantations because different West African languages were mixed together. In order to communicate effectively, slaves had to create a language in which they could speak to one another. When African Americans started to become free and migrate to other places, they started to acquire some part of American English. “Scholars who adopt this position argue that AAE then underwent

decreolization and converged with other varieties of American English” (Curzan and Adams, 2012, p.406).

Perceptions of Black English

Jones (2011) constructed a study to collect information about English teachers’ awareness of AAE and how they address it. Often, students are corrected on their language because it is not the “proper” form or it sounds “lazy”. This is very prominent with students that use nonstandard dialects such as AAE. “Because of their use of AAE, these students are hesitant to express themselves in class and, therefore, are viewed as being incapable of performing at a high level” (Jones, 2011). When students feel pressured to use one dialect over another, they become discouraged and began to feel as if what they say cannot be right. This could potentially affect the student’s comfort level in the classroom and even outside the classroom. Some teachers do not have the ability to empathize with students that are culturally different thus causing distressed relationships within the classroom. The study that Jones conducted consisted of 2000 English teachers from 575 different secondary schools in the southeast. Jones stated, “In order for teachers to gain an understanding of African American English (AAE), teachers should consider evaluating their beliefs toward the language as a whole” (2011). English teachers are affected by AAE on a regular basis, but some do not know how to approach the language in a learning manner. They are always trying to correct, correct, correct instead of using the dialect

to teach students. Teachers could take the opportunity to use authors such as Toni Morrison, Octavia Butler, Langston Hughes, and Rita Dove to teach literary themes and propose different ways of viewing language and literature. Curriculum that is multicultural has the power to influence students and push them to embrace their identities (Jones, 2011). "The purpose of this study was to survey a group of high school English teachers on their perceptions on students' use of AAE in the classroom" (Jones, 2011). Jones collected information, using quantitative and qualitative research, about the extent to which teachers recognize that their students use AAE. Jones' research questions were:

- Were there differences in English language arts educators' perceptions and awareness of students who speak AAE;
- Were there correlations between teacher demographic characteristics and English language arts educators' perceptions of AAE and students who speak AAE? [i.e., how do teacher demographics impact their perceptions of AAE];
- Were there differences in English language arts educators' perceptions of their instructional role as it relates to code-switching; and
- What pedagogical strategies did English language arts educators use to teach conventions of Standard American English to students who speak AAE? (Jones, 2011)

For this study the independent variable was

the English Language Arts teachers while the dependent variable were the category scores for awareness, views, and instructional ideas about AAE. "This approach provided quantitative data and feedback that aided in analyzing comparisons and collecting information" (Jones, 2011). Jones used a combination of open- and closed-ended questions in her survey research. Her open-ended questions were:

- What strategies did you use to address your students' use of AAE within your classroom;
- How should teachers model code-switching in their classrooms to bridge the gap between AAE and Standard English;
- What other comments, questions, or perspectives on code-switching did you have concerning language use in the classroom? (Jones, 2011)

She asked them to reflect on their views of the language and how they structure their lesson around the use of Standard English. Having teachers become aware of the language that is used in the classroom. "This study addressed teachers' perceptions and methods of managing African American English use in the educational realm" (Jones, 2011). The study showed that gender, age, and ethnicity were the most prominent factors as to teachers' perceptions of AAE. English language arts teachers who do not use AAE use literatures that encompass other languages including AAE to make sure their students are well-rounded and some English language arts teachers associate AAE with only African American students

not realizing that language does not have a color barrier. Jones concluded by saying, “English language arts teachers must prepare themselves to address the linguistic needs of their students and be receptive to speakers of AAE” (Jones, 2011).

Codeswitching

Codeswitching is the process of alternating between two or more languages in conversation. Some have mastered the art of code switching to fit in to the everyday life of working, going to school, or being with friends. Some people code switch to fit into social groups or to be potentially looked at for a higher position. “The purpose of codeswitching is to facilitate more efficient communication and conversational equality amongst individuals who come from different cultures” (Likely, 2009). Some people may not codeswitch because they feel less attached to their roots when they do, or they feel as though they are betraying their ancestry. Others codeswitch from AAE to SAE in order to seem more competent. “With a more developed awareness of dialectal repertoire, it might be assumed that employment seekers would be more likely to make necessary modifications (i.e., codeswitching) to speak appropriately in professional situations” (Likely, 2009). The purpose of this study that Likely conducted was to teach African Americans how to codeswitch. The study was conducted with five adult female participants, all of which stated they identified as predominantly AAE speakers, and one of them was the control, she did not go through the training. Below are the research questions:

- When exposed to codeswitching training, was there a difference in the amount of AAE usage by AA speakers before and after the training?
- Was there a difference in the types of AAE usage before and after codeswitching training?
- Did the participants' survey responses reflect more positively their feelings about codeswitching after they receive training? (Likely, 2009)

These were the hypotheses regarding the research questions:

- With respect to question 1, it was hypothesized that AAE speakers will decrease the amount of AAE subsequent to codeswitching training.
- With respect to question 2, it was hypothesized that AAE speakers will maintain the use of the following types: zero copula/auxiliary and subject verb agreement after training.
- With respect to question 3, it was hypothesized that AAE speakers will respond more positively on the post-training survey than on the pre-training survey. (Likely, 2009)

“All reported a negative history for cognitive, speech-language, and hearing deficits and passed a hearing screening test at 35 dB at 500, 1000, 2000 and 4000 Hz” (Likely, 2009). The participants completed a pre- and post-test which consisted of quantitative and qualitative data. All of the participants were seeking to improve their employment status by acquiring a communication style that may assist them in their employment

opportunities. The participants were interviewed by White females that spoke SAE and had degrees in Audiology. The four out of the five participants underwent training. "The training consisted of hands on practice, simulations, and discussion forums led by the researcher" (Likely, 2009). Each participant went through a two to five minute interview and survey for pre- and post-training then the responses were transcribed and coded for AAE patterns. The training consisted of:

- Comparing/contrasting AAE and SAE,
- Identifying of AAE and SAE forms and structures,
- Completing structured speech tasks contrasting AAE and SAE utterances,
- Completing spontaneous contrastive speech tasks (Likely, 2009).

Role playing was the main form of spontaneous speech used to practice codeswitching. The participants were given a scenario where they had to codeswitch to fit the context. Group discussion happened to be one the activities as well. "The purpose of the present study was to measure the amount of AAE features used by adult AA speakers before and after receiving two and a half hours of codeswitching training (Likely, 2009).

Conclusions:

Participant 1: She did answer her pre- and post-test questions fully.

Participant 2: She was the least talkative of the group, but showed knowledge of AAE and SAE. She was able to code switch effectively

when asked. The interview proposed that she made good eye contact.

Participant 3: She was very knowledgeable about AAE and SAE. "She stated that she held a managerial position at a retail store, and was responsible for hiring potential employees" (Likely, 2009). She cried during the interview process.

Participant 4: She also was knowledgeable about AAE and SAE and was aware of how to code switch. She needed to expand more on her interview answers.

Academic Effects of Black English

This study conducted by Lawson was done to emphasize the fact that reading teachers need to research African American culture and be able to distinguish between cultural differences and language deficits. The purpose was to investigate the relationship between teacher attitude toward Black English and reading achievements. The study used mixed methods in a correlational design. Data was collected on teacher's characteristics and attitudes using the Language Attitude Scale (LAS) (Lawson, 2010). The data was then compared with student scores in reading (TAKS) to look for differences. Qualitative data was collected through interviews to get a more in-depth response about attitudes towards AAE. This study took place in the southwest United States in 17 elementary schools. These schools were deemed predominantly African American. 61 participants were involved in this study ranging from 3rd-

6th grade teachers. Of the 61, only six were interviewed. Student participants were labeled as Black English speakers by teachers who agreed to participate. Teachers used their class roster and characteristics of Black English to choose students (Lawson, 2010). The instruments used were the LAS and the TAKS. The LAS consists of 25 pro and con-language statements. The TAKS is a state-mandated instrument given to students starting the 3rd grade that relates test items to objectives taught to students. The test includes articles and stories. The interview questions that were asked are below:

- What is your perception of students who speak non-standard English at your school?
- Why do you say that?
- How do you work/deal with students who speak non-standard English?
 - Probe in necessary: What instructional strategies do you use to teach students who speak non-standard English? How is that different than what you do with Standard English speakers?
- What problems do you think students who speak non-standard English have? Why?

The research questions were:

- Do teachers' gender, years of experience teaching, age, ethnicity, and participation in a linguistic class predict their attitude toward Black English?
- Is teacher attitude toward Black

English related to student achievement in reading?

Results for the LAS construct 1, which was structure and use of Black English, showed that 50% of teachers had a negative attitude towards Black English while 20% were neutral and 30% were positive.

Construct 2, which was consequences of using and accepting Black English, showed that 57% of teachers had a negative attitude while 30% had a positive attitude.

Construct 3, which was philosophies concerning the use of Black English, showed that 54% had a positive attitude.

Results for the TAKS were not significant enough.

To conclude, teachers' attitudes towards Black English was not statistically significant to predict student's reading achievement scores.

Search Terms: *black dialect and success, black dialect and perception, black dialect and college, African American English, black dialect and history, Black English, regional dialect changes, geographical dialect, geography and black dialect, dialect changes, code switching, Black English and Standard English, age and black dialect, Black English and understanding, phonology and Black English*

Methodology Research Design

For my research, I used a survey. The reasoning for using a survey is because if I simply interviewed people they may not have been as open to discussing with someone personally about how they felt towards a dialect. Some disadvantages to surveys are that the questions cannot be modified if they are unclear once they have been distributed. I used mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). Research questions below:

- How does people's perceptions of Black English affect how they view a speaker of Black English?
- Does the use of Black English hinder speakers from being successful?

Participants

I had 188 participants take my survey. I asked demographic information regarding age, ethnic background, and educational history. I did not take age or gender because I felt that it would have been unnecessary for my research. This was a convenience sampling. The problems that were posed were that some individuals did not know there was a thing as Black English or some individuals were too "woke" to take this survey seriously.

Instruments

I used a Google Forms survey (See Appendix D.) shared through email and social media to contact as many participants as possible. I shared the survey via Facebook and email to receive more than Longwood University college students. Out of 13 questions, 10

of them were required. The only issue I encountered were skewed answers for one of my questions that had an "other" option. Some participants were putting answers that were similar but worded differently.

Procedures

Data collection. I posted the link to my survey on Facebook on my personal page in November 2017 and again a couple days later. I sent an email to family and friends in November 2017 with the survey link attached (See Appendices A and B.) I sent out a reminder on Facebook as well. (See Appendix C.)

Data analysis. I analyzed the data for the survey using the data analysis feature in Google Forms, the Google Sheets features, and coding for the open-ended question. Charts and graphs were produced.

Limitations. The validity and reliability of my research is limited because I only acquired 188 participants and quite many did not even know that Black English was a dialect. The survey's main point was to determine how individuals perceived Black English and its speakers. Some questions of the survey could have been refined so that my results would have come back clearer. Having the "other" option for some of my questions skewed the data.

Timeline.

- September 15, 2017
Research topics
- September 22, 2017
Research questions and hypothesis

- September-October 2017
Refine research questions
- October 2017
Create survey instrument
- November 2017
Invite participants to take online survey
- November 27, 2017 Collect data from survey instrument
- Analyze data

Research Findings

- **Research Question 1:** How does people's perceptions of Black English affect how they view a speaker of Black English?

Through my findings it became clear that people believed that individuals who speak Black English are uneducated and that it affects success. In my short answer question, I received many responses saying, "It makes them sound uneducated and dumb." Out of 188 participants, 94 were White, 70 were Black or African American, 14 were biracial or multiracial, one was Jewish, one was South African, one was Native American, five were Hispanic, and two preferred not to say. 71.3% of my participants said they did not speak Black English (See Appendix E.). Of the 94 White participants, only three stated that they used Black English and out of that 94, 66 stated that "Yes" Black English does affect success. Of the 70 Black or African American participants, 46 stated that they used Black English and out of that 70, 44 stated that "Yes" Black English does affect success. One participant stated, "Black English is just another dialect that is equal to all of the other dialects. It has a negative

connotation, but should not. Just like all other dialects, there are times when it is appropriate, and times when it is not, but that does not make it linguistically unequal to other dialects." An African American speech language pathologist that took my survey stated, "I am an African American speech language pathologist, so I know this topic very well. I struggle with this topic myself—whether to correct our Black children for their use of AAE or recognize it and inform others of its diverse place in language." It is clear that majority of the participants that took my survey presumed that if a person is speaking Black English then they are unintelligent and will not be successful. Out of 188 participants, only 178 answered the question of if it was okay to use Black English. Out of the 178 participants, 76.7% stated that it was not okay. Of that 76.7%, 53 Black or African Americans and 72 Whites said "No".

Understanding Black English. When asked if they could understand a sentence full of Black English dialect markers, 64.9% of the 188 participants said they could understand the sentence while 27.7% could only understand it a little (See Appendix F.). Of the 64.9%, 56 Whites and 46 Blacks or African Americans said they could understand the sentence. People are able to understand Black English and what the speakers are trying to say, but yet, deem speakers unintelligent for speaking in that manner. A research participant stated, "It's not incomprehensible but it shouldn't be used for professional purposes or educational." Out of five Hispanics, all five

stated that they did not use Black English, but when posed if they could understand the sentence in Black English, they all said "Yes". One participant stated, "I think when people hear Black English, they equate it to ignorance because they don't understand." Two biracial participants stated that they could not understand the sentence.

- **Research Question 2:** Does the use of Black English hinder speakers from being successful?

In my analysis, it was evident that participants believed Black English hinders speakers from being successful. Out of 185 participants that answered this question, 120 participants said "Yes" to if Black English hinders success, but when posed the question if their language has hindered their success, 163 participants said "No" (See Appendix G.). In my analysis, I found that many participants stated that speaking Black English in a classroom or a work place is unprofessional and should not happen.

One participant stated:

I don't use it, and don't care if other people use it. Only checked off that it shouldn't be used in professional settings because I know that it's harder to get hired or maintain good standing at a job if they perceive you as unprofessional or people cannot understand you. It sucks and it's not fair, but that's just the way things tend to be.

Another participant stated:

I feel that Black English (AAEV) Or Ebonics should not affect someone trying to get to

the next level. It should not hinder them from being successful or getting a great job. Yes, African Americans speak Black English but there are a lot of Caucasians that speaks Ebonics as well. People are always judging the way someone speaks or dress etc. what we fail to realize is that it's not about us not using the proper English to succeed but it is our knowledge that get us or has gotten us far ahead in life. The world is still racist and always try to treat any colored skin ethnicity different. You do not have to be African American to speak Ebonics. If you pay close attention to this generation everyone is using Black English.

Discussion

This study was significant because too often are people criticized and looked down upon because of the language that they speak. This study proves that there are still pressures being put on Black English in society. People are associating language with intelligence which should never be done. Linguistically, nonstandard dialects are equal to standard dialects. There are various nonstandard English dialects that do not receive as much backlash as Black English does. This is mostly because of politics and social aspects that are still not resolved in the world. I would say for future research to not only do a survey, but have face to face interviews regarding their perception on how Black English affects success. Not just academic success, but success in the work force and socially.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Email Invitation to Take Survey

Hey fam--

I have to write a research paper for my linguistics class, and I was wondering if y'all could take my **survey** for me. It will only take 2-3 minutes.

<https://goo.gl/forms/uFBTSKvQ9qqY6wD42>

The screenshot shows a survey invitation email. On the left, there is a preview of a survey titled 'How do you speak?' with a 'Form' dropdown menu and a 'How do you speak?' question. On the right, there is a text message: 'How do you speak? goo.gl Thank you for participating in my research for my Linguistics and Language Learning course. Your responses are confidential. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.'

Michala S. Day
Longwood University | Class of 2019
English Major | Secondary Education
BASIC Gospel Choir, Secretary and Public Relations Chair
Big Siblings

"A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success" - Unknown

Email sent November 10, 2017

Appendix B: Facebook Invitation to Take Survey



Michala Day

...

November 10 at 10:51am · 👤 ▼

I have to write a research paper for my Linguistics class, and I was wondering if y'all could take my survey for me. It will only take 2-3 minutes. Feel free to share with others!

<p>How do you speak?</p> <p><small>Are you participating in my research for my Linguistics and Language Learning course. The responses are confidential. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.</small></p> <p>How did you graduate from a college/university? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> High school student</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Current college student</p> <p>How old are you? *</p> <p>16-25</p>	<h3>How do you speak?</h3> <p>Thank you for participating in my research for my Linguistics and Language Learning course. Your responses are confidential. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.</p> <p>DOCS.GOOGLE.COM</p>
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First post November 10, 2017

Appendix C: Facebook Reminder to Take Survey



Michala Day

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November 12 at 5:43pm · 👤 ▼

I still need survey participants 😊 I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you!

<p>How do you speak?</p> <p><small>Are you participating in my research for my Linguistics and Language Learning course. The responses are confidential. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.</small></p> <p>How did you graduate from a college/university? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><input type="radio"/> High school student</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Current college student</p> <p>How old are you? *</p> <p>16-25</p>	<h3>How do you speak?</h3> <p>Thank you for participating in my research for my Linguistics and Language Learning course. Your responses are confidential. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.</p> <p>DOCS.GOOGLE.COM</p>
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Second post November 12, 2017

Appendix D: Survey

Link to Google Form:
<https://goo.gl/forms/r0s0kMBku1CylPXn2>

QUESTIONS

RESPONSES

188

How do you speak?

Thank you for participating in my research for my Linguistics and Language Learning course. Your responses are confidential. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

Have you graduated from a college/university? *

- Yes
- No
- High school student
- Current college student

How old are you? *

- 16-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46 or older

Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity. *

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian

Asian/Pacific Islander

I prefer not to say

What dialect do you use? *

Cultural (African American, Cajun, Chicano, etc)

General American

Mid-Atlantic (Baltimore, Pennsylvania, etc)

Southern

Mid-Western

Other...

Do you speak Black English (African American Vernacular)? *

Yes

No

How often do you adjust your language (code switching)? *

	never	2	3	very frequently
in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in social settings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

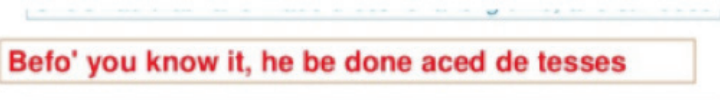
Have you ever been penalized for not using Standard English (English taught ^{*} in school systems)?

	never	2	3	very often
in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in social settings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Is it okay to use Black English in professional settings?

1. Yes
2. No

Image title



Befo' you know it, he be done aced de tesses

Could you understand the sentence above? ^{*}

- Yes
- No
- A little

Where should Black English be used? Check all that apply. ^{*}

- school

-
- work
 - social settings
 - home
 - Other...

Where should Black English be used? Check all that apply. *

- school
- work
- social settings
- home
- Other...

Does Black English affect success? *

- Yes
- No

Do you think your language has ever hindered you from success?

- Yes
- No

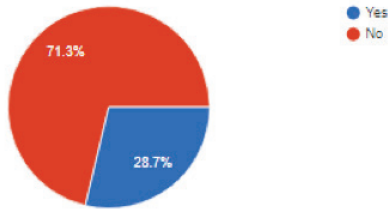
What else do I need to know about your experiences with using or hearing individuals use Black English?

Short answer text
.....

Appendix E: Statistics of Participants Who Speak Black English

Do you speak Black English (African American Vernacular)?

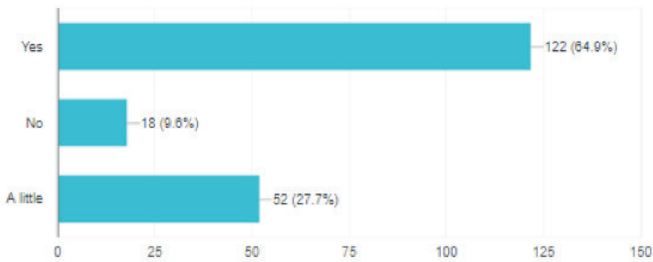
188 responses



Appendix F: Statistics of Participants Who Can Understand Black English

Could you understand the sentence above?

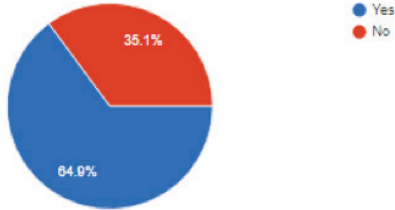
188 responses



Appendix G: Statistics of Participants That Stated Black English Hinders Success

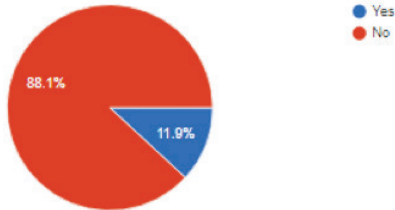
Does Black English affect success?

185 responses



Do you think your language has ever hindered you from success?

185 responses



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Making A Difference: What Research Has to Say About Social Justice in the Classroom

Abstract

Social justice in education is a complex topic that teachers want to implement to encourage safety and open conversations. Social justice can be guided by the principles of identity, diversity, justice, and action. These principles encapsulate the idea of social justice by showing that the students must understand their own personal identity, the other identities in the world, the necessity to stand up for others and the ways to do that. Throughout the paper, teachers are encouraged to look at the literature they are putting into their own classrooms in terms of representation, encouraged to find literature that models social justice, and to use service-learning in their own classrooms. The paper also encourages teachers to look at their own biases and stereotypes to caution them from overstepping any boundaries. Overall, the article finds research-based ways for students and teachers to see the importance of social justice in the classroom and the ways in which it can be implicated.

Making A Difference: What Research Has to Say About Social Justice in the Classroom

As teachers, we crave to provide a safe environment where children feel like they belong, but beyond that, it's almost necessary for us as teachers to provide a space for our students where they feel comfortable, safe,

and celebrated. One of the easiest ways to do that is by looking at what makes them who they are, and what makes their peers who their peers are, and letting them know that they are in an environment of people who are going to support and stand up for each other. In order to do that, one has to recognize and assess his or her own biases and incorporate them into one's instruction.

What is Social Justice?

Social justice is a complex term widely used by the media to describe this idea of people using their privileges to stand up for the little guy. But what does that mean? Teaching Tolerance, an organization dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations, and supporting equitable school experiences for students identifies four domains of social justice: identity, diversity, justice, and action. I use these standards to help define the complexity of the phrase "social justice" and break down the complexity into parts that are easier to understand.

The first domain is "identity." Identity is the concept of understanding and being comfortable in one's own ethnicity and membership in their societal group. Children must understand that they have something that makes them diverse. The standards focus on the development of *positive* identities and expressing pride, confidence,

and a healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of others (Teaching Tolerance, 2016, p. 3). Identity is one of the most important parts of social justice because students need to understand that there are things about themselves that make them different to understand beyond their identity. Another important part of identity is the focus on understanding where one's identity has come from and the culture and history behind it. It is important that students understand themselves to understand others. Identity is the foundation to the domains that follow.

The second domain is "diversity." Diversity is the concept of understanding that there are lots of different identity groups, learning about them, and respectfully expressing curiosity. We teach diversity in schools often already, but we examine them in superficial and oversimplified ways, the standards emphasize a focus on examining diversity in social, cultural, political, and historical contexts, therefore, students will understand the complexity of the subjects of diversity rather than seeing it at face value (Teaching Tolerance, 2016, p. 3). Diversity is one of the hardest things to teach. It is immensely difficult to teach a child about all the different things in the world that make each person different, but it is critical to understanding the world around us. A demonstration I have seen is the white and brown egg comparison. A teacher takes a white egg and a brown egg and then breaks them to show that no matter what we look like on the outside, we're all the same on the inside. It is important to teach that we

are different and our differences are to be celebrated, not put aside. Students must learn to respond to diversity with empathy, respect, understanding, and connection—rather than fear or hesitation (Teaching Tolerance, 2016, p. 3). Diversity is often avoided because it requires a lot of personal commitment from the teacher to understand their own biases and move past them by educating themselves.

The third domain is "justice." Justice is the understanding that there is unfairness in the world both on the individual and institutional level and that biases have a harmful impact on all. This is where students can learn about stereotypes and how harmful they can be without one completely understanding their impact. Students will also start to recognize the use of these stereotypes in marketing, institutional measures, and personal comments (Teaching Tolerance, 2016, p. 3). Justice is when students are starting to understand that people are hurt by the things that make them different, but due to the understanding of different societal groups and their histories developed earlier, we can hope the students see that it is wrong for people to be hurt this way.

Action, the final domain, is when students start to understand that as educated individuals, it is their responsibility to stand up to exclusion and that a critical part of social justice is taking action against bias and injustice. Action is when students see other children being mistreated and they say something about it with courage and respect. Action is when students plan and

carry out a project against injustice and reflect on how it went (Teaching Tolerance, 2016, p. 3). Action is when students finally realize that learning about their own identity, the diversity in the world, and the justice needed to make the world a better place all was for a reason.

Why is Social Justice Important in Education?

You just sat through the explanation of social justice, and you may be thinking- so? What does this have to do with my classroom? It has everything to do with the classroom. The classroom is a hub of multiple identities, cultures, and homes. The classroom is the first place many children are exposed to people who don't look, talk, or act like them. Teachers have a responsibility to create a classroom of understanding and acceptance. The classroom culture is in the complete control of the teacher, whereas the teacher cannot control what happens when the students leave (Torres, 2015, p. 1). The teacher assumes the responsibility to make their classroom a safe space and to make their students the kind of people that won't be spreading intolerance when they leave the classroom.

The problems addressed by social justice education, such as bias, intolerance, prejudice, etc. are all problems our students see every day. It is believed that biases can be unlearned or reversed if students are exposed to diversity in a positive light, so it's important to capture a child's natural curiosity and use that to teach students diversity (Spiegler, 2016, p. 1). Prejudice

and discrimination begin to affect a child's development early, so it is important that we talk about it with our students early (Derman-Sparks and Edwards, 2017, p. 1). Racial identity begins to develop early (around 2-3 years old), so it's important that we start talking about differences in a positive light because by three years old children start to embrace racism taught to them, even if they don't understand why (Spiegler, 2016, p. 1). It often falls on teachers to notice that students even have biases, because often times the child isn't being intentional. Teaching social justice becomes increasingly important here: often, biases are not necessarily taught, but are often accumulated by a child through observations. By being intentional with their teaching, teachers can start to unwind those biases by introducing the normalcy of other cultures.

These intentional lessons based on equality are starting to be called on by national education-based organizations. In September of 2015, The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) wrote a statement calling upon teachers to "use classrooms to help as opposed to harm, to transform our world and raise awareness of the crisis of racial injustice" (Short, Hesse, Houser, & Morrell, 2015, p. 1). The National Education Association (NEA) has created a branch called EdJustice, whose mission is simply to "fight for racial, social and economic justice in public education" (NEA, 2018, p. 1). Beyond that, national organizations are including anti-bias education in their curriculum framework. The International Society for Technology

Education (ISTE, 2018, p.1) has a domain in their framework dedicated to using digital tools to connect with learners from a variety of backgrounds and cultures and examining issues from different viewpoints (ISTE, 2018, p. 1). The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has 10 themes for social studies, six of those ten have social justice implications: Culture, Individual Development and Identity, Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, Power, Authority, and Governance, Global Connections and Civil Ideals and Practices (NCSS, 2013, p. 1). It speaks to the topic's importance that various groundbreaking organizations in education see that social justice is critical to be included in all classrooms.

It is critical that teachers develop communities in their classroom for students to feel comfortable and safe. For students to feel this way, they must feel like they are in an environment with little judgment and equal expectations for all. There are a plethora of ways to include social justice in the classroom, and a few research-based recommendations are listed below. These recommendations are based on evidence-based practices proven to be effective by teachers and education professionals, these recommendations are the best ways to include social justice in the classroom.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered in order to successfully use social justice as an education tool in the classroom. These recommendations are based on evidence-

based articles and practices explained by other researchers:

1. Promote social justice through using literature that represents diversity.
2. Promote social justice through introducing text that models social justice.
3. Promote social justice through encouraging students to act against the injustice they witness.

From here, these recommendations are described with the aid of the research that has been done to support them, as well as ideas that extend and elaborate on the topic from there.

Diverse Representation in Literature

As we explained earlier, diversity can be a very hard topic to teach without shoving it down the children's throats, but equally hard to gloss over it and expect children to swallow the complete significance of the topic. One of the best ways to ease children into the importance of diversity, pillar one of social justice, is by introducing and using children's literature that is representative of multiple groups in society. This literature helps students understand diversity, both in letting students from underrepresented groups start to realize they deserve and have representation in children's literature, but also in encouraging students to realize that representation is critical for children from all groups.

The elementary school library is a hub of knowledge, but it seems like a good number

of books that we pick up are books that are about white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual children who do not experience the same problems that other children face. This is where we begin to look for representation in children's literature. For the purposes of this paper, representation is defined as the idea that students are seeing themselves within what they read, watch, or interact with. It is imperative for children to see people who look like them or talk like them doing great and big things (or even okay and small things.)

According to Sandra Osorio, "When students don't see themselves reflected in their classroom curriculum, it gives them the impression that they are not valued, that something must be wrong with them" (Collier, 2016, p. 13). Louise Derman-Sparks noted that what students see in their books equates to what they think matters in society, so when they don't see themselves in their books, they start to believe that they, or their culture, don't matter (Derman Sparks, 2013, p. 1). Representation is something so easily produced, yet so easily avoided. Twenty years ago, only about 9% of children's books were about people of color and, now, the number is at about 22% (Donnella, 2017, p. 1). Although this is growth, people of color make up a combined 38% of the population, therefore, it's still not where we want it to be (Donnella, 2017, p. 1). It is significant to note, however, that racial differences aren't the only things to look for in books, and it's important to look for other social groups that are underrepresented.

According to Blaska's article "Children's Literature That Includes Characters with Disabilities or Illnesses," "Books serve as mirrors for children to see characters who look like themselves and have feelings and experiences similar to their own." (Blaska, 2004, p. 1). He notes that children with disabilities need to see people in them that look like them, and not with negative stereotypes. These stories don't represent disabled people constructively, and often times don't show the real stories behind people beyond their disabilities (Crow, 1990, p. 1). Another vastly underrepresented group in children's literature is the LGBTQ community. "It is important to disrupt the heteronormativity that is so typical in classrooms and challenge students to live up to the expectation of being supportive of LGBT rights and people," (Clark & Blackburn, 2009, p. 28). As far as gender representation goes, this is shown in both whether or not girls are represented as well as how they are represented, meaning that in many stories, boys are the heroes and girls are the damsels in distress. Studies indicate that girls are portrayed less than boys and girls are often fall into more stereotypical roles (Singh, 1998, p. 1). It is obvious that there are lots of underrepresented groups throughout literature, and it's pivotal that teachers try to find and include books that represent these groups as much possible.

Teachers can use this idea in their classrooms by helping their students discover what representation is and how to find it in literature. A teacher could choose

two books that represented different societal groups, read the books to his or her students, and create an activity in which the student had to identify what made this a diverse book, why they liked it (or didn't like it), and what they would look for in a book to find another one like the examples provided. Teachers can turn books into experiences of authentic inquiry, and this inquiry nurtures social responsibility (Wolk, 2009, p. 666). By including these kinds of books and encouraging the students to use and read these books, students are more likely to look for them and read them themselves. If they read these books more often, they are more likely to see what the book is teaching as important.

Representation is a critical part of exploring social justice. From representation, we go into texts that model social justice. These texts show the importance of social justice, often in ways that are not necessarily explicit. It's vital to note that students will start to become more understanding through assimilation of this representative literature, but pleasure is critical in making this understanding work- one cannot only use didactic literature that drones on about the representation because that'll destroy any association the student has with the representation (Clark & Blackburn, 2009, p. 30).

Texts that Model Social Justice

Like previously mentioned, children equate what they see in books to what matters in the

real world, so in order for children to see that standing up against injustice is important, it's a smart idea to find literature that talks about social justice in action (Wolk, 2009, p. 665). Yes, an easy way to do this would be through non-fiction texts on real social justice events. But, another great way to do this is to find fictional text that introduce social change and action in more pleasurable ways rather than what may come across as purely informational. These books will help teachers include social justice lessons in a more enjoyable way.

These stories help students understand the practical applications of social justice. Here, students can see that social justice has a place in the world and students can begin to see how it can be used in various ways. An important part of teaching to read for social justice is teaching a "social imagination," or the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our society (Wolk, 2009, p. 667). Dystopian novels like *The Hunger Games*, *The Giver*, and *Brave New World* are good stories to teach this because they show the social problems that are in worlds other than our own. The main characters are the revolutionists to bring change to their worlds and guide students to believe that they can make a difference in their world. Wolk comments on this issue, "Expanding from teaching a novel strictly to improve students' reading skills to teaching for social responsibility can be as simple as changing the questions we ask. When teaching for social responsibility, teachers must move beyond simple plot-based

comprehension questions and ask students questions that do not have single correct answers,” (2009, p. 670).

It is important to teach these novels with the intention of teaching social justice. This can be done by encouraging students to look for the action in the novel. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss and Peeta agree not to kill each other, out of “love,” and boycott their government’s policy of the games. This boycott is an example of action taken against injustice. In *The Giver*, Jonas leaves the Communities in order to learn more about the world around them, rebelling against the society of “sameness” that his world is. Of course, there are tons of other examples in which characters in novels are enacting power over the oppressor. If these novels are taught correctly, students can begin to understand the importance of taking action.

Like previously mentioned, a teacher can also teach this idea by using nonfiction texts. These can be stories about historical events that have shown people acting against injustice or these can be autobiographies and biographies of people who have brought about great change or have witnessed and overcome injustice. An even better way to teach this idea is to link the two genres, linking a fiction story with a narrative from someone who went through a similar event and dealt with the injustice in a similar way. An example of this is linking *The Hunger Games* with a story about a poor child having to support her family, survival in the wilderness, Roman gladiator stories,

or stories that talk about the economic inequality in the world.

Finding these stories isn’t hard; literature likes to attack hard topics and bring them to the forefront of our attention. It is the job of the teacher to teach these books with the intent of teaching social justice as well as the academic lesson. From this intentional teaching, students can begin to realize that it is both vital and occurrent to take action against injustice in the world, and it is the responsibility of all of us to do so. This leads us to our next recommendation for the classroom: using academic outlets to act against real-world injustice.

Action

The best thing a teacher can do for their students, in terms of social justice, is encourage them to stand up for what they think is wrong. After being immersed in literature that represents all kinds of people and learning about social justice from model texts, students are encouraged to use that knowledge and empathy to act for change. Leading students into this is no easy feat, a teacher must explicitly teach modes of communication that would successfully convey change as well as encouraging meaningful change.

As teachers, we become, in a way, responsible for creating the next generation and preparing them to be productive members of society. By asking students to participate in projects that empower our students to effect change, they not only

participate in important work, they also learn important skills like critical thinking, writing, and media literacy skills (Hernandez, 2016, p. 1). These projects will also help the students start to realize everything I have addressed throughout this paper, students can gain a more complex understanding of diverse communities, obtaining an opportunity to stand up for something they value, or even simply realizing that they can make a difference in the world (Bittman, 2016, p. 1). This concept is sometimes known as "service learning," a form of experiential education where students learn through action and reflection (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016, p. 1). Service-learning though does not always require the social justice element, which is where this paper starts to curve the conversation. A student who participates in service-learning that is social justice oriented must understand the systematic issues throughout the world in order to believe that taking action is necessary. Therefore, teachers should introduce literature that shows a representation of diverse peoples as well as texts that model social justice.

Service Learning is probably the hardest recommendation from this article to implement in the classroom. This requires lots of work from both student and teacher to make both a successful and a meaningful project that somehow benefits the community's systematic issues. In order to make it a more reasonable task, I will break down the method in which I recommend undertaking it.

First, I recommend discovering a specific

social justice issue that your students are particularly interested in or an issue that is relevant in the world. If you would prefer to give students the choice of what social justice issue they'd like to tackle, it is very beneficial for students to brainstorm issues they feel personally connected to. Students are often times more engaged when they are given choice, and being able to choose something they feel close to will help keep the excitement up. It is also possible to choose a topic for your students, especially because unfortunately it is not hard to find an issue that is happening at the current moment because there so often is something going on. Those issues are often quite politically polarized, so it is best to attempt to attack these issues carefully. It is necessary though to talk about the difficult issues that are going on in the world, even if it will be a little harder.

Second, I recommend deciding what kind of action to take. This can be something as simple as writing letters to Congress. Mrs. Molly Fuller, a 5th grade teacher in Loudoun County, Virginia, had her students write letters to their House Representative in defense of Net Neutrality. The students wrote about their concerns of losing internet access or having to pay more for certain websites. These students are using not only their understanding of net neutrality, but are learning vital skills like writing a letter, grammar and mechanics, persuasion, and more. Students can also participate in discussions in class, lead assemblies with other students from the school, write action plans for possible solutions to problems,

participate in those actions, raise money for organizations, participate in food drives, and more.

Finally, we need to make sure that our social justice work is still in-line with what we need to teach in the classroom. This isn't hard since there are a lot of things that students can learn from the implementation of these projects. In many standards, students are required to learn oral presentation skills, writing skills, and persuasion skills. Many of these social justice issues have roots in history that can be taught in alignment to the social justice work in the classroom. This requires teachers to work extra hard to align these projects with the standards, but it is incredibly important for students to interact with real-world projects, making the hard work worth it.

So, when broken apart, the implementation of action is not as hard as it seems. It takes hard work by the teacher, but the benefits are overwhelming. These students are more prepared citizens in the real world when they leave a classroom infused with social justice and are more empathetic and care about making a change. It is important to take all the recommendations and apply them to your classroom as they fit. Now, there are some cautions to keep in mind throughout the process of implementation to make sure that the social justice idea is conveyed properly and without bias.

Caution

In this brief section, I emphasize an important caution to implementing social justice in the

classroom so that teachers can caution themselves before making a mistake that will further inhibit children's understanding of social justice and its positive implications in the classroom.

Sterotyping

One of the biggest, if not the biggest, cautions to implementing social justice education into the classroom is stereotyping and singling out students based on their membership in their identity groups. Many times, teachers harmlessly ask a student to speak as a representative of their identity group. The problem is that not all students participate in the stereotypical traditions and customs of that culture, and it's not fair to expect students to represent their entire identity group, especially when they often have more than one to talk about.

It is important to remember the concept of individuality and that even if a student is a part of an identity group, they don't necessarily represent it. "Never single out one specific child when you do activities about the physical characteristics linked to racial identity. Every activity should be about all of the children, as everyone has a racial identity." (Derman Sparks & Edwards, 2017, p. 1). It is important to remember that these students are individuals from different racial identities, and not just their racial identity. In a separate article written by Louise Derman-Sparks, she points out that there are lots of stereotypes that are alive in children's books, as well as the main character being a character of color that somehow brings change. This only allows children to see one

view, rather than the vast diversity among the identity group (2013, p. 1).

Like previously mentioned, this isn't often intentionally done by teachers, which makes it more important to be aware of in terms of caution. There is a concept called "identity contingencies" which is used to refer to the specific set of responses that a person with a given identity has to cope with in specific settings (Moya, 2006, p. 96). These contingencies are ways that students have begun to adapt to situations based on their identity- meaning students who are faced with these instances of being singled out often have a response calculated and ready. It is the duty of the teacher to make sure these students don't have to use these responses because we want them to feel safe and welcome.

Overcoming stereotypes isn't necessarily easy, but it is necessary for teachers as they are role models for their classrooms. This can be achieved by first realizing that it is human nature. But, we need to become aware of those stereotypes to understand how they affect people's beliefs and actions. We should be willing to engage in honest discourse about diversity and identity, and willing to have these conversations with students. As we begin to have these conversations, people start to see the pain that these stereotypes cause and the effect they have on people (University of Notre Dame, 2018, p. 1). Thus, we begin to release these stereotypes as we realize that they are untrue and not worth it.

By overcoming our own personal stereotyping and biases, teachers will begin to avoid singling students out by not even having the assumption that the student would be able to answer questions based on their identity. Students will be able to avoid using their identity contingencies and will be able to speak their minds without having to defend themselves. Teachers will begin to feel more comfortable in the classroom, allowing conversations about social justice to flourish.

Discussion

Using social justice in education is no easy feat, but this article has a lot of recommendations to make the mountain less intimidating. There is so much more research to be done as to the benefits of social justice in the classroom as well as the outcomes. This research could address a study using actual students and one could study their response to action and whether their empathy and willingness to stand up for others has been increased. It could also study representation as an overall topic: how has it changed throughout history as well as what response students from these historically underrepresented groups have towards more representative literature. The field could benefit from a future discussion of the benefits of social justice in the classroom and how those benefits translate into the political adults they become. Finally, the idea of social justice education could benefit from future research on cautions of teachers using this in their classroom: if teachers should voice their own political opinion, if teachers and students should

participate in marches and parades, and if using present politics to study social justice is a good idea. Overall, social justice in education is not yet thoroughly studied, and it is our duty as educators to continue that study and create those safe classrooms that encourage resiliency and empathy.

Conclusion

John F. Kennedy once said that “the educated citizen has a special obligation to encourage the pursuit of learning, to promote exploration of the unknown, to preserve the freedom of inquiry, to support the advancement of research, and to assist at every level of government the improvement of education for all Americans, from grade school to graduate school” (Kennedy, 1963, “Remarks”) As teachers, we have the unique ability to improve education for our students by keeping them aware of the diversity around us and our human duty to stand up for the injustice in the world. By giving students literature that is both representative of all identity groups, as well as literature that models social justice themes throughout, students will see the importance of participating in direct action to improve the lives of others. If teachers stay cautious of stereotyping and make sure to create authentic experiences, their students will leave their classrooms with an urge to do more in the world.

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“Seeing Yourself in the Story:” The Influence of Multicultural Education on Adolescent Identity Formation

Abstract

This article explores theoretical and empirical research conducted regarding adolescent identity formation and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Research shows that adolescence is a critical period for identity development, with educational settings serving as a primary site of socialization and peer pressure. Historically, schools have marginalized students whose lived experiences differ from those expressed in many of the stories told within the English classroom. In contrast, culturally sustaining pedagogical practices place a value on storytelling, allowing students to share their unique perspectives and viewing their personal narratives as valued among their peers. Utilizing this research framework, the article provides practical applications for using culturally sustaining pedagogy to promote knowledge construction, cultural appreciation, and positive identity formation as students “see themselves in the story” of their middle school English language arts classroom.

I. Introduction

“Why do we have to read this?”

“This book is boring!”

“Is this book actually important?”

If you’ve heard any of these questions from your students, then you, like me, may face the challenge, and great privilege, of confronting issues of identity and representation within your classroom. Particularly during the middle school years, a turbulent time of peer pressure and identity formation, students often begin questioning social structures, school expectations, and even the very texts they are required to read in class. As educators who “in charge” of our classrooms, we may view such questions as a threat or challenge to our perceived sense of control and authority. Nevertheless, we should not shy away from these questions; rather, we should embrace them, recognizing the inherent value they will add to our classroom, in the form of critical inquiry, higher-level knowledge construction, and cultural recognition and appreciation. When we require students to read certain texts without acknowledging the unique cultural experiences of individuals, we fail to express appreciation for the identities of our students. On the other hand, when students can critically examine course material, they

are allowed to view their personal narratives as valued and important within the larger classroom discussion. Utilizing a theoretical framework for adolescent identity formation, this article provides practical applications of culturally sustaining pedagogy that allow students to “see themselves in the story” through knowledge construction and cultural appreciation within a middle school English language arts classroom.

II. Adolescent Identity Formation Theory

Amidst the ongoing processes of moral, cognitive, and social development occurring during middle school, adolescents also engage prominently in identity formation. Identity, “a matter of determining who one is and who one decides to be,” is related to conceptions of the self, although “neither term is easy to define” (Moshman, 2011, p. 117). In line with the work of Freud, Piaget, and Kohlberg, Erik Erikson (1968) postulated eight developmental stages, with adolescence serving as a period for a crisis between identity and role confusion. Critical to this theory is the belief that problems in the earlier stages may “decrease the likelihood of positive outcomes,” while, in contrast, a strong adolescent identity may set one “on the right course” for adulthood (Moshman, 2011, p. 119). Kroger’s (1993) research supports Erikson’s theory that adolescence is the most active period for identity crises and formation (Moshman, 2011, p. 121).

Relational processes are critical to identity formation for adolescents, with the school setting serving as a primary site of social

interaction. Flum and Kaplan (2012) find the simultaneous processes of reflection and observation, by which adolescents “judge themselves in light of what others perceive them to be,” key to identity formation (p. 241). Conflicts over “multiple selves” proliferate during adolescence, as socialization through peer feedback influences “internalization” of various qualities (Harter, 1999, p. 349). While forming friendships and identities, adolescents often cope with victimization, exclusion, and peer pressure. Within schools, two dimensions of identity formation—value (internal degree of importance) and belonging (external desire for attachment)—help mediate academic and social self-efficacy for adolescents (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 2357).

While value and belonging are critical for all students, Matthews et al. (2014) find that these two dimensions are particularly salient for marginalized and underserved adolescents, particularly African American and Latino students (p. 2370). For minority students, factors such as cafeteria seating, academic tracking, and stereotypes influence cultural understanding and identity formation (Stoughton & Siverson, 2005). Unfortunately, many schools historically have “informally perpetuated the racial order,” leaving African Americans subject to “stereotypical negative expectations” (Tatum, 2004, p. 121). When students are required to read certain stories and discuss topics with little or no relevance to their lived experiences, they are subtly and repeatedly reminded that their identities and cultures are “less important to know.” For minority adolescents to know

there is a “heritage of excellence they can aspire to,” schools require authentic spaces of “counter-storytelling” that challenge traditional stories, encourage critical inquiry, and promote cross-cultural identity formation (Stoughton & Siverson, 2005).

III. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

To address this problematic lack of inclusion of minority voices and identities in the classroom, Ladson-Billings (1995) outlined a framework for culturally relevant pedagogy committed to collective empowerment of student and their identities. This groundbreaking work helped to shift the view of culture from an obstacle to a vehicle for learning. Paris (2012) shifted Ladson-Billings’ term and stance from culturally *relevant* to culturally *sustaining* to place focus on the value of “linguistic and cultural dexterity necessary for success and access in a changing world” (p. 95). Using the relationship between African American language (AAL) and “standard” English as an example, Paris and Alim (2014) argue that culturally sustaining pedagogy should teach students to be flexible “across multiple languages and cultural ways of life,” placing value on the unique lived experiences of all students (p. 96).

Within a classroom, especially an English language arts classroom, culturally sustaining pedagogy has the power to positively transform cross-cultural identity formation. Across the literature, an emergent theme is the power of storytelling, and “story listening,” to entwine personal and

community narratives with literary narratives experienced in texts (Trimble, 2016, p. 191). Keehn (2015) finds that students engage more and show more successful outcomes when personal stories are included in instruction, even those of students belonging to a different cultural group. Furthermore, the construction of personal narratives “gives meaning to multiplicity, enhancing self-understanding and self-worth” and revealing how unique identities fit within a multicultural world (Harter, 1999, p. 348; MCUE, 2008). Particularly within an English language arts classroom, the inclusion of texts that feature multicultural characters or reflect the experiences of students allows minorities to engage with the ways “power, privilege, and position” shape their identities (Greene, 2016; Ainsworth, 2016). Bilingual books and comics are two additional forms of media that allow adolescents to critically engage with issues of cross-cultural identity formation (Puzio et al., 2017; Low, 2015).

While there is no shortage in research related to identity, explicit literature on the links between identity, knowledge construction, and English language arts education is limited (Flum & Kaplan, 2012). In particular, research into the effects and practical implications of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) are critical. CSP is not a one-size-fits-all incorporation of “diverse stories, language, and food” (Puzio et al, 2017). Additionally, CSP must continue to critique regressive practices, such as racism, homophobia, and sexism to promote “critical consciousness” and reflect the “increasingly fluid understanding of the relationship

between language, culture, and race” (Paris & Alim, 2014, 90, 93). As cultures and demographics change, so too must conceptions of identity within schools and classrooms. Finally, recognizing that notions of belonging, value, and identity “have been shown to have task-specificity,” future research must examine identity formation in different subject areas (Matthews et al, 2014, p. 2371). Within this theoretical and research framework, this paper seeks to explore some practical applications of culturally sustaining pedagogy within an English language arts classroom to promote knowledge construction adolescent identity formation.

IV. Practical Applications for the English Language Arts Classroom

Considering this framework for adolescent identity formation and culturally sustaining pedagogy, there are several practical applications that English language arts educators can implement to help students create meaning and engage with complex and unfamiliar texts. In particular, adopting a culturally sustaining pedagogy framework has allowed me to create a caring and supportive moral classroom community that values all cultures and identities. Serving in a predominantly minority, underserved school, after attending majority White, middle class schools for my own education, required a significant change in my own mindset. While I consciously treat all students with the same dignity and respect, I certainly did not have the “conceptual framework”

for understanding cultural patterns in my African American students’ behavior (Tatum, 2004). As a result, I often felt overwhelmed and unequipped to understand the identities of my students, which could lead to racial tensions when a cultural process (i.e. talking loudly) was misconstrued as inappropriate behavior.

While pleased with the progress I have made so far to foster positive relationships and apply cultural competency in my classroom, I plan to reduce cultural miscommunication by highlighting positive racial identities with my students. For example, by inviting speakers, including a police officer, a firefighter, and a social justice worker to come speak to the class about positive community relations, I have sought to engage my students in a critical dialogue and examine more than one side to the popular racial narrative. Additionally, my “Living Wax Museum” project grants students an opportunity to embody famous African American and Hispanic writers and research their history, cultural background, and written works. This project helps students combat negative stereotypes by exploring “the heritage of minority excellence to which they can aspire” (Tatum, 2004).

Educators have a moral imperative to appreciate and utilize all languages, literacies, and cultural ways of life to promote healthy identity formation in the classroom (Paris, 2012, p. 96). For English language arts teachers, expressing appreciation for and value of different languages and literacies is critical. Many of my students

utilize African American Language (AAL) in their daily conversations. When educators label this language as “slang” or improper in contrast to “standard” English, students who speak AAL may internalize identities of inferiority (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 95-96). In contrast, I have sought to utilize the unique linguistic and cultural practices of my students to integrate a stronger sense of cross-cultural identity within the curriculum. For example, during our fall poetry unit, we analyze familiar hip-hop songs that use AAL and are full of rich poetic meaning, particularly figurative language and sound devices. While teaching grammar lessons, I emphasize the different “registers” of language, with certain forms of writing requiring formal English grammar and others (i.e. text messages, conversations, song lyrics) utilizing cultural linguistic techniques. Through these strategies, I try to convey to my students that their voices and identities not only are meaningful and valued in my classroom, but also are critical windows through which we can engage with literature (Paris & Alim, 2014).

As the title of this paper suggests, “seeing yourself in the story” through multicultural education can promote healthy adolescent identity formation. Unfortunately, all too often, a significant portion of students have their voices silenced and cannot see themselves represented in the stories told in many classrooms across the nation. As an English language arts teacher serving a predominantly minority student population, I feel a particular responsibility and necessity to provide my students with

authentic spaces for “counter-storytelling” and identity formation and expression (Stoughton & Siverson, 2005). The first step in enacting this process is making it clear to students that the classroom is a “collective of stories and that the interplay amongst all participants and texts is valued” (Trimble, 2016, p. 189). While as the teacher I am responsible for leading instruction, I try to make it known to my students from the first day of school that my narrative is no more important than the narratives of all students. Signs hung on the walls and reminder statements at the start of discussions serve as constant reminders that our classroom community is one of respect and belonging, rather than imbalance and injustice.

In helping my students “see themselves in the story” of our classroom and global communities, I actively incorporate their personal narratives within the Language Arts content. Senses of belonging and positive identity formation have been shown to have “task-specificity,” implying that certain classroom activities are more likely to promote these desired outcomes (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 2371). Reflective writing and journaling are particularly critical narrative techniques that I regularly incorporate in my classroom. However, writing is just a starting point for bringing the personal narrative into a “community storytelling and story listening experience” (Trimble, 2016, p. 191). After particular journal prompts, our class forms a circle and shares our narrative experiences with one another, fostering a sense of cross-cultural identity formation. Our short story unit, when students craft

their own narratives set within their local Richmond context, is a critical step in the process of knowledge construction and cultural discussion within my classroom. After analyzing the various elements of a short story (plot, character, conflict, setting, dialogue, etc.) within mentor texts, students then are given the opportunity to engage more deeply with these elements in their own writing. Although all stories must be set within a Richmond setting, each highlights the unique perspectives and identities of my students. By compiling the stories into a collection at the unit's conclusion, I am able to create a physical product that highlights the value of both the similarities and the differences among students' cultural identities and experiences.

Students should be given opportunities to literally "see themselves in the story" through cultural representation in the novels, stories, and media they read. As noted in the introduction, my students have often complained about having to read a "boring" book that "has nothing to do with me." While constrained by the text sets available within our schools, we must recognize the need for culturally diverse literature, in which our students are represented through characters, settings, conflicts, and themes. I have consulted a variety of online sources to compile a list of multicultural texts to share with my students (see resources in Appendix) and was blessed to add over twenty of these novels to my classroom library this year via Amazon Wish List donations. Furthermore, I was able to earn grant funding to purchase class text sets for three of these multicultural

novels (Kwame Alexander's *The Crossover*, Annie Donwerth-Chickamatsu's *Somewhere Among*, and Alan Gratz's *Refugee*). At the end of the school year, these novels will be used as part of a unit that focuses on the power of narrative to convey a perspective and evoke empathy. Using the novels as mentor texts, students will craft their own narrative essays about moments of vulnerability within their own lives. Thus, this unit allows students to meaningfully engage with and apply classroom texts to their own lived experiences, while also connecting with characters and stories across cultures.

Additionally, I have explored my online textbook to find culturally relevant short stories and texts that may appeal to my students' developmental and identity needs. "Born Worker" by Gary Soto, "Amigo Brothers" by Piri Thomas, and "Thank You Ma'm" by Langston Hughes are simply a few of the many online short stories that produced particularly memorable cross-cultural identity formation and meaningful discussion. With Hispanic and African American characters and settings, these stories provided my students with an opportunity to "see themselves" as part of not only the text, but also the larger universal moral themes addressed. The resulting conversations of these stories were thus more engaging and resulted in higher-level knowledge construction as students synthesized and applied story elements to their own lived cultural experiences and identities.

Through storytelling strategies, adolescents

can construct counter narratives to challenge mainstream beliefs about identity. In my classroom, I utilize a variety of media to allow my students to participate in this constructive storytelling process. During our Holocaust novel study unit and concurrent research writing unit, students utilize digital technology to create public service announcements and messages about racial, cultural, and social injustice occurring around the world today. Through these digital projects, students not only participate in the curriculum, but also engage in critical literacy, identity formation, and meaning making, constructing their own knowledge about the world around them (Greene, 2016).

Comic strips are another form of media through which students can share counter narratives. Following novel or short story units, students can create comics that “complicate gender expectations, contest racial silencing, and re-narrate identity” in the traditional, White-dominant texts that are considered “canonical” or “essential” reads in a middle school language arts classroom (Low, 2015). Thus, in addition to “seeing themselves in the story,” my students also can challenge mainstream conceptions about identity, reexamining the knowledge they have been taught is “important” to their own lives. While classic texts such as *The Giver*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *To Kill A Mockingbird* are valuable and developmentally appropriate for a middle school classroom, students must be provided opportunities to see the themes and elements of these stories as relevant and meaningful within their own lives. The

option to create a counter narrative (i.e. through a comic strip) provides students with meaningful engagement with these texts, while also allowing them to foster the higher-level thinking skills that accompany such a meaning-making process.

V. Conclusion

Quite simply, identity formation is the work of adolescence. As a state of “active tension constantly in a process of reevaluation,” identity seemingly defies definition and varies for each individual (Moshman, 2011, p. 128). As I’m sure all educators can attest to, there is no one strategy or practice that will fit the developmental needs of all adolescents (Harter, 1999, p. 347). Nevertheless, educators have a moral imperative to develop inclusive and supportive classrooms that reflect appreciation and respect for the diverse backgrounds of all students. Strategies may vary for elementary or high school level classrooms, but ultimately all educators must provide outlets for their students to critically engage with course material.

I am not arguing that we should rid our bookshelves of the developmentally appropriate “canonical” texts that have been taught for years (and in some cases, decades) within a middle school classroom. However, if we are teaching these novels with little or no recognition of the unique cultural differences that our students bring to the classroom, we are missing out on transformative opportunities to engage their own narratives in the process of learning. In contrast, when we allow students to

question and challenge traditional texts and insert their own perspectives, we effectively say, "Your personal experiences are just as valuable to know in this classroom as those of these authors and writers." At such a critical junction of development, the benefits of positive reinforcement of students' identities and narratives cannot be understated. By utilizing culturally sustaining pedagogical strategies that help students to "see themselves in the story" and construct knowledge and meaning within the text, educators foster positive cross-cultural understanding and respect during this most critical period of identity development.

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Appendix

Resources for Multicultural Texts

School Library Journal's "An Expanded Cultural Diversity Booklist"

Colours of Us "21 Multicultural Middle Grade Novels for Summer Reading"

Sean Tenaglia is a second year graduate teaching fellow with the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education. He currently serves as a middle school English Language Arts teacher at All Saints Catholic School in Richmond, Virginia. As an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame, Tenaglia majored in American Studies with minors in Education, Schooling, and Society and Journalism, Ethics, and Democracy. His ethnographic research study, "Manufactured Masculinity: Observing Constructions of Heteronormative Masculinity within a University Weight Room" was published in Through Gendered Lenses, the University of Notre Dame's Gender Studies undergraduate academic journal.

A Clerihew

Robert Frost
wrote at great cost.
Family bonds could not survive neglect
when only verse and voice had his respect.

– David Black

David Black, former poetry editor of English Journal, lives in Louisa, VA. He has published widely in regional magazines such as Now & Then, Zone 3, Tar River Poetry, and Appalachian Journal. His fourth, Aspects of a Crosscut Saw, just came out (Amazon). He is writing a new collection focused on Ireland and Scotland.

Integrating UDL into Secondary Writing Instruction to Promote Accessibility and Equity

The development of strong student writers requires educators to implement a blend of quality instruction, purposeful practice, and effective assessment (Graham et al., 2016). Achieving measurable student success in writing, however, greatly depends on appropriate planning for and application of research- and evidence-based practices. The roles of student support and research-based pedagogy are factors that are acknowledged to play a vital role in guiding students to be effective writers (NCTE, 2016).

That said, many educators struggle with how to best instruct, assess, and engage students in writing in a way that embraces and builds upon their varied strengths and needs. Zumbrunn and Krause (2012) conducted a qualitative study to identify guiding principles for effective writing instruction. In addition to understanding the important role of the writing instructor, who must recognize their own writing's respective impacts on student writing, effective writing instruction must encourage student motivation and engagement, begin with clear and deliberate planning, but also remain flexible, ensure instruction and practice happens every day, and provide a scaffolded collaboration between teachers and students (Zumbrunn & Krause, 2012, p. 347). Unfortunately, little research has been conducted that primarily focuses on how

secondary students' strengths and needs can be proactively considered during the lesson-planning process to develop targeted writing instruction (Goldstein, 2017).

Today's secondary teachers shoulder the daunting responsibility of designing and implementing writing instruction for students with a wide range of strengths and needs. This fact highlights the need for differentiated instruction, or instruction that is designed with students' needs and strengths in mind (Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998). Research indicates that strategies for differentiating instruction are inconsistently and sporadically implemented in classrooms (Hawkins, 2009; Reis et al., 2008). When lessons are differentiated, student variance is embraced and effective learning is increased through responsive lesson-planning and implementation (Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch, 1998). Several frameworks for differentiation have been designed to support teachers in the design and implementation of lessons. One framework for differentiation that has been receiving attention from researchers and practitioners is Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The UDL framework is purposed to provide greater flexibility in planning and lesson implementation through the integration of multiple modes of content representation, multiple ways in which to increase and sustain student engagement

in learning, and multiple means of student expression (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014; Rose & Meyer, 2006; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005).

The History and Purpose of the UDL Framework

The concept of universal design originated in the architectural field as a proactive approach to the provision of access for people with physical disabilities (CAST, 2011). Architects who implemented the concept of universal design in their work soon found that, while they were working to increase accessibility for one population, they were increasing accessibility for a number of populations. One of the most notable examples used to illustrate this concept is the curb cut (Johnson & Fox, 2003), which was originally designed to increase the mobility of those in wheelchairs. Though it was created to assist those with physical handicaps, many people appreciate the convenience of ramps and curb cuts, such as people pushing strollers, people on roller blades, and people who use the curb cuts to assist with rolling luggage. Other commonly used universally designed adaptations are automatic door openers, water fountains that are at varying heights, and door handles that are levers instead of knobs (CAST, 2011).

Based on the recognition that these universally designed systems and structures served those with and without physical limitations, the Universal Design for Learning instructional framework was designed to reduce barriers in curriculum and instruction

for all learners (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012; Rose & Meyer, 2006; Rose et al., 2005). The UDL framework guides educators into proactively considering and addressing students' individual strengths and needs during the lesson-planning process. The framework focuses on planning for multiple means of representation, engagement, and/or expression, thereby minimizing the need for subsequent retroactive accommodations (CAST, 2007; Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2002; Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014; Rose & Meyer, 2002; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005). Though it was originally designed as a framework to help teachers support students who received special education services, UDL continues to gain popularity among general education classroom teachers (see Figure 1 for UDL principles and guidelines).

The use of the UDL framework during lesson-planning allows teachers to proactively differentiate lessons based on demonstrated student needs, rather than waiting for students to be unsuccessful, which would require retroactive remedial instruction. "Thinking about differentiation as a kind of universal design makes it seem achievable" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 96). If teachers seek to proactively decrease barriers to student learning, the use of a framework that supports this work guides them in creating a "ramp" of sorts that scaffolds and supports student understandings (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Proactive consideration of multiple

means of content representation, student engagement, and student expression of learning benefits learners at all levels of achievement (see Figure 1).

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

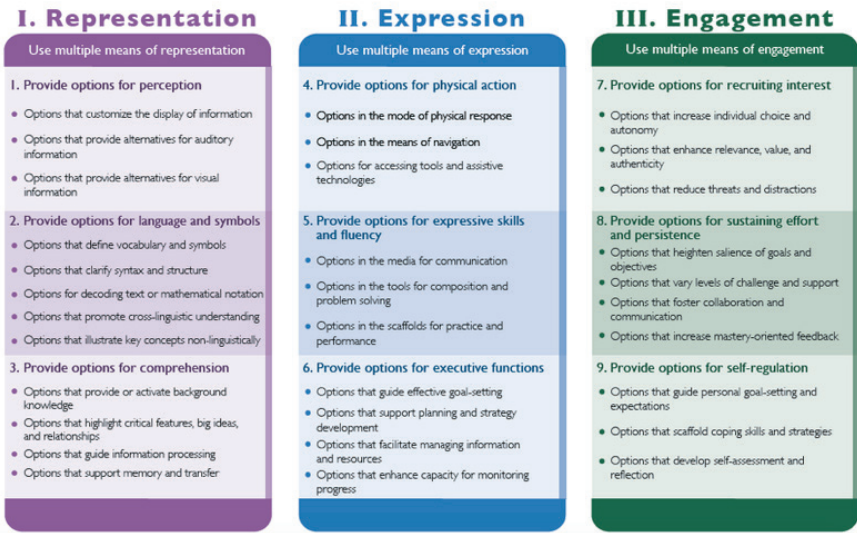


Figure 1. UDL Principles and Accompanying Guidelines

<http://www.cast.org>

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Using the UDL Framework to Plan and Teach Writing Lessons that Incorporate the UDL Principles

The UDL framework supports teachers in the planning of lessons through the proactive consideration of students' strengths and needs through the incorporation of multiple means of content representation, student expression of understanding, and tools for engaging and motivating students (See Figure 1). Discussed below are some

practical ways in which secondary teachers can integrate the UDL principles into writing lessons in order to differentiate them and increase accessibility.

UDL Principle of Representation

The UDL principle of representation is rooted in the understanding that the presentation of content in various ways will meet the needs of a greater number of students (CAST, 2011). The provision of multiple modes of content representation allow for options

for student perception, provide clarity in instruction foci and expectations, and provide options for student comprehension of the content being taught (See Figure 1). Two approaches to writing instruction that integrate the UDL principle of representation are modeled writing and writer's workshop.

Modeled writing, otherwise known as a "write-aloud," is an instructional strategy that is used to pre-teach and reinforce writing concepts and/or skills. During modeled writing instruction, students are primarily listening to and watching the teacher. As they observe the teacher's decision-making process during the construction of writing, in which the teacher makes his/her metacognition about the writing explicit, it reinforces their knowledge and understandings of strategies they can use in their own writing. Modeling writing provides a necessary scaffold that enables students to see the process of thinking that leads to a strong piece of writing.

The writer's workshop model of writing instruction allows teachers to individualize writing instruction and supports students to write at their own pace, focusing on the content and style of their writing. Because the process through which students learn to write is a personal journey, writer's workshop provides students with guided skills practice and support catered to their respective writing needs (Scofield, 2016). The workshop model hinges on purposeful interconnectivity between teacher and student, student and peer, and the student, individually, targeting specific skills to

develop, expand, and nurture quality writing practice. Students benefit from an initial mini lesson with a model, or mentor text, which provides a foundation from which to build; then, students engage in a blend of independent and collaborative practice, guided conferencing, and sharing of work in progress and at completion (Children's Literacy Initiative, 2017). Because this process begins with explicit modeling and gradually moves into independent work, it supports students through the activation of background knowledge, guides students through the processing of newly presented content, and maximizes student transfer and generalization of instructed information (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005).

UDL Principle of Engagement

Because students vary in how they become and stay engaged in learning, it is important that teachers provide multiple options for gaining and sustaining student motivation. Multiple means of engagement come through giving a variety of options for doing writing exercises, offering all learners ways to express what interests and excites them, which captures their attention and highlights individual thinking and interests (CAST, 2011). Two instructional approaches that support the integration of the UDL principle of engagement in secondary writing instruction are the interactive writing approach and the provision of mastery-oriented feedback.

Interactive writing is a process in which the teacher leads the students through a piece of writing by first modeling and then

guiding the students into the creation of a whole-group piece of writing. This process allows students to become fully familiar with the targeted writing concept and promotes a safe atmosphere, in which students can take risks. This process differs from the write-aloud process due to the fact that the end goal is not individual students' writing. Students' practice of writing skills, while working together as a whole group, allows for greater student engagement through collaboration as well as stronger self-regulation through the integration of student support.

The provision of mastery-oriented feedback, during each stage of the writing process, encourages student perseverance and focuses on the development of efficacy and self-awareness in writing. The emphasis on process over product allows students to set personal writing goals that are frequent and specific to their individual needs. It is important that the provided feedback is substantive and informative, rather than comparative or competitive, focusing on each student's strengths and needs and leading them to feel empowered and incorporate methods of self-regulation when writing. Ultimately, the provision of mastery-oriented feedback guides students to be reflective, goal-oriented writers.

UDL Principle of Action & Expression

Students have great variation in their abilities and levels of achievement in writing. Therefore, in order to fairly assess them, it is important to consider multiple ways

in which students can demonstrate their understanding of learned writing concepts and skills (See Figure 1). Multiple means of action and expression provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know and what they want to say. This demonstration of knowledge can be through the use of writing, illustrating, dictating, manipulating pictures or symbols, and group discussion and composition. Two specific ways in which secondary teachers can integrate the UDL principle of action & expression into their lessons are through the incorporation of technological tools and assistive technologies and the provision of information management systems, such as graphic organizers, prompts, and checklists.

There are many current technological tools that can be used to support students' learning and demonstration of their understandings. Today's students tend to be technologically savvy, engaging in social media and using web tools. When teachers embed these tools into instruction, it opens up options for student expression, in addition to increasing engagement. This can be done through the incorporation of online discussion boards, learning modules, interactive response methods, and videos. As educators, it is important to consider the objectives of taught information, and then determine how students may indicate understanding of those objectives. All too often, students are only provided with one way to express their understanding. When educators take time to think through the varied ways in which students may demonstrate understanding, and allow students to choose one of those

options, they are fairly assessing instructed objectives while empowering students to show their knowledge in ways that are relevant and choice-driven.

Additionally, the provision of resources that assist students in information management allows students to demonstrate their understandings in varied ways. Graphic organizers and checklists not only serve to support self-regulation, but they allow students to document knowledge in guided, targeted, succinct ways. Note-taking guides are another example of a way in which students can demonstrate what they are learning while being provided with a scaffold that supports this expression of knowledge. These tools not only assist students with the organization of newly presented information, but they can be used as a tool with which students may demonstrate knowledge and understandings.

Conclusion

Because there is great variation in secondary students' writing strengths and needs, it is incumbent upon teachers of writing to design and implement instruction that allows for multiple means for student success. The differentiation of writing opportunities through the incorporation of multiple means of representation, engagement, and action and expression allows for flexibility not only in the planning of lessons, but also in the expectations of how students will be presented with new writing content, how teachers will incorporate and utilize a variety of motivational tools, and how students will be allowed to express their understandings

of presented writing concepts. The UDL framework is an effective, research-based tool that teachers can use to help in the proactive design and implementation of lessons that are centered on students' strengths and needs.

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Charlottesville: What We Choose to Memorialize and Why



Abstract

Charlottesville. On August 12, 2017, it joined a pantheon of places, whose very names have come to elicit a visceral reaction nationwide. This brief article focuses on a mini-unit I devised for my students, who call Charlottesville home, to help them come to terms with the events of that day.

Charlottesville: What we Choose to Memorialize and Why

Charlottesville. On August 12, 2017, it joined a pantheon of places, such as Little Rock or Selma, whose very names have come to

elicit a visceral reaction across our country. On that Saturday morning, just a week before the beginning of the new school year, the violence of the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville's Emancipation Park burst on t.v. screens nationwide and ended in tragedy and death. Charlottesville is the city my students call home; their world was rocked by what had transpired.

I knew that the events of that weekend would still be on my kids' minds when they returned to school to start their seventh grade year. So, I jettisoned the lesson plan I thought I was going to use that first week of school and developed a mini-unit that, in its own way, addressed the events that had shaken our community. The unit addressed the big question, "Who or what do we choose to memorialize and why? It involved some writing, a brief literature study, some class discussion, creating a "monument," and a whole lot of reflection.

The unit began with students' journaling about the purpose of memorials and small and large group conversations centered about that topic. The literature students read and contemplated included Oscar Wilde's fairy tale, "The Happy Prince," William Staffords's "At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border," and Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley, this latter work being a bit of a stretch for my seventh graders. While reading these works, we contemplated

several more big questions: Why do we feel a need to memorialize or build monuments? Can memorials take some form other than a statue or monument? How do perceptions of monuments and memorials change over time?

After writing, discussion, and literature study, it was time to create. Students were encouraged to think about who or what they would like to memorialize and challenged to fashion a “monument” of their own. Students were likewise encouraged to make use of their unique talents and abilities, explore their own passions and interests, and think “outside the box” as they developed their projects.

The unit culminated in a sharing day during which students displayed their work and explained why/how they landed upon their final products. There was a wide array of subjects to whom/which students paid tribute and a large variety of media employed by the students in making their memorials. Subjects ranged from Ulysses S. Grant, a distant relative of one of my students, to Tom Petty, who passed away during the time my kids were working on their projects. Some students created portraits, clay sculptures, or traditional posters, while others used digital formats to honor their subjects.

As a coda to this monuments and memorials mini-unit, the students attended Monkey BAA Theatre’s production of Sandra Eldridge’s YA play, *The Unknown Soldier*, at the Paramount Theater on Charlottesville’s downtown mall. This play explored many of

the themes discussed in class. Ironically, as they disembarked from the buses on the street behind the Paramount, my students came face-to-face with the shrouded statue of Robert E. Lee in Emancipation Park, “ground zero” for the cataclysmic events that inspired this mini-unit.

Chuck Miller has been an English/language arts classroom teacher for 41 years, having served for 38 years at J.T. Henley Middle School in Albemarle County, where he is currently teaching. Chuck was a member of the VATE Executive Board from 1988-2016.

Book Review of *After the Shot Drops*

Ribay, Randy. *After the Shot Drops*. 325p. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. March 2018. Tr. \$17.99. ISBN 9781328702272. Gr 9 and up.

Bunny Thompson (so named because he's "got hops") is a basketball phenom who just transferred from his inner city high school to an elite private school in the suburbs. He has a great team, a full scholarship, and wonderful resources-- but no real friends. Bunny's lifetime best friend, Nasir, believes that Bunny abandoned them, and Bunny is wary of his new classmates, who are rich and white. In addition to his worries about the basketball season, missing his best friend, and the anxiety that code-switching induces, Bunny has a new concern-- Wallace, Nasir's cousin. If Bunny helps Wallace with some financial trouble, he can have Nasir back in his life. However, the request comes at a high cost to Bunny's hard-fought future. *After the Shot Drops* is a fast-paced, intense novel about friendship and integrity that calls upon teen readers to make moral decisions along with Bunny, Nasir, and Wallace. The story alternates between Bunny's narration and Nasir's narration, which allows readers to see both perspectives in the conflict. The characters are layered and complex-- Bunny is a fully-formed, sympathetic character who has to make difficult choices, and the secondary characters are multi-dimensional. The basketball narratives are adrenaline-packed, and Ribay highlights the hard work that Bunny puts into his craft in

order to secure his future. This book will be hugely popular with anyone who enjoyed *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brandon Kiely or *Final Four* by Paul Volponi, and will especially appeal to reluctant readers, given the pacing, dual perspectives, and subject matter.

Susannah Goldstein is a school librarian in New York City. She has served on the Young Adult Library Services Association Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers selection committee, as well as served on the board of the Hudson Valley Library Association. She is beginning a two year term on the Association for Library Service to Children/Young Adult Library Services Association/American Association of School Librarians Joint Committee on School/Public Library Cooperation. Susannah can be found on Twitter at @SusInTheLibrary.

Book Review of *Black Bottle Man*

Russell, Craig. *Black Bottle Man*. 184p. Great Plains Teen Fiction. \$14.95. March 2010. ISBN 9781894283991.

Moonbeam Children's Award winner, Craig Russell masterfully crafts the story of *Black Bottle Man*, an extraordinary allegorical journey with high stakes- rescuing souls from the man with a "glad to see ya smile."

Initially set in the depression era, *Black Bottle Man* follows the life quest of Rembrandt, a Midwestern boy from a modest farming community. When his extended family makes a deal with the devil (the Black Bottle Man), he is forced to hit the road with his father and his uncle to search for a savior who can beat the devil and rescue their souls. To complicate their mission, they must leave every place they stay within twelve days or terrible things happen.

Interestingly, the novel's simple prose provides the reader with an allegorical journey that poignantly addresses the themes of moral turpitude, friendship, family bonds, as well as the overarching belief in the existence good in the world. Although Rembrandt's aunts chose a dark path, he chooses to believe that there is goodness in the world and that evil can be defeated. Along his journey, stark images of the depression era are present as well as harsh descriptions of the hobo existence that

Rembrandt is forced to endure. Additionally, while Rembrandt is forced to give up romantic happiness and domestic stability in his quest, he also believes that his personal sacrifice is right for his family and that it is morally responsible.

This coming of age story reminds the reader that difficult choices and situations create moral complications that cannot be easily remedied. Moreover, the reader learns that assumptions should not be made about the choices people make when placed in untenable conditions. This takeaway is particularly important within the current social milieu where kindness and understanding are often overlooked or not even practiced in the social sphere. Young people reading this novel can take spiritual journey which forces introspection and reflection.

By setting this allegory in the depression era that is later juxtaposed with the modern day, readers are shown that the darkness of the depression is seen differently when contrasted to the context of modern tragedies (like school shooting events). By presenting the character of Gail, a modern day elementary teacher who survives a school hostage-taking in the novel, Russell represents the difficulty in maintaining good and moral justness within violent modern times. Further, Gail's empathy for the hostage taker displays the changeability of

right and wrong as well as the ways in which the judgment of others can undermine one's sanity.

Undoubtedly, *Black Bottle Man* is a successful young adult narrative, steeped in spirituality. This novel serves as a reminder of the importance of love and family. Young people are subject to the negativity of social media, fake news and gossip media outlets but are not always reminded that to be empathetic and morally responsible is the right way to exist. *Black Bottle Man* prompts the audience to consider love as the most important part of life. Most importantly, this novel gives us hope that dark times can be beaten with the light.

Jill Perttula served as a high school teacher and a literacy teacher prior to completing her dissertation research in English education at the University at Buffalo. She is passionate about discovering ways to engage students through captivating young adult texts and innovative, multimodal curriculum. She is an assistant professor in English education at Longwood University.

Virginia English Journal
Winter 2019, Vol 68, #2
“Relevance in the English Classroom”

SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO VEJ'S WINTER 2019 ISSUE

The Winter 2019 *Virginia English Journal* will focus on the idea of relevance in the English classroom. I invite you to submit a piece that focuses on what you do to make your instruction relevant to your students' out-of-school lives, cultures, backgrounds and experiences.

There are many ways to conceptualize the idea of relevance in the classroom and numerous questions to consider when writing about this topic. Some potential questions to consider are listed below.

- What are some ways you've made your English instruction relevant to your students?
- What recommendations would you give other teachers interested in making connections to students' out-of-school lives?
- What texts that you've taught and activities that you've conducted have been relevant to your students' experiences and interests?
- How have you engaged students with relevant material in academically meaningful contexts?
- What are some strategies for maximizing student ownership and expression in the English classroom?

This issue of the *Virginia English Journal* will contain three types of articles, described below:

Feature articles: These are longer articles of 3,000 to 5,000 words that blend research and practice, providing educators with theoretical understandings as well as practitioner-friendly ideas.

Great teaching ideas: Shorter articles of 1,000 to 2,000 words that focus on effective and innovative teaching practices that other educators can quickly put into action in their classes.

Promising young scholars: This section is designed for English and English education majors interested in sharing their ideas with an audience of fellow educators. Articles in this section should blend research-based insights with practical suggestions for application and share unique perspectives on English instruction.

Submission deadline: November 1st, 2018

To submit a manuscript, email editor Sean Ruday at rudays@longwood.edu with the following documents attached:

1) Title Page, including: a. manuscript title, b. author's name, c. correspondence info: address, email, phone number, d. a brief bio: indicating affiliation, recent publications, e. a 100-200 word abstract

2) Masked Manuscript. Do not include any identifying information in your manuscript document or in the document file name. Replace author identification with "Author" or "Author A," etc. Please make sure your abstract is also included in this document. Please include tables and/or charts in the manuscript.

Other Submission Information:

Submissions must be in MS word and follow the style outlined in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2009, 6th edition).

Once a manuscript has been received, the editor will determine if the piece will be sent out for review. All manuscripts chosen for review are read by a minimum of two reviewers. VEJ will attempt to reach a decision on each article within three months.

NOTES

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