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Manuscripts

The editorial Board of the *Virginia English Journal* welcomes contributions related to the teaching of language arts and English at all school levels, especially manuscripts of 3-12 pages on announced themes. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically, as e-mail attachments, preferably in Microsoft Word, but other formats and word processing programs are generally acceptable as well. To have your article considered for publication, please comply with the following: (1) Carefully state "VEJ Submission" in the Subject line of the e-mail and provide the following information in the body of the e-mail text itself: your name, full address, telephone number and E-mail address. (2) Also in the body of the e-mail or in an attached cover letter file, provide a short biography (50 words or less) including the name of your school or former school(s), position, courses taught and a brief statement about your professional life. (3) Make sure the spelling of the names of the author(s) in the reference section agree with the spelling in the text and that the copyright dates concur in both sections, and provide full reference data, complying with either APA or MLA style. When making a direct quote, please include quotation marks and specific reference data--if APA, last name of author(s), copyright year, page numbers; if MLA, author(s) and page numbers. (4) Carefully proof final copy attached to e-mail BEFORE submitting, checking for omissions, correct publication infor-mation, and spelling, stylistic, punctuation, and grammatical conventions. E-mail address: jmmartin@bridgewater. edu. Deadlines for copy are November 1 and May 1 unless otherwise advertised. Jenny M. Martin, Flory Hall, Bridgewater College, 402 East College Street, Box 16, Bridgewater, Virginia 22821.

Subscriptions and Advertising:

Bridgewater Colllege teacher candidate Danielle Werner, Kelly Gallagher, and I focused on "Deeper Reading, Deeper Thinking, Deeper Learning" in June at the Margaret Sue Copenhaver Institute for Teaching and Learning.

Introduction from the Editor's Desk

If you have not attended the Copenhaver Institute at Roanoke College, then you are missing out! Participants receive a copy of the keynote's book in their mailbox, well in advance of the institute. After a month of spending time with the text, it is invigorating to hear the author(s) in an up close and personal setting. This summer was my third year attending and the second time presenting at this institute, and it was the first time that I took a teacher candidate along.

Right in line with this issue of *VEJ*, the book that accompanied the institute was *180 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and* **Empower** *Adolescents* (Gallagher & Kittle, 2018). Gallagher and Kittle "…want to create classrooms where students feel their lives are worthy of study and reflection. We find our students are more likely to engage in their literacy development when given the opportunity to explore their own lives" (p. 13).

In the context of choice, there are ways to encourage students to tap into *place* (Azano, 2011), with opportunities to meaningfully tie the curriculum to the realities in students' lives. Place-based pedagogy can also work to empower students. In this issue, the authors focus on ways to empower students through writing by considering some important questions:

- How can place-based pedagogy fit into your ELA curriculum?
- What are some ways to structure the curriculum to empower students?
- What sets the students "on fire" for reading and writing?
- What specific topics apply the 5 C's of creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship that have resulted in meaningful work and dynamic end-results?
- How can students be empowered through choice in reading, choice in writing?
- What is the result of providing students with autonomy in the classroom?

Thank you for the reviewers and authors who made this issue possible. If you did not get a chance to write or review this issue, I encourage you to set a goal to do so for the winter issue!

Warm regards,

Jenny M. Martin

Jenny M. Martin, Ph.D.
Editor, *Virginia English Journal*
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Penny Kittle signing my copy of 180 Days at the Copenhaver Institute for Teaching and Learning at Roanoke College on June 18.

Amy Price Azano

Place is More than Just *This* Place

What does it mean to use place in the English curriculum? Place-based instructional practices stem from environmental and ecological studies with the notion that if young people learn about their place, they will in turn have greater civic engagement within their local community. Given the sometimes over emphasized focus on global education and the decontextualized scope of standards-based curricula, purposeful attention on the local is certainly a worthwhile pursuit. But utilizing place as a meaningful instructional platform can do much more than teach civic responsibility or affirm place—in fact, it can be about more than an actual, physical place altogether.

Place-based instruction can promote and further efforts to support *critical literacy* skills, especially when place-based efforts are characterized as culturally relevant instruction. In David Gruenewald's formative work, he suggested that a *critical pedagogy of place* can allow students to "pursue the kind of social action that improves the social and ecological life of places, near and far, now and in the future" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7). In other words, studying a place critically gives students permission to critique and develop a more nuanced understanding of the places they might value. In an English classroom, there are numerous "text to self" opportunities for this type of personal exploration; however, this work can also be extended to helping students consider others' relationships to places that hold meaning, including the characters and places they meet in fiction.

English teachers have many tools at their discretion. They can offer their students a myriad of critical lenses through which to consider narrative. *Place* is one of those possible lenses. When reading novels, students can wear their "place lenses" to think about characters and their relationships to the places they are from or encounter. Imagine the possibilities for reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. What does it mean for Scout to grow up in Maycomb? How might her narrative be different if she grew up in a different place? How did Gatsby's midwestern upbringing influence his experiences in New York? Why is Hogwarts so important to a young Harry Potter who never before felt he belonged? How is Garden Heights Starr different from Williamson Starr? Some students might find it difficult to grasp the enormity of the African diaspora and effects of slavery. However, in reading *Copper Sun*, a starting point could be to examine Amari's relationship to her village where she grew up. How does that experience compare to the experience students have had growing up among family and community members? These inquiries become critical in nature when students are able to identify oppressive forces at work and how places are valued and devalued. By inviting students to take a critical and evaluative stance toward place, they can in turn develop what Paulo Freire (1970/2000) described as critical consciousness.

Often, we argue that place (for better or for worse) influences our worldview, but when do young people get to consider how those local views are cultivated? Without an opportunity to unpack critical narratives, they will lack the authorial voice to engage or resist narratives with which they agree or disagree. Using place in the language arts classroom provides an opportunity for young people to write their own narratives about place. This is particularly important for young people growing up in more marginalized communities. In Appalachia, for example, students might consider how the legacy of dispossession has shaped the region. In rural communities, students can reflect on why or how pervasively negative stereotypes are perpetuated. How is rurality characterized in *To Kill a Mockingbird*? How does poverty influence that characterization? How might the characters they encounter serve as metaphor for self-inquiry?

Story is a powerful medium—the ones we write and the ones we read. Simply asking the question, "Why do some places hold meaning in our lives?" can be a powerful starting point to make literature more accessible for students. Creating a safe space for young people to consider the meaning of place will allow them the critical literacy skills to then read and understand the importance that place has not only in fictional characters' lives – but, more importantly, in their own.

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Jennifer N. Suriano

Place-Based Education to Mediate Struggles for Preservice Teachers

Abstract

The role of place-based education (PBE) in a teacher education methods course was explored in a constructivist case study of preservice secondary English teachers during their semester of student teaching. Written and discourse data were examined through the lens of a conceptual framework of PBE. Findings suggest that PBE methods can prepare student teachers for success with classroom management, assessment, and meeting students' individual needs. Further research is needed to explore PBE and its role in teacher education. The implications of this research extend benefits to students and society through improvements in teacher education and connecting classrooms to communities.

Many secondary, single-subject classrooms with teacher-centered instruction and inauthentic assessments are associated with low student engagement as adolescents struggle to find relevance in the content and applications to the real world (Smith & Sobel, 2010). Equipping teachers with innovative pedagogies that ground instruction in authentic, student-centered models could offer a solution. Place-based education (PBE) is an evidence-based methodology ripe for investigation in teacher education. PBE weaves active citizenship and environmental problem solving throughout the curriculum (Martina, Hursh & Markowitz, 2009). For the purpose of this study, PBE is defined as a progressive curricular framework grounded in the resources, issues, and values of a local community which focuses on using the near environment as an integrating context for learning (Powers, 2004).

Utilizing PBE, teachers of all content areas can move away from traditionally textbook-based instruction and conduct student-led explorations (Brooks, Dolan, & Tax, 2011). According to Smith and Sobel (2010), "such learning opportunities provide young people with the chance to apply literacy, mathematical, and analytical skills to significant problems" (p. 39). Most students do not have such opportunities and continue to use isolated, subject-specific knowledge and skill sets in their learning experiences. PBE can help teachers meet NCTE/IRA standards particularly including the opportunities for students to participate in literary communities, use writing and texts to understand cultures and the demands of society, and communicate with different audiences for different purposes. PBE gives students frequent opportunities to write for their own purposes and to audiences other than their teachers; this opportunity is not often present in the traditional secondary English classroom.

The impetus for this study was the knowledge that while novice teachers have sought more active, real-world curricula and methods, they feel tied to traditional ones due to a lack of confidence to use innovative practices (Wynn & Okie, 2017). If confidence and mediation of struggle can be addressed in teacher education courses, will pre-service teachers (PSTs) be able to employ non-traditional methods that facilitate more authentic instruction and learning? This question prompts investigation into the PSTs' reception of innovative practices. More specifically, one goal of this study was to explore how secondary English teaching candidates responded to practices associated with PBE. For the purposes of this study, non-traditional methods refers to those which are predominantly student-centered and do not rely on a standardized curriculum. Additionally, authentic instruction refers to that which connects school to students' lives; more specifically, authentic literacy activities are those that replicate or reflect reading and writing activities that occur in the lives of people outside of a learning-to-read-and-write context.

Conceptual Framework

Throughout this study a framework of PBE, presented in this section, was referenced to make critical decisions about the design and execution of the study. Figure 1 illustrates PBE's pedagogical characteristics (e.g., student-centered, connected to community, inquiry-based) as well as the estimated impacts on students and learning. In isolation, the characteristics are representative of many high-quality teaching practices, but only when holistically implemented and situated in place is it characterized as PBE in the literature. Throughout the study, decisions were made about which data were relevant to the framework. The conceptualization of PBE, detailed in this section, helped form interpretations of the ways in which PSTs responded to PBE. The framework and approach to the study came from concepts of PBE presented in previous research and scholarly work in the field.
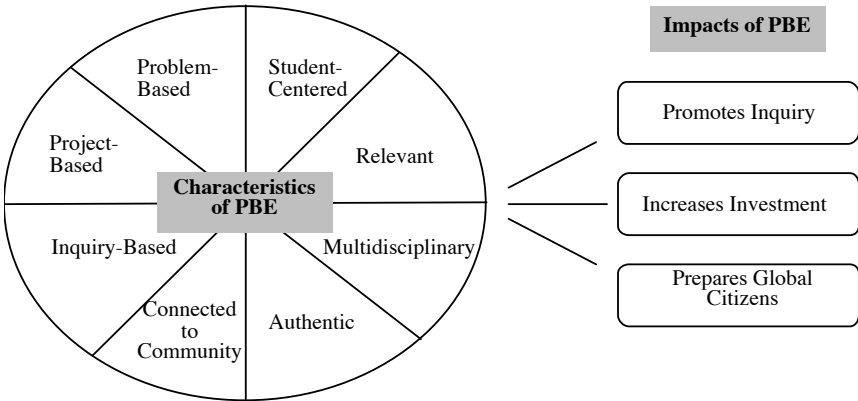

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for incorporating and describing PBE in classroom settings

Smith and Sobel (2010) argue that PBE is not a new concept; children learn naturally through experience and attention to local concerns in their living and play environments. In modern settings, most schools have created barriers between classrooms and their communities where students enter one realm while leaving the other during the school day. PBE, however, can reunite them by bringing cultural, environmental, political, and economical phenomena into at least part of the curriculum (Smith, 2007; Smith & Sobel, 2010). The emphasis on social and natural environments likens PBE to environmental education, cultural journalism, service learning, and project-based learning (Smith, 2007). PBE prepares students to live in the real world (Glenn, 2000) by focusing on conflicts and issues that occur in a multicultural, global society (Gruenewald, 2008) through a curriculum that connects students to their work with a relevant academic framework of place (Takano, Higgins, & McLaughlin, 2009). At its core, PBE creates an educational model that is student-centered, collaborative, and multidisciplinary (Glenn, 2000). These characteristics create lasting impacts on students, schools, and communities.

Impacts

Student Investment

PBE creates engaging, hands-on learning opportunities for students (Glenn, 2000) that are situated in their communities and bring students into the issues of their lives in and out of school. If students cannot see how school is relevant to their futures, why would they invest? PBE facilitates a perpetual attention to local concerns and prompts students to ask questions while continuously seeking solutions. Inquiry-based instruction leads to the creation of meaningful and impactful ties to the curriculum and supports learning of empathy, relationships, and community (Webber & Miller, 2016). This type of learning is shown to increase students' engagement and improve their attitudes about school (Shepley, 2014).

Problem-Based/Inquiry

PBE centers school learning time on questioning, problem solving, and exploration. "Integrated, interdisciplinary, and inquiry-based curricula are premised upon the philosophy of progressive education as the framework for teaching and learning" (Webber & Miller, 2016, p. 1064). Questioning, as the basis of a progressive pedagogy, yields long and short-term benefits for students (Brooks et al., 2011; Martina et al., 2009). Students develop agency and are situated as producers, rather than consumers, of knowledge by participating in cognitively demanding tasks while seeking solutions to social and environmental problems (McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011).

Preparing Global Citizens & Sustainability

PBE prepares students to be able to influence the social and ecological well-being of a place

(Gruenewald, 2008; Ontong & LeGrange, 2015), after gaining the skills that will help students maintain, restore, or create successful communities (Takano et al., 2009). An environment-based education helps students develop understandings of complex relationships and encourages them to recognize multiple viewpoints (Stables & Bishop, 2001). Place-based education has "the potential to promote civic engagement, democratic practices, an ethic of care for others and the environment, and the fostering of values that are largely absent from individualistic and utilitarian approaches to schooling" (McInerney et al., 2011). Given the numerous benefits to students, schools, and communities, teachers need preparation to support students and participate in this model.

A Review of Research on Integrating Innovative Pedagogies

Preservice Teachers and Progressive Pedagogies

Experience with progressive pedagogies in methods, practicum, and internship courses builds PSTs' confidence, enabling them to incorporate these pedagogies into their planning and instruction (McDonald & Dominguez, 2010; Tomas, Girgenti, & Jackson, 2017; Weiland & Morrison, 2013; Wynn & Okie, 2017). Wynn and Okie (2017) found that PSTs describe planning with innovative pedagogies as "laborious and challenging" (p. 7). When the PSTs encountered them in their practicum and coursework, however, they felt prepared and confident to implement these pedagogies into their planning and teaching. Students of teacher education who saw these pedagogies modeled and referenced in their teacher education courses frequently used them on a daily basis in their practical teaching experiences (Szeto & Cheng, 2017).

Place-Based Education in Teacher Education

Few research studies have been conducted to examine PSTs' experiences with PBE in their teacher education programs (TEPs). One instance of research in this area conducted by Warkentin (2011) showed that teachers who were initially reluctant to PBE later reflected and acknowledged that it "was extremely valuable and something they would employ in their own teaching in the future" (p. 236). She found this by studying the effects of nature journaling and interventions to nature deficits with preservice teachers. Waller and Barrentine (2015) studied how teachers used place-based connections during lesson planning and reading instruction. By making connections to place, their young readers were able to translate text-based concepts into personal connections which encouraged students to read more. The researchers found that these connections weave community and school together, leading students to become more invested in both.

Teaching of PBE provides PSTs, students, schools, and communities beneficial opportunities.

PSTs benefit from collaborative and knowledge-rich learning experiences and develop strong reflective practices (Weiland & Morrison, 2013). PSTs engage in deep exploration of their own places and develop a deeper sense of self in their roles in schools and society. The application of PBE provides an authentic means to cross and strengthen the boundaries between a university and the wider community (Best, MacGregor, & Price, 2017). It is important to ascertain how PBE aligns with the goals of TEPs. With limited research in the area, but an understanding of the benefits of PBE for students and the propensity for PSTs to incorporate innovative methods, this study begins to outline a path.

Methods

The research question guiding this study was: How do secondary English student teachers incorporate PBE in their internship experiences? In order to address the research question, a single case study was utilized to craft an understanding of the PSTs' responses to PBE. The findings are the result of an inductive understanding of the social constructs and meaning made in context by the researcher and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). IRB approval, as well as permission from the associate dean, was obtained to study the participants in the context of their normal course activities. Data reduction was employed for manageability (Miles & Huberman, 1994); the data analyzed were chosen as salient in terms of the conceptual framework of PBE.

Context

This study was conducted during a semester-long seminar course which accompanies the student-teaching internship experience of secondary English PSTs at a large, Mid-Atlantic university. The objectives for this course include fostering a context that furthers inquiry-based, reflective, principled practice and creating a space that simulates professional learning communities as they are currently practiced in schools, where topics or problems are discussed, possible action plans generated, and actions taken are later debriefed. Each intern was placed with a single mentor teacher in a secondary English classroom for the entirety of the internship. The PSTs participated in two place-based excursions on the grounds of the university, three place-based class sessions, a brainstorming session about nontraditional learning spaces, and many writing and collaborative tasks around topics and characteristics of PBE.

Participants

Data were gathered from nine participants, all female, in their twenties. Six of the participants were enrolled in the five-year, Bachelor and Master of Teaching (BAMT), while the remaining three were enrolled in the Post-Graduate Master of Teaching (PGMT) program (Table 1). Erin and Ella conducted their student-teaching internships at American while Lucy and Rachel did so at Mountain – two local county high schools. Amy and Lorelei were placed at Community, the local city high school. Ariel and Olivia's experiences were at a local county middle school,

Johnson. Elizabeth was in a neighboring county's high school, Freedom. All participants' and school names presented here are pseudonyms.

	Student-Teaching Intern		Student-Teaching Context				
	PGMT	BAMT	American High School	Community High School	Mountain High School	Johnson Middle School	Freedom High School
Amy		x		x			
Ariel		x					
Elizabeth	x						x
Ella		x	x				
Erin		x	x			x	
Lorelei		x		x			
Lucy	x				x		
Olivia	x					x	
Rachel		x			x		

Table 1: Participant Student-Teaching Information

Role of the Researcher

The primary investigator was an Ed.D. candidate at the time, with three years of secondary English teaching experience. She holds a Master of Education (M.Ed.) in environment-based education and a keen interest in the intersection of environmental and English education. She conducted this particular project as part of an independent study while working with the instructor of record of the course. The researcher functioned as a participant-observer throughout the study and developed working relationships with the participants.

Limitations and Recommendations

Additional participants and a longer period of data collection could facilitate further analysis and confirmation of findings. All participants were female, which is not representative of the population of secondary English student teachers. Observations of the participants in their teaching roles could have strengthened the study to triangulate the data attained from self-reported data. The analysis henceforth are preliminary in nature and do not serve well to extend the conclusions to other populations of student teachers. They do, however, offer insight into possibilities of place-based pedagogy in meeting challenges PSTs face during the student-teaching internship.

Data Collection

Data were collected over the course of five months in congruence with the student-teaching seminar course. These data were used to examine participants' responses to and

incorporation of PBE. (1) Participants completed weekly blog entries (twelve in total) as part of the tertiary requirements of the course. Participants were required to post an entry visible to their peers and instructors. (2) Each participant was responsible for completing a Teaching Inquiry (TI) assignment in which she identified a challenge from her internship experience that became the focus of one forty-five-minute audio-recorded discussion. (3) As part of the course, participants had the choice of 12 weekly Challenges to complete in the form of written reflections and documentation of the enactment of the challenge. Data were collected from written responses that participants submitted for only two of the challenges. These two challenges were chosen as they related to the PBE conceptual framework. The first asked participants to experiment with redefined classroom spaces (the topic of a previous class discussion) by bringing their internship class elsewhere and then responding to the experience. The second asked participants to respond to a class discussion about student-led inquiry by creating a plan for releasing control, defining student and teacher roles, and brainstorming assessments for student-led inquiry projects. (4) Participants and instructors, including the PI, met weekly for approximately two and a half hours for the seminar. The time was divided among Teaching Inquiry protocol discussions and presentations, addressing student concerns, developing a teaching portfolio, and topics such as classroom management, technology, job searching, differentiation, collaboration, and instructional planning. All lessons that were conducted by the researcher were audio recorded, as well as the discussions and student involvement that followed. Additional class conversations were audio recorded in an impromptu matter when the researcher heard key words or topics such as those relevant to the conceptual framework (e.g., inquiry, student-centered, relevance).

Data Analysis

As part of data analysis, initial codes were created from the participants' blogs as they were the most consistent source of data. The codes that initially emerged from the blogs (relevance, implement, future goals, realizations, motivation, struggles) were revised to reflect the characteristics of PBE outlined in the conceptual framework. After a second round of analysis, using the revised codes, a second coder was used for inter-coder reliability. This process refined the codes further to encompass both examples and non-examples that appeared in the data. The revised codes were then applied to coding of transcriptions of the TI discussions, Challenges, and pertinent class discussions. Four categorical pattern codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) were created to organize the data in response to the research question. These included: (1) participants incorporate the characteristics of PBE; (2) opportunity for participants to incorporate characteristic(s) of PBE, but didn't; (3) participants respond emotionally to elements of PBE; (4) participants explicitly address PBE.

Findings

Emerging from the data analysis are insights into the experiences of the secondary English

PSTs through their reflections, summaries, and initial musings about PBE. Overall, participants discussed a variety of struggles and breakthroughs, both related and unrelated to PBE. Most clearly, it was evident that the participants responded to individual characteristics of PBE, in isolation, rather than adopting the framework as pedagogical approach. Findings presented in the following sections are organized as they relate to the categorical patterns that emerged in the data.

Finding 1: PSTs Give Attention to Individual Characteristics of PBE

Examples of PSTs' students engaging in authentic tasks, student-centered instruction and planning, as well as the need for relevance were seen in the data. More than one participant excitedly noted students, who had previously shown minimal engagement, produce high quality work when completing a task involving an authentic audience. These tasks, however, often lacked the element of place or holistic incorporation of PBE. Participants often discussed the benefits or difficulties they experienced with individual characteristics of PBE.

When discussing inquiry in a class meeting, Lucy talked about students following personal interests and passions through series of questions and research. She said the following:

> We're letting them pick what they want to do after high school, charting their own course, we're letting them run with it; we're letting curiosity steer the ship. I feel that's more student-led than student-centered. All student-led is student-centered but not all student-centered is student-led. (Discussion, August 30, 2017).

Lucy made this distinction as she processed her role in curriculum design. She and her peers discussed instructional planning that attempts to include perceived student interests (student-centered) versus highly flexible planning which supports students in their personal quests as they evolve (student-led). They discussed approaches and assessments with predetermined outcomes versus preparing for student-led projects and goals.

Another characteristic several participants discussed was the enactment of student-centered classrooms. They wished to remove themselves from the central role of instructor and function more as facilitators. Participants also recognized the need for relevant contexts, but expressed difficulty actually implementing this best practice. Seemingly at a loss, Ariel blogged: "What I am struggling with a lot is how irrelevant it all is to the kids. You can see how bored they are in class, and you can also feel them pushing against the assignments," (September 17, 2017).

Participants addressed the collaborative nature of PBE as they discussed plans to incorporate more student-student interactions through peer editing and classroom discourse. In blogs,

participants wrote: "I'd really like to enhance student-to-student talk in my classes" (Ella, October 11, 2017); "I want to give these students more opportunities to move and to communicate with their peers in low-stakes, safe environments" (Ariel, September 9, 2017). Participants seemingly lacked the confidence to begin removing the barrier between schools and communities and kept students and learning within the "safety" of the classroom. They favored experimentation with individual characteristics of PBE, but showed hesitance to holistically adopt the pedagogy without extensive practice and instruction.

Within the classroom, incorporating relevance provided opportunities for student teachers to mediate disengagement. Participants documented incorporating student passions and interests into prompts, projects, and assessments; they discussed relevance as providing students with "a reason to care" (Rachel, TI Discussion, September 20, 2017). Ariel blogged: "I hope to see them get motivated intrinsically so that they can really buy-in to their own success in reading," (September 30, 2017). Lorelei offered an important distinction: "Getting someone interested in something and introducing something that is relevant is different... relevance is sustaining because it speaks to you and how you feel about something, where interest might capture someone's attention for a short period of time," (TI Discussion, September 20, 2017). PBE seemingly provided the framework for PSTs to approach abstract and challenging concepts such as relevance, engagement, and inquiry.

Finding 2: Participants Have Varied Emotional Responses to PBE

Participants tended to be surprised at student aptitude and natural inclinations toward inquiry and collaboration. For instance, in an online forum with her colleagues, Ariel expressed her surprise with grammatical enthusiasm about a student invested in an authentic performance task: "He wasn't supposed to yet, but he did it on his own! … he DID HIS WORK GUYS! He seemed really into it, and I think he must have worked really hard to get it written" (Blog, October 19, 2017). Ariel was proud of her student and had concrete evidence to show the benefits of engaging students in a writing task involving a local policy issue. It was often that the participants associated positive emotions when they enacted characteristics of PBE in their instruction, but in phases of planning or hypothetical discussions, expressed negative ones.

When discussing inquiry in the classroom, participants communicated skepticism and hesitancy using words like *craziness* (Erin, Class Discussion, August 30, 2017) and *scary* (Amy, August 30, 2017). Several participants agreed on the term *chaos* (Olivia, Erin, Amy, October 13, 2017) when making associations to student-led inquiry. Elizabeth fearfully indicated that inquiry "gives students more power to fail" (October 13, 2017). It became apparent that these PSTs had not had many opportunities to learn about or utilize inquiry-based instructional methods during their TEP.

Finding 3: PSTs Make Explicit References to PBE

The majority of the data do not contain explicit references to PBE, but rather discussion of individual characteristics. The explicit references often reveal participants' misconceptions about the topic. Participants referred to PBE when students were "sitting outside the classroom at a table to do the reading;" (Blog, November 5, 2017), which, for Lucy, was an example of PBE. According to her, the setting of where the reading occurred, regardless of the lesson, sufficed as the main component of PBE. Ella's use of air quotes when she said, "going outside, that kind of thing, 'place-based education'" indicated the same conceptual misunderstanding (TI Discussion, October 11, 2017). One participant shared the experience of a PBE unit her mentor teacher had planned in connection to their reading of Roland Smith's novel, Peak. In this case, the participant did not detail her participation in the planning or knowledge of the pedagogical implications of the hike.

Over the course of one semester, even without extended time devoted to the teaching and practice of PBE, the participants began to speak and write widely and explicitly about it. They showed interest in its possibilities for their students and attempted to integrate it into their curricula within the bounds of a student teaching experience. Overall, however, they had limited exposure to PBE and faced significant challenges that limited their confidence in implementing this progressive pedagogy.

Discussion

The data reveal that these secondary English student teachers questioned elements of traditional pedagogy that result in disengaging, inauthentic instruction. Additionally, the participants found successes in utilizing characteristics of PBE despite some misconceptions regarding the progressive pedagogy. Throughout the period of study, it became evident that several struggles and inquiries were common across participants in their secondary English teaching contexts. As such, it is proposed that explicitly embedding PBE in teacher education courses can begin to break down the barrier between and engage students in schools and communities.

Preparing Participants to Enact Authentic Instruction

Authentic instruction recognizes the roles of the learners and the context in planning and enactment of curriculum. Study participants acknowledged this, but found characteristics of PBE, including authenticity, relevance, and student-led instruction, to contrast the traditional experience of students. Students are simply "doing school" to attain traditional values of achievement. Without holistic revisions to school, traditional measures do not often recognize or support pedagogies such as PBE. Participants presented this concept of doing school and using 'student' as a verb: "How do we teach them to student and do school before they can do well?" (Erin, TI Discussion, October 18, 2017). Doing school and preparing for

the future emerged as both synonymous with being prepared for college and resistant to authentic learning. Participants described instances of doing school, such as: "She's found a loophole in playing school...she's found a way around it" (Lorelei, TI Discussion, October 18, 2017); or "Some kids aren't good at jumping through hoops but really care about learning" (Ariel, Discussion, October 13, 2017). Success should not be in contention with care and development. The tension for the participants existed between the requirement for doing school in the traditional teaching contexts and the desire to engage in progressive pedagogies which often lacked support from mentor teachers, administrators, and other colleagues.

Doing school was seen in opposition to the hands-on learning opportunities PBE creates for students (Glenn, 2000). These opportunities lead to the creation of meaningful and impactful ties to the curriculum and support learning of empathy, relationships, and community (Webber & Miller, 2016). This type of learning is shown to increase students' engagement and improve their attitudes about school (Shepley, 2014). Integrated, interdisciplinary, and inquiry-based curricula yield long and short-term benefits for the students (Brooks et al., 2011; Martina et al., 2009). Students develop agency and are situated as producers, rather than consumers, of knowledge by participating in cognitively demanding tasks while seeking solutions to social and environmental problems (McInerney et al., 2011). This level of engagement and investment stands to combat the apathy and avoidance seen in the participants' description of 'doing school'.

Participants argued that students need literacy and English regardless of their future plans. Specifically, they indicated that students need perpetual learning skills, such as: taking responsibility; being self-advocates; asking good questions; and seeking out information on their own. And if they do not have them, "they aren't going to be as well prepared in the future" (Lucy, Blog, September 24, 2017). Participants expressed that schooling focused on grades and task completion does not align with authenticity or genuine learning. Alternately, through PBE, students conceptualize their connection with others and the world and develop a sense of responsibility to the environment and future generations (Gruenewald, 2008). This responsibility encourages students to take ownership of their learning and gives students a sense of agency through authentic problem-solving and the possibility to affect change.

Struggles, such as barriers to genuine learning, inauthentic assessment, and student apathy, were experienced by the participants in traditional teaching internships. It can be supposed that had the PSTs experienced PBE in their teacher training, they may have been able to manage these tensions. They may have been enabled to tease out student passions and facilitate student-driven instruction, create authentic assessments, and design instruction to "see kids who have these passions find ways to do it themselves without our expectations" (Ariel, Discussion, October 13, 2017).

Gaining more practice with innovative pedagogies, such as PBE, can increase PSTs effectiveness and confidence with diverse learners (Best et al., 2017; Wynn & Okie, 2017). Additionally, PSTs engagement with place has an immense potential to promote social justice and equity (Best et al., 2017). A review by Webber and Miller (2016) "pointed to the necessity for teacher education to envision its role beyond the transmission of content and subject-specific methods in order to prepare new professionals to engage with meaningful experiences, ideas, and ways of learning" (p. 1073). This is necessary to effectively prepare teachers to emphasize the roles of students and contexts in their instruction.

Recognizing the Relationship Between PBE and Classroom Management

Participants cited examples of the connection between students being quiet, working diligently, or remaining focused when they were engaged with student-led instruction. One such example was Olivia's reflection:

> When you give kids the power to be in charge, the kids were engaged; engaged kids cause less problems; If we give them the power, if it's their choice, it's going to cause them to actually engage in what they're doing. (Discussion, October 13, 2017).

Participants also noted that students were distracted or disruptive when provided irrelevant instruction. Rachel said, "It is important to make content relevant to student's lives. Many of the distractions that were happening were purely because students were not interested in what was being taught or discussed" (Blog, September 10, 2017). This statement was not immediately followed by practical suggestions for relevance or local contexts for discussion that interest students. In general, participants associated positive classroom experiences with characteristics of PBE, but had negative perceptions when discussing PBE out of context. It is likely that if teacher preparation concisely ties practical experiences in relevant communities, environmental issues, and local contexts to PBE pedagogy, preservice teachers would develop effective skills and strategies in management.

Uncovering Students' Nature Deficiencies

Participants expressed discontent with the fact that their students were lacking outside time and the students' unfamiliarity with the outdoors. Lucy wrote in a blog, "I am concerned about students' screen time each day both in and out of school" (September 5, 2017). Ariel noted, "I think that they were taken aback by being outside" (Challenge, September 13, 2017). In her reflection of an outdoor experience, Ella wrote, "I wasn't surprised by the fact that several students were apprehensive about hiking – many expressed that they had never done anything like that, and weren't sure that they could" (Challenge, September 13, 2017). These sentiments mirror Richard Louv's (2008) concerns of today's nature-deficit child and the need to shift school's role in rekindling the bond while fostering healthy student growth

and ecological regrowth. PBE has "the potential to promote civic engagement, democratic practices, an ethic of care for others and the environment, and the fostering of values that are largely absent from individualistic and utilitarian approaches to schooling" (McInerney et al., 2011). Providing student teachers with place-based methods can transfer benefits of PBE to their students and society.

Conclusion

It can be argued that including PBE in teacher preparation could alleviate some of the tension between "doing school" and authentic instruction. The student teachers already recognize and utilize some of the characteristics of PBE, and those that they do not, along with extended practice and instruction in PBE, could offer benefits in the areas in which they still struggle. Meanwhile, the current objectives of the teacher preparation program could still, if not more effectively, be met with PBE. Embedding PBE in TEPs could create a more holistic and innovative approach for developing the skills and knowledge in alignment with NCTE/IRA standards. Specifically, those that are related, but not limited, to research, multi-dimensional understandings, generating ideas and questions, as well as effective communication. It is conceptualized that the same benefits of PBE and its potential to mediate struggle is relevant to novice and veteran in-service teachers.

This study included a brief integration of PBE within an English methods course. Kea and Trent (2013), however, suggest avoiding fragmented instruction with dabs of this pedagogy, instead incorporating principles throughout teacher education curriculum, including the internships. The methods of suggested incorporation include lesson plan feedback, rubrics to assess how it has been infused, increased cooperative learning, and less lecturing. Simply giving student teachers resources is not enough; purposeful integration into preservice teacher education programs is necessary to break subject-area divisions (McDonald & Dominguez, 2010) and integrate PBE with classroom skills. Because this progressive pedagogy is one promising way to support teachers, while also supporting communities and student development, future study in these areas is recommended to develop the curriculum of PBE in teacher training.

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Erika Lynn Bass

Dialoguing with Place: Using Writing Instruction to Inquire into Place

Abstract

This article discusses the value of a place-based and dialogic stance to writing instruction. Providing opportunities for students to explore their lived experiences as valuable members of their local communities can foster motivation and engagement. All students come to school with different understandings and views of thinking and behaving; using those experiences in the classroom will help students to make meaning out of something that would otherwise seem like compulsory time filler. Using writing instruction as a catalyst for inquiry and discussion surrounding place and its relation to the curriculum, this article discusses teaching strategies that teachers can use to begin to enact this type of instruction in their classrooms.

Introduction

Designing curriculum to motivate and empower students involves creating spaces for students to have autonomy in the classroom. One key way to provide students with choice and autonomy is to incorporate students' lived experiences into the curriculum. Place-based pedagogy, which was founded in areas outside of education (e.g., agriculture, forestry, environmental studies) (Sobel, 2005), provides an opportunity for students to use their lived experiences in conjunction with the curriculum. Dialogic pedagogy, based on Bakhtin's (1981) theories of language, pairs with place-based pedagogies by providing a space for students to explore multiple perspectives within their place—learning and understanding others' lived experiences. Writing instruction is a powerful tool for providing opportunities for students to explore their lived experiences and their places.

Dialogic pedagogy, according to Stewart (2019) "is an approach to teaching that values questioning, examines context, explores multiple perspectives, challenges hierarchical structures, and views learning as a generative act" (p. 213). Moreover, dialogic pedagogy pairs naturally with place-based pedagogy because they both have connections to critical pedagogy. Critical literacy, as discussed by Freire and Macedo (1987), is designed to "lead students to recognize various tensions and enable them to deal effectively with them" (p. 49). Students entering into dialogue with the curriculum and the oppressive forces that seek to maintain the status quo in the classroom are engaging in a critical pedagogical process by recognizing the tensions that exist in their worlds. As students write, they are entering into a discourse community; a conversation that is ongoing. This is similar to going to a social gathering and joining in a conversation: People don't enter conversations by repeating what others have already said; instead, they use what others have said and connect to their own

ideas and experiences (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010). This paper provides instructional take-aways teachers can use to enact a dialogic, place-based stance in the classroom.

Place-Based and Dialogic Pedagogies

Dialogic pedagogy is founded on Bakhtin's theories of language and culture. Bakhtin (1981) discussed the mythical Adam as the only being who entered into a "virginal yet verbally unqualified world with the first word" who could escape "dialogic interaction," which cannot happen today (p. 279). It is impossible to escape dialogic interaction because every utterance is connected to the words of others (Bakhtin, 1981). Furthermore, what Bakhtin termed *heteroglossia* connects what is said to the context, or "the orientation of the word amid the utterances and languages of others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 300). Because each utterance is shaped by the context in which it is uttered, the tension of heteroglossia is important to writers; they must find a way to express their ideas in connection with themselves, but in such a way that more than just a select group of people have access to that piece of writing.

Freire (1970) discussed his concepts of dialogue, which connect to Bakhtin's theories of language and culture. Freire argued that "without dialogue there can be no communication and without communication there can be no true education" (p. 93). The purpose of education is to provide opportunities for people to dialogue about their views and others' views (Freire, 1970). Because dialogic pedagogy stems from Bakhtin's theories of language and culture and Freire argued that education needs to provide opportunities for people to dialogue about their views and others' views, these two concepts connect together well, especially in creating a writing classroom that seeks to value student voices.

Bakhtin (1981) discussed the concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces in language. According to Bakhtin, "Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)" (p. 272). Centripetal forces in language are those that work to unify the codifications of language; centrifugal forces are those that work toward multiple meanings—the meanings everyone makes for themselves once entered into actual speech. In order for students to make meaning of and engage in the texts of the classroom, there needs to be a balanced tug between the centripetal and centrifugal forces of language. Providing students with an opportunity to develop their content before focusing on mechanics and structure will help with cultivating this tug between forces. As students express themselves, while focusing on content over mechanics, they may find that certain words or phrases that are pulled more centrifugally are more impactful in the context, while still revising much of what they are writing to pull more centripetally, unifying the language of the piece to a larger audience. This is important in writing because as students transact with the language they are using to get their point across, they need to have that delicate

balance between the two forces of language so that the utterance matches the context in which it occurs.

Dialogic classrooms are similar to Bakhtin's concept of centripetal and centrifugal forces—they exist on a continuum; it is neither monological nor dialogical (Fecho, Coombs, & McAuley, 2012). What this means for the classroom is that sometimes the lessons can skew more toward the monological end of the continuum or more to the dialogical end, but they should not skew to one end routinely, but find a delicate balance on the continuum, which is similar to the tug or balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces of language.

In order to create an equitable classroom where all students' voices are valued, Bakhtin's concept of *heteroglossia*, which literally means different tongues, is key to creating equity. When creating an equitable classroom, Fecho (2013) argued that "trying to achieve some modicum of balance in that tension [between forces]" (p. 117) is what matters in making sure that meaning can be made. Fecho and Botzakis (2007) operationalized Bakhtin's term "feast of becoming" to show that there is often an existential crisis that can occur when this tug exists between the two heteroglossic forces. When students are given opportunities to transact with the unifying and individual meanings of words and utterances "literacy classrooms . . . become . . . playgrounds, workplaces, and intellectual places of the future" (Fecho & Botzakis, 2007, p. 556).

Including a Dialogic Stance to Enhance Curricula

Dialogic pedagogy provides opportunities in the classroom for students to inquire into multiple viewpoints and explore context (Stewart, 2019). Providing opportunities for students to make connections between people and places, and how they work in concert with one another to make places special, can open the door for a more dialogic stance and conversation to happen in the classroom (for more a larger study that discusses this connection, see Bass, 2019). Creating a curriculum that has opportunities for students to dialogue about place, while including a more deliberate dialogic stance to the curriculum can help students think more critically about their place. Dialogic pedagogy provides a lens through which instruction in the classroom can value inquiry, explore context and multiple viewpoints, providing opportunities for students to co-construct meaning in the classroom. Teachers can use a dialogic stance in the classroom to provide opportunities for students to bring competing beliefs into conversation with one another and the curriculum, while exploring tensions that exist between the classroom, their experiences, and the status quo (Bakhtin, 1981; Stewart, 2019).

Creating an environment where students can connect to place also opens up the conversation to global issues (Azano, 2019). All places, local, rural, metropolitan, suburban, near and far, are connected to and shaped by larger global forces (Brooke, 2011). Brooke asserted that "local reality is almost always shaped by much more widespread cultural, natural, and economic forces" (p. 164). Moreover, students understanding their sense of place is key to understanding and caring about more distant places (Azano, 2019). Using students' experience as a catalyst for developing students as change agents can start with writing instruction, connecting what they experience in their communities to larger, global context. Providing a space for students to value their local communities through a dialogic, place-based curriculum helps students to use that context to make meaning in the classroom.

Instructional Take-Aways

Dialogic pedagogy provides a space for students to question hierarchies through writing. By including a more dialogic stance—providing opportunities for students to inquire into their own belief systems, as well as the hierarchies that exist in their communities—will provide a more critical discussion of what students can do to act as change agents in their communities. To enact a dialogic, place-based stance in the classroom, teachers can utilize these take-aways as a basis for instruction in the writing classroom:

- *Have students write about stereotypes they experience:* Teachers can bring the concept of place into dialogue with students' experiences by having students write about how they have been influenced by or subjected to stereotypes ascribed to them by others in relation to their community and the people who live there. After writing, discuss stereotypes that surround students, allowing students to dialogue with one another and their own beliefs in discussion or through writing to examine multiple perspectives, and providing opportunities for students to examine their beliefs and the implications of those beliefs on their communities.

- *Inquire into and dialogue with opportunities and limitations in their communities:* Teachers can guide students as they write to bring their lived experiences into dialogue with the concept that being part of a community can be a positive and powerful factor in their lives. Teachers can use writing to help students explore pathways to success when they meet challenges or systematic oppression. Helping students use the opportunities afforded to them by being a part of their community, they can then consider how the fabric of their community might serve as a resource when they encounter systems of oppression (e.g., school funding, access to healthcare). For example, writing prompts and discussion can be centered on things like: What opportunities to do they experience as members of their community? Are there systems of oppression at work in their local community and, if so, how has that affected them personally? What place-based solutions might you propose for

those challenges based on local support systems? Exploring these ideas, and the beliefs students have about them, while inquiring into beliefs (and even challenging them) will bring a more critical understanding of what place means to them.

- *Inquire into the opportunities and richness of rural life students have experienced:* Teachers can use writing as a means of helping students call attention to the richness of their own cultural and geographic contexts. Students can also write about the ways they and their families have experienced community life. Writing prompts and discussion can begin around questions like: What do they value? How would they offer a critique of the relationship their place has with the rest of the state or country? Are there inequalities or systems of oppression that have affected them personally and how would they promote place-based solutions to those challenges? Writing about and dialoguing with their experiences can help them also dialogue with their values and beliefs as members of their communities.

Conclusion

Writing instruction that connects to place provides opportunities for students to enter into a discourse community, entering in to a conversation that is ongoing. As students enter into this ongoing conversation, through writing and dialoguing with their experiences, they are transacting with other viewpoints and other classmates' experiences to create a strong and positive environment for learning (Fecho, 2000). As Freire and Macedo (1987) asserted, "Reading does not merely consist of decoding the written word or language; rather it is preceded by and intertwined with the knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically interconnected" (p. 29). Using dialogic pedagogy in conjunction with place-based pedagogy, the classroom then becomes a space where there is an understanding that "all [writers] belong to discourse communities" (Nystrand, 1989, p. 71) and where students can use writing to connect their reality with the reality of the classroom. Through writing, co-constructing meanings and experiences, and transacting with texts, students are inquiring into and challenging the tensions that exist in their communities and lives.

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Amanda C. Biviano

"I Just Ain't Buyin' It:" Integrating Place-Based Education Into a Rural High School

Abstract

This paper explores the use of a place-based approach to examine the Appalachian dialect and literacy practices of students in a secondary English Language-Arts class. The use of place-based education creates value and purpose for writing and allows students to go beyond the stereotypes surrounding their culture and language. Specific activities and resources for dialect and new literacy studies are given as an example of empowering students to engage in writing in a rural, Appalachian school.

In the modernist novel *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, author Gertrude Stein (1933) wrote of the constraints of grammar and correctness in writing for an editor. As Stein writes,

commas were unnecessary, the sense should be intrinsic and not have to be explained by commas and otherwise commas were only a sign that one should pause and take breath but one should know of oneself when one wanted to pause and take breath. However, as she liked Haweis very much and he had given her a delightful painting for a fan, she gave him two commas. It must however be added that on rereading the manuscript she took the commas out. (p. 132)

As writers, and at one point students, we all have felt this same sense of stubbornness to keep our own words and voice in our writing. As an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, I have had many students resist my editing marks on their papers over the years just as Stein did. One particular memory that stands out is when a student argued that he should be allowed to use the word "ain't" in his paper. As he stated, "That's the way I talk, and I ain't gonna change it." I argued my point on the use of standard English when writing and speaking for school, but I also admired his determination and strong connection to his culture, so much so that, like Stein, I let the writer have the final say.

However, there was a bigger issue underlying this argument. The student, who I will call James, was a bright and talented young man, yet he did not quite "fit" into the classroom and often acted out against teachers. He tended to stay close to those who were like him—rough and rowdy, hunting and four-wheeling, country boys—and he tried hard to affect an air of total disgust and disinterest in school. A year or two after he graduated, his mother shared with me that "James just didn't like school. I thought we'd never get him through." Looking back on this experience and others while teaching, I realize that students like James are

often at a disadvantage in school. These students who come from rural schools and other diverse cultures often speak in a dialect that is far from the standard English they are taught in English classes (Donehower, 2007). Students are often resistant to accept the language of academia, perhaps harboring long-held distrust of teachers and school. As a result, many students like James tuned out their classes and rejected the dominant culture maintained by their teachers and their schools.

ELA teachers, particularly in rural areas, oftentimes fail to acknowledge the outer world of rural students (Azano, 2011) and to see them as talented individuals who can be just as creative in their writing as great writers in the past who pushed the limits with language— Stein, Hemingway, and E.E. Cummings to name a few. In my school, the Appalachian dialect students used was also one that was surrounded by a deficit narrative, perpetrated by movies and popular culture (Donehower, 2007). As Hayes (2017) writes,

> there seem to be at least two ideas at work in the dominant narrative: that Appalachians are without "real" literacy in terms of academic discourse (and are unwilling or unable to gain it), and that the literacies they have, in terms of cultural and place-based literacies, don't count in the ways we might otherwise believe multicultural literacies should. (p. 73)

Faced with stereotypes and assumptions that students in rural schools are deficit in academic discourse, ELA teachers, myself included, often turn to formal grammar exercises and the marking of papers to teach their students formal Standard Grammar. Yet, these practices only lead to isolating students, since they separate them from their own dialect and language practices of their immediate society. After teaching for several years in this rural school, I saw this resistance frequently. Research shows that dialects can foster social bonds and are strongly tied to place and community. These ties are greater in smaller communities than in "open social networks where people interact with a scope of people in different circumstances" (Wolfram & Schlling-Estes, 1998, p. 171).

When rural students such as mine adopt features of standard English, many run the risk of losing their connections to social groups and peers. As Wolfram and Schlling-Estes (1998) explain, "a large part of in-group identity is often oppositional identity, or the positioning of oneself as the opposite of what one is not, including positioning oneself as someone who does not use Standard English" (p. 318). In many cases, this oppositional identity causes students to reject schooling altogether, and, unfortunately, the subject most easily rejected is the one that asks for students to speak and write in a way that seems unnatural to them, namely the English Language Arts class. This was true for my students, who saw the social world of academia as one in which they would rather "die" than be a part of.

So as I preached the virtues of learning standard English to my students, I often found they

just weren't buyin' it. I began to realize that if I failed to acknowledge the literacy practices of my student's personal lives, then I failed to understand the complex social function language played in their day-to-day lives. When my students were consistently denied their native speech, they were losing a very valuable part of their culture and their personal identity.

Place-Based Education and Language Use

To bridge the gap between the linguistic world of my students and the academic language I expected them to conform to, I turned to the tenets of place-based education. David Sobel (2004) defines place-based education as "the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum" (p. 4). Placed-based education seeks to engage students with community problem-solving and civic-minded interactions (Gruenewald, 2003). Smith and Sobel (2010) define these as "the environments in which students live—natural, social, cultural" which are used "as starting points to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum" (p. x).

To begin implementing a place-based pedagogy, I first considered the language prejudices and stereotypes that surround the dialects of my rural students. As Lyman and Figgins (2005) state, "[t]he unspoken assumption that nonstandard dialects are 'degradations' of a standard are simply wrong, a myth promulgated by language mavens who have not often examined their linguistic prejudices" (p. 41). Students needed to see that their way of writing and speaking was not wrong, but in fact followed many complex patterns of grammar that are studied by linguists today. As Smitherman (2003) argued, students do not need "models of correctness" but instead "a broader understanding of the intricate connection between one's language and his cultural experience, combined with insight into the political nature and social stratification of American dialects" (p. 128). Language use fluctuates according to situation and user and is tied to systems of power and prestige. I knew my students needed to realize the full complexity and power structures surrounding language if I were to ever convince them to value the language of academia.

To begin a place-based approach to language and composition, I first focused on the cultural value and beauty in language, as well as the linguistic varieties in English. We studied the history and linguistic features of Appalachian dialect in detail and considered how it is perceived in our society. We also watched documentaries on dialect such as *Do You Speak American?* (MacNeil, Buchanan, & Cran, 2005), which focuses on American dialects and sociolinguistic controversies surrounding nonstandard English. In addition, *The Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change*, found online, allowed us to hear the many dialects spoken in the United States.

Next, we examined stereotypes surrounding Appalachian dialects by watching old cartoons such as *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *The Looney Tunes* to see how caricatures of rural people have been created in television and popular culture. Students discovered that the stereotypes surrounding their dialect was often one of the lazy or ignorant Southerner. I resituated this study of dialect to celebrate place by examining the unique qualities of my students' language use. With the help of a former linguistics professor who studies Appalachian dialect, I shared the sophisticated and complex rules and patterns of this dialect. With her help, I created a more in-depth examination of the problems surrounding language, as well as the completion of dialect exercises to build student awareness of the linguistic rules surrounding dialect. Other useful exercises were found in Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998) *American English: dialects and variation*, Schuster's (2003) *Breaking the rules: Liberating Writers Through Innovative Grammar Instruction* and Ward and Wolfram (2006) *American Voices: How Dialects Differ from Coast to Coast*. Through these activities, students could see how Appalachian dialect was appropriated and used in our society and how to argue against harmful stereotypes.

Writing For the Community

My next task in integrating a place-based education approach, was to discuss how students' own voices might interact in the varying spaces of literacy today. This served as a way to examine the "heritage, values, and history of community," and to "act effectively in and with the community—identifying current strengths and problems, negotiating local and external definitions of community that would restrict and stagnant" (Brooke, 2004, p. 12). Students turned to an examination of the literacies within their own culture to form a better understanding of the literate practices around them. I purchased books and found essays that either focused on local places and histories of our community or were written by Appalachian writers. I also invited local writers and community members into the classroom to speak with the class about why and how they wrote.

To actively engage with our community through writing, I formed community partnerships with local non-profit organizations and our town newspaper so that students could write within their community. Some of our projects included writing for a website of a community sustainability group, designing a brochure for the local chapter of Relay for Life, and writing news articles on the actions of our local soup kitchen. Students were motivated and excited to engage with their community in this way, and members of the community were appreciative of our written contributions as well. Friends would even approach me at church, an important locale in rural communities, and express how impressed they were to see my students' writing in the community.

An awareness of language diversity and how one can enter literate practices within their own

community empowered my students and allowed them to realize that all language variations can be valued in our society. This place-based approach to language allowed me to move past an overemphasis on standardized English and to prevent the internalization of negative stereotypes surrounding my students' dialects and cultures. As O'Kawa (2003) argued, students' "unawareness leaves them susceptible to believing and upholding myths that may be destructive to others and ultimately themselves, for some students internalize linguistic colonialism as both victims and perpetrators of discrimination" (p. 111).

New Literacy Approaches to Place-Based Education

Our work did not necessarily stop at local and community based writing, however. We also considered how the language of the student's cultural context was impacted by online spaces. Students needed to connect their own language with the skills necessary in today's literacy practices. As Kress (2003) states, "the screen more than the page is now the dominant site of representation and communication in general…the screen is the site of the image, and the logic of the image dominates the semiotic organization of the screen" (p. 65). I felt that writing and language study that is situated in place should consider the point at which students come into contact with writing in their larger world, including the world wide web.

However, a challenge facing rural schools such as mine was the gap between technology use and access. In their study on the state of wiki usage in the United States, Reich, Murnane, and Willett (2012) found that wikis created in affluent schools demonstrate more 21st century skill development than in less affluent schools. Lower income students, who are oftentimes minorities and rural students, not only have less access to computers, but they face a divide in how technology is used in the classroom (Warshauer & Matuchniak, 2010). Many of my students were impeded by the lack of a home computer or poor server speed. They were also unfamiliar with basic Web 2.0 skills, such as online navigation and word-processing.

For this reason, new literacy was a major emphasis in my place-based education curriculum. The internet offered a world of discourse in which my students could enter and participate in equally. Unlike school literacy, cyberspace does not privilege or exclude others, but instead, as Lankshear and Nobel (2003) argued, "can be peer aided, can find its way around faulty spelling, can lean heavily on use of icons, sound/audio, graphics, and so on" (p. 71). Such a space is ideal for those whose language is different than the standardized, formal English, and particularly those whose voices and dialects are judged and rejected in our society. Acceptance is made possible by the fact that anyone can participate online. A "bottom up" approach for organizing information and for connecting with others online can be used with "wikipedia, fan fiction, fan manga, anime, and online gaming" (Nobel & Lankshear, 2007, p. 19).

My students began online literary work through podcasting and blogging, which allowed them to harness the strong oral tradition present in their culture. They were also able to share parts of their "home language" expressed in their culture and interests. For example, one student started his podcast with a song he had written, sung to bluegrass music. He then gave an overview of the local fishing spots, critiquing and offering details on each. Other students in the class were so excited about his podcast that they forced me to listen as soon as he was finished. Another student composed a podcast and blog explaining the harms of smoking marijuana, particularly as an athlete. Because these students were able to speak their knowledge in their own voices, they created pieces that were entertaining, intelligent, and real.

After composing online works, students addressed where their voices "fit" into society. We examined various kinds of communication by looking at blogs and other forms of social networking, and we discussed ways in which these forms of literacy varied in our society. Students continued writing blogs and recording podcasts, and they also researched and listened to popular podcasts to understand and adapt to online literacy traits. This step opened up a new awareness to the ideas of audience and context in writing and planted the seed for, what I hoped was, the growth of my students' "literacy practice," which takes place outside of school and throughout their lives (Purcell-Gates, 2007, p. 260). As students entered the digital world of new literacy practices, they found many ways to showcase their works and to value their voices as Appalachian and teenage writers.

Throughout the years, I've developed a number of briefer activities to build an awareness of varying literacies. These included the following:

- using YouTube and Photo Essays from *The New York Times*, we considered how literacy is changing. Text combined with video and photography is a common way to spread messages to millions of viewers. Students searched for and discuss ways that we use images and text to communicate and ask how these examples illustrate a new use of rhetoric and persuasion in our society;
- sharing ways we write online. Students submitted their own writings on forums, fan pages, or review sites and discussed how they differ from standard English and printed texts;
- creating an online language forum to showcase and collaborate student's findings as they have fun with language. Students shared fun words, phrases, word combinations, etc. with the class on a regular basis;
- sharing writing through blogging and emails with other classes. Students used this online collaboration to focus on personal interests such as a hobbies, sports, or special projects and continue writing in a voice of their own.

The underlying aim of these projects was to give students opportunities for creativity and autonomy as they positioned themselves as writers. Without the constraints of having to adapt to a formal, standardized, written discourse, students were free to develop and share ideas on a new level.

All writers need a space to speak in their own voices and share their ideas openly, a space that is freely given in the classroom. Yet, ELA teachers often create patterns and models for students to fit into. We can teach students how to use their voice in their community, whether it be a nonstandard or standard English. As Ball and Muhammad (2003) state, "we can better evaluate linguistic systems by assessing whether or not a given system is the most appropriate or most effective variety of English for the particular communication at hand" (p. 78). The possibilities for student voice and creativity in writing can be expanded through an examination of the many forms of English available them.

Place-Based Education and Rural Schools

Students in rural schools are in the process of redefining and expressing themselves in new ways. As they grow into adults, ready to enter their communities, they are faced with the difficult task of convincing them that the academic voice their teachers wish for them to adopt is a worthy one. The acceptance of this voice can begin with an appreciation of students' own voices before searching for where they fit in the literacy practices of their school, community, and society.

While the Internet has opened the door of communication for many students in rural communities, the common perceptions and prejudices surrounding language use in the wider world has not lessened. Students can write openly on the web, but in many other contexts, their ways of speaking and writing are not valued. In our society, formal standard English is the grammar of the upper-class, privileged members of our society, and sadly students from lower socioeconomic status or rural schools are blocked by the barriers of class and privilege that this form of English entails. Teachers might underscore this privilege by addressing the social and cultural practices surrounding language use openly in the classroom through place-based dialect and literacy study. Place-based education offers one means for appreciating the dialect and patterns of speech and writing common in rural students' localities, as well as ones they are asked to adapt to in various writing contexts. If all forms of literacy are explored and offered to our students, we can end our bias towards standard English and celebrate the many ways in which our students communicate in our society.

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H. Michelle Kreamer and Natasha Heny

The Power of Authenticity: Empowering Student Writers through Meaningful, Real World Writing Experiences

Abstract

Authentic writing tasks mimic writing that takes place in the real world or settings beyond the classroom (Casbergue & Plauché, 2005; Kohnen, 2013). Benefits associated with such writing tasks include engaged students (Whitaker, 2005), potential connections between students' personal experiences and writing (Dutro, 2009), connections to one's learning (Peterson, 2007) and the ability to transfer writing skills to meaningful, real-world settings (Rainey & Moje, 2012). Teachers, including English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, should incorporate authentic writing tasks into their own classrooms to benefit student writers and empower them as life-long learners. Given the potential benefits of authentic writing, as well as the need for an increased focus on writing and writing instruction (NCWASC, 2003), a university-level writing course was re-designed to support K-12 educators as writers and instructors of writing. The course, Writing Across the Curriculum, incorporates research-based best practices for writing instruction, including a focus on authentic writing. Best practices for promoting authentic writing, including using mentor texts; modeling writing; providing opportunities for peer collaboration; and writing for a real audience, were incorporated into the course. These instructional approaches are detailed within the article, along with recommendations for incorporating said practices into ELA classrooms.

> *"In order to write about life first you must live it."* –Ernest Hemingway

Hemingway's quote suggests the value of drawing from real-life experiences, using these experiences to inspire and infuse into one's writing. This connection between lived experiences and writing highlights the value of authentic writing, or writing that is personally meaningful to a writer (Newman & Fink, 2012), including student writers.

Despite its frequent use, Kohnen (2013) claims that "'authentic writing' is an imprecise term" (p. 32). Indeed, this becomes evident in a study conducted by Johnson (2016), in which the researcher determined that a state-level education department considered everything except multiple-choice tests to be authentic assessments. In regard to writing specifically, Johnson explained that "any writing…(whether it was formulaic or not, whether the topic was chosen by the student or teacher, or whether the paper was ever read by anyone else outside the classroom) was considered an 'authentic assessment'" (p. 52). Given inconsistencies in how the term "authentic" is used, for the purpose of this article, authentic writing tasks are defined as those tasks that mimic writing beyond the classroom or would take place in real-world settings (Casbergue & Plauché, 2005; Kohnen, 2013). Characteristics associated

with authentic writing include encouraging choice when writing (Whitaker, 2005), writing for different purposes (Hammond, 2009), and writing for varied audiences (Fisher & Frey, 2013; Peterson, 2007), including opportunities to publish writing (DiPardo, Staley, Selland, Martin, & Gniewek, 2012; Whitaker, 2005). There are a number of benefits for students associated with authentic writing, including student engagement (Whitaker, 2005), opportunities for connections between writing and learning (Peterson, 2007), and the ability to transfer learning to personally relevant settings (Rainey & Moje, 2012). The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges (NCWASC; 2003), however, has described writing as "the neglected element of American school reform" (p. 9), suggesting a need to support students as writers and teachers as instructors of writing.

Despite this concerning lack of attention to writing and writing instruction, English Language Arts (ELA) teachers are positioned to incorporate research-based best practices to better support student writers and empower them as life-long learners. Specifically, ELA teachers can do this by enhancing the instruction and support of writing in their own classrooms by incorporating authentic writing tasks and opportunities into their instruction. For instance, Dutro (2009) notes that authentic writing allows students to make connections between their writing and personal experiences. Additionally, engaging in authentic writing tasks can help students obtain skills to "move from academic reading and writing in one subject-area classroom to another, from a classroom to a job site, or from home to the workplace" (Rainey & Moje, 2012, p. 76). This suggests that students can learn from authentic writing experiences and transfer the skills and knowledge obtained to personally meaningful settings beyond the classroom. Thus, through involvement in authentic writing experiences, students are provided opportunities to become autonomous learners and are empowered to transfer their knowledge from the classroom to a meaningful, real-world environment.

In response to a need for improved student writing, we worked to re-design a university-level writing course, *Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)*, to support K-12 educators, including ELA teachers, as writers and instructors of writing. The course was re-designed to focus on salient topics aligned to research-based best practices, including the significance of writing instruction, authentic writing instruction within the classroom, and writing to support content learning. A key belief that guided the course re-design is that all teachers are teachers of writing and, as such, should also view themselves as writers. In the remainder of this article, we focus on the value and impact of supporting teachers to incorporate authentic writing instruction into their classrooms. The following includes a brief review of literature, an explanation of how the writing course was designed in light of best practices for writing instruction supported by research, and recommendations for applying these practices to secondary ELA classrooms to support authentic writing instruction and empower student writers.

Review of Literature

Authentic Writing and Associated Benefits

Authentic writing tasks are those that make connections to the "'real world'" (Kohnen, 2013, p. 33) and reflect the types of writing that take place outside of the school setting. Casbergue and Plauché (2005) refer to these as "the same kinds of writing tasks that literate people perform outside classroom walls" (p. 33). In particular, Kohnen (2013) identified and explained the differences between two different types of authenticity—latent and functional. She noted that while writing tasks can be authentic in that they may reflect an authentic genre or real-world writing task, if they are not taught or assessed in an authentic way, this is latent authenticity (Kohnen, 2013). Hammond (2009) described such a task in her article in which students wrote fictionalized stories and incorporated research into their writing, mimicking the process of fiction writers. In particular, Hammond reflected on the compromised authenticity of the writing task explaining, "While this assignment is authentic in the fact that students have a real-world purpose and audience for their writing, the requirement of including internal citations does somewhat fracture the authenticity" (p. 56). In this example, aspects of authentic writing were present; however, this writing task was not entirely authentic as it included in-text citations that would not typically be present in the genre of fiction writing.

Functional authenticity, on the other hand, reflects those tasks in which "[s]tudent writing is assessed according to teacher goals and genre goals; in other words, success in the genre (by external criteria) and success in the assignment are one in the same" (Kohnen, 2013, p. 32). Kohnen describes her work with SciJourn, in which students were positioned as scientific reporters, noting that for the writing tasks to be functionally authentic, this "demanded that students approach the writing as reporters, not just as students proving that they read a piece of text" (p. 32). While she argues that complete functional authenticity in classroom writing tasks is not possible due to the nature of the traditional school context, she maintains that efforts can and should be made for teachers to "start thinking about the role of various 'real world' writing assignments in their classes" (Kohnen, 2013, p. 33).

Other researcher articles (e.g., Dutro, 2009; Fisher & Frey, 2013) as well as practitioners (e.g., Adams, 2009; Chase & Fink, 2012; Whitaker, 2005) have also acknowledged the need for students to participate in authentic writing experiences. For instance, in Whitaker's (2005) work on best practices for writing instruction, he recommends teachers "arrange for meaningful-to-students reasons to write," (p. 3). Specifically, Whitaker explains that when it comes to student writing, allowing opportunities for student choice is one way to engage students. Additionally, he expresses the value of writing for an authentic audience that goes beyond that of the teacher (Whitaker, 2005), recommending that teachers include

"opportunities for publishing" (p. 4) student writing. Peterson (2007) describes the connection between learning and authentic writing, explaining when students make connections between their own experiences and prior knowledge to what they are learning, this can allow for "authentic contexts for student writing" (p. 28). With this in mind, it is important to consider how authentic writing tasks and instruction can be embedded into one's teaching to encourage student autonomy and ownership as writers.

Promoting Authentic Writing Experiences

Promoting authentic writing in the classroom through various strategies and instructional approaches has been detailed by a multitude of researchers (e.g. Cervetti & Barber, 2009; Chase & Fink, 2012; Hammond, 2009). As part of re-designing the university-level writing course, we delved deeply into the expansive field of writing research to learn more about current practices in writing and writing instruction to inform the WAC course. During this process, it became evident that using mentor texts, modeling one's own writing, providing opportunities for peer collaboration, and writing for varied audiences were all approaches to writing instruction that could aid in the process of composing authentic writing.

In their work, Cervetti and Barber (2009) assert that a curriculum (in this case, a science curriculum) should include a combination of texts and hands-on learning opportunities to engage students in authentic learning experiences. By including texts that reflect the real world and using them as mentor texts for students, teachers can share examples of authentic writing with students that they can, in turn, use as models when composing their own writing. Building on this research, Newman and Fink (2012) made an additional important connection between students' reading and writing, explaining "[w]riters learn to write by emulating and adapting what their favorite authors do—this is the crux of the mentor text" (p. 25). To take the use of mentor texts a step further, Hammond (2009) describes using a combination of mentor texts by published authors, as well as compiling examples of student work to serve as mentor texts for future students. Additionally, she modeled her own writing for students which provided them with another mentor text, while simultaneously demonstrating her writing process for a particular writing task (Hammond, 2009). In this way, the teacher was serving as a model writer and instructor of writing.

Other approaches to supporting authentic writing in the classroom include providing opportunities for student collaboration and writing for authentic audiences. In his work, Whitaker (2005) recommends that students have opportunities to collaborate when writing as a way to "gain ownership and independence" (p. 7). To promote such peer collaboration in one kindergarten classroom, students were encouraged to interact with one another while writing as a way to obtain feedback and share ideas (Chase & Fink, 2012). Additionally, students shared polished writing in front of their classmates to create an authentic audience of

their peers (Chase & Fink, 2012). To further extend the reach with whom students share their writing, Whitaker (2005) suggests writing can be shared with younger students, families, and others who make up broader audiences. Daniels, Zemelman, and Steineke (2007) consider public writing to be "intentional, highly-polished pieces that can go out into the world, [and] connect with real readers…" (p. 112), highlighting the numerous opportunities for students to share their writing with authentic audiences.

By incorporating the aforedescribed practices and strategies into one's instruction, ELA teachers can create an environment that values authentic writing experiences and empowers students through writing. In the following section, we describe how such approaches to writing instruction were incorporated into a university-level course designed to aid in-service teachers as both writers and writing instructors.

Writing Course Re-design

In re-designing the *Writing Across the Curriculum* course, our goal was to create a rigorous course to help educators grow in their writing instruction by grounding the curricular decisions in research while also being practitioner-conscious by offering practical strategies for the classroom. Another goal of the course is for teacher participants to become part of a writing community through frequent opportunities for collaboration in order to learn from one another while growing as writers and writing instructors. Finally, it is our belief that all teachers are and should be teachers of writing. Therefore, although the focus of this article is on ELA classrooms, the design of the WAC course was for a wide variety of educators, so all teachers can work to improve their writing instruction and, ultimately, student writing.

We first began to re-conceptualize the course, including the goals, essential questions, and learning objectives to be addressed. This was a collaborative and iterative process in which we continually returned to the research as we revised and refined the course. Given the importance of and benefits associated with authentic writing experiences as detailed in the previous section, this was one of the major categories highlighted within the WAC course. Specially, we incorporated the aforementioned approaches to supporting authentic writing as evidenced in research (i.e., using mentor texts, modeling one's writing, providing opportunities for peer collaboration, and writing for varied audiences) to provide teacher participants with practical, research-based approaches to enhance their writing and writing instruction.

Authentic Writing in the Classroom

The connection between students' learning and authentic writing as noted by Peterson (2007) became an Enduring Understanding of the WAC course. This understanding, along with Essential Questions and learning objectives for the course, are detailed in Table 1

and highlighted the need for a strong focus on authentic writing and instruction within the WAC course. To address these goals, we incorporated various instructional approaches and strategies identified as effective writing practices into the WAC class to position participants as both writers and instructors of writing. In the following sub-sections, we describe ways in which the course was designed to engage participants in authentic writing experiences and to design authentic writing tasks for their students.

Table 1

Overview of course goals and learning objectives as they relate to authentic writing

Enduring Understanding	Authentic writing experiences can support student learning across the disciplines.
Essential Questions	• What distinguishes authentic and inauthentic writing tasks? • What is the significance of an authentic audience on writing practices? • What happens to our writing when we have a specific purpose? • How can authentic writing support student learning across the disciplines? • What does authentic writing look like in practice in my content area? • How can I design authentic writing tasks for my content area?
Learning Objectives	Participants will understand: • a teacher's own writing experiences influence the way he/she approaches writing instruction in the classroom • writing practices can influence the lives of teachers and students, both in and outside of school • authentic writing experiences can support student learning across the disciplines Participants will know: • how to run a writing workshop in a K-12 classroom • writing genres based on purpose of text • characteristics of authentic writing tasks Participants will be able to: • design authentic classroom-based writing tasks that provide students the means to demonstrate content understanding • develop written texts for specific purposes and audiences • design classroom-based writing tasks that support content learning

Teachers as writers. One of the major ideas that drove the re-design of the writing course was that in order to be effective writing instructors, teachers should view themselves as writers. Therefore, as part of the course, teacher participants are tasked with producing writing for various purposes. In one such task, teacher participants are first directed to find and select three different mentor texts that they might use in the classroom—one written to inform or explain, one intended to persuade, and one designed to express oneself. After familiarizing themselves with mentor texts, participants in the WAC course produce personal writing composed for different purposes (i.e., persuade, inform, express oneself). The intention of this writing experience is for teachers to examine how writing about the same topic can differ based on the purpose for writing, including the influence of writing for varied audiences. This writing experience provides teacher participants with the experience of using mentor texts and writing for varied audiences, two approaches that aid in composing latent authentic writing for this task.

To move further along "the authenticity spectrum" (Kohnen, 2013, p. 32) toward functional authenticity, another writing task included as part of the WAC course is for participants to create a piece of professional writing about a topic or issue that is of personal relevance to them as an educator. For this writing task, participants select both the topic and medium (e.g., opinion piece in a newspaper, conference proposal, practitioner article in a journal) for which they would like to write and compose a piece of writing based on these choices. Sample mentor texts are included as a resource for this writing assignment, along with an authentic audience and opportunities for peer collaboration—all approaches to supporting authentic writing experiences.

Teachers as instructors of writing. As instructors of writing, one aspect of the WAC course includes having teacher participants engage with one another in frequent and on-going discussions on topics of writing and writing instruction. By engaging in online discussion forums, participants of the WAC course are encouraged to share their ideas with others, to make sense of writing-related topics, and to consider how they would incorporate these various strategies or components of writing instruction into their own classroom. Examples of such discussion topics and questions are included in Table 2. Furthermore, engaging in online group discussions is another form of collaboration through writing in which teacher participants can interact, allowing them to learn from one another while developing a community of writers and writing instructors.

Table 2

Forum discussion topics on authentic writing and writing instruction

1. Consider how writing choice, audience, and purpose influence writing outcomes. How might these factors influence your classroom instruction or writing?

2. Compare and contrast the potential impacts of authentic v. inauthentic writing in your classroom or content area. Describe how you will use the knowledge gained from this week's readings in regard to incorporating authentic writing in your classroom.

3. In what ways can K-12 students engage in authentic writing that can be influential to their lives?

4. Discuss the role of authentic writing as it supports learning in your discipline. In what ways might such writing tasks enhance your instruction and/or student learning?

One of the major assignments in the course is for teacher participants to design student writing tasks that align to their classroom content and are representative of real-world writing tasks in their particular content area. This is an opportunity for participants to brainstorm, draft, and design authentic writing tasks for their own students while collaborating with other educators to refine and revise said writing tasks. Just as when they are crafting their own writing tasks, teacher participants have an authentic audience and opportunities for collaboration, again aligning the course to research-based practices. The final assignment of the WAC course is a writing portfolio that brings together teacher participants' writing and writing tasks for their students. Additionally, the portfolio includes a reflection, which encourages participants to consider their learning throughout the WAC course and to describe how they plan to implement writing and writing instruction within their classroom. By being positioned as writers and instructors of writing simultaneously, teacher participants in the WAC course are empowered as writers and supported as writing instructors to transfer those best practice for writing instruction, including authentic writing experiences, to their students.

Recommendations for your ELA Classroom

The main goal of the WAC course is to provide teachers with a rigorous writing course to help them grow in their writing instruction by providing practical strategies for the classroom grounded in research. Based on a review of current writing research, it is evident that the re-designed course includes multiple opportunities for authentic writing experiences

for teachers and their students. Furthermore, research indicates that using mentor texts, modeling writing, providing opportunities for peer collaboration, and writing for varied audiences are all approaches that can be used to foster effective writing when engaging in authentic writing experiences. As such, these approaches were included throughout the WAC course, providing teachers with their own authentic writing experiences, as well as the tools to support students to take ownership of their writing and, by extension, their learning. While the WAC course was designed for educators from an array of different content areas, the strategies used within the course strongly align to secondary ELA classrooms. We encourage ELA teachers to implement the following recommendations within their classrooms as a way to improve student writing and empower students through authentic writing experiences.

First, ELA teachers should incorporate frequent opportunities for in-class writing with a focus on authentic writing tasks. Teachers can do this by giving students choice in what they write about, as well as having students write for real-world audiences. One way to support this practice is for students to engage in pre-writing tasks at the beginning of the academic year or periodically throughout the year to create a list of topics that they are interested in writing about. Examples of such pre-writing opportunities might include (also see Appendix A):

- Georgia Heard's Heart Mapping: creating a visual heart and labelling it with topics that are important or "close to one's heart" to write about

- Vanity Fair's Proust Questionnaire: a list of thought-provoking questions that can be referred to as a way to jump-start a new piece of writing

- Natalie Goldberg's Obsessions List: recording a list of one's "obsessions" or the things one spends considerable time thinking about and can re-visit to write about later

As students spend more time writing and have increased opportunities regarding choice when writing, teachers can then incorporate writing tasks that are authentic to the ELA discipline. For instance, students could produce news articles, podcasts, or blogs about various content-specific topics.

Our second recommendation, which supports the first, is to provide students with samples of authentic writing in a variety of genres. By incorporating mentor texts into one's instruction, students have a guide to follow, allowing for clearer expectations when composing a piece of writing. Furthermore, it is important to expose students to a variety of different types of writing and encourage them to step away from the all-too-familiar structure of the five-

paragraph essay. The following resources have examples of mentor texts and also highlight different types of real-world writing for students:

- Thoughtful Learning's Student Models (i.e., Mentor Texts)

- Annenberg Learner's "In the Real World" video examples of professionals discussing the role of writing as part of their jobs (i.e., authentic writing experiences)

Providing students with mentor texts, whether written by professional writers or fellow students, is a way to support students as they compose writing, while also giving them autonomy and ownership over their own work.

Finally, we recommend and strongly encourage ELA teachers to establish procedures and protocols within their classroom to foster a strong community of writers. This was one of the central tenets of the WAC course and is imperative for encouraging student writers to feel comfortable sharing their writing with peers and engaging in collaborative practices as previously described. As part of the WAC course, opportunities for peer collaboration were intentionally planned for all major writing tasks as a way to support the participants as writers and demonstrate that writing is not created in isolation. By having members of the course interact with a number of peers, they can become part of a writing community in which they work with others to brainstorm ideas, provide feedback, and share writing. While there are a number of ways to support and encourage a strong writing community within your classroom, the following are a few suggestions for how you can foster a community of writers:

- Writing workshops in which students interact with their peers, and teacher, to brainstorm, draft, provide feedback, and revise their writing

- Author's Chair for students to share their writing with their peers; Other forms of making writing "public". such as in a school or local paper, blog, etc. are also recommended

- And finally (and again because it is so important) daily, in-class writing, with teachers writing alongside their students, modeling positive writing behaviors

There is not one exact way in which teachers can go about creating a strong writing community within their classroom however, we believe that daily writing, coupled with frequent opportunities for collaboration (such as during a writing workshop), and encouraging students to share their writing are steps toward establishing a community of writers in one's ELA classroom.

Conclusion

In re-designing the WAC course for educators, we identified a number of areas to address to support teachers as writers and writing instructors. One of the most important things was to demonstrate the need for authentic writing experiences and have teachers engage in such writing tasks, as well as design authentic writing tasks for their own students. For ELA teachers looking to improve writing instruction within their own classrooms, providing authentic writing experiences is one way to help students improve as writers and thinkers. By engaging in authentic, personally-relevant writing, students are able to produce work that is meaningful to them and can then transfer their writing skills to other contexts. Encouraging students to take ownership over their writing is one way to empower students English classroom and into their lives beyond the school setting.

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Peterson, S. S. (2007). Teaching content with the help of writing across the curriculum. *Middle School Journal, 39*, 26-33.

Rainey, E., & Moje, E. B. (2012). Building insider knowledge: Teaching students to read, write, and think within ELA and across the disciplines. *English Education, 45*, 71-90.

Whitaker, C. (2005). Best Practices in Teaching Writing. *Write in the Middle, 6*, 1-8.

Appendix A: Resources for Further Exploration

Annenberg Learner Videos of Professionals Writing in their Career; ELA example:
https://www.learner.org/courses/readwrite/video-detail/english-real-world-sports-journalist.html

Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers Inc.

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Goldberg, N. (1986). *Writing down the bones: Freeing the writer within*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications Inc.

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Mentor Text Samples for K-12:
https://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/resources/studentmodels

Vanity's Fair's Proust Questionnaire:
https://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/2000/01/proust-questionnaire

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Sam Hamilton

Teaching Metaphors and Learning Uncertainty

Abstract

This essay argues for the importance of developing and redeveloping a "teacher metaphor" as a way for individual teacher's to frame their individual teaching philosophy and approach. The essay draws from the constructivist pedagogies of John Dewey and Paulo Freire to argue that the most effective type of teacher metaphor is a complicated and complicating metaphor that resists being settled.

> "It is not easy to get the full meaning of words."
> —John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*

> "To speak a true word is to change the world."
> —Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Students enter my college writing classrooms differently; they want and need different things. Some see my course as purely practical; a course that will help them improve upon their writing skills so they can later produce documents such as resumes and cover letters, or intelligently communicate with professors, coworkers or bosses through email or memos. Others see the course as a hurdle; just another in a long string of liberal arts requirements that are eating up their time and money, and have very little to do with the practical skills they hope to learn in their major courses. Still others are primed for this liberal arts experience; the course is an opportunity to think challenging ideas and have challenging discussions and write challenging essays, all in the name of some push toward a better society. Others don't see the course at all, lost as it is in the buzzing, blooming confusion of this startling new world they've entered into and of which they are struggling desperately to make sense. I value all these students, and I must do a good job at teaching them all something about writing.

At its core, this essay is about how to go about doing a good job at teaching a variety of students; how to be a teacher that empowers myriad students to become invested in their learning together, in the same place, and at the same time. This essay is not, however, a "loafers-on-the-ground" piece; it does not attend directly to the Monday Morning Question of "how do I teach these students?" Rather, this essay attends to Sunday Evening Questions, or maybe even Monday Afternoon Questions; First Day of Student Teaching Questions, or Last Day Before Retirement Questions: what type of teacher am I? What type of teacher do I want

to be? What type of teacher do my students need me to be? Only after we attend, thoughtfully and unendingly, to these questions can we truly start working on that pesky "how" question.

English teachers need teacher metaphors to do a good job at teaching our students. Teacher metaphors confront the semantic strangeness of the word "teacher," a word difficult to define without leaning on circularity: a teacher is someone who teaches. Teacher metaphors unsettle this tautological circularity, replacing the predicate with some concept (guide, parent, shepherd, etc.) that insists upon the active imagining of what teachers are and what they do. And in imagining this teacher metaphor, what we are really doing is imagining ourselves as teachers.

We must never let this imagining settle. As comforting as a simple, ostensibly clean metaphor may be when we imagine ourselves as teachers, such a simple and clean metaphor comes with a cost: sterile things die. And when a teacher metaphor dies, it does what all dead metaphors do: it fixes consciousness about teachers and teaching, determining it as static and unmoving. In representing reality, teacher metaphors select reality, and so eliminate reality. For this reason, our teacher metaphors need to be complicated and complicating. Complicated and complicating metaphors are mixed rather than settled, dirty and fecund rather than clean and sterile, alive rather than dead.

To build these arguments, I examine the richly complicated teacher metaphors developed in the works of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. Dewey and Freire represent two impulses incipient in English studies pedagogy, and more specifically in the constructivist pedagogies of writing studies: the impulse to join (Dewey) and the impulse to criticize (Freire) a larger social order. Both Dewey and Freire offer mixed and richly alive metaphors. Further, though Dewey and Freire's respective pedagogies do have different motivations and divergent aims, both present complementary examinations of teacher and student consciousness. Ultimately, when we actively conceive of ourselves through complicated and complicating teacher metaphors we are forced to constantly reevaluate our goals and approaches when working with each new student and group of students. Moreover, complicated and complicating teacher metaphors prevent us from settling into consistent or static modes of teaching.

Dewey's Teacher Metaphor

John Dewey opens "My Pedagogic Creed" (1897) with the following statement: "I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race" (p. 77). At first glance, not much separates Dewey's "social consciousness" from what Paulo Freire refers to as the "fundamentally *narrative* character" of the "banking" model of education (Freire, 2007, p. 71): both lend structure and meaning to society, both pertain to how folks are and how they act with others, and both are present in teachers,

absent in students. Significantly, though, Dewey's social consciousness is dynamic, while a banker's narrative is not. That is, for Freire's bankers, the story of how and why things are the way they are is always already written, inscribed even, immutable and timeless, permanent. "The [banking] teacher talks about reality," writes Freire, "as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable" (Freire, 2007, p. 71). There is nothing motionless or predictable about Dewey's conception of social consciousness. As this social consciousness is established in the student, so too is it also established by the student. The establishment — or more accurately the "reconstruction" (Dewey, 1897, p. 78) — of the social consciousness by the student is the fundamental process and purpose of education.

The folks that facilitate the establishment of social consciousness within students toward the purpose of reconstructing that consciousness are Dewey's teachers. He uses the following metaphors to describe teachers and the ways they operate: teachers are parents, farmers or gardeners, community organizers, representatives or agents, group members, leaders, designers or architects, guides, prophets, and (perplexingly) students. There are some common threads in Dewey's mixed teacher metaphors. Both parents and gardeners are in the nurturing and raising business, just as leaders, prophets, and guides are in the chaperoning and accompanying business. Parents can also be in the chaperoning business when they guide or lead their children to some preconceived goal, either developmental (walking, talking, reading) or physical (the store, pre-school, the park). Gardeners could be conceived of as being in the guiding business, but this might move gardening into the realm of manipulation (genetic engineering or bonsai growing) in ways that might sully "gardener" as a possible metaphor for teacher. Leaders, prophets, and guides, however, can engage in nurturing in ways that do not damage their teacher metaphor status. Indeed, a nurturing leader is one who gently and carefully guides her followers; this type of leader is closer to the way in which Dewey conceives of a teacher than would an autocratic or draconian leader. Such a nurturing leader thoughtfully crafts or designs their methods of leadership much like an architect would craft or design a structure or a gardener might plot a garden. So too, some parents are thoughtful in how they design or structure their children's daily activities so as to provide a comfortable and engaging environment in which children can play and explore just as a gardener might try to control for environmental factors such as sunlight, soil temperature, water volume, and so on to provide a healthy environment in which plants can grow. This movement between teacher metaphors goes on *ad nauseum* as each different metaphor nuances each other metaphor, worrying what at first appears to be a unitary thread into its own teased jumble.

But even as the individual metaphors complicate each other, there are nonetheless some overarching similarities. A number of the metaphors, for example, pertain to groups and grouping. Parents, community organizers, leaders, guides, and prophets all relate to specific

types of groups in the same particular way, i.e. they organize, lead, and guide them, though leaders, guides, and prophets need a clear destination, while parents and community organizers do not (outside of "be organizer"). This is different, though, than members and representatives or agents. While both are parts of a group, members are led along with other members, while the representatives or agents speak or advocate for other members to some other group. Farmers or gardeners can be a part of a group (a community that draws nourishment their crops or livestock), but do not need to be. The same goes for architects (a community that inhabits a space designed by the architect). So teachers are a part of a group, but they also lead a group. They speak for a group, but are within it. They have a goal for the group, but that goal might just be to keep the group intact. They might design the space the group inhabits, or they might cultivate the fruits from which the group draws nourishment. They could do all of these things, none of them, all of them *sous rature*, none of them by proxy.

Returning to the individual metaphors, Dewey suggests teachers are a member of a group and they do play a role in leading that group. This group is simply a class, a collection of students and a teacher or teachers. Teachers are a member of a class in the same way that a leader is a member (albeit a special member) of the group she leads. The group or class of students and teacher(s) is itself a part of a larger social group or community (either a school, or the community in which the school is situated). But while the teacher is a more fully developed member of this larger social group or community, her students are not. This is because, according to Dewey, these students have not fully developed a social consciousness (that is, a full awareness of the community of which they are a member, and the nature of their membership; the "story" of the world). Teachers guide students in their development of that social consciousness. In this way, they are representatives or agents of the larger social group or community; they advocate for the interests of the larger group or community to the advantage of the smaller group or class. That is, they possess the social consciousness they hope to guide their students toward developing, much like a prophet hopes the guide disciples to some divine knowledge. Significantly, though, Deweyan teachers are also organizers of this larger social group or community. As such, they are not just prophets that speak for some transcendent social consciousness, they are shapers of that social consciousness.

Teachers facilitate the expansions of the social consciousness, and thus act as both guides to and organizers of that consciousness. Teachers do this in the classroom by designing — like an architect — meaningful learning experiences in which students can operate. Or another way, teachers cultivate — like a gardener — meaningful learning experiences from which students can sample. For Dewey, learning experiences become meaningful when they start with the student as the organizing center and expand outward. Students gather experiences

together, slowly amassing further experiences that creep outward from their isolated and individual student experience to a fully socially conscious experience. "The problem of teaching," Dewey writes, "is to keep the experience of the student moving in the direction of what the expert already knows" (Dewey, 2015, sec. XIV.1). But because a student's social consciousness starts with themselves as an organizing center, Dewey maintains that it is as important for the teacher to know the student, as it is for the teacher to know the subject. In order to help the student move from an individual to a social consciousness — in order to cultivate fruitful learning experiences, what Dewey refers to as a "shared activity" — the teacher must learn about the student, her likes and dislikes, her tastes, values, mores, her individual consciousness. "In such shared activity," Dewey writes, "the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher" (Dewey, 2015, sec. XII.1.III). And it is in this way that the student contributes to the social consciousness just as she is developing it. For as the teacher learns the student, the teacher amends or reconstructs the social consciousness to accommodate or account for the students' individual consciousness. As the social consciousness moves to gather into it the individual consciousnesses of students, it shifts and changes; the process by which the teacher learns is just as accretive as the process by which the student learns.

Freire's Teacher Metaphor

Freire's teacher metaphor expands upon the idea of teachers being students, and students teachers. Quite simply: there is no teacher and there are no students. Instead, there are teacher-students and students-teachers. So conceived, Freire's metaphor of teacher-student and students-teachers is "the solution of the teacher-student contradiction" (Freire, 2007, p. 72) incipient in the banking method. For example, while a banker-teacher possesses Knowledge and the bank-student does not, the teacher-student and students-teachers create knowledges. While the banker-teacher speaks and the bank-student listens, the teacher-student and students-teachers dialogue. While the banker-teacher is a Subject narrating the story of a static, immutable reality to passive bank-students or objects, the teacher-student and students-teachers are co-creators and co-investigators of "a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 2007, p. 83). Freire's teacher metaphor is an anti-metaphor: in conceiving of teachers as students, he effectively obliterates the utility, even the purpose of each term; it no longer makes sense to speak of "teachers" and of "students" as there is no distinction between these terms.

But while this might be Freire's ultimate goal in solving the teacher-student contradiction, it does not prevent him from metaphorically casting teachers in a variety of competing ways. In addition to the teacher-as-student metaphor, Freire uses the following metaphors to describe teachers: leaders, liberators, discussants, co-investigators, interdisciplinary team members, presenters, audience, coordinators, decoders, and authentic revolutionaries. Freire's

complicated and complicating problem-posing teacher metaphor matches the complicated and complicating definition and function of a teacher both in a classroom and a school and within the society in which that classroom and school is located. As with Dewey, Freire sees "teacher" as an important component of a larger social order. In important ways, however, Freire situates his teachers and his pedagogical theory against the larger (read: hegemonic) social order.

The ways in which Freire situates teachers against a hegemonic social order are evident in metaphors such as leader, liberator, and authentic revolutionary. Teachers are in the revolution and resistance game; they are trying to lead students toward liberation from governing system established and maintained by the banking method of education. Discussants are revolutionaries; it's easy to imagine students and teachers meeting to conspire in salons, coordinating some strategies for resistance, perhaps some guerrilla tactics to challenge the dominant banker-teachers. This is a very egalitarian picture of revolutionary leaders, as teacher-discussants can be both audience and presenters during the salon discussions. They simultaneously decode what they view to be the social problems from which they require liberation, as well as what the other discussants (students) view to be the social problems. This is why Freire specifies teachers as "authentic" revolutionaries, as opposed to despotic revolutionaries (Mao Zedong, Pol Pot). Authentic revolutionary leaders are co-investigators and co-ordinators with those with whom they seek liberation.

The metaphors of dialogue and discussion feature centrally in this process of co-investigation and coordination. Discussants and interdisciplinary team members communicate with one another on the same level: they discuss and share ideas without any disparity in their ranks. As such, the words they share with each other can never be directives or orders, but merely suggestions, recommendations, or proposals. They do not and cannot appeal to their own authority when making such suggestions; the suggestions must be met and accepted on their own merit. This suggests a special type of presenter/audience dynamic. The presenter does not didactically speak Truth for the audience to receive passively and unquestioningly; rather, (and crudely) the presenter makes a pitch the audience can accept or deny according to its quality, rather than the position of the presenter herself. This is certainly a different than the type of communication that exists between leaders and those whom they lead. Between these two parties, words can be orders and authority can be appealed to; didactic speeches can be given, and "proposals" can be foisted (though they would more accurately be edicts or decrees and proposals in name only). In such communications, however, all co-investigation and coordination is obliterated. Instead, it is directed investigation and organization. It is banking.

So much of the work of Freire's different teacher metaphors is accomplished when working

through his base metaphor of teacher-as-student and student-as-teacher. Teachers do lead students toward liberation in that teachers are aware of the need for student liberation in a way that students are not. But the process of leading is not directive, but suggestive, and the so-called "authentic revolution" does not amount to a movement to some idyllic state, but rather movement away from (or, more properly, out of) some oppressed state. This process of liberation requires discussions, specifically discussions centering on the experiences of the students within their oppressed state. Students and teachers examine and decode this state together. Importantly, the teacher does not presume to understand exactly how the students are oppressed, just that they are oppressed. As such, the teacher is not leading students to some understanding of their own oppression that the teacher has, but the students lack. Rather, the teacher is truly investigating the nature of her students' oppression, just as her students are truly investigating the strange fact that they are oppressed. In short, Freire's model of education starts with a problem, students' oppression, and it proceeds as teachers and students work together to understand and solve that problem. In doing so, both teachers and students are working toward what Freire calls conscientização (conscientization) or the development of critical consciousness.

Teachers facilitate conscientization, and thus act as both co-investigators of and leaders to that critical consciousness. Of conscientization, Freire writes:

> "In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation." (Freire, 2007, p. 83)

For Freire, critical consciousness is not a product or end goal, but rather an ongoing process. This process is self-reflective; students are not simply aware that they are oppressed, they are also aware of their awareness. This meta-awareness — "consciousness as consciousness of consciousness" (Freire, 2007, p. 79) — keeps both teachers and students moving and working toward solving the problem of their oppression. That is, for Freire the goal of problem-posing education is not simply for students to realize that they are oppressed, or even to realize the specific ways in which they are oppressed. Instead, Freire wants students to actively resist their oppression, rather than merely accept it as just one more static and passively received fact about the world, one more deposit from a strangely self-destructive banker.

Metaphors and Teaching Philosophies

Significantly: the differences in the teacher metaphors of Dewey and Freire don't just *grow out of* the differences in their respective pedagogies; the differences in the teacher metaphors

frame their respective pedagogies. And, in a profoundly clear example of how practice is as strong an influence on theory as theory is on practice, the differences in their respective pedagogical theories stem from the differences in their respective teaching experiences. Dewey taught young children in the University of Chicago Lab schools, a school he established to be one of the top co-educational college preparatory academies in the country. Freire, as the Director of the Department of Education and Culture of the Social Service, taught illiterate sugarcane workers so they could vote in Brazilian elections. That is, Dewey taught students who had an opportunity to both join and lend shape to a democratic society. Freire, on the other hand, taught students attempting to gain this denied opportunity. While Dewey's pedagogy moved students to developing, maintaining, and improving upon what was, for them, a positively beneficial social consciousness, Freire's pedagogy moved students to developing the skills to break in and break apart what was a negatively oppressive social consciousness. In terms of access, Dewey sought to develop within students a functional and experiential access to social consciousness; material access to that consciousness was a given. Freire, on the other hand, sought to first develop for students a material access (via literacy) to the social consciousness so they could then develop a critical access to that consciousness.

Many of our students enjoy enough privilege such that the development of a functional and experiential access to social consciousness is an admirable goal. In this way, Dewey's teacher metaphors become incredibly useful. As English teachers at all levels, we can meet our students where they are in terms of their literacy abilities, and we can generate new literacy experiences that allow them to build upon and expand those abilities. The end goal for us would be to teach our students how to be better readers, writers, speakers, and listeners. (This is not a simple goal. I've not touched the "how" question.) More than that, it would be to teach our students how to be better readers, writers, speakers, and listeners in such a way that will benefit them as they continue on in their education and in their post-education lives. This would situate our teaching in a realm of practicality. It would operate under the assumption that the larger social consciousness was fair and equitable, that it was a consciousness worth developing and being a part of. And it would assume that this social consciousness manifested itself in how folks read, write, speak, and listen and through folks reading, writing, speaking, and listening; either as a means of communicating with others in possession of the social consciousness or as a mechanism for contributing to that social consciousness (or both).

Other students — sometimes the same students as envisioned above — lack that privilege, and as such functional and experiential access to a larger social consciousness is not enough; these students need to develop critical access, and we need to help facilitate that development. In these situations, Freire's teacher metaphors prove useful. Start with the

assumption that our students' literacy abilities have been oppressed in some systematic and purposeful way, and present that assumption as a problem for our students to solve. The end goal would be to teach students how to become critically conscious of the myriad ways in which how they have learned how to read, write, speak, and listen is connected with larger forms of systemic and systematic oppression. More than that, it would be to teach students how to use reading, writing, speaking, and listening as a way to develop and further promote critical consciousness about larger forms of systematic oppression. This situates our teaching in a realm of resistance. It operates under the assumption that the larger social consciousness is neither fair nor equitable — not for many folks — that it is a social consciousness that must be challenged, resisted even, and hopefully (someday) significantly altered. Such critical consciousness manifests itself in how folks read, write, speak, and listen and through folks reading, writing, speaking, and listening as a means of communicating with others not in possession of a critical consciousness, as a mechanism for contributing to that critical consciousness, or as a way of resisting the dominant social consciousness (or all three).

Coda: A Further Entanglement

Before, during, and after I can start to think about the Monday Morning Question of how I should I facilitate and empower my students to either join a social consciousness, resist it, or a little bit of both, I have to consider where they are and what they have when they enter into the class, where they hope to be and what they hope to have when they leave the class, and, yes, I also have to consider where my institution, my colleagues, our commonwealth hopes they'll be and what they'll have when the leave the class. And I should probably also be honest and consider what I hope they'll be and what they'll do when they leave my class. And I have to do this in fifteen weeks.

If I started with these last hopes — my hopes — it would be very easy to come up with a teacher metaphor that afforded me a clear and operational consciousness about my teacherly roles and responsibilities. That is, if my writing class was a class that sought to teach students how to write in some specific way for some specific purposes that I deemed best, then I could conceive of myself through a specific teacher metaphor that aligned with that way and those purposes. For example, if I wanted my students to be able to write a really good academic essays, I might conceive of myself as an academic journal peer reviewer, which would focus my attention on the development of their ideas in writing, how well they are "reading" source materials, then explaining and analyzing those source materials, how original their ideas are, and how well those original ideas are developed in their essay. Or, if I wanted my students to be able to write with syntactic precision, I might conceive of myself as a copyeditor, which would focus my attention on the grammatical correctness of their prose, how well they adhere to citation guidelines, how precise and comprehensible their prose

reads, and how well that prose presents a precise and comprehensible idea. Or, if I wanted my students to be able to write expressively, I might conceive of myself as a creative writing workshop leader, which would focus my attention on how my students' writing rendered experience or generated an affective response in me, how well they use suggestive words or eloquent phrasings to convey complex ideas, how compelling their sentences and paragraphs are, and how well those sentences and paragraphs hang together as a whole piece. Such metaphors would give me something clear to do as I taught my writing courses, certainly, but then I want to be and do all of those things as I teach all of my writing courses. And they are our courses — my students and mine — so my hopes are not the only relevant things to consider when I attempt to conceive of myself via some teacher metaphor.

When I think about my students' hopes for my writing classrooms, I feel I have to take into consideration that they often enter my classroom in complicated and complicating ways. They are reminiscent of a Deweyan student who has an opportunity to grow up and become a part of and contributor to a larger social consciousness. So too are they like a Freirean student who has been denied an opportunity through what appears to be systematic oppression. Many of my students do view college as a means for getting a job, and for good reason; it remains the case that a having college degree makes someone significantly more employable than not having one. Yet, college is a staggeringly costly means toward an uncertain if not untenable end; it also remains the case that the cost of a college degree continues to rise at a clip far outpacing the rate of inflation. I cannot, with clear conscience, teach students writing skills so they can become a part of and a contributor to a social consciousness that operates under the assumption that the increasing unaffordability of college is OK. So too, I cannot, with clear conscience, teach students to be critical of this social consciousness and think that that critical consciousness will be at all helpful to them after they graduate and try to get a job. So many of my students are in a peculiar type of liminal state between Dewey and Freire: they hope to (and deserve to be able to) succeed in a social consciousness, and my writing class ought to attend to that hope. Yet they also deserve to be able to (so that they might eventually hope to) be critical of that consciousness and the way that it systematically oppresses not just others, but also them. And my writing classes ought to attend to that hope as well. *Yet there is no single teacher metaphor that allows me to do all these things.*

But a mixed teacher metaphor, a teacher metaphor that resists simplicity in its very construction, a teacher metaphor drawn from competing and contradictory sources, a complicated and complicating teacher metaphor which, in its very formulation fails to attend to a multiplicity of hopes, desires, and aims, a metaphor which is a figurative array, a teased metaphor, a worried metaphor, a jumbled, swirling, quilt-like, shapeshifting metaphor, such a metaphor might do the trick. Such a metaphor affords me the opportunity to enter into my classroom as fresh as my students. Such a metaphor forces me to constantly reevaluate my

teacherly being and my teacherly duties. Such a metaphor allows me to properly differentiate between students who need first-year writing to get by, and those who use first-year writing to get over, to have functional and experiential access to the social consciousness versus critical access to it. I could find and use this metaphor, seeing it for what it does; what expectations it creates for me and my students, what goals it aims us at, what teaching and studenting objectives it accomplishes for us, what limitations it draws around us, what it promotes and negates. This teacher metaphor could be a treacherous path toward figuring out the best way to teach, both functional and broken because of its simple, brutal honesty. This metaphor is not given, nor can it be. It is always as of yet unbuilt. Only through its rigorous and continual construction can it be the type of metaphor that might help me be better conscious (materially, experientially, functionally, and critically) of my identity as a teacher, the type that could give me momentary stability in a profession of uncertainty.

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Mary Beth Cancienne

Using Metaphorical Thinking to Understand a Literary Archetype: The Hero's Journey

For students and teachers alike, the hero's journey narrative is a deeply familiar literary genre that has been and continues to be recast in books, films, and video games. Among some of the more popular films adapted for cinema that center on a hero's journey narrative include movies as *Endgame, The Black Panther, Wonder Women, The Hate You Give, Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, The Lord of the Rings, The Life of Pi, The Brother from Another Plant, Whale Rider, Contact*, and *Star Wars* to name a few. Examples from early literary periods include *Gilgamesh, The Odyssey, or Fairytales*.

In his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, author and teacher of comparative mythology Joseph Campbell (2008) tells us that the most persistent universal theme or archetype in oral and recorded literature of all cultures in all time is the myth of the hero, or what he calls the "monomyth" (p. 1). Campbell (2008) maintains that storytellers tell the same story in endless and infinite variations. As Campbell (2008) sees it, the hero's journey—which includes seventeen stages—offers a road map of the psyche, reflecting the structure of the collective unconscious shared among all humans. At the end of the journey, the hero has experienced change, transformation, and growth. Although Campbell envisioned the hero as male, we now see textual, cinematic, and video game depictions of female and multiple gender identities as heroes.

The reason students return time and again to read hero's journey stories is because they are searching for answers central to human identity: Who am I? What is my purpose in life and where am I going? What is the difference between good and evil? How do I prepare myself to be successful in this world? Reading other people's stories of adventure, failure, and success is important for adolescents as they grapple with their own identity. As teachers, we encourage students to embark on these journeys through reading adolescent novels and writing using reader response methods (Rosenblatt, 1985).

Taken one step further, teachers may teach a unit to middle and high school students on the stages of the hero's journey. While Campbell (2008) identifies seventeen stages to the hero's journey, many teachers may opt to use Christopher Vogler's (2007) twelve stages to the hero's journey as depicted in movies. As with Campbell's model, the twelve-stage model has a high level of complexity. The stages include: *1) The ordinary world, 2) Call to adventure, 3) Refusal of the call, 4) Meeting the mentor, 5) Crossing the threshold, 6) Test, allies, and enemies, 7) Approach to the inmost cave, 8) Supreme ordeal, 9) Reward, 10) The*

road back 11) Resurrection and 12) Return. This lengthy process might not be practical for every class; in that case, a teacher may wish to combine some of the stages and teach only five--Call to adventure, Testing the hero, The Abyss, Resurrection, and Restitution/Return or for the shortest version possible three stages -- or what Campbell (2008) describes as three major acts (e.g., separation or departure, trials and victories of initiation, and return and reintegration into society).

State Standards of Learning and Instructional Objectives

In teaching this introductory lesson as a hook to the hero's journey, I have outlined the following essential understandings, instructional objectives, and Virginia English Standards of Learning (Virginia Department of Education, 2017) relevant to the lesson. The English standards addressed in this lesson are that all students should recognize and understand universal characters and themes in literature, compare and contrast subject matter, use analytical and critical thinking skills, and write about what is read. At the end of this lesson, students should have an overarching understanding that in life knowledge of the stages of the hero's journey of the successful quest could be useful in helping them to organize and understand their own experience, and as a result empower them to be successful in their own lives. The goal of the Synectics II strategy (see the definition of this technique in the following paragraph) is to teach students to use analogies to make creative comparisons that express new ways of approaching and comprehending the universal literary theme. The instructional objectives of the lesson follow: Students will understand that the theme of the hero's journey is universal to all cultures (comprehension); students will understand that there are universal themes in the human experience (comprehension); students will know the different phases of the hero's journey (comprehension); students will be able to identify the theme of the hero's journey in multiple print and non-print texts (apply); and students will demonstrate the ability to write a hero journey personal narrative that follows the template (three major acts) of the hero's journey (create).

Making the Strange Familiar

Because the stages of the hero's journey are complex, I introduce to the students a metaphorical teaching model known as Synectics II, developed by Gordon (1961) and Prince (1970). Synectics II—defined as bringing together that which is apart or, as it is known in creativity theory, "making the strange, familiar"—is an operational, creative, critical thinking model that focuses on analogies as a means of making new information—that is, the stages of the hero's journey (the strange)–familiar to students. While the students are certainly familiar with the general theme of the hero's journey through reading, viewing movies, and playing video games, they likely are unfamiliar with the cyclical twelve steps that come together to build the journey. With the twelve-step framework, they can begin to

see the underlying structure of the journey, identify how the steps are blended, and identify variations from story to story. While stages may be skipped, the three acts/stages defined by Campbell (2008) in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (departure, trials and victories, and return) constitute the core stages of the journey.

The purpose of the Synectics II model according to Joyce and Weil (1992) is to increase the students' understanding, internalize new or difficult material, and use metaphor as analysis. The Synectics II strategy achieves these goals through a step-by-step process in which "students constantly alternate between defining the characteristics of the more familiar subject and comparing these to the characteristics of the unfamiliar topic" (p. 230). The benefit of this model for teachers and students is that it approaches creativity and problem solving in a logic, systematic way (Gordon,1961; Prince, 1970). In many ways, it demystifies the creative process for students, making the creative process more transparent for them to see, experience, and thus understand.

Synectics II Methodology: Phase One

In Figure 1 below, I identify the Synectics II process in seven phases and below the phases, I state the main questions that the teacher asks for each phase in the model. For purposes of clarification, I will use the term "phases" for the Synectics II model and "stages" for the stages of the journey of the hero patterned narrative. Returning to Synectics II, the first phase is called, "New Information." I begin the students' examination of the hero's journey by showing two YouTube videos that include segments from "The Hero's Journey/Monomyth" (CornerTalker, 2010) and "The Hero's Journey You Tube" (theherocc, 2011) (See figure 4). These videos explain Vogler's twelve stages of the monomyth. Next, I ask students to name other movies or books that may follow the same pattern and identify what elements about these books appeal to them. Students make suggest books such as *Harry Potter* or *The Hunger Games*. Following that discussion, I distribute a hero's journey graphic organizer (see Figure 2) and introduce the "12 Stage Hero's Journey" adapted by Vogler (2007) for screenwriting and supported by the videos that the students just watched.

Synectics II Overview: Phases with Teacher Guiding Questions

Figure 1

I. New Information	II. Direct Analogy	III. Personal Analogy	IV. Compare Analogies	V. Explain Differences	VI. Exploration	VII. New Analogy
Twelve stages of the hero's journey/ Monomyth See figure 2	Having a fever How are the stages of the hero's journey like having a fever?	I have a fever. This is happening to me, and it makes me feel?	How is having a fever similar to the stages of the hero's journey?	How is having a fever different from the journey of the hero?	Now that we have used an analogy to the stages, name a novel that you have read or a movie that we have seen and connect the events to the stages.	The journey of the hero is like what experience you have had in your own life? Create a new analogy and explain your analogy.

New Information: The Hero's Journey Twelve Stages

Figure 2

1. The ordinary world	The hero is living in the ordinary world.
2. The call to adventure	Something happens to the hero internally or externally. There is pressure to change.
3. Refusal of the call	For a brief moment, the hero fears the unknown and turns away from the adventure or the call to make a different choice.
4. Meeting the mentor	The hero receives training, equipment, and advice from a helper or reaches within for courage and wisdom.
5. Crossing the threshold	The hero leaves the ordinary or known world and enters the unknown world. The hero can also go to a place where there are unfamiliar rules and values.
6. Tests, allies, and enemies	The hero meets allies and enemies and is tested in the new world or situation.
7. Approach to the inmost cave	The hero and newfound allies prepare for a challenge.
8. The ordeal	The hero confronts fear and/or faces death. A new life or perspective arises from this experience.
9. The reward	The hero takes possession of a treasure won by facing fear or death. There is still a danger of losing the treasure.
10. The road back	The hero completes the adventure and leaves the special world with the treasure to return home.
11. The resurrection	At the climax, the hero is tested one more time on the way home. The hero is challenged on a higher level (internally and externally). The conflict is finally resolved.
12. Return	The hero returns home transformed with the treasure and has the power to transform the ordinary world/society.

Phase Two

In phase two of the Synectics II model, the teacher suggests a direct analogy to the hero's journey. We can safely assume that all or nearly all students have had a fever at some point prior to their study of the hero's journey. I begin by asking the students, "How are the twelve stages of the hero's journey like having a fever?" With our work during phase two, I ask them to write for five minutes, listing the stages involved in having a fever. As an example, a student might write the following:

> I am sitting at my desk in the classroom, and I feel fine. I then begin to feel warm and touch my forehead. Am I getting sick? No, I don't think so. Maybe it's just the temperature in the room. Now my body aches, my mouth is dry, and I have a headache. I am going to see the school nurse, etc. The nurse takes my temperature, which is high. The nurse calls home for someone to come and get me. I get home, and I make chicken noodle soup and take cold and flu medicine.

The students continue to write until they reach the end of their stages of having a fever. The students will end with a sentence such as "I regain my health and I return to school." After the "quick write" activity, I ask the students to work in groups to discuss what they have just written. After they meet in small groups, I give students a graphic organizer to pair each of the twelve steps of the monomyth with the stages of having a fever (See figure 3).

Graphic Organizer: Pairing Stages of the Hero's Journey to Stages of a Fever

Figure 3

Hero's Journey Quick Write	How are the stages of the hero's journey like the stages of having a fever? Share quick writes in small groups and link the stages of having a fever to the stages of the hero's journey.
1. Ordinary World Polarity in the hero's life is causing stress.	I am sitting in class, and I begin to feel warm and unwell.
2. Call to adventure Something shakes up the situation.	I feel feverish. I notice that my body aches, and I have a headache.

3. Refusal of the call Hero turns away from the adventure.	I ignore my physical symptoms, telling myself that the classroom temperature is high. I continue to work at my desk.
4. Meeting the Mentor Hero meets a traveler who provides training, equipment, or advice.	Later, I accept that I probably do have a fever, so I make the trip down the hallway to see the school nurse who takes my temperature. It's confirmed: I have a fever. The nurse calls home or a guardian. When I arrive home, I take medicine and go to bed.
5. Crossing the threshold Hero leaves the ordinary world and enters a new region.	I admit to myself and others that I am sick. It seems to take forever, but I fall into my bed to sleep.
6. Test, Allies and Enemies Hero is tested.	Friends call to see if I can go out with them. Phone keeps buzzing. Notifications are chiming. Parents/Guardians are telling teachers and friends that I am sick. Siblings are coming in and out of the room and don't believe that I am sick and make lots of noise. Adult makes the siblings leave the room. Who is going to help me get well? Who is going to hinder me?
7. Approach to the inmost cave Hero and allies prepare for a major challenge.	I am in the fetal position, and my entire body aches. I am hot and cold.
8. Supreme Ordeal Hero engages in a battle and confronts his/her fear.	My fever reaches 103. I am sweating and vomiting.

9. Reward – Seizing the Prize Hero takes possession of the prize.	My fever breaks.
10. The Road Back Leaves the special world with the prize.	Awake. Open my eyes. No headache or aches and pains. A gradual recovery.
11. Crossing the Threshold – 'Resurrection' Hero is tested again but at a higher level than before.	Get out of bed. Make food. Take bath. Wash sheets. Reach for phone. Text friends to catch up on social life and school work missed. Siblings apologize for making so much noise and not believing that I was sick. Start to catch up on all homework missed and the task feels daunting. But I persevere.
12. Return with the elixir Hero returns home with the prize and the power to change the community.	Health is regained, and I return to school.

Phase Three

After the students complete the table listed above, I ask them to use a personal analogy (Phase 3) to emotionally connect to the experience of having a fever. I help them get started by offering the following question: "I have a fever. This is happening to me, and it makes me feel how?" The students' lists should include a range of adjectives (See figure 4). Students must support their answers with an example. They may write something to the effect of, "I am sitting in class, and I feel tired. My head hurts, but I felt just fine a few minutes ago. Did someone turn the heat up? I feel *confused*." (Stage 3 - Refusal of the call) Or, "I met with the doctor and received medicine. I feel *protected* against this infection." (Stage 4 - Meeting the

mentor) Or, "I have a high fever, migraine, chills, sore throat, and can't sleep. I feel *defeated*."
(Stage 7 - Approach to the inmost cave). While in the personal analogy phase, I have students
identify their emotional responses to each stage of having a fever. It helps them gain a
sharper understanding of the parts of the monomyth. The personal analogy phase is essential
to the Synectics II model and should not be skipped. The founders of the model, Gordon
(1961) and Prince (1970) believed then as well as current neurologist and neuropsychiatrist
today such as Restak (2001) that we are feeling beings who think and not thinking being
who feel. Restated a different way, the two components are intertwined and necessary for
students to have an optimal learning experience.

Phases Four and Five

After the students work on the personal analogy phase, we begin work on the fourth phase–
comparing analogies. In this phase, the students look for similarities between having a fever
and the hero's journey. For example, students have noted that the three main acts/stages
in the hero's journey are similar. In stage one, separate/depart both depict a change and a
refusal of the call. In stage two, trials and tribulations, both the hero and the person who is ill
endure internal as well as external challenges. In stage three, both the hero and the person
who is ill overcome a challenge. In both situations, the experience is going to get worse
before it gets better. Both journeys are temporary and will end with the hero's returning to
the ordinary world. The hero's journey and the fever are both difficult but ultimately positive
experiences in that the fever fights infection and the hero's journey fights fear (See figure 4).
While phase four engages the students in examining similarities between having a fever and
the hero's journey, phase five asks them to consider how the two experiences differ from one
another. Students have noted that the hero's journey often happens over a long period of time
whereas the fever has a shorter duration—typically from one to five days. Finally, with the
hero's journey the character matures and gains wisdom from the adventure, while having a
fever does not mean one returns to school as a better student (See figure 4).

Phase Six

Phase six is the exploration phase in which students begin to apply their knowledge of
the stages of the journey of the hero to what they are reading or viewing. At this point, I
reintroduce the stages and provide examples for each. I recommend distributing another
hero's journey graphic organizer and providing examples from one of the most recent books
or movies that the teacher has assigned for reading and viewing. I also ask students to name
other movies or books that follow the same pattern. Using the graphic organizer, I ask the
students to provide examples of a few of the stages from the three main acts (departure,
trials and victories, and return).

To illustrate how the exploration phase works, I offer the following example using the popular

Marvel film, *Black Panther* (2018). At the beginning of the movie, viewers first see T'Challa, the hero, in the ordinary world—Oakland, California—before he moves to the special world called Wakanda, an advanced technological African nation *(departure)*. The ordeal begins when Killmonger, the supervillain, kills T'Challa, who is the newly King of Wakanda (also known as the Black Panther) and seizes the throne (trials). T'Challa, returns (he doesn't really die) fights and defeats Killmonger *(victory)*. In the end, T'Challa, *returns* to Oakland, the ordinary world, and begins improving the society in which he lives by starting outreach programs. The students do not have to identify all twelve stages, but they should provide examples of at least the main three stages such as separate/depart, trials and victories, and return (See figure 4). Critical questions that I ask include: What is the setting of the ordinary world versus that of the special world the character enters? What happens that motivates the hero to enter the special world? Who are the hero's mentors along the way? What special object or advice does the mentor give the hero? Who are the hero's allies and enemies? Who does the character fight and eventually defeat? What happened that caused the hero to change? How is the hero transformed? What did the hero gain from the experience? Upon returning to the ordinary world, how does the hero intend to benefit others?

I recommend asking students to think about the main events depicted in a novel, movie, or a video game and map as many stages as they can to the stages of the hero's journey, monomyth. Students can work alone or in groups. After students share their roadmap to the hero's journey, I ask them to explore online, searching for examples of the hero's journey in books and movies.

Phase Seven

As the students and I undertake the seventh and final phase of the Synectics II model, I ask them to create a new analogy that applies to the hero's journey. One readily accessible strategy for the students would be to provide examples of "personal hero narratives" that are meaningful to them. In helping students think about personal hero stories, I remind them about Campbell's three acts/stages of the journey: separate/depart; trials and tribulations; and return. I then ask the students the following two questions: "Describe a time when you were challenged and learned from that experience?" Or, describe a time when you rejected advice from a mentor and consequently, you were challenged before ultimately learning from the experience?

After these discussions, I ask the students the following question: "How do you relate the journey of the hero experience to your own life?" Some students have described the hero's journey as being like playing a sport and winning the championship, performing in a play or musical, passing a driver's education test and receiving a license, catching a large fish, surviving a hurricane or tornado, surviving a relationship separation or your surviving your

parent's divorce, improving a low grade point average, being accepted to college, receiving an award, or getting a job (See figure 4). Below I have listed three more detailed student examples from question two:

Choosing not to get a flu shot, getting the flu, and recovering. The following year the student makes the choice to get the flu shot.

Choosing not to do homework and failing the course. Having to repeat the course, doing the homework, and earning a "B" the second time.

Deciding not to prepare for a track meet, competing in the meet, being injured, recovering from the injury, and placing second in the track meet the following year.

These examples drawn from their own experiences help students to see that on a smaller scale, they, too, are heroes when they take a risk, are challenged, and overcome the challenge. They have learned and been transformed by the experience.

Synectics II: Making the Strange Familiar

Figure 4

I. New Information on a New Topic	II. Direct Analogy	III. Personal Analogy	IV. Compare Analogies	V. Explain Differences	VI. Exploration	VII. New Analogy/ Personal Analogy
Introduce the 12 stages of the Journey of the Hero.

3 Stages/Acts Separate/Depart Trials & Victories Return

Website addresses:

Hero's Journey Monomyth

Hero's Journey You Tube | How are the journey of the hero stages like the stages of having a fever?

Write a one-page explanation of having a fever from beginning to end?

I am sitting in class and… | I have a fever and this is what is happening and it makes me feel?

Exhausted
Defensive
Neglected
Powerful
Protected
Unappreciated
Responsible

Explain your answers by providing support. | Warning/call There is a change.

No turning back

Overcome a challenge/Peaks and valleys

I can feel sorry for myself. I can't escape/Alone

Both are temporary and both are good for you. | HJ lasts longer than a fever.

I am in bed when I have a fever/HJ is action-oriented/an adventure.

HJ is an inner transformation; maturity /Not so with a fever. | Map as many stages as you can within the three major acts in the HJ in the book that I am reading, the movie that I am watching or the videogame that I am playing. | Accepting a job offer

Receiving a driver's license

Acceptance to a college

Performing in a play

Winning a championship

Increasing GPA each year

Surviving parent's divorce. |

Personal Hero Narratives

Students learn about the monomyth genre not only by reading texts and viewing movies but also by writing their own personal hero narratives. Such authors and literature teachers as Kittle (2008), Murray (1984) and Moffett (1981) agree that students should write in the same genre in which they read. Indeed, it is through writing the kind of narrative that they have read and viewed that they gain a critical understanding of the cyclical hero's journey and how it has taken shape in their own experiences.

After I introduce students to the journey of the hero phases and they provide the kinds of personal examples as listed in Figure 4, we have extensive conversations about real-life hero stories, including their own. The Synectics ll model also provides a segue into students' hero journey narratives and how they themselves may have been transformed by the experiences they recounted. We examine how they may be more emotionally and mentally stronger because they were tested and overcame challenges. Using the stages as the plot of their own narrative, they will write a story that has personal significance. I have found their stories deeply compelling, offering greater insight into who the students are than if we had limited our study simply to the texts written by professional authors. This exercise can give students a means of gauging real stories of transformation versus those created for cinema. Having a conversation about mythical stories of transformation as compared with personal stories of change is an effective way to wrap up at the end of the study of the hero journey narrative.

In addition, this assignment can be advantageous in terms of the students' college applications: colleges and universities routinely ask applicants to write an essay about an experience in which they were challenged and learned from it. Job applicants during interviews are often asked to describe instances when they faced a challenge, overcame it, and learned from the experience." For the students, understanding the phases of the the hero's journey and writing their own hero journey narratives can have a multitude of short- and long-term benefits. It is my hope that students having knowledge of the stages of the hero's journey will help them to organize and understand their own experience and, as a result, empower them to be successful in their own lives.

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Recent publication
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Carly Dirghangi

Mindful Self-Inquiry: Preventing Burnout in Preservice English Teachers through a Tailored Mindfulness-Based Curriculum

Abstract

With little experience and in a short time, pre-service English teachers in their student teaching must build trusting relationships, identify areas of need in developing student literacy, familiarize themselves with curricular materials, and perform alongside decades-old school testing pressures. Considering these factors, preservice English teachers enter their teaching career already at risk of burnout. This pilot unit implemented mindfulness-based self-inquiry, tailored to the student-teaching experience of a cohort of English student teachers as a proactive measure against potential burnout in pre-service English teachers.

Introduction

Preservice English teachers face unique challenges. With little experience and in a short time, they build trusting relationships with students, identify areas of need in students' literacy, familiarize themselves with curricular materials, and perform as new teachers alongside decades-old reading and writing school testing pressures. In addition, student teachers have a concurrent job search and frequently view student teaching as a semester-long job interview. Consequently, English teachers enter their first year of teaching already at risk of teacher burnout. In addition, teacher attrition remains a significant challenge in education, most prominently in teachers' first years of teaching. This pilot unit implemented a mindfulness-based self-inquiry curriculum tailored to the student-teaching experience as a proactive measure against potential burnout.

Burnout

Experiencing stress as a result of the high demands at a workplace can lead to burnout, a state of chronic distress as a result of a work environment, with symptoms including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decrease in feelings of personal accomplishment (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslac, 2009). Teachers' experiences of high demands, such as time constraints, discipline problems, and low student motivation have been tied to burnout symptoms in teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Burnout among teachers correlates negatively to teachers' motivation and job satisfaction and positively correlates to teachers' motivation to leave the profession (Leung & Lee, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Teacher turnover in public schools, in connection with teacher burnout, is a critical factor in the inability to fill teaching positions with quality teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Given the potentially

serious consequence for teachers, schools, and the quality of education, such as teacher attrition, teacher burnout cannot be ignored (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013).

Preservice teaching, often a teacher's first experience in front of the classroom, can be particularly stressful. On top of the demands of teaching, preservice teachers experience the added demand of the coursework for their program. Contributing risk factors to preservice teachers' commitment to continuing on in the profession of teaching include time pressures and student behavior (Kyriacou, 2001). In addition to dealing with typical teaching demands, preservice teachers are attempting to respond to these demands by applying theory to practice, sometimes for the first time (Syring, Kleinknecht, Bohl, Rehm, & Schneider, 2015). Considering the early onset of what could amount to burnout symptoms after continuous exposure to the work demands of teaching, preservice teachers should be considered as candidates for preventative measures against emotional exhaustion and teacher burnout (Kerr et al., 2017).

Mindfulness and Self-Inquiry

One such preventative measure against emotional exhaustion is the intervention of mindfulness, defined as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2006, p. 145). Specific attention has been given to mindfulness in schools recently, due to increased standardized testing demands on teachers and an increase in teachers' stress levels (von der Embse, Pendergast, Segool, Saeki, & Ryan, 2016). Mindfulness can help to support self-reflecting, examining our emotion conditioning, and broadening our awareness around how our emotions interact with our thoughts, which in turn can influence our behavior (Jennings, 2015). Through self-awareness, self-reflection and openness, mindfulness practices can result in an explicitly supported dispositional transformation, which ultimately would strengthen our preservice teachers in the prevention of burnout.

Self-inquiry, one realm of mindfulness, is the act of turning inward in search of one's true nature. Rather than a standard mindfulness curriculum, this unit used a personalized curriculum of mindfulness-based self-inquiry practices in response to the particular needs that arose during a cohort of English preservice teachers' semester. Using the foundation of breathwork, meditation, and mindful movement, this curriculum took participants through a series of self-inquiry practices, such as investigating the stories and self-talk they have related to their identity as teachers and learning how to dismantle the inner-narratives that were prohibiting their growth.

Conceptual Foundation

Two conceptual models influenced the assumptions and curriculum development of this pilot unit. Mindfulness is rooted in self-regulation theory (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004; Brown, 2017; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Increasing teachers' ability to find awareness of their stress-induced behaviors and then to adjust their behaviors towards their goal, might increase teachers' level of coping with stress. The second conceptual model is differentiated learning (Tomlinson et al., 2005), or the idea that adapting instruction based on students' readiness and interest provides greater student achievement than a standard curriculum for all students. Differentiated learning was the basis for designing the mindfulness intervention to the specific needs of the preservice English teachers. Integrated within their coursework, this pilot unit captured the impact these practices can have in preventing symptoms of burnout in pre-service English teachers.

Curriculum Design

This pilot unit curriculum framework included topics of exploration that could be adjusted, based on preservice teachers' needs throughout the semester. These topics were grouped into four categories of focus: being, releasing, gaining, and transforming. These categories were then specifically applied to self-inquiry topics, including being present, being grounded, being alive, releasing distraction, releasing control, releasing stories, gaining awareness, gaining acceptance, gaining empowerment, transforming relationship, transforming self-image, and transforming intention. For each self-inquiry topic, a mindfulness-based activity was made available through which to explore whichever needs arose for that week. Some of these activities included breath work, body scan, mindful movement, self-caring practice, loving-kindness practice, generating and savoring the positive, mantra work, and setting intention (Jennings, 2015). The lessons were designed as 15-30 minute mini lessons to break up the preservice teachers' long seminar evening course, once a week.

Tailoring of Curriculum

In order to respond to the specific needs of this cohort of English preservice teachers, the curriculum was tailored throughout the semester. At the beginning of the semester, students shared stress specific to the transition into their placement, specifically feeling performance anxiety when standing in front of new groups of students and in front of a new mentor teacher. In response to these feelings, the next lesson focused on being grounded. The activity that corresponded to focus of being grounded included some mindful awareness of returning to the body, rather than staying in our thoughts, which can often spiral towards imposter syndrome. To return students to the physical experience of the body, the lesson used the yoga pose *tadasana*, or mountain pose, asking students to reflect on feeling connected through their feet to the ground, and then opening up through the heart with broad shoulders, even while standing. Having this total engagement throughout the standing body and open-hearted

stance can lead to feelings of confidence, and this pose can be taken anywhere, even when standing and delivering a lesson.

Another instance of tailoring the curriculum came when students, after the second week in their placement, expressed general feelings of being overwhelmed. Dealing with a great deal of new information, getting to know sometimes over a hundred new students and names, and feeling weary and insecure already around the challenging and unpredictable questions and issues students bring up, the preservice teachers admitted a general overwhelming feeling. To respond to this need, the next lesson was on self-care. Pre-service teachers completed a self-care inventory (Jennings, 2015) to reflect on the daily activities of their new schedules and then categorized which activities serve their own energy restoration and which activities drain them of energy. Teachers then set a goal to incorporate self-care activities, even if just for five minutes a day, that can lead to personal growth throughout what might be an energetically draining student teaching semester.

The biggest need that arose for this group of preservice teachers was a mindful look at the job search process, especially since each member of the cohort had a different timeline of finding job openings that interested them, pursuing interviews, and hearing back from schools. The small talk they made with each other during breaks in class often reverted to job search and where each member was in the process. Many members admitted feeling anxiety about the uncertainty of the process. In response, the next lesson was on releasing control, and the activity was a letting go practice. The purpose of the activity was not to invalidate the preservice teachers' heightened feelings around the job search, yet to raise recognition and awareness of how their mind and body respond to the uncertainty of the future. Preservice teachers left with a visualization strategy to separate themselves from their thoughts and to recognize what impact our gripping thoughts can have on us physiologically, mentally, and emotionally.

Preservice Teachers' Response

Preservice teachers overall responded positively to the pilot unit and shared specific applications to their student teaching life as well as to their personal life. With the loving-kindness practice (Jennings, 2015) under the lesson of releasing distraction, several preservice teachers admitted gaining empathy for students in their placement with which they were having difficulty connecting, students who were distracting them from the flow of their teaching. With the lesson on releasing stories, specifically those we tell ourselves that are lies that hold us back, preservice teachers admitted to self-talk around the topic of how they will never be a good teacher because of different struggles they have had in their life. Several activities provided the added bonus of strengthening the relationships within this cohort of preservice teachers. Towards the end of the semester, the gratitude practice (Jennings,

2015) under the lesson of gaining empowerment included partner work, where preservice teachers shared with one other member of their cohort something small but specific about their day that they could generate gratitude around. One member of the cohort reflected on how empowering it was to do this practice with someone they had a strong relationship with, who was able to "get" them and the joy they found in small moments in their placement, whether it an interaction with a student their partner had already heard stories about, or an accomplished feeling with a mentor teacher their partner had already heard struggles about. These mini lessons strengthened a reflective practice in the preservice teachers, built overall self-care, and fostered the supportive interpersonal nature of the cohort, three areas of growth that likely can prevent burnout.

Takeaways and Next Steps

After engaging with this tailored mindfulness-based, self-inquiry curriculum, pre-service English teachers shared some informal feedback that will influence the way we introduce this curriculum to the next cohort of pre-service teachers. This cohort was reflective of self-care and how at times, especially towards the end of the semester, when their placement became especially challenging, as they finalized their coursework requirements, entered the transition into the job field, and all these factors seemed to culminate as a set of demands that challenged their sense of balance, well-being, and personal self-care. Being reflective of how self-care gets neglected at times of stress is a first step; however, with the next cohort, the intention is to introduce the self-care inventory (Jennings, 2015) and to build self-care goals and practices before the most stressful time of the year so that these practices may be of better use when most needed.

Gratitude practice was one practice we noticed a few members of the cohort were able to apply with positive impact when times were tough. Even when feeling disappointment at not securing the exact teaching jobs they had in mind, several members of the cohort were able to reflect on what the job search process had taught them and how grateful they were for the opportunity to try for a position. In one case, the gratitude practice led to positive self-talk after a similar feeling of rejection, as the member of the cohort was able to broaden her perspective on applying for jobs as a beginning teacher without reverting to self-deprecation. Noticing these benefits, gratitude practice is another practice to introduce at an earlier stage in the cohort's academic year and one that we might even focus the whole unit around. Many of the lessons within the unit, such as gaining awareness, savoring the positive, sending loving/kindness, can be embedded within a gratitude practice, and building a gratitude practice early on and possibly even a gratitude partner within the cohort might strengthen the preservice teachers' ease at accessing gratitude and a broadened perspective when challenges arise later in the year, as well as in future years when beginning teachers are most vulnerable to teacher burnout.

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Dr. Jill Perttula

Cultivating and developing critical thinkers in the ninth grade: How to be a "thoughtful" reader and writer according to Ms. B

Abstract

Many teachers support inquiry-based learning where students are part of a productive community of learners. However, due to rigid administrative and curricular prescription, very few teachers maintain autonomous student-centered learning environments. Ninth grade, urban English language arts teacher, Ms. B demonstrates that responsible critical thinking and analysis can be facilitated successfully in her classroom (even in the face of curriculum mandates). Her pedagogical practice can serve as a model for teachers and the case study findings presented here illuminates how to implement and develop critical thinking and writing in a secondary English language arts classroom.

"School teaches you tomato is a fruit. Experience is not putting it in a fruit salad." *-A tweet by Dion, a ninth grade student in Ms. B's English class*

"We respect all religions, races, ethnicities, citizenship statuses, cultures, genders, and sexualities. We attempt to understand diverse perspectives with depth and complexity. In this classroom ALL STUDENTS are respected, loved, and heard." *-Ms. B's classroom rules*

A Classroom that Becomes a Community

Upon entering Ms. B's ninth grade, urban English language arts classroom, I am immediately taken with the words on the walls. The mantras include words of freedom and support and also encourage membership in the classroom community. She undoubtedly supports her students as learners and citizens. Not only do the walls of Ms. B's classroom contain student work (political tweets and illustrations), but there are also messages of inclusiveness and community (as seen in her classroom rules). This environment undoubtedly lays the framework for student autonomy and critical consciousness through the promotion of inclusivity and activism (as displayed through the student writing projects and messages that support progressive citizenship on the classroom walls).
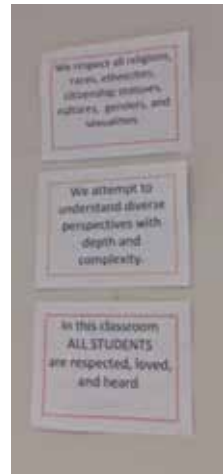
Figure 1: Ms. B's Classroom Rules

Many classrooms across the country do have inclusive messages, and many teachers also require students to become part of a learning community (with varying degrees of academic success). However, Ms. B's ELA pedagogical practice coupled with her passion and commitment to student autonomy and critical thinking demonstrates a consistent effort and a successful achievement of a responsible and effective learning community. As Ms. B outlines with her students, "I want you to be critical thinkers and I want you to think critically about text and the world. And be thoughtful about the ways in which you are writing and the ways you are expressing yourself. So like I'm asking you to be that. Yeah, I am. I am 100 percent asking you to be a great critical thinker and a thoughtful reader and writer" (Ms. B, 2016, p.3). She consistently encourages students at all levels to be critical of their environments and to develop their own opinions based on reputable sources. There are no right or wrong answers in her English curriculum, but there are always opportunities to refine and refute arguments within the classroom community through peer discussion and review. Through the examination of her instructional choices (to be discussed subsequently), it becomes apparent that her model of instruction can be seen as culturally and socially responsible as well as consistently student-centered. This practice has also been academically sound (as evidenced in satisfactory and high academic student performance), which is an important consideration in the current academic climate.

The Case of Ms. B's Classroom: A Longitudinal Study in an Urban High School

I began my study by visiting Ms. B's classroom for over eight weeks in the spring of 2016. During that time, I was there for three full days a week for two months. Due to the fact that the findings from my initial study demonstrated that Ms. B enacted a new literacies stance that facilitated critical literacy practice, I chose to continue my data collection in her classroom from the fall of 2016 until the spring of 2017. I was there for periods 1-4, two days a week, for six months.

Ms. B's High School

Ms. B teaches at an urban high school (9-12 grades) in a northeastern U.S. city. At Springwood High (pseudonym), 52 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and there is an 86 percent graduation rate. The school has a total of 733 students (363 female and 370 male). The ethnicities identified at Springwood High are diverse, with students identified as Black or African American forming the highest percentage of the school population.

During my time observing Ms. B, she taught four periods of ninth grade ELA and one period of eleventh grade ELA per day, and her 102 students have varying reading and writing abilities. Each period was 41 minutes long. After visiting all of Ms. B's classes during the beginning of the semester, I focused on observing her first and fourth periods in the ninth grade and

the third period of her eleventh grade class. During my observations for this case study, I recorded class discussion (video and audio) and then transcribed the proceedings. I also interviewed Ms. B, followed the class Twitter Feed and class email, and completed field notes and analytic notes whenever I observed a class.

The Structure of School

As Ms. B is aware, oppressive forces are at work in her school and school board. She is encouraged and required not to supplant or supplement curriculum and to follow the prescribed curriculum plans for her classroom (as overseen by the school board). However, she enacts her own instructional choices through an inquiry-based format (as her own professional choice). Many teachers within her school follow didactic instruction or lecture-based lessons (as prescribed by school board curriculum) regardless of potential reservations about the successful academic impact of that choice. Much of the prescribed curriculum (lecture-based and worksheet-driven) is enacted by teachers at Ms. B's school due to job security fears (i.e. not following the prescribed curriculum equating to refusal to perform job duties) or, in some cases, the inability to enact student-led choices. Nevertheless, having students strictly follow prescribed curriculum (as discussed by Ms. B) leaves out diverse perspectives and student agency.

Kumashiro (2000) argues that forms of oppression are represented within educational environments (implicit and explicit) and that,

> Teaching is not a representational act, an unproblematic transmission of knowledge about the world to the student, but is a performative act, constituting reality as it names it, while paradoxically acknowledging that the teacher cannot control how the student reads what the teacher is trying to enact. (p.46)

What happens in the classroom (socially, culturally and politically) must be cultivated and monitored. Kumashiro (2000) suggests that educators "think differently" or call into question the ways in which knowledge is constructed. He asks educators to explore the space between or what is not said, known or visible (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 46). Thinking differently for educators encourages them to get students to explore different knowledge bases and representations, and it calls for subverting traditional ways in which knowledge is constructed. In essence, traditional, didactic education is not socially responsible for students to participate in due to its limited student autonomy.

Freire (1970) has also argued that problem-posing education (inquiry-based education) is the only educational pedagogy that takes into account people as beings in "the 'here and now,' which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge, and in which they intervene" (p.85). For education to be relevant, it has to be grounded in

the real world of people wherein they enact inquiry which is important to their lives and cultural relevancy. Freire (1970) argues that, "No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed, by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation, models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption" (p.54). Therefore, the agency of the students is the most important feature of this pedagogy, so that they may launch a struggle that they believe is possible to win. Casting students as beings that are unfortunate or disadvantaged casts them into an identity that is passive and susceptible to complacency. Unfortunately, the prescription of curriculum in didactic form does not allow for students to be active agents in their own learning. Ms. B takes this into account in her classroom and places students as an authority in the classroom community. She encourages her students to take responsibility for their education while creating their own learning outcomes (to be discussed below).

Student Autonomy and Testing Accountability

Student autonomy is the underlying concern for Ms. B, and she embodies Freire's notion of liberation education. As Freire's (1970) Liberation Model dictates (see Figure 2), culturally relevant material that is important to students must be enacted in a problem-posing sphere. Ms. B routinely encourages students to make real world connections to texts. She does not want students to become complacent in the "banking model" of education. When I asked her about her instructional choices, she stated: "I've actually heard from other students that I had last year that they think the class is hard, which is interesting to me. Because I didn't know it was hard" (Ms. B, 2017, p.11). She described why students think it's "hard." She explained,

> I don't think they have been asked to be thoughtful about argumentative writing and I know that it's like a thing, it's a thing. It's a standard that I really have to attack and address that we have to get through together. But I don't think they have been asked to be thoughtful about it. I know they haven't. Their seventh and eighth grade teachers where it's like check box writing so you have evidence, you have analysis, you check those things off you get the points right? You're either 1, 2, 3 or 4 based on how you do this and it's not how I grade. Or how I assess. So I think they haven't been asked to be thoughtful.(p.12)

> Prior to the ninth grade students arriving in the classroom, Ms. B believed that her students found her inquiry classroom difficult, in that they were being asked to think about the topics with depth, instead of being asked to fill out worksheets that had one right answer. She clearly stated that she wanted her students to be thoughtful. In this context, she asked her students to be active learners, not subjects. Moreover, she wants students to dictate what happens in the curriculum so that it is personal to them. This is not part of the prescribed curriculum.

Figure 2: Overview of the Liberating Education, Friere, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder and Herder, p. 85-86.

"St Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves": An Examination of Ms. B's Practice

At the beginning of the school year, Ms. B's ninth graders read the short story "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves" by Karen Russell. The story is about a pack of young werewolves forced to convert to proper young ladies. After reading the story, Ms. B provided a contrasting text, which was a student-produced film recreation of the story.

Prior to the viewing of the film, she asked her students, at the beginning of the class, "Do you think that watching videos, listening to music, or being on social media counts as reading? Why or why not?" Students wrote down their responses as Ms. B remained silent. When she asked the class to read their writing, many students raised their hands or started to speak right away. This sparked an interesting dissection of reading texts (in social media) and the ways in which writing and reading (in a variety of modes) are part of comprehension. The definitions and understandings were formed by the class with Ms. B guiding the overall observations of students. She didn't readily answer the questions herself but encouraged

the students to take ownership of the discussion. Peter, an athletic African American boy, answered the question after careful thought. Phyllis, a confident African American girl and Joe, a boy of Latinx heritage provided feedback as well.

Peter I think sometimes it is reading because they say that sometimes pictures are a thousand words. So if a picture is a thousand words, imagine a video piece.

Ms. B. It's true. Why would social media count? Some of you are saying it does. Why wouldn't it count?

Phyllis I said that like watching videos don't always count, but it could count because in videos there's subtitles. You have to read them.

Ms. B. So does there have to be words for it to be reading?

(Some students say yes; some say no)

Phyllis Technically. Reeaaaading. (class laughs)

Peter Well there's expression, how you read with expression.

Ms. B. Yeah. Joe.

Joe When you're listening to music, you try to understand what the artist is saying. Like their lyrics trying to see...

Ms. B. So like interpreting something?

Joe Yeah.

Ms. B. Why would social media not count as reading all the time? (Pause) What about it makes it not reading? Joe.

Joe Maybe there will be a picture or something that won't have anything to do with anything.

Ms. B. Okay.

Phyllis   It's all comprehension, but it's not reading.

Ms. B.   "It's all comprehension, but it's not reading." I like this idea that somebody
           brought up that it's about how you're interpreting. If you're analyzing to figure it
           out. I think that's a good idea. Maybe it's not all reading but it can all be... I don't
           know. The reason I brought this all up is we're going to be watching a video version
           of "St. Lucy's" today. I was thinking about this and I was, like, how do you do this?
           Does it count as like.. we all read the story, and we know what's going to happen.
           So does watching the video matter? (a lot of students say yes).

In this interlude, it becomes clear that Phyllis had rigid views about reading in a traditional
way. However, she conceded that trying to interpret something (in any mode) was trying
to comprehend it. In fact, it was then reading. The majority of the class then responded
affirmatively to Ms. B's question about whether or not watching the video of "St. Lucy's"
matters. The students arrived at this reflection through considering the question together,
rather than Ms. B lecturing the class on the validity of different modes used to make meaning.

The class's analysis of the student film proved to be thorough (they analyzed film technique,
editing, music, character portrayal, and plot points). The students also showed their invested
interest in the story. Ms. B encouraged participation of all students and asked questions
herself, which showcased the community she actively cultivates in her class. She does
not supply students with answers, and she questions her own authority on a majority of
occasions, including the lesson on this day. Of particular interest is the fact that students
were visibly excited and frustrated by the film depiction of the nuns of St. Lucy's (See Figure
3). The class discussion follows:

*Figure 3: The Nuns, Short Film of **St Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves** by house of dUrt*

Ms. B. (Cues video) You guys ready? (Stops video at nuns) Did someone over here—and I don't know—say they look like strippers? (Class laughs) Is this how you pictured them when you were reading? (talking all at once, most saying no). No, I remember it's all like it's not all one right answer. There could be fifty different film versions of this. This is one person's interpretation. What stands out to you about like the nuns? It's very telling some of you were like what is happening? Jaidev.

Jaidev They look ratchet.

Ms. B. "They look ratchet." The nuns look ratchet. Thank you, ninth grade. Eva.

Samantha (Samantha interjects) They look sassy. They are like you're coming with us. (the class laughs)

Ms. B.   They are. They are very sassy. Warren.

Warren I thought they were old.

Ms. B. I picture them old too.

Julie They're like wearing stockings and their nails.

Ms. B. Yeah and their nails. Angie said their nails were longer than her future (class laughs). I thought that was pretty hilarious.

Jaidev described the nuns as looking "ratchet" (a diva in an urban environment, who thinks she's attractive, but is not), and there were many students who thought that they just did not look like respectable women. They critiqued their nails and stated that they were negative attributes if they were instructing young girls. Mariana, a frequently outspoken girl of Cuban descent, vehemently argued that the nuns were not "naturalized citizens," a term used in the story to describe well-mannered, proper ladies. Susan, also an outgoing and regularly opinionated White girl, argued that the nuns' attire was inappropriate, and Peter and Phyllis weighed in with their opinion.

Mariana They are not "naturalized citizens."

Ms. B . So they're not?

Mariana I think they are, but they don't act that way.

Ms. B.   What do you mean?

Mariana   Because they don't look civilized.

Ms. B.   They don't look civilized?

Mariana   It looks like they're wearing a Halloween costume (class talks all at once).

Susan   They don't look like they're fit for teaching young girls.

Ms. B.   What makes them... what makes them not fit to be teaching young girls? Yeah.

Phyllis   Because teachers usually have this image of being a nice person, and they look evil.

Ms. B.   (Class talks all at once) Okay. Peter. Peter, do you...I think this word is a little bit out There, but do you think they're not fit? Do you mean they're a little bit slutty? (Many students in the class say yes) So if someone dresses that way or acts that way, they're not fit to do something? (Some students say not necessarily).

Peter   They're supposed to teach girls positive things in society. How are they supposed to go to them?

Ms. B.   So how does, so like having makeup and nice nails represents a negative thing? (Many students say no, and then class talks all at once) Susan. Make sure you listen. Go ahead.

Susan   So what I was trying to say is like St. Lucy's girls are super high maintenance. Hard to control, but if you're thinking of a nun who's supposed to be teaching these kids, you're looking for someone who is very calm, put together, and they made themselves be very high maintenance.

Ms. B.   Oh okay.

Marianna   The way they are presenting themselves they seem to be unfit to teach the girls (class talks all at once).

Ms. B.   So, you guys are bringing up some interesting things. One of this was not how I

pictured the nuns either, and this is very much who's in charge of making the choice, like of what they look like. Who? (Someone says the director).
The director, right? The director or the costumer is making the choice for what they're looking like; the director is telling them how to act in a certain way. So this is one, this is, like, word choice like when you're writing and you choose a particular word to get an idea across as a writer. The director is choosing very particular things to sort of give the reader clues on how to feel or what idea they want to express. Like, this was a very clear choice on the part of the director. And as a writer we can't make that choice all the time. And as a writer we have to make those choices all the time, but clearly because of the choices that she or he made, the director put forward a very different, very particular idea. Just like you would choose a very particular idea. Yeah. (Peter raises his hand).

Peter   I think the director interpreted it wrong.

Ms. B.   You think the director interpreted wrong? (Silence) Okay, interesting.

In this portion of the class, Ms. B encouraged students to analyze physical attributes through the discussion of stereotypes but also managed to talk about the director as a writer making particular choices. The director, as Ms. B explains, interpreted the text in the visual way he or she wanted to. Through this discussion, students analyzed gender and sexualization of women as a construct, while at the same time deciphering the intent of the writer (the director). It was apparent that Ms. B had a feminist viewpoint on sexual stereotyping (as seen in the discussion of the clothing of the nuns), but she continued to question student assumptions as they picked out costume choice, hairstyles, and makeup in the film depiction of "St. Lucy's School for Girls." She did not overtly present her opinion but had students question their own society-based assumptions of female appearance. Ms. B expertly guided this discussion without providing students with the right answer. In this way, she presented a student-led inquiry that enabled students to practice critical thinking.

Ms. B provided a lesson that allowed students to question societal norms and conventions, while reading the video elements that led the nuns to be presented as they were. Peter, in particular, was questioned about gender roles and expressed his definition of what gendered appearance should look like. Ms. B took up this topic and asked if Peter or the class has not seen a woman who chooses to be masculine. Notions of masculinity and femininity were then critically analyzed. Students were encouraged to make critical observations about "the ratchet" nuns. More interestingly, they also analyzed their own estimation of females in the public sphere.

Many times during this lesson, students started talking all at once in their excitement. Many students like Phyllis, Peter, Susan, and Mariana were passionate about expressing their opinion. Their discussion of the ways women should present themselves in public was questioned, evaluated, and analyzed (through the guidance and facilitation of discussion by their teacher). For example, Ms. B provided the word "interpret" that students later took up as they tried to frame their objection to the nuns. Not only were students engaged in the content of the film and in class discussion, they were also encouraged to "interpret" their findings, synthesize their observations, and later present a written argument about the film versus the story version along with a dissection of clothing and costume (as was presented in class discussion). Ms. B then provided students with the chance to form their own conclusions based on media dissection. This was a process that provided an engagement in a learning community that may not have been conducted in the same way had the students only been reading the Russell short story and responding to it in worksheet form.

Key Takeaways from Ms. B

When Ms. B presented the student film in the "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves" unit, students were able to compare and contrast it with the traditional text. Importantly, femininity and female dress were deconstructed in the film discussion. Mariana had a set definition of what was appropriate to wear, and Ms. B questioned her on those assumptions. Clearly, the inquiry here is questioning societal constructs in a critical way so that subtexts and counter-narratives are revealed (Saunders et al., 2017; Mulchay, 2008; Perttula et al., 2017). This inquiry was not "on the script" of prescribed curriculum, but the fact that Ms. B permitted this experience to happen allowed for critical literacy practice to be implemented in her classroom. The film sparked discussion on gender and gender binaries, and reflective skepticism shown by students was prompted by the questioning of societal norms as well as interpreting media. Throughout the process, Ms. B maintained the community of learners who were responsible for being thoughtful and productive in their class discussion and writing analysis.

Had Ms. B not structured inquiry into class discussion and encouraged agency in her students, the takeaways they would have gotten from the example of the short story could be limited. While Ms. B was subversive in supplanting and supplementing some curriculum, the lessons learned from her approach to structuring her classroom as an active community are invaluable. This is the cultivation of future critical consumers of text and media. The discussion of gender assumptions and gender-based bias in the classroom community's discussion here directly demonstrates the critical thinking and analysis that is possible in an English classroom.

Authentic Engagement and Inquiry-Based Instruction

Ms. B is also cognizant of student conceptual understanding of the world. By dissecting media as part of the teaching of Russell's short story, Ms. B strengthened student understanding and learning. This concept of connecting student cultural and societal sources to student learning demonstrates the utilization of student "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992). Funds of knowledge "refer to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). When using funds of knowledge, the teacher must be well versed in the cultural backgrounds of students and use those backgrounds to make decisions about creating curriculum. This process automatically allows students to make authentic connections. I observed throughout the year that Ms. B demonstrated her constant research for new and important media sources for her students to dissect. As already stated, the student film for "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves" provided fodder for analysis of gender with reference to the traditional text.

Conclusion

Ms. B represents herself as an equal in her classroom, not as an autocratic leader. She is also part of the classroom community that she created. She eats breakfast with her students at the start of the day and always prefaces her statements with covenants like "that's my opinion," or "correct me if I'm wrong." She asks questions frequently but did not supply the answers. It's up to the students to work on problems that are posed and to come up with their own answers. She will also admit when she doesn't know something and then the class would use tools like Siri or websites to find definitions or supplement their knowledge.

Ms. B was rated "highly effective" on her yearly evaluation. While that is based on two class observations and test scores, it can serve as an example of an educator who used innovative curriculum in a prescriptive curricular system and who was still succeeding. This rating is the highest level for a teacher and showcases the fact that Ms. B's curriculum taught the skills required of the curriculum but also focused on student growth (both academic and personal spheres). While her students may test well, she does not teach to the test. Rather, she engages students with content and allows them the opportunity to critically engage with many texts in different modes.

Teachers can look to Ms. B's example as a progressive and responsible way to implement critical thinking while providing valuable knowledge in literature and media analysis. Ms. B's classroom strategies also illuminate ways to incorporate student voice and authenticity into classroom discussions. Teachers should not tell students what to think but guide their thinking while questioning assertions that are made by students if they do not assess fact

or evidence. In this way, students are positioned as experts as the classroom community while, at the same time, modelled ways to be accurate and experienced critical thinkers by their teacher. This can then be translated into precise and thoughtful ELA writing pieces and students are positioned as valuable writers with advanced writing analysis skills while participating in this process. Clearly, Ms. B is teaching valuable writing and thinking skills that go beyond curriculum standards. She is preparing her students to be savy, critical consumers of the world around them; this is an invaluable skill in a world fraught with inaccurate truths and misleading information.

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Using Mentor Texts to Create Poetry about Place

by: Adrian Nester

Abstract

Clint Smith's *Counting Descent* and its closing poem "There is a Lake Here" gives students an opportunity to write about place in an authentic way.

Southern Virginia has seen hard times with the movement of some industries out of the Southside and the reduction in tobacco farming over the past several decades. Despite this, there is still great pride in our area and what it means to live in a rural community. Many students live in the same communities and sometimes on the same land that generations of their families did before them.

Using Clint Smith's poetry collection *Counting Descent* as a mentor text gives students an opportunity to write about place in an authentic way that celebrates the place where they live despite adversity.

A Word About Mentor Texts

In my first professional online book club, we selected Allison Marchetti and Rebecca Odell's *Writing with Mentors*.

At first I was skeptical. It sounded interesting, but would it really work? If I provided a model for the students, wouldn't they just basically copy what was in front of them? Wouldn't even the most well-intentioned students feel like they had to rely too heavily on the mentor text?

My skepticism quickly dissipated once I gave the concept a real chance. I realized that I had been using mentor texts in class, but just did not give it that particular name when modeling top performing AP Literature essays. When we look at an example of a high scoring paper, we notice the moves, structure, and phrasing of a well-done piece. We also do this when reading and analyzing award-winning articles from student newspapers around the country in journalism class.

After impressive student engagement in my first mentor text inspired lesson on Truman Capote's "A Christmas Memory", I knew that I had to integrate mentor texts more often in my classroom.

"After" poems

After reading Clint Smith's collection as a whole work, we took a close look at his final poem "There is a Lake Here." We discuss its placement as the final poem in the collection and the message that is left with the reader. Smith's poem is an homage to his home city of New Orleans following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Smith modeled his poem after Jamaal May's poem "There are Birds Here" which is his tribute to his city, Detroit. Students should read May's poem and identify the ways Smith uses May's poem as inspiration and a model for his poem.

Once students realize that published and accomplished poets write poems that are inspired by other poets, it brings more validity to the assignment.

Ways to approach the poem

Consider trying a Twitter style chat like the one hosted in August of 2018 on this poem. These questions are tailored for teachers but could be easily adapted to work for students. Silent discussions (copies of the poem are annotated and passed silently) are another way to "discuss" poetry while giving every child a chance to think about the poem without having to answer aloud.

#TEACH LivingPoets

#TeachLivingPoets Chat

August 28th, 8:30 EST

Poem: "There is a Lake Here" by Clint Smith

WU: What new poem(s) are you excited about bringing to the classroom this year?

Q1: What words/phrases stand out in this poem? Why?

Q2: What do you notice about the structure? How does the structure reinforce meaning?

Q3: What would you want your students to take away from this poem either in skill and/or meaning?

Q4: How would you approach this poem in class? Strategies? Connections?

Action: Write your own "There is a _____ Here" poem and share.

This poem is also a great opportunity to incorporate nonfiction articles into the classroom regarding Hurricane Katrina since most of the students will likely have little prior knowledge of the disaster which occurred in 2005.

Jamaal May's poem also has a motion poem available through the Poetry Foundation that adds a visual element to this short unit.

Writing their own

The following activity could be used for pre-reading "There is a Lake Here" or before drafting their own mentor text poem. Students will be prompted to free-write about a specific place they love, somewhere that gives them a sense of belonging, describing its key features. This will then move into a discussion of their school community as a place or the town/city where they live. A sheet of paper divided in half will be used to record observations: one column for common misconceptions made about the place by outsiders, and the other for the TRUTH as a person who belongs to the place.

Students should now be in the right frame of mind to write their own poems about place. Many of them use the model of the title "There is a _____ Here" at least initially but may change it in a later draft. Students focus on the misconceptions of their selected place and the truths they would like others to see. Many use the repetition of "And no,..."as Smith does to discredit the would be critics of their location. Students may also like to craft their first and last sentences as Smith does and model the syntax of their poems after his example.

Providing an authentic audience

Once students have drafted, edited, and revised their poems, they may want to share their work with a larger audience outside of the four classroom walls. Student blogs through Edublogs provide a user-friendly interface to share student work with a larger audience.

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Kyle D. Trott

Teacher as Technical Communicator: Utilizing Usability and a User-Centered Approach in Designing Instructional Packets

Abstract

In the exigence of high stakes testing and an instructor's own expert blind spot, the author proposes secondary English teachers to re-envision their pedagogical practice of creating instructional packets through the field of technical and professional communication. Through this lens, teachers may consider the construction of their instructional packets to empower students through TPC's concepts of usability, in the form of plain language and heuristics, and user-centered design. In doing so, students will become better engaged with the instructional packets and advocates and agents in their own learning.

Exigence

"Why haven't YOU taught Johnny to write yet?" As secondary English teachers, we hear the same lamentations that students can't write by fellow teachers, administration, parents, and college professors. Many of us recall reading the damning *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1955), *Why Johnny Still Can't Read* (Flesch, 1981), and *Why Johnny Can't Write* (Linden & Whimbey, 1990) in our introductory Education courses. Criticisms about student writing—and how to best teach it—are still debated today. However, the limited scope of these critiques doesn't address the various and overwhelming legislation and requirements placed upon teachers' shoulders.

Yet, we persist. And, in this way, the field of Technical and Professional Communication can help secondary English teachers by empowering students for their own learning. If teachers can see themselves as technical communicators in the construction of their teacher-made packets, then they can think first about how their students' use instructional materials. In doing so, teachers can better plan for student agency. This is an alternative to constructing packets as an instructional pacing guide which privileges the ownership by the teachers instead of the students. Therefore, this shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning can empower students' ownership of the materials for learning.

The field of Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) grew from the field of Engineering and was in response to the need to teach engineers how to better communicate to those outside of their field (Conners, 1982). While TPC is a robust field, it may still feel far removed from the classroom of the secondary English teacher. However, this is not the case.

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) (n.d.) defines a technical communicator as someone who is "[p]roviding *instructions about how to do something*, regardless of how technical the task is or even if technology is used to create or distribute that communication" (emphasis mine). This act of providing instruction about how to do something is exactly what a teacher does for their students. It is imperative that secondary English teachers see themselves as technical communicators because this lens can open up new ways of seeing our instruction, our work, and our students.

Here, English teachers provide instruction through the formation of their instructional packets. Teachers act as a conduit between The Department of Education's required curricular objectives or College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) courses and teaching our students how to demonstrate those learning objectives on standardized tests. Thus, when teachers create instructional packets designed to break down complex material into easily understood tasks or lessons, we are technical communicators. Returning to STC's definition, the "value that technical communicators deliver is… mak[ing] information more useable and accessible to those who need that information." As teachers, we make information usable and accessible in the form of our instructional packets.

Teacher-Made Instructional Packets

First, rethinking and defining instructional packets is needed. Broadly defined, instructional materials are any type of resource a teacher utilizes in the classroom in order to make the process of knowledge-making easier. Instructional material may be *traditional* (textbooks and workbooks), *graphic representations* (graphic organizers and charts), or *teacher-made* (instructional packets) (Janovsky, n.d.). In this article, "instructional packets" does not refer to a collection of readings or worksheets intended to mimic *traditional* instructional material like anthologies or workbooks. Instead, "Instructional packets" refers to a sequential how-to guide that is generated by teachers to communicate demonstratable outcomes such as writing. For this article, I refer to my instructional packets on teaching my pre-AP tenth and AP eleventh grade students how to write a rhetorical analysis.

Principles of TPC need to apply to any instructional materials used in the classroom, especially teacher-made instructional packets because they are *teacher generated*. Thus, the packet is created by the teacher, without TPC training, and locally situated to the students in the classroom. Grounded in TPC, teachers can empower students by making their packets "useable" by breaking down their own expert language and providing heuristics that highlight conventions of genre. Additionally, by applying a user-centered design, teachers can include students' expertise in the instruction giving them agency in the knowledge-making process. In doing so, teachers "advance the goals" of their institutions and stakeholders. Indeed, but the most important goal is helping and teaching students to learn and grow so they may

become life-long learners. Part of that process is empowering students to own their learning. And the success and achievement for our students, the users of these packets, are our goal. To achieve successful agency, instructional packets need to be revised in the lens of TPC in terms of usability and a user-centered approach. STC echoes these sentiments in defining the goal of technical communication: "What all technical communicators have in common is a user-centered approach to providing the right information, in the right way, at the right time to make someone's life easier and more productive." And working from a framework of usability and a user-centered approach, English teachers can re-envision how they construct their packets as technical communicators because these approaches recontextualizes how teachers think of themselves, their students, and their instructional materials.

Usability

Utilizing Technical Communication's concept of "usability" can help in responding to the problematic theory of "expert blind spots" where experts overlook the developmental stages a novice must take in comprehending and mastering a new field of study. Nathan & Petrosino (2003) assert the "concern is that teachers' subject-matter expertise often overshadows their pedagogical knowledge about how their novice students learn and develop intellectually in the domain of interest" (p. 906). The authors identify the difference, and subsequent interference, between "subject-matter knowledge" and "pedagogical content knowledge." The separation between these two realms of knowledge can leave glaring gaps where novice students can get lost and falter. The problem is that the instructor is looking at their students through a disciplinary lens and not a pedagogical lens (Nathan & Petrosino, 2003). For example, the instructor teaching rhetorical analysis may overlook the need for the novice student to know the jargon associated with the understanding of the content, such as devices, strategies, conventions, and how to analyze a text. Consequently, the instructor misses the foundational steps and language needed for the novice students to demonstrate mastery (Nathan & Alibali, 2001).

By considering usability, an instructor can work to circumvent the issues of communication from expert to novice in their packets. Usability is characterized by "*easy to learn*" and "*easy to use*" (Dilger, 2006). Dilger summarizes Jakob Nielsen's foundational components of usability:

> "…Jakob Nielsen defines usability as five interconnected parts: (1) learnability, or being "easy to learn"; (2) efficiency of use; (3) memorability, or "an interface that is easy to remember"; (4) few and noncatastrophic errors; (5) subjective satisfaction, or pleasure in use."
> (p. 48)

With these five parts as a framework, English teachers turn to the construction of their instructional packets from the perspective of how their students will use them. This shifts

the agency from the teacher to the students. In doing so, greater insight into how the student sees the field is gained and can be utilized to aid in their mastery of the work. When teachers work to deconstruct the components necessary for their students to quickly and efficiently understand the curriculum, problems with content specific language can act as a barrier to comprehension. Furthermore, understanding conventions of a genre can hinder demonstrable mastery. Teachers can combat the issues of language and genre conventions in two forms: plain language and heuristics.

Plain Language

In a special issue on plain language (*Transactions*, 2017), guest editors Natalya Mateeva, Michelle Moosally, and Russell Willerton (2017) "reintroduce" plain language as a necessity for technical communicators to consider for audience usability. Mateeva, et. al. identifies the four principle guidelines of plain language as "conducting careful audience analysis; organizing information in a logical way; using bulleted lists, active voice, shorter sentences and paragraphs, and common everyday words; and conducting usability testing" (p. 336). Plain language actively works to deconstruct complicated language that convey theories and complex terminology to make it usable for audiences. Furthermore, plain language has been argued to be equitable, ethical, developmental, and growing in popularity amongst U.S. professionals, institutes, and government (*Transactions*, 2017).

This is not "dumbing down" instruction for students, but meeting students where they are in the learning process. This is making the content readily understandable for students to comprehend so they may build upwards toward more complex language as their conceptual command of curriculum develops. This is not to imply that introducing jargon is detrimental to the development of students, but immersing them in this jargon doesn't equip students with the necessary skills to swim and survive or thrive in the sea of a field's terminology.

In terms of constructing instructional packets, teachers pull from textbooks, outside resources, or employ their own elevated and expert language when attempting to breakdown content. This academic and mature vocabulary may be difficult and intimidating for students to grasp as they learn, leaving students frustrated and alienated from the content. This extends beyond placing content vocabulary in "their own words" or explaining what a term means in a more colloquial way. Plain language is about changing all the words to a more user-friendly prose accessible to every student. By thinking like a technical communicator, teachers can reflect on the novice students' usability of the packet away from the classroom. In doing so, teachers can identify and highlight difficult vocabulary used so that they may be replaced or rewritten with easier and more localized vocabulary giving students greater usability of the instructional packet on their own.

Teachers can go about this process of converting expert language to plain language in the revision stage of writing. In doing so, two copies will be made (see in Figure 1). One copy maintains the elevated and expert language wielded by teachers. This serves as a mentor text and can be utilized in a comparison or evaluative stage. For students, a second copy may be available for their usability in comprehending, internalizing, and demonstrating curriculum content. With both texts, students may see where they are, where they will go, and work to get there with the necessary steps expert teachers may leave out due to expert blind spots.

Teacher Text (Expert Language)	Student Text (Plain Language)
Utilizing rhetorical strategies, like ethos, pathos, and logos, can help a rhetor persuade an audience to action.	You can move an audience to action by: - (E) earning trust or sharing values - (P) getting them emotionally invested - (L) clearly organizing your argument
In a rhetorical situation, consider the contextual factors that influence the exigence of the rhetor's strategies upon their audience to convey their telos.	When considering how a speaker moves their audience to action, you need to consider how the speaker came to address the problem that arose. This will help explain why the speaker chose to organize their argument in the way they did, decide what emotions to appeal to, and what common values they share with their audience in order to get their point across.
In your conclusion, rhetorically situate your telos as a kairotic moment to sway your audience to action. You can best accomplish this by utilizing pathos to evoke your audience's moral obligation to the public sphere.	In your conclusion, address why your audience should act now for the greater good and get them moving by getting them emotionally invested!

Figure 1: Examples of revising from expert language to plain language.

Heuristics

In order to make complex and invisible conventions simple and visible for students, teachers employ heuristics within their instructional packets so that students may contextualize, adopt, adapt, and modify them for their own demonstrable mastery. People use heuristics as mental "shortcuts" that make "decisions or solutions to be reached more rapidly" (Todd,

2001). "Heuristics are approximate strategies or 'rules of thumb' for decision making and problem solving that do not guarantee a correct solution but that typically yield a reasonable solution or bring one closer to hand" (Todd, 2001). And these "approximate" and "not guarantee[d]" solutions allow for the mobility teachers need to avoid "extreme usability". The inexact nature of heuristics provide space for interpretation by the student to find their own voice and demonstration while allowing the teacher to address key conventions of a genre. Thus, teachers create and instruct with heuristics in order to highlight key components of a genre or curriculum content. But, heuristics can be tricky as they need to be usable away from classroom instruction. Which means they need to embody the five parts of usability: learnability, efficiency, memorability, few errors, and pleasure to use (Dilger, 2006).

When introducing students to the conventions of a body paragraph of a literary or rhetorical analysis, the following heuristic has worked well (found in Figure 2) during the first quarter. Knowing students come from a plethora of backgrounds, begin with this usable guide to meet students where they are at in the learning process. This provides the foundations for what goes into a paragraph, but doesn't take agency away from the students' writing. In the second quarter, introduce the second evolution of the heuristic (found in Figure 3). Students work with these heuristics in class and at home in order to gain and demonstrate mastery.

Assertion: (AUTHOR) (POWER VERB) (DEVICE) to show (IDEA).
Citation: In (LOCATION), (SPEAKER) (POWER VERB), "(CITATION)" (#).
Explanation: Explain how (DEVICE) is used and illuminates (IDEA) through "(CITATION)" (#).
So What?: Explain how (IDEA) supports the (AUTHOR'S PURPOSE).

Figure 2: Heuristic given first quarter

Assertion: (AUTHOR) (POWER VERB) (IDEA) through (DEVICE).
Citation: In (LOCATION), (BRIEF SUMMARY OF PARAGRAPH), (SPEAKER) (POWER VERB), "(CITATION)" (#-#).
                    * Minimum 2 sentences explicating citation
Explanation: Explain how "(DEVICE)" is used and illuminates "(IDEA)" through
                    "(CITATION)" (#).
      * Minimum 1 transitional word: Additionally, Furthermore, Moreover, However,
                          Conversely, Although
So What?: Explain how (IDEA) supports the (AUTHOR'S PURPOSE).

Figure 3: Heuristic given second quarter

Provide the complete heuristic (Figure 4) during quarter 3 when teaching students how to write a body paragraph in a rhetorical analysis for the College Board AP English Language and Composition Question 2 essay. Students use this heuristic both as a means to see what goes into a body paragraph, but also as a means to evaluate their work. There is one further step towards advancement, in quarter 4, of which students have the option to move past this stage by removing the block citation.

Assertion: (AUTHOR) (POWER VERB) (STRATEGY) through (DEVICE).
Citation: In (LOCATION), (BRIEF SUMMARY OF PARAGRAPH), (SPEAKER) (POWER VERB), "(CITATION)" (#-#).
    * Minimum 3 sentences explicating citation to show device's purpose
Explanation: Explain how "(DEVICE)" is used and illuminates "(STRATEGY)" through "(CITATION)" (#).
    * Minimum 2 transitional words: Additionally, Furthermore, Moreover,
        However, Conversely, Although
So What?: Explain how (STRATEGY) connects to the (AUDIENCE).
        Connect (STRATEGY) to (AUTHOR'S PURPOSE).

Figure 4: Heuristics for identifying the conventions of writing a body paragraph for a rhetorical analysis.

These heuristics are not designated to only advanced students. Teachers and student-tutors have used these heuristics in SOL remediation and in the Writing/Learning Center. Thus, students are met where they are in the educational process, work with tools readily usable, and develop towards mastery. Used at home for construction, evaluation, and revision, these heuristics empower students with confidence which leads to their willingness to take on loftier aspirations and more challenging work.

Creating a Heuristic

There are several steps to get to a heuristic which involves analyzing both teacher-generated texts and sample essays provided by College Board. First, read and respond to several of College Board's essay prompts to learn how a writer accomplishes these tasks. Then, deconstruct the mentor and sample essays by looking for standard conventions of topic sentences, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Finally, reconstruct the essays to conclude the prominent moves found in low (4), middle (6), and high (8) scoring essays on a 9-point rubric. Once the genre analysis is completed, construct a heuristic for students' usability.

In terms of the five parts of usability, center the heuristic around memorability due to students being assessed in the testing site away from instructional aids. Thus, students would have to

rely upon their long-term memory. Begin with the formation of the paragraphs and simplify a mnemonic device, like ACES. ACES refers to the explicated parts of a body paragraph: Assertion, Citation, Explanation, So What. From this, break down each part of the format to help with learnability and efficiency. For learnability, students may see the components that go into each part of the paragraph. For efficiency, students may answer the various subparts of the paragraph which further breaks down the parts into smaller tasks. Finally, while very few students would say the format is a "pleasure to use", they will attest to the ease of use and transferability to other assignments, classes, and genres. Conclusively, the heuristic needs to meet the requirements of Nielsen's definition of usability.

Applying heuristics in an instructional packet can help students make the connections in how they can show demonstrable mastery in an "easy to learn" and "easy to use" way. It requires teachers to analyze, deconstruct, and reconstruct curriculum outcomes and provide guidelines for students to follow. And, while this is formulaic in nature, the heuristic highlights the conventions of the genre and does not dictate or take agency away from the student's voice and invention. This is important to recognize, because a heuristic provides guidelines for students to navigate and negotiate as opposed to "extreme usability" addressed in the limitations section.

Accessibility

Teachers are familiar with the need to place students first and find ways to effectively communicate learning outcomes to them so that they may master key skills. Teacher training places the emphasis on the ability to instruct rather than on how students learn (Loveless, 2019). With a user-centered approach, the question becomes how do students learn and in what ways do students utilize instructional packets. User-Centered Design, originated by Donald Norman, places the user at the center of the design process through four basic tenements:

1. Make it easy to determine what actions are possible at any moment
2. Make things visible, including the conceptual model of the system, the alternative actions, and the results of actions
3. Make it easy to evaluate the current state of the system
4. Follow natural mappings between intentions and the required actions; between actions and the resulting effect; and between the information that is visible and the interpretation of the system state.

<div align="right">(Abras et al., 2004)</div>

The key insight provided here is focusing on how the user, placed in her or his own location, "can make use of the product as intended and with minimum effort to learn how to use it" (p. 2). By tapping into a teacher's greatest resource, students' experience, valuable

insight and knowledge can be gained for best practices. This involvement can be relatively light through consulting students' needs and use or intense by having students actively participate as partners through the design of the packet (Abras et al., 2004). Regardless of how teachers choose to incorporate her or his students in the design process of the packet, it is important for teachers to consider how students will use the packet outside of the classroom to encourage self-efficacy and empower students to own the learning. If students are comfortable with the usability of the packet, then she or he will refer to it when working on their own. And, if students are working on their own with the packet, then she or he are truly engaged with the learning. Thus, these students are not passive recipients but active participants (Ladner, 2015).

This may sound like Student-Centered Learning, a fundamental pedagogical tool (*Education Reform*, 2014). However, Student-Centered Learning focuses on designing formative and summative assessments for the purposes of engaging students in authentic learning for the purposes of demonstrating their knowledge of curriculum in a meaningful way (McWhorter & Hudson-Ross, 1996; TEAL, 2010). In many ways, Student-Centered Learning draws many of the principles found in User-Centered Design. They both ask students to collaborate with the teacher in creation, assigning value, and reflecting on production as a meaningful assessment of their learning. However, Student-Centered Learning focuses on assessment while User-Centered Design focuses on process. Thus, by applying User-Centered Design for the construction of instructional packets, teachers empower students by giving them agency in her or his own knowledge-making process.

User-Centered Design

For the purposes of making an instructional packet, teachers must start with a Teacher-Centered approach. After all, teachers have the insight, training, and knowledge to understand the demonstratable outcomes the Department of Education or College Board require students to know and master. Second, after instruction or completion of the unit of which the packet was utilized, the teacher needs to open up a dialogue with students and give them the power to critique, comment, and provide feedback on the packet's usability. In this way, students become part of the recursive process necessary to improve the usability of future packets.

Teachers can approach their packet like a piece of text they are looking to improve upon. They can do this by asking four key questions: What worked well in the packet? What could be expanded upon in the packet? What was left out of the packet that I covered in class? Where do you see this packet growing? By asking these four questions at the conclusion of each unit, teachers may create an outline (see Figure 5) which can be adjusted accordingly. Over time, this provides teachers with a plan that may be swapped out or replaced in accordance to their students' needs.

User-Centered Packet Breakdown		
PART I	**PART II**	**PART III**
Learning Objectives *- State Mandates*	Construction **(Visible)** *-What it looks like?*	End Product Sample *-Full Teacher Example*
Introduction *- Relevance*	Deconstruction **(Evaluate)** *-What are the components?*	Definitions *-Literary/Rhetorical Terms*
Concepts *- Common Terms*	Reconstruction **(Mapping)** *-How do we make it?*	Resources for Review *-Reference Material*
Standards-Based Approach *- Localized Assessment*	Practice *-Step-by-step instruction*	

Figure 5: Organization of instructional packet on composing a rhetorical analysis

Part I – In Class

The first part of the packet construction recalls the first suggestion in Norman's User-Centered Design of which students see what actions are possible. These four subparts to the main are in response to students' initial questions and inquiries about why they have to learn this and what are they being assessed on. Because this question comes up often by students, make sure to address it so they know the weight and validity of their learning and work. First, present the learning objects of the State, then introduce the background of where the work comes from. Provide common terms that are used so that the class may understand each other on a common ground. Then, provide students with either a rubric or points for which they will be assessed. While this seems like teacher-centered instruction, all of these points were suggested by students in prior classes and years which helps to enrich their buy-in. Teachers should point this out to build ethos and let students know the weight of their contributions.

Part II – In Class

Construction (Visible) – Students consistently ask for how to read and dissect prompts. These inquiries open up dialogues about points of emphasis for the teacher and student, as well as, conversations about where to apply emphasis and value. Making the construction of a prompt visible for students was important for them to see the conceptual model of the system

which helped their understanding for what was being asked of them. In one such case, a teachable moment arose when students asked to write their own.

Deconstruction (Evaluate) – Students also asked for models and examples of how to do the prompts and assignments so that they may mimic and break down the text. During this time, provide written essays as mentor texts for students to critique and learn from. Place these mentor texts in the instructional packets for future years to show growth. This is the most active process in the user-centered approach because it empowers students to evaluate an expert's work and ask questions about the process. Students assess both good and poor examples that instills in them both ethos for the teacher and metacognitive reflection.

Reconstruction (Mapping) – This section answers the students' questions regarding what is being asked, what do they see, and what do they need to do. This part is paramount to how students take their learning and turn it into practice. After breaking the assessment up, then seeing how to evaluate it, they can map the requirements to then demonstrate their understanding. This section is the most practical to students who ask for time to develop and practice the necessary skills. In this section, include the heuristic. Here, students choose to be evaluated on key components they struggle with as opposed to the instructor focusing on key components they value. Students place more intrinsic motivation in their work because they are the ones who set the standards.

Part III – At Home

This section needed to be fully informed by students, because teachers may not know the lived experiences of their students. In many ways, this inquiry and need extends beyond user-centered design and into human-centered design because it focuses first on the student and second on their relationship with the packets (Rose, 2016). In this frame, it helps to conceptualize and get input from students not just as users of the packets but their lives outside of the classroom. For example, in the technology age where "everyone has a phone", under-resourced and under-privileged students can be invisible.

Three main points were brought up each time students said they left the classroom. The first being an example of the finished product for review and conception. Thus, teachers should provide examples of mentor texts and College Board's essays without complications or teachable moments embedded. Second, students asked for a reference of key terms used in the essays so they may learn how to identify, analyze, and utilize the terminology. Specifically, students asked for terms they will use often and not just a list. Finally, resources on specific conventions, like how to effectively cite and use sources, were included in the back.

Limitations: Extreme Usability

Extreme usability is a serious concern for teachers when making their instructional packets, because teachers want to make learning easy for students. Under stress of standardized testing and compressed time, teachers look towards efficiency to produce top results. In this light, teachers may lean on extreme usability for its "simplicity, comfort, expediency, and pragmatic character" that "emphasizes pragmatic knowledge and highly specialized skills rather than generalized theoretical understanding" (Dilger, 2006). Extreme usability assumes the expert knows better than the user and "extreme usability corrects the shortcomings of novices" hindering novice users to "develop only instrumental knowledge" and "never conceptual knowledge" (p. 56). Indeed, if teachers implement extreme usability in their packets, then they can take away the necessary theoretical and fundamental development of students. This can lead to producing proficient skills, but can hinder students' agency in their life-long learning.

In my own practice, I fell into a pitfall of extreme usability when first constructing my heuristic. I wrote the power verb "elicits" instead of leaving the part open for students to choose their own word that was appropriate to the context of their essay. After teaching with the heuristic for three weeks of quarter one, it came time for a formative assessment. To my surprise, I received sixty paragraphs all using "elicits" in the assertion. Everything else was different except this one word. Perplexed, I asked my students the next day to which they politely informed me that I had clearly put in the word "explicit" where the power verb would go in the assertion. So they complied. By providing the power verb, I had effectively taken away their agency and supplemented with mine. When I realized the issue, I changed the heuristic, thanked them all for the lesson, and returned the favor with a week-long lesson in power verb usage.

Hence, when teachers are designing their instructional packets, they must keep their own ethos in mind and avoid the pitfalls of expediency. Under extreme usability, teachers subscribe to their own expert blind spot and act in direct harm to their students' academic needs. While students may ask for direct answers, teachers need to find ways to guide students to locate their own answers so that they are not robbed of the educational inquiry needed later in their academic and personal lives. And, while instructors find ways to show students conventions of analysis and composition, teachers need to make sure they do not intrude on the self-discovery and transformation of student learning. Finally, teachers need to continue to encourage and empower students to utilize their own voices while respecting the conventions of the genres they are writing in.

Conclusion

When teachers begin seeing themselves as technical communicators, they gain new insights into their pedagogical practices when constructing their instructional packets. In doing so, teachers shift their perspectives from themselves as the main source of agency in the classroom and work to see how students can learn on their own outside the classroom. Teachers need to recognize their own expert blind spot and work to actively circumvent this through usability and user-centered design. By implementing plain language and heuristics in their packet constructions, teachers can make their packets usable to students. Through user-centered design, instructors can continue to develop their pedagogical practice with their students at the center. Finally, teachers can maintain their ethos and work to empower their students to construct a more collaborative space that promotes a mutually inclusive practice and life-long learners.

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Melissa Seaver

Student Choice Equals

Abstract

The English classroom has the potential to engage students through creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication by setting clear expectations and allowing students to have choice and some control of their education. Student engagement in essence is student-centered instruction which permits the student to personalize learning. A secondary high school English teacher describes her methods to increase student engagement.

I will never forget sitting in my eighth grade English class and reading the *Diary of Anne Frank.* This was the first time that I really connected to history. I had learned about World War II and had ingrained December 7, 1941, the day they bombed Pearl Harbor, in my memory bank, but I had never really understood the impact that the war had had on German citizens, Jewish families, and those who stood up in the face of tyranny. I remember thinking about Anne's situation and what it would have felt like if that were my family in hiding in the Attic. I thought about sitting quietly for hours on end, whispering with my twin and desiring to play like normal children, or trying to keep my special needs sister quiet for the daylight hours. The Holocaust had never been so real to me before. That was when that I knew I wanted to have this effect on students; to take them to places they had never been, but relate it to where they are, and have them so *engaged* that they don't even realize they are learning.

Student engagement can be defined in several ways. According to Fred Newmann, author of *Student Engagement and Achievement in American Secondary Schools* (1992), engaged students make a "psychological investment in learning. They try hard to learn what school offers. They take pride not simply in earning the formal indicators of success (grades), but in understanding the material and incorporating or internalizing it in their lives" (pp. 2–3). Studies of 21st century students show an alarming number of students who aren't engaged in classroom instruction (Meece & McColskey, 1997). So how do we engage students in an age where they must constantly be entertained? The University of Washington's Center for Teaching and Learning states, "Instructors who adopt a student-centered approach to instruction increase opportunities for student engagement" (Engaging Students in Learning). Student-centered classrooms personalize curriculum by allowing students to have some choice and control over the learning process. This is how I take them from the routine of rote learning to a level where they are invested.

Often in the history classroom, students touch on so many aspects of European and American history, but they don't really get to dive in and gain a deeper understanding of a topic. Each

semester, I devote a 4-6 week teaching unit on a significant historical event. I utilize novels that form the foundation of my lessons, then I allow room for student choice to determine where the learning will take them.

I survey students to find out about their interests on historical topics. For example, World War II is a very broad subject that one can spend decades on. In many cases, students want to know more about Hitler as a leader, surviving in a concentration camp, the 1936 Olympics, and so on. Because this has been such a point of interest for students, I have developed lessons that coincide with the novel *The Book Thief*. This is not the only topic or novel that I use, but one that I use when the majority choose the Holocaust. Other novels that have proved popular based on the holocaust unit include *Night* by Elie Wiesel, *The Boy in the Stripped Pajamas* by John Boyne, and *Prisoner B-3087* by Alan Grantz.

I begin the Holocaust unit finding out what students know and what they want to learn. Then, they complete a scavenger hunt of important background information to give them some knowledge of the events leading up to World War II. I allow them some freedom on the hunt and students never disappoint in coming up with a plethora of information they are ready to share. I give students a list of credible websites and sources to help them on their journey. Some tried and true websites include History (www.history.com), The National Archives (nationalarchives.gov.uk), and Remember.org.

Next, students dive into propaganda and use the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Propaganda Artifacts Gallery as a tool to allow them to have a choice in what propaganda they view based on interest.

One student this year said, "I knew propaganda was used, but I had no idea they actually wrote anti-Jewish children's books!" Another student, whose grandparents immigrated from Germany, remembered some of the propaganda that they had seen, and he shared that with the class. These conversations spark interest and engagement and fuel continued learning.

After the initial several days introduction to World War II, students begin reading the novel. Marcus Zusak, author of *The Book Thief*, has written a beautiful fictional novel with Death as

the narrator. Not only have I incorporated a study of literary elements into this unit, but this unique narrator gives readers a view of many events that took place during the time period and allows students to see the war from the perspective of a girl who is similar to them in age. Students can identify with her feelings and emotions surrounding the events. As we read, I have integrated creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Students analyze political satire, close read an excerpt of Adolf Hitler's *Mien Kampf* and respond to his ideas of Survival of the fittest, racial superiority, and opposition to democracy. Students discuss Nazi book burnings and connect it to ISIS book burnings today. I host a Socratic Seminar on Simon Wiesenthal's true story and students prepare by wrestling with the ideas of forgiveness, genocide, and determine what the author should have done. Students are given a choice board to choose a project-based learning activity they find relevant to them including: The 1936 Olympics/Jesse Owens, concentration camp survivor project, Life as a Nazi soldier, Being a child in the Hitler Youth, American internment camps, or a teacher-approved topic. All of the projects combine researching, organinzing information in an online format, collaborating, and presenting. The projects are graded according to a rubric that is specific to each project. If a project is suggested and approved by a student, they must also collaborate with me to produce a rubric by which they will be graded. I have found that the easiest way to keep student engaged is to give them choice.

The novel unit is always a favorite with my students. They love all of the topics we talk about and it is a welcome change from the typical read a chapter and take a test that they have experienced in other classroom settings. I believe that allowing students to have choice and give feedback has significantly improved my curriculum.

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Motivation and learning matters (Jones, 2018), and for the next four issues, I invite you to consider motivation and learning as it applies to your English language arts curriculum. For this winter issue, share how you design curriculum in such a way that students believe that the work they are doing benefits their goals.

Like us, our students want to spend time on learning things of use. As English teachers, we can be explicit about how the work we are doing in the classroom is meaningful for them. In order to be effective, we know that students' needs must be at the center of this curriculum design, and our communication of what we are teaching and why we are teaching needs to be clear and intentional. In the context of usefulness, sometimes that means we should give students WIIFMs (What's In It For Me). Sometimes that may mean helping students to consider what is "in it" for them. How have you incorporated usefulness into your units?

- What are some ways you've structured your curriculum to make it useful for students?
- When have you seen your students benefit from the work accomplished in class?
- What specific topics for applying the 5 C's of creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship resulted in important work for their future?
- How have you effectively helped your students understand that they will use the knowledge learned in class? How did you know this was effectively communicated?
- Either as a class or individually, how have students' outcomes demonstrated that their work was relevant to their short- or long-term goals?

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 (including references, tables, and figures) 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 (including references, tables, and figures) that focus on effective and innovative teaching practices that other educators can quickly put into action in their classes.

Budding scholars: English and English education majors interested in sharing their ideas with an audience of fellow educators are encouraged to submit. Articles of 2,000 to 4,000 words (including references, tables, and figures) should blend research-based insights with practical suggestions for application and share unique perspectives on English instruction.

Submission deadline: November 1, 2019

To submit a manuscript, email editor Jenny Martin at jmmartin@bridgewater.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) Blinded 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 figures within 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 whether it 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.

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