VIRGINIA

English
Journal

A Professional Publication of
The Virginia Association of Teachers of English

Virginia English Journal
Publication of the Virginia Association of Teachers of English

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 either WordPerfect or 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, file name, computer program used, and version of program. (2) Also in the body of the e-mail or in an attached cover letter file, provide a short biographical sketch 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 information, 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.

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Introduction from the Editor's Desk

2019 VEJ Writing Award Winners:
The winner of the 2019 VEJ Writing Award is Erika Lynn Bass. Her article, "Dialoguing with Place: Using Writing Instruction to Inquire into Place," was published in the summer issue of the *Virginia English Journal.*

Erika Lynn Bass graduated from Virginia Tech with her PhD in English Education in May. She will begin her first faculty position at the University of Northern Iowa as Assistant Professor of English Education. She wrote her dissertation on place-based writing instruction. During her tenure as a doctoral student she published two articles: one on co-teaching at the college level and a conceptual piece about blending reading and writing instruction. She also currently has a piece on preservice teacher efficacy in press.

Honorable mentions:
The winners of the VEJ Honorable Mention Award goes to Jenifer N. Suriano and Nadia Kalman and Christine Woods. Jenifer's article, "Place-Based Education to Mediate Struggles for Preservice Teachers," was also published in the summer 2019 issue of the *Virginia English Journal.* Nadia and Christine's article, "From Windows to Mirrors: Curating, Contextualizing, and Teaching World Literature on Relevant Issues," was published in the 2019 winter issue.

Jennifer N. Suriano, EdD is a recent graduate of the University of Virginia. For her doctoral capstone, she studied writing instruction in a place-based curriculum. She previously taught high school English and earned a master's degree in environment-based education.

Nadia Kalman, M.Ed., M.A., Editor and Curriculum Designer, Words Without Borders Campus, former ELA and English teacher in New York City Department of Education. Prior publications on Flipped Learning Network and in Words Without Borders blog. Conference presentations at NYSEC (2017) and WLU (2017) nadia@wordswithoutborders.org

Christine Woods, M.Ed., M.A. - Past President VATE '08 & '09, NVWP Teacher Consultant, previous NBCT, ELA Teacher in the Roanoke Valley, most recently published in the Virginia English Bulletin (now the VEJ). cwoods@virginiawestern.edu

Introduction from the Editor's Desk
For the final exam in the *Foundations of American Education* course that I taught last semester, teacher candidates describe an innovative school that they would like to work in when they become a teacher. Often, usefulness arises as a priority for these future educators. This exam follows our review of the State of Virginia's legislation entitled "Regulations Governing the Designation of School Divisions of Innovation" that became effective on September 19, 2019 (8 VAC 20 – 760). During the semester, these teacher candidates also use a "Committee of N" card game created through the MIT Teaching Systems lab to design their own school and to learn about the history of schooling in America (https://tsl.mit.edu/project/committee-of-n/).

This learning experience takes time and we scaffold this school design project over a five week unit. We encourage candidates to research innovative schools, dream big, and envision where they wish to teach. A first year student had this to say about the THINK (https://thinkglobalschool.org/) school: "I love the fact that when students learn something in their curriculum, this school offers life experiences with what they learn. I think that this allows the student to understand what they are learning better than just sitting in a classroom. Sitting in a classroom and learning subjects offers students some knowledge, but I think when you use what you learn in the real world, then that is when you full understand what you have learned.

In this issue, the authors focus on ways to incorporate usefulness into their English language arts curriculum students by considering some important questions:

- 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 apply the 5 C's of creative thinking, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship that have 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?

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 summer issue!

Warm regards,

Jenny M. Martin

Jenny M. Martin, Ph.D.
Editor, Virginia English Journal
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Brett D. Jones

Using the MUSIC Model of Motivation to Engage Students

Janice has been teaching for a few years, and although she has been pretty successful at teaching, she believes she can do even better. She really wants to engage students in her class to help them learn as much possible. Sure, many of her students are already engaged, especially those who really enjoy the topics or who want to receive a high grade. But others seem to play the school game by showing up to class, nodding their heads, smiling occasionally, and participating half-heartedly in discussions. A few students don't even pretend to want to be there, but they participate to please others or simply because they want to pass the class.

Given Janice's situation, what can she do to motivate more of her students to engage in class and learn more effectively? Janice could begin by considering why students are not completely engaging in her class. Different students are probably unengaged for different reasons, but some of the underlying psychological reasons as to why students don't engage are that: they lack empowerment (they feel controlled or manipulated), they don't find the content useful, they don't believe that they can succeed, they aren't interested in or don't enjoy the class, or they don't believe the teacher cares about them or their success. I contend that by considering instructional strategies that address these issues, teachers can engage most of their students most of the time. I acknowledge that it's not always easy to successfully implement these strategies. But if teachers work to implement strategies that address these reasons for low engagement, they will be well on their way to effectively engaging their students.

The strategies to which I'm referring are those related to empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and caring. In my research and my work with preservice and in-service teachers, I have found that using these five categories of strategies are very beneficial because they lead to student engagement, they make sense to teachers, and they are backed by decades of research in the field of education, educational psychology, and motivation science. I call these strategies the MUSIC Model of Motivation (Jones, 2009, 2018) because the acronym MUSIC can be used to help teachers remember the beginning sounds of the five categories (eMpowerment, Usefulness, Success, Interest, and Caring).

Empowerment strategies give students some control over their environment by providing them with choices and allowing them to make decisions (here, "empower" means to give power to students). These strategies don't give students complete freedom; rather, they give students some control within limits. Teachers can empower students by giving them choices among or within assignments and activities. Some choices may be rather significant, while others may

be rather minor (yet critical for student engagement), such as choosing which book to read during class from 10:10 am to 10:30 am.

Usefulness strategies help students understand why they're learning something and how what they are learning can be useful to them, either now or in the future. By explaining the usefulness of a class activity, teachers may motivate some students, but other students may not be convinced by the teacher's explanation. Alternative approaches include asking students to explain to one another why an activity or topic is useful to them. Another strategy is to have a former student explain, either in person or in a short video, how what they learned in the class has been useful to them over time (perhaps in a future grade or in their professional career).

Success strategies are those that help students believe that they can succeed if they put forth effort. Easy activities will often not engage students; instead, activities need to be challenging, but not too challenging that students find them impossible to complete. The key is that students need to *believe* they can succeed. Success strategies include adjusting the level of difficulty of activities and assignments, providing clear expectations, allowing students to redo work until they are successful, and attributing their lack of success to a lack of effort and/or effective strategies instead of to their lack of innate ability.

Interest strategies include those that make activities fun or that get them curious about the content. These strategies engage students' emotions and get them excited about learning. Many strategies fit into this category, such as varying class activities, using novel activities, and incorporating interesting facts and ideas into lessons.

Caring strategies help students believe that the teacher and other students care about their learning and about them as a person. These strategies include teachers respecting students, showing students that they are available to assist them, and creating a class environment in which students feel physically and psychologically safe.

These are just a few of the many MUSIC strategies that teachers can use to engage students. The past issue of the *Virginia English Journal* (Summer 2019, Volume 69, Number 1) provided many examples of how teachers used empowerment to engage their students. Strategies related to the other MUSIC components are provided in the next few issues of this journal, starting with strategies related to Usefulness in this issue and followed by Success, Interest, and Caring strategies in future issues. More information about the MUSIC Model of Motivation, including ways to assess students' MUSIC perceptions in class, can be found at www.theMUSICmodel.com and Jones (2009, 2018).

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Dr. Brett D. Jones is a Professor in the Educational Psychology Program within the School of Education at Virginia Tech. His scholarship focuses on student motivation and strategies teachers can use to design instruction to support students' motivation and learning.

Katie S. Dredger and Beth Lehman

Dialogic Multimodal Paired Presentations: Examining Perspective

Abstract

As an alternative to debate, paired multimedia dialogic presentations ask students to adopt a learning stance with a classmate and to perform a conversation with visuals in a classroom. This composition assignment asks that students have a conversation to deepen understanding instead of having a debate that results in a winner and loser. Like a TED Talk or Pecha Kucha for two alternating speakers, Dialogic Multimodal Presentations develop students' skills in the areas of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and citizenship. This article discusses the reasons that ELA teachers may choose to offer an alternative to persuasive writing and debate by explicitly teaching conversing with others while using powerful images. A modifiable lesson plan is included that encourages teachers to prioritize process over product as students negotiate the ways to communicate with the goal of understanding another's viewpoint through questions, responses, and clarifying images.

Dialogic Multimodal Paired Presentations: Examining Perspective

The need for educators to teach students how to be in healthy connection with different others is distinctly important as the genres of persuasion and argument increasingly permeate our society and our classrooms. Given the nature of media today that pits varied viewpoints as opposition instead of putting them in dynamic dialogue, it is unsurprising that students understand and value argument as a genre. In that mode of communication and in light of a culture that values competition, winning is often prized in discussion. After a loss of a debate, members of both sides of debate teams may consider that the discussion is over, which signals a closed case, or closed minds. There is less of a possibility for further discussion on a topic. However, reaching consensus or deeper understanding could be an individual and collective goal of our communication. In this article we present dialogic alternatives for writing and presentation in the English Language Arts classroom. As authors we are motivated by political rhetoric in the media to explicitly model and teach modes of human interaction that privilege a learning stance inclusive of all participants rather than a winner take all mentality.

If the goal is learning, then the focus should be on extending and expanding ideas rather than adhering to a rigid set of yes/no, right/wrong, win/lose dichotomies. Here, the win is the expansion of thinking, development of relationships, and understanding other sides and perspectives; not bending another's will to one's own. This type of win first requires listening,

genuinely considering what others are saying rather than looking for weaknesses in their argument. Further, listening to ideas in this way turns the notion of "weaknesses" on its head as strengths and weaknesses are often two sides of the same coin. Looking for the best in another's argument is an invitation to consider their weaknesses as possible strengths. Doing this, however, requires one to hold their argument with an open hand, letting the ideas of another provoke them to question their own position. This practice is a compelling way to engage with people, and it ties to issues of culturally responsive teaching as it demonstrates an appreciation of diversity. If we are serious about diversity, we need to expect, accept and desire multiple viewpoints. Without an intentional effort toward this approach, dominance and assimilation are the result of a lost argument. This, in action, silences less powerful voices, and the mosaic of innovation that can result from a compromise is lost.

From Persuasive and Argumentative to Dialogic

Clearly, growth of understanding comes when people talk with each other. Given that learning is one of the primary purposes of school, educators must consider how they can foster this type of dialogue in the classroom (Hacker & Graesser, 2007; Howe & Manzoorul, 2013). Focusing solely on persuasive essays assumes that writers are fixed in their opinion and leads to the often-faulty assumption that there is one "right" or "wrong" answer to be fought over. One specific way educators can foster productive dialogue is through a dialogic composition and presentation format. This article describes our adaptation of a Pecha Kucha, a slide lecture that is six minutes and forty seconds long and includes twenty slides that automatically advance every twenty seconds (Klein Dytham Architecture, 2015). The multi-modal format of Pecha Kucha encourages communication through carefully planned images (Dredger & Beach, 2016; Dreder & Lehman, 2018; Jones, 2009). This is best understood by watching a few easily accessible Pecha Kuchas online before assigning the paired format to students. At its heart, this assignment is about collaboration, in that two people are tasked with working together to find a shared topic of divergent views that they explore together to reach understanding. Our adapted presentation keeps the spirit of the Pecha Kucha format while making space for purposeful discussion with the goal of creating new shared understandings and of loosening tightly held impermeable beliefs. In this paired presentation format, two discussants trade slide lecture time equally, while working toward understanding. This student presentation is a process that can be one element in the building of a dialogic classroom. Building a dialogic classroom involves a developmental process of building trust, valuing of diversity, and listening with a constructivist paradigm, all within a developing learning stance within classroom interactions.

Underpinnings of the Dialogic Classroom

This work is grounded in relationships. Many of us have engaged in unproductive discussions on social media, like in the comment section of a friend's Facebook page. A result of this practice is often hurt feelings and bruised relationships. Openness to new perspectives happens in strong relationship in respectful environments that can be developed and nurtured, especially in the English Language Arts classroom. An unintended positive consequence of this type of slide presentation is the building of relationships between students in classrooms. Abraham Lincoln is credited for saying, "I don't like that man, I'm going to have to get to know him better." Perhaps, this might help students understand that changing or helping people understand other's perspective works best when there is a mutual respect. Students are prompted to listen and adopt a learning stance, one where the expectation is learning instead of seeking to change another's mind.

In the dialogical classroom, students use writing to explore who they are becoming and how they relate to the larger culture around them. Dialogic writing
- Combines academic and personal writing;
- Allows writers to bring multiple voices to the work;
- Involves thought, reflection, and engagement across time and space; and
- Creates opportunities for substantive and ongoing meaning making. (Fecho, 2011)

Fecho's work on dialogic writing is part of the broader literature on best practices in English education. It brings today's outside literacies into the classroom (Alvermann, 2008; Gainer, 2013). Dialogic writing involves thought, reflection, and engagement across time and space. Language can oppress, and to combat this, we encourage the movement of language. Dialogic conversation can open language and move relationships forward . Multiple new media platforms are easily accessible and dialogue is happening on these, so let's take this incredible and powerful out-of-school literacy and bring it into the classroom and talk about ways that we can teach our students to do better. Friere (1970) stated that

> Dialogue cannot exist…in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. … Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. … And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. … Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made possible. If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love other people—I cannot enter into dialogue. (p.88)

This dialogic work, done in the English Language Arts classroom, is rooted in equity and freedom of oppression. When we develop in our students a learning stance in conversation

instead of a winner-takes-all argumentative stance and an equity stance of sharing the metaphorical microphone, power can be distributed more evenly in the arena where the loudest, the most sensational, and often the meanest comments get attention, which can silence dissenting opinions.

The Composition Format, Dialogic Multimodal Presentation

The picture-oriented nature of this Dialogic Multimodal Presentation encourages multimodality as it acknowledges that authentic dialogue is not confined to written text and brings out-of-school visual literacies (like the use of images in sites like Instagram) into the classroom. Unlike Pecha Kucha, this composition form is presented in pairs of two students. It holds the potential to promote growth of understanding in each learner through dialogue (Seglam, Witte & Beemer, 2012).

This composition form supports dialogue because two students work together to craft and then present a negotiated discussion that incorporates two perspectives. To help students with this, there are specific subskills teachers must scaffold for students so they can develop and practice productive dialogue. Such skills include constructive listening, asking clear and intentionally open questions, and genuinely respecting the other human in their dialogue. Furthermore, Virginia's Five Cs each are developed through this composition form.

Enactment of the Five Cs

As a commonwealth, Virginia has chosen to keep five important skills for learning at the forefront of classroom work: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication and citizenship. As one assignment, this multimodal presentation, in its process and in its product, promotes all of these. While these are specifically pertinent in the context of Virginia, they are part of what many would consider effective education in any context. This style of dialogic thinking, writing, and presenting, taps into all five domains.

Critical Thinking

This composition and presentation format supports critical thinking as students have to simultaneously evaluate their partners' words in light of their own ideas. The critical thinking component comes not only in choosing how one verbally responds to a partner, but also in selecting (and co-selecting) effective images that evoke emotions and clarify important points. In both of these verbal and visual modes, students have to move between perspectives, each one considering their own voice, the way they hear it, and how their partner and the

classroom audience will perceive it. Beyond this, students then have to listen to their partner and consider how ideas presented verbally and visually relate or connect to their own ideas. When selecting images, both partners have to be able to draw connections between the visual presentation, verbal presentation, and the position being supported.

Additionally, critical thinking can mean anticipating the need for clarification needed based on new information or the dialogic partner's shared perspective. As a student misinterprets or questions their partner, they will have to learn how to make some choices and then share in a better or different way. They will also have to recognize nonverbal cues such as leaning back, leaning in, shutting down, or seeing disengagement in the partner's eyes and will have to decide how to reinvite engagement. In tough dialogue, students will have to be especially careful in reflecting on areas where their words have shut down the conversation. All of these things require critical thinking and communication. Dr. Bruce Perry guides adults who have dealt with trauma to use the three R's: regulate, relate, reason.

> Until a child is regulated (i.e., feeling physically and emotionally settled), he is unlikely to be able to relate to you (i.e., feel connected and comfortable). And until a child is related, he is unlikely to have the mental capacity to fully engage with you in the higher level cognitive processes that are critical for problem-solving, like perspective taking, predicting the future, and considering multiple solutions" (Think:Kids, 2014)

This is true for adults as well, and speaks to the goal of perspective taking and considering multiple solutions.

Creativity

Largely because of the images, slide presentations such as the Dialogic Multimodal Paired Presentation encourage creativity both through the image choice and presentation diction. Students can be encouraged to take and use their own pictures and insert them into a slide lecture, which evokes the Instagram story that is a valued out-of-school literacy of our youth today. We have become conditioned to communicate in images. Photographs in newspapers are a relatively new phenomenon. Facebook status updates were text only less a decade ago. Youth today know how to curate and choose evocative images that can be springboards for discussion. Images can be used to discuss abstract ideas in a more concrete way. Images are also an effective way to speak metaphorically, and fresh metaphor use calls for creativity. Picking an apt metaphor and identifying similarities and differences means knowing the audience, and yet it also means being creative with a fresh metaphor that bridges possible gaps in understanding. The move between genres creates space for creative thinking.

Collaboration

Collaboration requires listening, exploration of both differing and shared perspectives, and ultimately calls for those engaged to accept the views of others and to be open minded to the possibility that their view is not the only view. After the topic is chosen, partners work to share alternating time and to imagine how the final presentation will show a dialogic performance to a class. The ideal dialogic slide presentation allows equity of visual space and talk time to each participant. The two then work to transition from one slide to another in seamless ways in this confining space. It is a compelling kind of collaboration that is structured and has a particular shape and pattern to follow. Within that shape, there is space to collaboratively identify what goes in the presentation.

Communication

Collaboration requires communication. Critical thinking, creative thinking, and collaboration are a part of communication. The partners work together to create the product, and the product is a communicative presentation to a class. As with the TED Talk and the Pecha Kucha 20x20, the ultimate goal is publishing in person or online to a wider audience. Communication is a life skill, and working within tough topics is something that we do not teach our students to do enough. Peter Elbow (1998) reminds us that authenticity is the best way to structure writing assignments, and conversational dialogue can start effective writing instruction. In a recent *Politico* piece, an ethics professor suggests that talking and listening could be part of the curriculum. He writes, "Imagine if, instead of requiring a swim test for college students or gym for middle-schoolers, we required students to sit in a room with a diverse group of people and listen to the stories of their life" (Mandery, 2019).

Citizenship

In classrooms today, we can explicitly teach that silencing someone is not proof that one has convinced them, and that wounding verbally is not effective in the building of a citizenry or community. Seeking to understand as a learning stance instead of seeking to persuade requires thinking critically about motives and is perhaps a disposition that can be developed within the skills of the English Language Arts classroom. Citizenship is the one skill that is perhaps most compelling in the climate of today's public arena. To think about what it really means to engage in citizenship, one must examine the deep thinking, deep listening, and deep willingness to speak into the ideas of others without shutting them down. One must speak meaningfully so that the ideas will grow and expand. A big part of citizenship is being actively engaged in a democracy. If every voice and every vote counts, we need to help

students to practice what it means to be able to speak truth and to listen and respond to others in productive and compelling ways.

When we amplify the ways that citizenship requires speaking and listening with open minds, we must examine Web 3.0 and mobile technologies and the ways that certain people can have more access than others to a platform and some students can amplify and be amplified by their followers. Understanding citizenship needs to be a self-discipline and may be, in some cases, rejecting sensational, shocking, or inflammatory ways to gain followers. Instead, students can be challenged to think about ways that their publications may be informing or even bettering others. As good citizens, we need to realize that people have different viewpoints and the metaphorical microphone is given unequally to people. Different opinions do not need to be vilified. Instead, different opinions offer an occasion to find common ground.

With citizenship, we may recognize free speech versus hate speech, a current issue on school campuses. We teach citizenship when we teach that there are places in most arguments for finding places of agreement. Mandery (2019) suggests that "We can teach people to distinguish unreasonable arguments from reasonable arguments with which they disagree and, where differences are unresolvable, how to disagree reasonably. And yet we don't do it."

Getting Practical: The Lesson

Grounded solidly on the conviction that dialogue is a critical human skill and in alignment with the five C's, we have designed a lesson plan (Appendix A) that introduces the genre of dialogue and then invites students to engage in generative dialogue leading to a timed slideware presentation for two voices. The first step of the lesson is to present to students varied texts that employ two voices. While single voiced texts are the norm, particularly in the ELA classroom, multi-voiced texts are not uncommon, and include Reynolds and Kiely's (2017) popular YA novel *All American Boys* (see Appendix). Some of these texts are overtly written in conversational voices; others provide multiple narrators who shape the story dialogically though not in conversation. Still another form are texts written as letters that reveal only one side of dialogue, but the presence of a listening other is an intentional rhetorical device. Small group examination of the texts serves as a mini-genre study and a warm-up to the lesson. Further analysis of the genre of dialogue is provided by students in conversation.

Primed to think of the value of multiple voices in text, students are next guided to identify the kinds of questions that lead to a productive and open conversation (avoiding fixed views and rigid debate). The recommendation is that broader philosophical, ethical, or aesthetic questions more reliably lead to a dialogue inclusive of varied perspectives than do hot topics like political views or abortion policies. What is beauty? What makes a good friend? How

can one be a good neighbor? How can you foster justice in your community? These are all questions of import and openness. A dialogue examining this type of question is likely to lead to discovery of varied views that are acceptable and informative to individual thinking.

After practicing some questions with the full class, students are invited to work with a partner to generate questions that would be worth exploring in conversation. A handout with sentence stems may be helpful. The pairs select a question to discuss, and their discussion of ten minutes or less is recorded on a phone or other personal device so that students can listen to it. After listening to their own conversation, students will identify the key ideas and note the turns in the conversation.

In listening for themes, ideas and patterns, students are not expected to transcribe the full conversation, rather to locate the key points made by each speaker and to determine what of this conversation is worth including in the dialogic presentation to the class. They may hear moments of disagreement or tension. They may hear uneven distribution of talk time. They may hear new ways of thinking emerge from their conversational synergy.

The final creation for students is to craft the dialogic language of the slide presentation. Students alternate talk with each slide, so the presentation is intended to function as dialogue. Some students, however, will benefit from working on the images for the presentation, citing for fair use. Just as the dialogue between two speakers is intended to expand the range of possible thinking, the dialogue between text and image is meant to expand views and interpretations of what was said and what will be presented.

Having taught this lesson to groups of both teachers and students, we noted some patterns. It seems that participants do fall into a debate mode sometimes. In fact, we've had participants say words like "argue" and "debate" to describe their conversation. We wanted to reframe that discussion as an idea-growing dialogue, which isn't to say that there is not a specific place for debate teams and student congress. A debate structure provides value for some purposes. What we want to do, however, is to develop other skills, skills of communication and listening, thinking critically and creatively while valuing diverse views. This is one way we seek to nurture well-rounded citizens in our classrooms. In the same way we don't want test writing to be the dominant genre of writing, we want to teach dialogue, exploratory conversation, and constructive listening in addition to argument and persuasion.

When our students engaged in conversations as part of this lesson, while some fell back on patterns of debate, most did not. More often they were surprised that the nature of the questions steered them toward thinking that surprised them. Pairs in conversation often reported that the time went so quickly and they still had more to say. Some found that

when they listened to their recording, they were surprised to realize how much more than the other one talked although they had not noticed it in the moment of the conversation. Some reported noticing that they were judging or evaluating instead of really listening to find common ground.

When implementing a process-driven activity like this, consider:
- Students have come to expect a focus on product; focus on product can devalue process.
- Students need support in paired assignments as opposed to individual ones.
- Teachers and administrators may need to be convinced that this is more than talk for the sake of filling time.
- As with any lesson idea, adapting for specific students and objectives is ideal.
- Recording and listening to the conversation has been one of the more effective aspects of the lesson, in regards to student self-awareness of communication styles.
- Initially, students feel restricted by the timed slides; however, they share value in the fluid and dynamic nature of their own presentation and those of their peers.
- Students reported being better listeners because of the images, the engaging topics, and the two perspectives.
- Learning is generated by taking risks in trusting relationships, and this investment of time builds a community of learners.

The stages of this lesson invite varied interactions and cognitive processes, and can be adapted or used in part. The process of simply recording a conversation and listening to it proved very important for students for the planned purpose of analyzing dialogue but also for increasing self-awareness. In the context of building a dialogic classroom, even the matter of fair use of images can be framed as interacting and conversing appropriately with the images and ideas of other people. In a dialogic process we listen to and acknowledge other voices without trying to claim them as our own or win them to our side. These are the very skills needed in our schools, communities, and the world.

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Appendix

Dialogic Multimodal Paired Presentations:
Examining Perspective
Grades 6-12

Overview

Students are often asked to write persuasively. This lesson, instead, engages students in dialogic writing that values multiple perspectives. The lesson involves the use of read alouds, conversation partners, and presentation. The lesson process is generative as dialogue becomes more creative and complex when revised and expanded into a Dialogic Multimodal Paired Presentation.

Standards

This demonstration lesson incorporates the VDOE 5 Cs (critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication and citizenship) with particular attention to critical and creative thinking.

VA Standards of Learning:

COMMUNICATION:

9.1 The student will make planned oral presentations independently and in small groups.

READING:

9.3 The student will apply knowledge of word origins, derivations, and figurative language to extend vocabulary development in authentic texts.

9.5 The student will read and analyze a variety of nonfiction texts.

WRITING:

9.6 The student will develop narrative, expository, and persuasive writings for a variety of audiences and purposes.

RESEARCH:

9.8 The student will use print, electronic databases, online resources, and other media to access information to create a research product.

NCTE/ILA National Standards for English Language Arts:

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Theory to Practice

Fecho, B. (2011). *Writing in the dialogic classroom: Students and teachers responding to the texts of their lives.* NCTE: Urbana, IL

> Further support for dialogic learning
> https://wac.colostate.edu/jbw/v11n1/middendorf.pdf
> https://journals.openedition.org/eces/697

Resources and Preparation

Mentor Texts

All Ages
- *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* by Paul Fleischman & Eric Beddows (2004)
- *I Am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices* by Paul Fleischman & Ken Nutt (1989)
- *Seedfolks Paperback* by Paul Fleischman & Judy Pedersen (Illustrator) (2004)
- *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart & David Small (Illustrator) (2007)
- *Two Naomis* by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich & Audrey Vernick (2018)

High School
- *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability* by Sheila Black, Jennifer Bartlett & Michael Northen (Editors) (2011)
- *The New Black* (Wesleyan Poetry Series)by Evie Shockley (2012)
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely (2017)
- *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2018)
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015)

Dialogue Process Instructional Supports

Question Stems Handout

Suggested prompts for students can be found for free download at Tolerance.org, *Writing for Change* https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/writing-for-change

Pecha Kucha Samples and Templates

Instructional Plans

Student Objectives

Students will

- Engage in critical thinking through dialogue and writing
- Work with a partner to examine possible answers to a question from multiple perspectives beyond personal experience
- Combine image and language to design and share creative and complex dialogic presentations

A. Opening/Inquiry: The Functions of Dialogue

1. Arrange students into groups of 3 or 4, and invite groups to examine the mentor texts and discuss.
2. Explain the term dialogic to the class (related to dialogue) and connect to the dialogic form of the mentor texts they have examined.
3. Invite quick write and follow with pair-share leading to whole class sharing. Prompt with question: What is dialogic writing (or dialogue) able to do that more traditional essays cannot do?
4. Hear student ideas and lead toward the idea that dialogue and dialogic writing allows for the examination of multiple perspectives, assumes that there are multiple perspectives, and values the ways in which multiple understandings, even if contradictory, enhance and complicate understanding.

B. Modeling the Dialogic Process with Compelling Questions

1. Discuss characteristics of productive dialogue.
2. Provide sample questions that form a philosophic tradition or attempt to define complex ideas. Examples include: What is beauty? What is art? How to be a friend? How to be a neighbor?
3. Discuss ways to sustain dialogue. Lead to the observation that further questions are needed to keep dialogue moving, that dialog involves active listening, that disagreements may occur, and speakers do not need to agree but to expand conversation.

C. Engaging Dialogue Partners

1. Begin active dialog time in partners. Per the needs of the class, provide a handout with sentence and question stems to continue dialogue if the talk stalls out or needs additional depth.
2. Provide students with instructions for next step: Listen to recordings, take notes, fill in gaps and use of an organizational table to shape more formal dialogic writing.

D. Partners Development of Multimodal Presentations
1. Student work thus far, especially the organizational chart of ideas, has generated the materials needed to develop a dialogic presentation. The process matters as much as the product.
2. At this point share a sample Dialogic Presentation.
3. Provide work time. Images, selected sources licensed for public use, should expand the ideas presented dialogically.

E. Presentations and Responsive Writing
1. Student partners present.
2. Invite students to write a response that continues the dialogic approach, commenting on what they noticed and appreciated and/or how they might add their voice to this dialogue.

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Beth Lehman is an Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at Bridgewater College and completed doctoral work at Indiana University. A former middle school English Language Arts Teacher, Beth seeks to advocate for authentic learning experiences and educational equity. As a Teacher Consultant through the National Writing Project, Beth facilitates professional development on writing to learn and classroom action research. Recent publications include "Relational Response: Preservice Teachers Providing Writing Feedback in Three Middle School Partnerships" in The Teacher Educators' Journal (2019) *and an article in the* Virginia English Journal (2018) titled "Learning in Between: Partnerships as Sites of Inquiry."

Sean Ruday

Grammar, Ownership, and Usefulness: Student-Centered Inquiries into Authentic Uses of Grammatical Concepts through The Grammar Inquiry Project

Abstract

This piece describes an instructional process designed to help students take ownership of their knowledge of grammatical concepts and see those concepts as relevant and useful to their own lives and interests. It provides teachers with four recommendations for putting this instructional process into action in their classrooms. In this process, students conduct grammar-focused inquiries into texts of their choosing, identifying examples of grammatical concepts used in those texts and reflecting on the importance of those concepts to the text's effectiveness. These inquiries merge key principles of culturally-relevant teaching and effective grammar instruction, allowing students to see grammatical concepts as tools that are purposefully used in a wide range of texts.

During the 2018-2019 school year, I worked with an eighth-grade class on grammar instruction. Throughout the year, we focused heavily on grammar as a tool for effective writing (Ruday, 2014), discussing the functions of key grammatical concepts, looking at examples of them in published texts, and talking about how and why students can purposefully apply them to their own writing. After students strategically integrated these concepts into their own pieces, they reflected on the concepts' importance to effective writing, further allowing them to conceptualize grammar as a set of purposefully used tools that writers utilize to maximize the effectiveness of their works. This approach shifted students' thinking away from the out-of-context approach to grammar instruction, which involves students learning grammatical concepts completely separate from writing and literature instruction and has been shown to make no impact on the effectiveness of student writing (Weaver, 1998).

At the end of the school year, I created an activity that gave the students an additional opportunity to take ownership of their understandings of grammatical concepts and see the usefulness of those concepts to their own lives. This activity asked students to select a grammatical concept we studied that year and conduct an inquiry into ways they see examples of that concept used authentically in texts they encounter outside of school. This assignment, called "The Grammar Inquiry Project," was designed to merge the principles of effective grammar instruction and culturally relevant teaching by looking at grammar in the context of literacy practices and facilitating meaningful connections to students' out-of-school lives (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

By facilitating these out-of-school connections, this project sought to not only help students further apply their understandings of grammatical concepts, but also to give students increased ownership over their learning of grammar. Grammar is often presented as a set of exercises that are not presented in a meaningful or authentic context (Woltjer, 1998); The Grammar Inquiry project sought to create an alternative to this out-of-context model by merging grammar instruction with the principles of culturally relevant teaching (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995.) Culturally relevant teaching uses "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives" of students to guide teaching and learning (Gay, 2002, p. 45), thereby situating academic concepts in students' experiences and frames of reference. This project connects these essential components of culturally relevant teaching with meaningful grammar instruction; by finding and reflecting on grammatical concepts used authentically in their out-of-school lives, students develop a meaningful frame of reference for understanding grammar. By seeing authentic and relevant examples of grammar concepts and considering their significance, students can develop increased ownership of grammar: it no longer becomes something that only exists in grammar textbooks and worksheets; it instead can be seen as a meaningful part of their out-of-school lives and lived experiences. This authentic, culturally relevant understanding can increase student ownership of the topic. Jamila Lyiscott (2019) calls for educators to create space for students by recognizing and valuing their realities, perspectives, and identities. Instructional practices like the one described in this article create this space by centering students and giving them authentic connections to the material; through these authentic connections, our students can develop an increased sense of ownership over their academic work.

In this piece, I describe a four-step instructional process that teachers can follow when implementing The Grammar Inquiry Project in their classrooms, with explanations and reflections accompanying each suggestion. The four steps are as follows:

1. Discuss the purposeful use of grammatical concepts, making connections to a range of texts.
2. Introduce The Grammar Inquiry Project, modeling your own inquiries and analyses.
3. Confer with students, focusing on both identification and analysis.
4. Create opportunities for students to share the results of their inquiries with peers and community members.

Let's take a look at each of these instructional steps in more detail.

Step One: Discuss the Purposeful Use of Grammatical Concepts, Making Connections to a Range of Texts

This initial step prepares the students for the cognitive approach they will take in The Grammar Inquiry Project by helping them think of grammatical concepts as tools that people purposefully use in their communication and allowing them to see a wide range of ways this concept is applied. The specific ways you'll have this conversation with students will vary based on their familiarity with this approach to grammar instruction. For example, when I conducted this project with eighth-graders, the students had already participated in many conversations about how and why writers and other communicators strategically use grammatical concepts, so our conversation about the purposeful use of grammar was a reminder of the topics we discussed throughout the year, why those concepts are important, and how they can be used in a variety of texts. Five grammatical concepts my students and I spent a lot of time discussing were subordinate clauses, relative clauses, absolute phrases, strong verbs, and specific nouns, so I used this step of the instructional process to remind students of the features and importance of these concepts and to talk with them about a number of ways those concepts are used, such as in literature we read, in song lyrics, and in everyday communication.

If your students haven't yet had the opportunity to think about grammatical concepts as tools for effective writing, I recommend spending more time on this instructional step by talking with students about key grammatical concepts that you believe will enhance their understandings of writing, showing them examples of those concepts in published works, asking students to reflect on how those concepts enhance the works in which they appear, and then supporting students as they apply those concepts to their own writings. Once students have done this, you can ask them to reflect on the importance of the grammatical concepts they've studied and then talk with them about the many contexts in which those concepts appear.

Step Two: Introduce The Grammar Inquiry Project, Modeling Your Own Inquiries and Analyses

Once students are comfortable thinking about the purposeful use of grammatical concepts and the range of texts in which they appear, you can introduce the details of The Grammar Inquiry Project, explaining to them that they will be engaging in an activity in which they each find an example of a grammatical concept in a text of their choosing and share with the class what that example is and why it is important to the effectiveness of the text in which it appears.

When introducing this assignment, I shared with my students the description depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Assignment Description—The Grammar Inquiry Project

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The Grammar Inquiry Project!

For our culminating experience on grammar this school year, each of you will complete The Grammar Inquiry Project! This assignment is designed to help you think about the importance of the grammatical concepts we've studied this year and their importance to texts you encounter in your out-of-school lives. The details of the project are below:

- Identify one of the grammatical concepts we've studied this school year.
- Select an example of it from a text of your choice. This text can be in any genre and should be something you encounter in your life. Social media posts, song lyrics, independent reading books, text messages, conversations with family are all fair game. The only requirement is that you don't use works assigned for this English class.
- Analyze the important of the examples of the grammatical concept to the text you identified. For example, if you selected strong verbs, you might find an example in a song lyric, a friend's Instagram caption, or a sports broadcast. Think about the importance of the strong verb you identify to the text in which it appears, focusing on how the concept is important to the effectiveness of the text and how the text would be different if that concept was not used.
- Share the results of your inquiry in a five-minute presentation (supported by visuals) that identifies the concept you selected, shares the example you found, and analyzes the importance of the examples to the text in which it appears
- Your grade will be based on the accuracy of the example you identify, your explanation of why it is an example of that concept, the strength of your analysis of the importance of that examples to the text in which it appears, and the preparedness you exhibit in your presentation.

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When introducing this project to your students, I recommend modeling it with your own examples. For instance, I modeled how the project could look with subordinate clauses by giving an example presentation that identified and described the importance of the subordinate clause "Since you been gone" to the Kelly Clarkson song of the same title, focusing on how the subordinate clause clearly conveys the central message of the song. Without that subordinate clause, I explained to my students, we listeners wouldn't grasp the

song's message that the speaker now feels liberated because the person being addressed is finally gone. This example presentation emphasized that students could select from a wide range of texts for this assignment and providing an example of a purposefully used grammatical concept in a text one might enjoy in an out-of-school context.

Step Three: Confer with Students, Focusing on Both Identification and Analysis

After students understand the expectations for this assignment, the next step is to ask them to work on it while providing individualized support through one-on-one conferences. I held these conferences with my students during the designated whole-class workshop time, when all students were working on their projects. As the students worked, I gave them the graphic organizer depicted in Figure 2, which asks them to identify the concept they've selected, a text in which that concept appears, a specific example of the concept being used in that text, how the example meets the criteria of this concept, why the concept is important to the effectiveness of the text, and how the text would be different if the concept was not used.

Figure 2: Graphic Organizer for The Grammar Inquiry Project

I recommend using students' responses on the graphic organizer to guide the one-on-one conferences you have with them. When my students were engaged in workshop time and I conducted individual conferences with them, I asked each student to begin the conference by talking me through the information on the graphic organizer—the students' work showed

me their understandings and the ways I could provide support. For example, I met with a student working on the concept of relative clauses who identified an excellent example of this concept in a conversation she recently had with her grandmother—her grandmother used the relative clause "whose family has been in this community for generations" to describe someone running for a political office in their county. This student did a great job of identifying this concept and describing how it meets the criteria of a relative clause. Her discussions of why the relative clause is important to the effectiveness of the text and how the text would be different if the relative clause had not been used had good overarching insights, but could have been enhanced with additional elaboration and discussion. In our conference, we talked about ways for her to expand her points to convey her ideas in even more detail, reflecting together on why the information that her grandmother shared about the politician's family being from the community was important to the intent of the original message. After this conversation, the student had a more developed response to share regarding the importance of the relative clause she identified.

Step Four: Create Opportunities for Students to Share the Results of their Inquiries with Peers and Community Members

Since this project connects students' grammar knowledge with texts they encounter in their out-of-school lives, I recommend creating a concluding celebration that also connects with the world outside the classroom: in this culminating experience, students give individual five-minute presentations on the work they did in the The Grammar Inquiry Project and the teacher invites a wide-ranging audience to attend the presentations. When the eighth-grade students with whom I worked shared their insights, I invited their families and other English classes in the school to attend. I also told the students that they could invite other individuals in the community. One student, who presented on strong verbs his out-of-school baseball coach uses, invited the coach to attend; the coach and student shared a wonderful experience and the student loved the authentic audience this event provided. The presence of other individuals beyond their regular classmates further developed for students the idea that this project is designed to help them identify and reflect on the importance of grammatical concepts to all forms of communication—not just to the texts and activities they participate in at school. Giving students opportunities to share their out-of-school grammar insights and connections with individuals that represent their communities and other aspects of their out-of-school lives further develops for students the idea that this instructional process brings together material they learn in school with authentic, out-of-school connections. By understanding these connections, students can gain increased feelings of ownership and comfort with this material.

According to Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), the three components of culturally relevant teaching are that students must experience academic success, students must develop or maintain a cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness. By identifying grammatical concepts in their out-of-school lives and sharing them with authentic audiences, students can achieve all of these aspects: they can master important academic content, see their out-of-school lives and cultures recognized in the classroom, and think critically about the importance of grammatical concepts to all aspects of their lives. Through The Grammar Inquiry Project, my eighth-graders had an experience with grammar that emphasized its role in all aspects of their lives, helping them feel a sense of ownership over grammar through relevant instruction and allowing them to understand its usefulness to all aspects of their lives.

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Christine Woods

Trusting in Your Craft, Technology, and Student Input: Logic and Compassion in the Relevant 21st Century ELA Classroom

Abstract

Returning to a teacher-generated, student-focused curriculum might just be the remedy for what ails apathetic traditional or non-traditional students. Technology, when used as a safeguard, a time-saver, and for direct student support, supports the teacher's ability to provide better instruction in a timely and useful manner. This article considers the effort of an adjunct professor at the community college level who is supported and encouraged to create a curriculum of varied and choice assignments utilizing prompt teacher feedback through technology, recursive writing, personalized grammar instructions, assigned and choice reading, student self-reflection along with teacher and peer interaction to develop a course for students with students' input. Through the use of old school principles of getting to know students through personalized lessons, then allowing teachers to develop their lessons with their students in mind and not outside pressures, classrooms at any grade level might just once again become places of confident curiosity, self-reflection, and lifelong learning.

The Golden Days...

In 1998 I was teaching 11th grade American literature and teachers in our district were told that we were going to be administering a field test of a new standardized test but that we shouldn't worry too much about it as it was just a trial run. Since the test was being given in April and we still taught school at that time until mid to late June, I assumed the test would account for the fact that we had only covered three semesters of school. Imagine my surprise when I saw questions on this new test that covered Hemingway and the Modernists. In addition to assuming a full year's worth of literature having been taught by mid-April, the tests also overlapped AP and SAT tests that many students were cramming for and felt immense pressure to pass. Being told that these field tests would not negatively impact the students' GPAs or graduation eligibility, many students Christmas-treed the tests and went about stressing over their college application requirements instead.

The students that year did not suffer any consequences from the less than optimal overall scores of the tests, later known as SOL tests, but the "[r]esults from the 1998 tests were used to establish proficiency standards for students" (VDOE, 2013, p. 32) from that point on. Teachers at that time were welcomed to fully design their own curriculum, valued for their college credentials, and taken seriously as dedicated professionals. I loved being a public school teacher prior to then. The results were not optimal and seemed to impugn both

students and teachers, signaling that schools needed greater accountability. We were then told the official testing would begin for students the following year at only grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 and should not change the way we would be teaching; however, I suspected otherwise.

A Return to Professionalism...

Realizing the likelihood of impending changes in how curriculum might be designed and by whom, I left traditional, secondary public education and have found my new happy place most recently at the community college level. I once again felt that the training and credentials I had earned from institutions of higher education were trusted and respected. I sometimes wondered if education schools at colleges and universities were perhaps slightly offended by high-stakes tests which possibly implied that colleges and universities were not sufficiently training and preparing their teachers. Not encouraging teachers to develop a curriculum based on what they know their students need but instead expecting them to teach to a test, feels more like stifling creativity and opportunities for teachable moments.

Refreshingly, the Virginia Community College System, VCCS, has its own goals and objectives to be taught in their classrooms, yet the methods and course design are left up to the instructor. There are checks and balances performed by deans and department heads via meetings, evaluations, and professional development opportunities to ensure students receive the best education possible in adherence to VCCS policy as well as course evaluations completed by the stakeholders themselves: the students. Instructional accountability at the college level, therefore, feels more professional, respectful, valid, honest, and certainly less time-consuming than testing en masse. Because teaching success is not just assessed by student scores but by student voice and opinion, community college courses seem to develop more organically in their relevance and usefulness to students, and in a timely manner as well.

Technology Is Our Friend...

Each semester when preparing my course assignments and online page, I review my syllabus to verify attention to VCCS policies and then reevaluate my full course schedule of assignments. I am a firm believer in posting all policies and expectations for the class from day one so students not only know what assignments are due and when, but can also work ahead on some types of assignments at their leisure. More and more, students have to learn how to manage their time and providing them the courtesy of a full schedule of expectations online seems not only prudent but considerate of their goals and commitments. Students have expressed to me each semester that they are so grateful for my posting all work assigned so they can better plan around their busy schedules of work, family, and other classes.

I stopped printing and distributing paper syllabi and schedules about five years ago and clearly communicate to my students on the first night of class that all assignments and written submissions will be posted and uploaded online to our course page, currently in the learning management system (LMS) Canvas. There are always a few grumbles initially, but when I explain my rationale that it provides less chance of confusion or loss of assignments for both them and me and that students can still hand-write any assignments then upload them as .jpeg files from their phones, even the most reluctant acquiesce. Students can now attend class with just their phones or computers, and I don't have to lug around bulky folders of paper assignments that could get lost or damaged either. As for students abusing the privilege of using cell phones and computers in class, I am so active during class walking around and sitting next to students as we work, there is very little time for students to get lost in cyberspace. I have attended college recently and was greatly relieved by courses where professors utilized technology so I knew not only what was expected of me but that those assignments had been received and when due to the time stamp feature inherent in online LMS.

For inevitable course or assignment questions or issues, students are encouraged to email any questions or even assignments about which they might be struggling or have submission receipt questions about as I leave my email notification on faithfully during the semester. This may sound intrusive of my non-contracted hours, but I am clear with students about my hours of availability and have never found students to abuse the option but instead appreciate knowing when I am available to assist them. This mutually useful option has drastically reduced the anxiety level for my students and so also made them less likely to abandon an assignment since one or two important questions can be answered within minutes rather than waiting until the next class. Because I teach night courses when the campus classrooms are less occupied, I arrive at our classroom an hour prior to our meeting time and am available to assist any student who might need face-to-face help or to use the classroom computer without them having to schedule a meeting.

At Virginia Western Community College (VWCC) where I am an adjunct professor, our department has also developed an open educational resource (OER) text titled *Let's Get Writing!* for the English 111 - College Composition course to help with the freshman year financial burden as the "high costs present barriers to many students who need assigned class materials and are already struggling to pay tuition" (Dulaney, 2018, Foreword). Again, one or two students might miss or prefer the tangible hardcopy text, but the VWCC library offers copies on loan each semester as well. Even students who might not be able to afford a computer can still complete all assignments on their phones, thanks to student Gmail accounts, Google Docs, and the LMS Canvas application, or can use the library or computer lab resources available. The ability to access any assignment completed in Google Docs from

any online computer has all but eliminated issues with printing disasters and costs or with lost work as well. I remind students that having a thumb drive and/or saving their assignments to a folder in their email account is wise, and screenshotting any crucial assignments or Canvas submissions makes for added peace of mind. I cannot imagine ever returning to paper submissions and my students are so grateful not to have the hassle or expense.

The Art of Teaching...

Early in my teaching career while participating in the Northern Virginia Writing Project (NVWP) Summer Institute at George Mason University, I had the privilege of studying to become a Teacher Consultant which instilled in me a love of and for writing that I endeavor to inspire in my students. Donald Murray (1996), the writing expert I was privileged to invite to speak at an NVWP Language and Learning Conference, advocated through his inspiring work *Write to Learn* that writing "is an act of the intellect, it is thinking with language, it is a craft" (p. vii). His compelling words in *Write to Learn* have prompted me to forever question the logic of restricting a teacher to a solely prescribed English language arts curriculum. Teaching English is first and foremost the teaching of how we connect with each other through oral and written communication. To punish or restrict student ideas and writing as solely quantifiable is to do the student a significant disservice.

To foster an open and engaging learning environment, I start each semester by greeting each student every night by name as they enter the class. In the pre-class time as students are settling into their seats or looking for plugs to charge computers, I ask them about their day or how college or work is going and I introduce them to each other through chatting. I bring a snack bag with packs of crackers and various candy options each night and quickly find that students will also bring treats and drinks to share as well. Students are not mandated to stay in their seats the entire class and are *free to roam about the cabin*. They appreciate my understanding that sitting in a class at night can be uncomfortable, but again only stretch or take a quick bathroom break, as a rule. I view my students as my hardworking clients and I want to make their experience in class as peaceful and productive as possible; in turn, they often form friendships or network with each other as well and more importantly, they show up every night.

Being in a position to help students, especially the most unlikely students, achieve a dream or life goal is an honor. Losing the human connection by rushing objectives, cramming materials, or forcing testing pressures, robs teachers and students of the essential opportunity to learn from each other. Through these pre-class conversations, we get to know about each other and that helps me design assignments they need and/or help them choose essay topics of specific interest to them. Connecting class discussions on course content to students'

ideas from their journals and reading logs further bridges comprehension gaps that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. Well-known educator Kelly Gallagher (2004) references researcher Edgar Dale who believes "that we remember… 70 percent of what we talk about with others" (as cited in Gallagher, p. 17) and so it is essential to have openness and discussion in a class where students write about their lives while trying to acquire important course information.

The Craft of Writing in Practice...

I can still recall the obviously brilliant and ground-breaking report I wrote in 1st grade on the enigmatic creature, the Zebra. I perfected with blue yarn tied into bows through the three holes in the lined paper what I thought was clearly one of the best reports ever written as proven by our elementary school librarian removing a published, hardback book from the display shelf to prop up my masterpiece for all to see. As a teacher now, I remind myself how proud and inspired I was by that gesture and have gone about trying to highlight student work as often as possible and as promptly as possible.

Evaluating student work in a timely manner so that I can refer to their ideas and efforts in each class, develops student buy-in again and again, without fail. Students knowing that I read what they write and value their thoughts has made for not only their honest efforts but entertaining work for me to evaluate. When students know through our weekly in-class journal writing that I grade them only on word count, we have rewarding interactions and even sometimes very real conversations. When they know and believe that their writing about text or choice reading through their reading log writing is appreciated, they care more about what they express. When we are compatriots in the strict adherence to MLA rules for essay writing, we become partners in learning, not enemies. When asked recently why we had to "conform" to MLA format for essays, I merely asked the student, "Wouldn't you rather each instructor and student all agree on a set of basic rules, then hold each other accountable to only those rules?" Honest responses to legitimate student questions also help to unlock students from the restrictions of standardized, quantified writing assignments to which they are unfortunately accustomed.

Here again, while assessing student work, technology becomes my ally as I can evaluate (not "grade") student writing online with various color highlights, insert comments, make track changes, or share Google Docs, even in real-time, with ease. We have the luxury of being able to cut or copy and paste within seconds rather than wasting senseless amounts of time on the tedium of actual rewriting. For those who are still asking students to write out sources and annotations on paper or index cards, please consider referring to Play Store or iTunes to

have students download a free notes application or possibly make it an isolated assignment so students do not have to transfer to type one hundred note cards.

My role as facilitator and learning advocate turns our classroom into a place where effort has a purpose and is rewarded. Objectives are presented with consideration and constructive criticism from me and *to me* from the students. With essay scoring, there are points for pre and post grade reflections to incentivize students to tell me before I read their essays what was difficult or easy, and then after evaluation what they would like feedback on. Not only does this help me provide useful feedback to them, but it requires them to engage with their own process. Reflection in writing and teaching were revelations presented to me first through the NVWP and then again when I became a National Board Certified Teacher where I was also expected to reflect on my ideas and methods to self-evaluate my motives and their usefulness. I cannot express enough how valuable reflection on process is in and to all areas of teaching and learning.

Through these various exchanges of my hopes and their realities, students know I am invested in the course materials and goals, but that I am also pragmatic in the knowledge that not many of them will have the calling to become English majors, despite my best efforts, but can learn to express themselves more cleverly and precisely. Benjamin Dreyer, copy chief of Random House, in his 2019 *An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style - Dreyer's English*, reminds us that "[w]e're all of us writers: We write term papers and office memos, letters to teachers and product reviews, journals and blog entries, appeals to politicians… And, at least as [he's] observed it, we all want to do it better: We want to make our points more clearly, more elegantly; we want our writing to be appreciated, to be more effective; we want - to be quite honest - to make fewer mistakes" (2019, p. XVI). We all want to go back to that feeling of joy we had as children when our most innocent and pure efforts at learning were lauded for their simplicity, honesty, and sincerity which cultivates craft.

English teachers, along with copy editors like Dreyer as one of his clients confided, have the honor of being the keepers of the love of language "like priests, safeguarding their faith" (Dreyer, 2019, p. XIII). Showing my devotion to the study and appreciation of the English language to my students not only from my teaching explorations and discussions but through my attention to their work fulfills my intrinsic obligations along with hopefully their return to learning through speaking and writing for themselves, not just a grade.

Through deliberately varied but repeated for emphasis writing assignments, students in our class are given the opportunity to think and write recursively and to write reflectively about their thinking. Starting from the first week with an in-class journal and an outside reading log lets me learn their writing strengths and weaknesses quickly. Assigning their first essay with

a mild research element the first week and continuing with gradually increasing research expectations for future essays, helps destigmatize the dreaded research paper as well.

Writing Opportunities in our class are:
1) **Journals:** can be creative or conversational and where they are required solely to meet the 250-word count on topics that follow not only essay types but where students are in the semester like: *how is a closet like an essay, a 10-minute campus walk to then write about what they saw, first… and then…, write about music played for class*, and finally *in the end...*;
2) **Reading logs:** which are MLA-light writing assignments where they can use MLA or their own method of signifying quoted information from their reading to exemplify the ideas they found most interesting or useful and again are 250 words;
3) **Research essays:** five essays which start with *the exemplification essay* having two sources and in-text citations on the topic "My Ultimate Dream Life," *the descriptive essay* with three sources and in-text citations where they describe a culture they have been a part of either online or IRL, *the partnered process essay* needs four sources and in-text citations where they work with a partner to split the essay writing and explain a process or a "how-to," *the argumentative essay* - requiring five sources and in-text citations about a position on two "items/sides" of a topic or issue, *the narrative essay* has no MLA requirements except to write about themselves, a visual component to be used during a presentation of their essay, and a 1,000 word count. All essays (besides the narrative) must conform to MLA 8 format, meet the minimum word count (ranging from 500 to 1,000 words minimum - not to exceed the word count by 250 words), and of course, be submitted online;
4) **Reflective writing:** pre and post grade reflections are expected where students discuss first what they experienced writing and want feedback on from me as I assess their work, while the post grade reflections will express how they feel about my evaluation, their grade, and if they feel the score should be changed.
5) **Essay rewrites:** points for a rough draft shown a week prior to the essay due date can be earned back if they rework my suggestions in a rewrite completed within a week of my scoring the essay.
6) **Emails:** another writing opportunity where students can learn to concisely, effectively, and respectfully ask me clarification questions, submit a rough draft for review prior to submitting it to Canvas, and how they can submit an essay rewrite as well.
7) **Self-reflective final exam:** a 250-word self-reflection where they are provided a list of the course objectives to then illustrate from their work with examples, where they were on each objective as the entered the course and where they are now. It is an open-note and open-Canvas exam they can prepare for in advance, but complete during our scheduled exam time.

Personalizing and Incentivizing Grammar…

Grammar instruction likewise has the potential to become a trap designed by some teachers and test-makers to highlight student inadequacies rather than promote humor and skill. Again, Dreyer (2019) understands that he has "never met a writer or other word person who didn't possess a pocketful of language peeves and crotchets - words or uses of words that drive a normally reasonable person into unreasonable fits of pique, if not paroxysms of rage" (p. 147). During my high school years, in my 10th-grade class, a comma splice was so loathed that it earned the unmitigated disgust and a non-negotiable grade of zero for any who dared to commit such a heinous act of grammar treason!

This irrational reaction to a grammar issue fuels my determination to explain the fun to be had with linguistic creativity that comes with a solid, fundamental understanding of the principles of grammar. There are numerous texts available in print and online to illustrate the necessity of standard grammar in many situations. *Grammarly*, a popular, online personal editing tool's blog article on comma usage provides witty examples such as: "Let's eat, Grandma!" as opposed to, "Let's eat Grandma!" which rightly imply how normal versus cannibalistic instruction could become life-threatening (Joki, 2014). Grammar and its concepts are generally developed in children as young as two or three years old who also "have a speaking vocabulary of about 1,000 words… [and] they may know 5,000 words or more" (Gunning, 2010, p. 14) by grade school. After elementary school, students may only need fine-tuning based on an individual's goals and needs in order to communicate with others.

It is important at the college level, however, where students are preparing for careers, for them to have a working knowledge of grammar as well as where to find assistance on questions of grammar rules when not in a classroom setting because they need to be able to do more than just communicate. Adults in college or entering the workforce need to be clear and effective in their ability to express themselves. Resources like Grammarly, Word by Microsoft, or Pages by Apple provide positive reminders for students as they write, but students still need to know which notifications to follow or decline. Technology is marvelous in this capacity, yet students need to have had a solid foundation in grammar to determine exactly what it is they mean to express.

As stated previously, I believe that at the elementary level, drills and repetition can provide students with a secure level of familiarity with language. Once they progress in grade levels, however, I further believe that same type of instruction becomes punitive and counterproductive. It is at that point where, as in a useful resource titled *The Grammar Plan Book - A Guide to Smart Teaching*, Constance Weaver (2007) explains, "It is both more motivating and more practical to teach selected aspects of grammar in conjunction with the

writing process by providing examples of good writing and minilessons, and by conferencing with students" (pp. 7-8). That is not to say that certain students may not benefit from more intensive instruction, but that on the whole, grammar instruction should become more individualized.

One way I personalize grammar instruction is by encouraging students to go back into an essay I have evaluated to address and rewrite areas that need adjustment. If a student completes and presents a rough draft a week prior to the essay due date, he can bank up to ten rewrite points to be earned by not just fixing my comments, but by also explaining in inserted comments to me why (or why not) he is choosing to make this adjustment and resubmitting the now at least third draft of that essay. This method not only supports the recursive nature of writing, but it personalizes the writing for the student via dialogue with me in writing, and in-person if they choose.

Another method is for me to gather the most common issues I see in student writing and then direct students either to their course text or to online resources such as *Purdue OWL* or *VCU Writes!* for classroom practice and discussion. At the college level, grammar discussion is surprisingly revealing and allows students to appreciate the value of expressing themselves precisely, especially in this time of rushed emails, texts, and tweets. I often see students taking notes on what applies to their work and mentioning these concepts again when they write and when we discuss assigned reading on grammar instruction from their weekly reading logs.

Grammar Opportunities can vary between direct classroom instruction on how to avoid a dangling modifier to in-essay comments on combining independent phrases with a semicolon or a coordinating conjunction and punctuation, which they have the option to revisit in a rewrite. For fun, I will put up on the screen an internet-based grammar practice exercise that I give them a chance to try on their own quietly and quickly, then we discuss aloud because it is revealing for students to see what they do and do not know compared to others in a pressure-free assessment.

Reading is Forever...

After considering writing and grammar, this brings me to what some say is a dying tradition: reading. Reading as assigned only, is potentially counterproductive to developing a lifelong love of reading for pleasure, personal fulfillment, and self-improvement. A recent National Endowment for the Arts study found that in the last few years, "43% of 18-34-year-olds read literature, outmatched only by 65-to 74-year-olds (at 49%)" which suggests that reading is alive and well, likely because "[r]eaders today have more ways than ever to access the

written word" (Howe, 2017). The difference though is that reading for students in Generation Z is changing brain development and this can be concerning. A recent study suggests, "As our youth read ever more on digital devices - which privilege fast processing, skimming and word-spotting, filtering voluminous information, and multi-tasking - their circuits adapt accordingly, often acquiring new, cognitively innovative and visually sophisticated processes" (Wolf, 2019). Though the article goes on to assert that "more and more adults are concerned that they no longer experience the same levels of immersion in their reading" (Wolf, 2019), I disagree. I have noticed that my students are often profoundly expert on myriad topics of their own interest and curiosities, and if allowed to express themselves on their interests, will do so astonishingly in-depth and well-versed in the particular language of the subject matter and genre from sources like Reddit, Tumblr or wikis.

The challenge then lies in not inspiring students to read, but in convincing them to read in the way we need them to read, and what we need them to read, or what the course requires. It is no mistake that my first assignment with students is written and then we discuss their writing. I have learned over the years that conversation with me through their writing and during class about their writing, creates ownership. Ownership invests students in the learning which then allows me to suggest further learning opportunities through reading. I explain that while I wish that each assigned reading could be read word for word for the pure joy of reading, I completely understand I am often still incorrigibly delusional. Choice readings are assigned as well and not only are the class discussions on their selections great, I always learn something new myself, which also pleases students to realize.

I know from researchers like Guthrie & McRae (2011) in their piece on student reading engagement, and through my own teaching experience that "classroom practices that support motivation and engagement, such as nurturing student interest and assuring opportunity for learning from authentic tasks… consists of behavioral engagement, which is the time, effort, and persistence in reading activities that are productive for success in school" (as cited in Samuels & Farstrup, p. 117). Students don't pursue what they don't care about, nor do they internalize what has no relevance in their lives. Assigning reading, even choice reading does not guarantee student investment, but it certainly does not discourage it. Further, asking students to present in groups, for example, what they have to read from the text at the very least creates interest in having something worthwhile to share. Education researcher Dale again reminds us this is why it is so valuable "for us teachers to build in meaningful collaboration time for our students" (as cited in Gallagher, 2004, p. 17) which I support with reading and writing. Additionally, I make sure to read student reading logs prior to class or I walk around to observe what they are focusing on in groups so that I can specifically reference and prompt certain students to present the relevant content I want to cover in class while they look like the experts in the process.

Reading Opportunities in our class range from reading from our classroom text *Let's Get Writing!* on their own, aloud to the class, or in groups with each other. Students are also assigned to choose their own interest articles from websites like ESPN, Ted, Wired, Big Think, Smithsonian, or The Skimm to select articles (or video transcripts) on subjects they are curious about for their reading logs to later share with the class.

Students Have A Voice...

Before we discuss any reading or topic, I make sure to assert that everyone has a voice in our classroom and has the right to be heard. That being said, I make sure all students consider that though they have a right to their own opinion, it is politic to consider the possible feelings of others so that we do not offend others, but merely express our opinion as just that: one opinion. We have discussed some of the most painful and heartfelt topics over the years and though some people may get teary-eyed or a bit angry, they have all remained in class and, most importantly, let each other speak. My role as facilitator is possibly most important here than in any other area of my teaching and knowing my students' feelings on a variety of subjects through talking with them or reading all their writing, helps me direct, encourage, or soften ideas.

Media literacy and spoken communication are vital in modern society where so much is presented to us through the media and so many people have something to say about it all. I am a firm believer in democracy and freedom of speech whether I like the speech or not. I hope through the valuable teaching standards, deliberate classroom experiences, and relevant course objectives, students will be exposed to many new ideas so that they know how to participate openly, objectively, and productively in our global society.

Speaking Opportunities in class range from informal, pre-class discussions to presenting their final essay, a narrative essay with a visual component. Students are never invisible in our class and know from the start they are expected to know each other's names, to speak to and work with each other during class, to partner on an essay, to participate in group reading presentations, and to really listen to each other.

Why do I need to learn this?

Through years of study and personal experience with my own writing and reading, and my teaching of both, I have come to rely on many tried and true methods and resources, and I am always a student first. I ask my students in their first assignment why they are in our class so I can then adjust instruction to their needs, be they nursing or business majors, first-time or returning, traditional students or non-traditional students. At the end of the course for our

final exam, we go back through their assignments, including the first night's writing to self-reflect on their efforts and achievements in the course from where they began to where they are at the end. Through the NVWP I discovered Peter Elbow's (1973) seminal text *Writing Without Teachers*. His ideas helped me better articulate two of my own fundamental teaching principles: "1) to help you actually generate words better - more freely, lucidly, and powerfully: not to make judgments about words but generate them better" whether written or spoken and "2) to help you improve your ability to make your own judgment about which parts of your writing [or speaking] to keep and which parts to throw away" (pp. vii-viii). One of the most basics goals my teaching is to prepare students through useful instruction and resources to become self-sufficient, life-long learners.

I am not sure whether the pendulum of education will ever swing back to a time where teachers prepared by accredited schools of education are fully entrusted to provide the learning their students need, or if curriculum will once again be developed through English departments on district-based objectives that allow and honor teachable moments. As educators in the field though, regardless of the grade level we teach, we can endeavor to control how course expectations, objectives, and materials are perceived in our classrooms by our students so they know we are striving to make courses relevant and useful to them as fellow learners seeking meaning in our shared educational experiences.

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Chelsea Stowe

Adolescent Activism: Teaching Experiential Literacy with Young Adult Literature and Global Perspectives

Abstract

Project-based learning enhances student-motivation as it allows them to be in-charge of their learning experience. Ninth graders in a cross-disciplinary course (English and World History) use the theme of adolescent activism from young adult literature and the skill of collaboration from a study of ancient civilizations to propose a service-learning opportunity in their community. This essay explores how incorporating experiential pedagogy gives students the chance to make a difference in the community around them while also combatting global issues. Specific instructional strategies to be used for project or culture development are included.

Answering the question: "Why do we have to do this?" is frustrating for both teacher and student. It's difficult to explain to a 14-year-old why theme, voice, or plot is important. As teachers, we know it is, right? We spend years earning degrees that focus on finding meaning in ambiguous texts. We spend days trying to understand how an author, as Donald Graves puts it, makes the imprint of themselves on their writing (Graves, 1983, p. 227). We spend hours grappling with the significance of story arcs because it's a passion. Sometimes it's hard to swallow the idea that most students passing through our rooms do not share that passion. Instead, we have to use our passion to help them find their own.

It makes sense to say that student-centered approaches are more likely to motivate students. Yet it is more difficult to restructure instruction in public schools to guide students to the point where they are in-charge of their own learning. Students lack familiarity to open-ended approaches that pedagogical styles like Montessori embrace because they have been through a system where barriers like pacing guides and standardized testing hinder exploration of what is outside the chartered curriculum. For this reason, researchers like Kolb (2018) define a recursive practice of active learning as Experiential Learning: "It is not *experience* but *experiencing* that is the source of learning" (Peterson & Kolb, 2018, p. 228). This idea of being immersed in the experience and having a sense of agency over one's own learning was a key element in planning a unit on service-learning for my ninth-grade students. Inspired by how Kolb (2018) transfers this idea of recursive learning into the Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle, which highlights benchmarks (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract thinking, and active experimentation), I set out to make some changes in my curriculum. These benchmarks helped me to assess the validity of my implementation of experiential literacy by observing students actively reflecting on the minilessons, literature exploration,

and history study. Furthermore, the benchmarks affirmed that within the unit, the students were expected to demonstrate levels of abstract thinking through creating concrete plans for transformation in their community. The students used the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with ideas from the experience of researching at international, national, and local levels; to study the progression of ancient civilizations, and to respond to narratives in young adult literature (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). Besides facilitating the development of self-efficacy, experiential pedagogy enhances students' assimilation of content because the design allows students to create a meaningful experience and go beyond simply completing an assignment for a grade.

Project Outline

I teach in a program that pairs English 9 with World History I. Because I co-teach in a shared classroom, the intertwining of material needs to be very intentional or it seems overwhelming for the teachers and students. The unit encompassed a study of prehistory and ancient civilizations. Identifying the theme of collaboration in the progression of ancient societies helped us decide on a final project embodying the same theme. Service-learning is hands-on, impactful, and memorable. From the English perspective, I decided to put an emphasis on powerful narratives. Since these ninth-graders would be in-charge of designing a service-learning project, I chose to incorporate young adult literature (YAL), using the lens of adolescent activism and showcasing the power of teenagers.

We started with a mini-lesson that explored the unique qualities of their people: Generation Z. They watched "Inside What Gen Z is All About" from NBC's *Today* (2018), considered the advances between generations, and contemplated how they could impact the future (Today, 2018). Students used an adapted version of the Four "A"s Text Protocol (2005) to respond to the video. This method asks students to synthesize information from a text by identifying: assumptions, ideas they agree and argue with, as well as any personal aspirations the text appeals to (School Reform Initiative, 2005). Of the Four "A"s, we asked students to elaborate on what aspirations were evoked from watching the video. After collecting the responses, we coded them thematically. Students responded with big ideas: being their own voice, making a difference in the world and community, using technology and skills to make the world a better place, and leaving a mark of good deeds. We then used the coded responses to aid in selling the project to our students, introducing the #FirstWorldProblems project as a way for students to work toward their aspirations.

Figure 1. Each group connected one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to the Henry County community. United Nations. (2019). "Sustainable Development Goals": SDGS tab. Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

To initiate students' inquiry and create a problem-based experience, they were tasked with designing a service-learning opportunity to take place in the community that would also help the United Nations with the Sustainable Development Goals. Each group chose one of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals as the foundation of their project (see Figure 1). As a result, high school freshmen were working against problems much bigger than them: hunger; poverty; gender inequality; peace, justice, and strong institutions; clean and affordable energy sources. We asked the driving question: "How can collaboration amongst civilizations create better living conditions in the world?" to help facilitate project development. The earlier scaffolds also created models of collaboration — modern collaboration in the Generation Z mini-lesson and ancient collaboration in our recent study of the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras.

Students spent about six weeks working in-depth with this project. Aside from the Generation Z mini-lesson, we utilized other instructional strategies along the way to scaffold student-driven questions and have them interact with the material. We arranged a book tasting for students to sample young adult novels. In this setting, students did not have access to titles, book covers, or other common identifiers. This strategy still emphasized the importance of student choice, but it challenged students to change how they choose a text. Narratives included the global issues they were working to combat, and corresponding sessions of literature circles followed students' text selections. Additionally, to put their projects in motion, students reached out to community assets, and we prepared for this communication with an e-mail etiquette workshop. This workshop was a great example of transparent pedagogy; the skills of a good e-mail aren't just important for communicating with community organizations. We helped students realize the usefulness of written communication outside of the classroom by aligning it with their future goals. These soft skills transfer to other

professional writing situations and improve oral communication skills as well. As a scaffold for the final project, we planned a model service-learning opportunity with a local ranch. During this day of service, students contributed to the well-being of animals to demonstrate what constitutes as a volunteer service. Contribution to the ranch was especially important to showcase the physical act of serving in order to avoid groups planning less immersive projects, like fundraising.

Adolescent Activism in Young Adult Literature

This project has many layers, but the inclusion of YAL functions as more than just a narrative of the chosen Sustainable Development Goal. In YAL, students find representation of different cultures, ages, and situations; relevancy to their own lives through a voice much like their own; and most impressively, motivation. Motivation can vary from speaking up to a bully via *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* or finding a platform to voice changes you wish to see, like in *The Hate U Give.*

Any literature could be used for this project, but YAL embraces the theme of adolescent activism, encouraging students to make a difference, which compliments the objective of service-learning. Garcia (2013) includes a chapter titled, "Grassroots YA: Don't Forget to Be Awesome," in his book *Critical Foundations in Young Adult Literature: Challenging Genres*, where he explores the social impact of YA literature (2013, p.109). Within this chapter, I appreciate the section Garcia includes on John Green's efforts to end "world suck" (p.111). While Green is a notable YA author and not a teenager, it still demonstrates the doors opened by the genre. Garcia also mentions the Harry Potter Alliance which battles real-world horcruxes (many overlapping with the UN's goals) like the climate crisis, bullying, and illiteracy (p.118).

These examples from YAL informed my research as they demonstrate the success of YAL as a catalyst for the service-learning project. I chose novels that could overlap and represent several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals: *With the Fire on High, The 100, Hunger Games, Same Sun Here,* and *I am Malala.* Instead of assigning a book to each group, each group had three options to "taste" and choose from. The books were wrapped so the covers were concealed, and each had a note of the "flavors" it contained (genre, setting, sneak peek). The book tasting strategy still allowed for student choice, but the selections kept it refined enough to easily organize literature circles. As students read, they answered guiding questions to not only help them formulate talking points for literature circles but to also help them explore the text at a deeper level. In the final proposals, groups included a reflection on how the novel contributed to their project development.

Experiential Literacy: Acting Locally to Impact Globally

Smagorinsky (1986) writes about making content meaningful for students, and he appeals to the idea of experiential learning when he writes: "we should help our students become skilled with regard to settling specific problematic types of situations, instead of . . . meet[ing] instructional goals" (Smagorinsky 1986, p.119). Students can explore difficult topics that appeal to their own lives through literature. Moreover, what they choose to create from the literature can help them outside of the classroom. Experiential learning, tailored to the English class as experiential literacy, is important for giving students the opportunity to find meaning in the classroom beyond achieving a grade. In our class, we also use experiential literacy to become immersed in the unit of prehistory study. By combining our subjects with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, students were able to interact with the material with purpose. With an emphasis on acting locally through service-learning projects in their community, students had an affectual motivation to do well.

The Harry Potter Alliance especially demonstrated the likelihood of success for the project as this alliance was formed around a book series, and members of the alliance make changes around the world, which is exactly what the #FirstWorldProblems project was designed to do. The Harry Potter Alliance also demonstrates the power of adolescent-activism, where teenagers are advocating for the changes they want to see. To support this, Suwaed (2019) used her research of service-learning in an English Language Arts class to collect results in which "70% of the students revealed that service-learning experience improved their sense of self-efficacy" (Suwaed, 2019, p.33). Service-learning supports the agency of teens to make the changes they want to see, so it is advantageous to pair YAL with service-learning for an impactful experiential literacy experience.

The combination of literature and service-learning takes the meaningful content that Smagorinsky writes about and puts it in a context of making a difference through real-life execution of global perspectives. The Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle shows that once students have grasped the knowledge and achieved the level of abstract thinking, they are then able to reach active experimentation, which ultimately leads to a transformation — in our case, the active experimentation is the service-learning project and the transformation is what changes in the community and how that benefits the UN Sustainable Goals (Peterson & Kolb, 2018). The ideas of the cycle play a large role in the overarching idea of project-based learning, but it is the goal of transformation that motivates students to work toward changing something they feel strongly about, which leads to an increase in self-efficacy.

In the end, groups proposed well-developed ideas: job fair, peace rally, river cleanup, inclusion sports day, low-cost health clinic, pep rally for girls' sports. Upon completion, students presented their project proposals to a panel of community members: small business owner, nonprofit representative, and a local college student. Unlike usual presentations, there weren't many students fighting stage fright. Instead, groups were vocal and passionate about their work, which reflected how they felt about their community. Each of the two classes voted for the project they'd like to participate in and we held a finalist's round, where students defended their proposals for a peace rally and inclusion field day.

Instructional Reflection

Not every project lends itself to be completely student-centered, but there are instructional strategies that help students find motivation and agency. Incorporating the strategies in each unit of study embraces the fact that we are preparing students for success beyond the walls of the classroom. Furthermore, as teachers, we care about what they gain from each learning experience. Channeling their strengths, interests, and aspirations in each project helps them realize the potential they have as it helps them find their passions.

Providing students with opportunities to make classroom lessons into life lessons motivates them to go beyond what is needed for a good grade. Facilitating the creation of experiences that resonate with them personally builds motivation to succeed later with improved self-efficacy. From the start of this unit, it was student-centered. Instead of beginning with a discussion about how the ancient civilizations collaborated to progress society, we began with a self-inventory, challenging them to think of how their generation is a resource that will change the future. The Four "A"s protocol then helped them use their own aspirations as a catalyst for the service-learning opportunity. The e-mail workshop gave them the agency and professional writing skills they needed to reach out and network with local leaders to make their visions happen. Moreover, each proposal was crafted intentionally to make the difference they wanted to see in the community while helping the United Nations make a difference in our world.

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David Black

Behold the Clerihew

No doubt we still teach many poems from the traditional canon with a view to their worth as "cultural literacy": these are important pieces we believe our students should be exposed to and—we hope—remember. When we hear sports announcers quote "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," we know it's working. When we hear someone reporting economic news use the phrase "late and soon, getting and spending…." we smile, no matter if it is wrenched a tad out of context.

However, light verse gets short shrift in most anthologies because it seems less important than "serious" poems. To many, light verse is just too…frivolous. Maybe we are still judging poetry as Matthew Arnold did, as a "blend of truth and high seriousness." I suggest we get away from that restrictive view that all must be "serious." I suspect that most students would welcome a respite from Shakespearean sonnets and T.S. Eliot and poems about death in favor of some humor and satire. Let's teach some light and fun poetry along with the heavyweights and see how our language can be used in other ways. I'd start with having students read and write some clerihews.

You probably already know them as humorous quatrains rhyming **a**, **a**, **b**, **b** with the first line being a person's name and the succeeding lines somehow sum up something of that person's life or character. You can find classic examples in collections by Edmund Clerihew Bentley (who invented the form), G.K. Chesterton, and W.H. Auden. The subject may be real or invented, a historical character or a cartoon character:

> Bugs Bunny
> didn't like honey.
> That would be Winnie the Pooh,
> and maybe me and you.

They can sometimes relate more seriously to the students' classroom experience:

> William Golding
> saw human history unfolding
> on a tiny speck of land
> populated by an atavistic band.

They can show a touch of exotic learning:

> Geoffrey Chaucer
> slurped his tea from his saucer.
> If anyone disapproved and stared,
> it was *a la Francaise*, he declared.

It would be good for the teacher to start with some samples. Cull several from the classics or use my examples, but several should be based on members of the class or school staff or someone well-known in pop culture:

> Coach Walker
> is quite a talker,
> but his written prose
> is mostly x's and o's.

> Taylor Swift
> has the gift,
> but too many songs
> deal with men and their wrongs.

Most students will find the form fun and easy, even if there is an occasional clunky locution. Four lines and a mere two rhymes are certainly easier and less discouraging than, say, an Elizabethan sonnet, and the form does not require huge poetic skills. Many students will be familiar with rhyming pop lyrics or rap songs. Once they see an example or two, some may be able to recite a known verse which is, or is close to, a clerihew. Given the chance to poke some gentle humor at a classmate or teacher or family member—or themselves— most will. (Keep it clean and gentle!)

Certainly there can be rewards. The teacher may honor selected ones by posting a-clerihew-a-day on the bulletin board. A few verses can make it into the student newspaper or literary magazine. The yearbook may print some, and others can be used as part of a student's signature to his or her classmates. You can bet some will show up in email or Twitter. Years later, you may hear one at a reunion or in a wedding toast.

However, the form has some obstacles. The worst is that the chosen person's name may be impossible or nearly impossible to rhyme. Obviously, then, some students will have to move on to a nickname or another name altogether. Some names are difficult but not impossible to rhyme, if the writers try for a creative solution. They may use two words to rhyme, as:

> Leonard Cohen
> found his musical flow in
> everything from zen to sex to hula,
> for which we all say "Hallelujah."

They may find a three-word solution, or a hyphenated word that works:

> George Washington
> went about quashing gun-
> toting redcoats and Hessian hires
> when he wasn't huddled by his campfire.

One of the few modern practitioners of the clerihew is Pulitzer-winner Henry Taylor. In his *Brief Candles: 101 Clerihews* (LSU, 2000) we find a rule-bending example which moves an apostrophe from line 1 to line 2, a practice I borrow here (and note the possibilities of expanded line length):

> Willie Nelson
> 's traveling bus never tells on
> him, denying high crime, misdemeanor or misdeed,
> but Shawn's uncle, who owns it now, can still smell the weed.

Taylor, a clever writer indeed, even found an ironically humorous way to eulogize the author and artist Weldon Kees, who committed suicide:

> Weldon Kees
> parked by a bridge and rode the breeze.
> It would have been better by far
> to have found Kees in the car.

To further illustrate the subject-matter possibilities, his wide-ranging collection even has clerihews honoring the Supreme Court members. This also shows an unusual use of dialogue:

> Ruth Bader Ginsberg
> said *Titanic*, in truth, made her wince. "Berg
> phobia?" asked a reporter.
> "No," she said, "I just wish it were shorter."

That bit of dialogue leads to this: there is a little-known offshoot of the clerihew, not in any glossary I know of, nor do I know of a full-length collection. I call it the "said" poem, and its rules are simple: begin with a stem "Said_____" someone and insert the chosen name here. From that point, lines 2-4 follow the usual clerihew rhyme scheme, but the lines are a mock-quotation, something the speaker could have said. These illustrations should suffice to define:

> Said Abe Lincoln,
> "She swore it'd be fun,
> so I reserved a stall.
> I should have gone to the mall."

> Said John Wayne,
> "These boots are a pain.
> If they fit well, I could darn near glide—
> instead, I lurch from side to side."

> Said Minnie Pearl,
> "I'm just an ordinary girl
> with a ratty handbag
> and a hat with a tag."

I suspect most teachers would make the clerihew a relatively short unit, perhaps a couple of days. After the students are familiar with the form, they might return to it at intervals, or fill an unexpected free half-hour at the end of a period. They could name one Friday a month "Clerihew Friday" and begin the class with a few minutes sharing some student contributions.

Clerihews, like other very short forms such as haiku, the limerick, and the précis, teach students more than they suspect. They learn to be concise, to patiently sort through word choices, to weigh what are the essential points they want to make. They provide every writer a unique form of discipline.

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[i] Two examples by Henry Taylor are used with special permission and not available for reprint. All the others are original, and you may use as many as you wish.

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*He has published four poetry collections: S*ome Task, Long Forgotten and Other Poems, The Clown in the Tent, Shortcomings: Around the Grounds & Corner, *and* Aspects of a Crosscut Saw. *These have been praised by people such as Henry Taylor and Ted Kooser (Pulitzers winners both). Most recently his poems appeared in* The Scottish Banner *and* Ireland of the Welcomes. *He is working on a general collection of poetry and a Scottish/Irish collection,*

Stephen Wilhoit

Promoting Student Reflection on What They Learned as an English Major: Ideas from a Capstone Course

Abstract

This article examines why students in a university capstone English class struggled to identify what they learned as majors. The author outlines how he employed a set of readings and reflective writing exercises to help the students identify not only what they learned in their English courses, but also how being an English major impacted their lives. The article explains how better understanding the skills and abilities they developed as majors can help students identify rewarding career options and successfully pursue their life calling or vocation.

For the past four years, I've taught the English Department's capstone course at my university. Unlike capstone courses at other institutions which require students to research and complete a final, culminating scholarly project, we designed ours to focus on vocational discernment, helping students better understand how to lead lives of purpose and joy. For a semester, the soon-to-be-graduating students in my class reflect on, discuss, and write formal and informal essays about the meaning of their undergraduate education, what they learned as an English major, what it means to lead a purposeful life, and how to set and attain short- and long-term personal and professional goals. In other words, the course helps students identify their vocation or life calling.

Our university defines vocation as answering a call to discover one's unique gifts and skills and employ them in service for the common good in personally meaningful and rewarding ways. In the class, we discuss how individuals may possess multiple vocations at any point in their life and that vocations change over time. One goal of the capstone course is to help the students clarify their current sense of vocation—at this point in their lives, how might they bring meaning and happiness to their lives by employing their gifts and skills to help others?

I designed the class to have four units. The first unit requires students to study a range of historical and contemporary conceptions of vocation before writing their own definition of the term. The second unit asks students to identify their personal gifts and talents. I am particularly interested in helping them articulate the skills they learned as English majors. In the third unit they explore ways they might employ those skills to achieve their personal and professional goals. In the last unit, they revisit and revise their earlier definition of vocation.

My first attempt to teach this course started off well. After reading and discussing definitions of vocation drawn from a range of disciplines, the fourteen students enrolled in the class developed individual definitions of their own which they could reappraise and revise throughout the semester. The students' responses generally fell into one of two camps. Many of the students saw vocation in terms of a specific plan fate or God had established for their lives. At some point in the future, this plan would become clear to them and they would understand what they were "supposed" to do with their lives. Others focused more on personal happiness and self-actualization—their vocation involved finding and committing themselves to activities that brought them the greatest sense of joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment. In almost all cases, the students' definitions of vocation focused on future careers—discovering the line of work or employment they are supposed to pursue or that will bring them the greatest sense of personal success. During this first unit of the class, I was pleased by the energy and honesty the students demonstrated in their class discussions and essays. However, as I will explain below, the second unit of the course—the one focusing on helping my students identify their personal skills and gifts—did not go so well.

The first day of the unit I asked the students to answer a question I had just written on the white board: "What did you learn as an English major?" I waited a few moments for a student to respond, but no one said a word. Instead, they seemed puzzled by the question. To clarify what I meant, I asked the students to quickly write down their responses to two more questions I wrote on the board: (1) What skills did you learn in your English classes? and (2) How do you think being an English major might have changed you as a person? I could see that they were still struggling to come up with a response. Finally, I said, "OK. Presumably, you learned something different as an English major than you would have as a biology or art history major—what do you think that is?" A student reluctantly raised his hand and gave the obvious response—since he was an English major, he had no idea what he might have learned as a biology or art history major.

Over the next few days, I thought about my students' response to these questions: why would they find it so hard to identify what they learned as an English major? Part of the problem, I realized, was the vague nature of the questions. I was asking them to identify the specific skills and abilities they learned as a major without providing examples of what I meant and to describe how their experiences as a major impacted their lives without clearly defining what I meant by "impacted." Another part of the problem, though, was timing. The students were likely not in a good position to reflect on and answer the questions I was asking. Reflection works best when you've had time to develop some perspective on the topic or experience you're considering. My students lacked that perspective. I was asking them to reflect on what they learned as an English major while they were still being English majors in my class. Even though the capstone would be among the last classes they took at the university, they

still had a hard time identifying what they learned as a major because they were still learning it.

I realized that I needed to help my students detach themselves from their own education in order to understand it more clearly and to provide them a new perspective from which to view their experiences as English majors. As a first step, I searched the Internet for readings that discussed the benefits of majoring in English. I was not concerned with whether the material came from scholarly sources--popular magazines, blogs, and corporate or school web sites would do. I just needed readings that offered research findings or opinions on the questions I wanted my students to consider: What did you learn as an English major, and how do you think majoring in English has impacted your life?

There was a lot of material to draw from. As might be expected, many of the readings I found focus on how majoring in English helps students become better writers (Dilenschneider, 2209; Gregoire, 2014; Maschmeyer, 2016; Moore, 2016; Reynolds, 2016), readers (Dilenshneider, 2009; Edmunson, 2013), or editors (Griswold, 2013; O'Brien, 2019). Others discuss how majoring in English improves communication skills (Corrigan, 2019; Curry, 2015; Edmunson, 2013; Waller, 2016), social skills (Gregoire, 2014), critical thinking or problem solving skills (Gregoire, 2014; Griswold, 2013; Oatley, 2016), and the ability to accept and employ constructive criticism (Griswold, 2013; O'Brien, 2019). Some note how majoring in English leads to greater empathy (Gregorire, 2014; Krakovsky, 2006) and enhanced emotional stability (Ciottti, 2016; King, 2001; Wapner, 2008) while others mention improved memory ("How Does Writing," 2013), powers of imagination (Oatley, 2016), and self-awareness (Oatley, 2016), just to name a few.

Now when I teach the second unit of the capstone, I have my students read some of the material I've collected and ask them if they see themselves in the writers' descriptions of what English majors learn or how majoring in English impacts students' lives. Most are surprised by what they discover. Prior to reading the material, they might have acknowledged that majoring in English made them better readers and writers, but they would never have thought about ways the major impacted their cognitive abilities, interpersonal skills, or emotional stability. The readings I now assign in this unit help provide the distance and perspective students need to think critically about their own education. In effect, they serve as a mirror students can hold up to their own experience and see reflected there the skills and abilities they developed in the literature, rhetoric, writing, and theory courses they completed as English majors. Key insights into their education occur when the students see their own experiences reflected back at them in the readings.

Following our discussion of these readings, I employ several activities and assignments to help the students better understand what they learned as English majors and to connect what they learned to their vocations and plans for the future. I vary which assignments I use each term to match student interest.

Because I'm an English Major Exercise

For this in-class activity, I distribute post-it notes to all the students then write on the white board "Because I'm an English major . . . ," inviting them to complete that sentence in as many ways as they can, recording each response on a separate post-it note. As they brainstorm their responses, they place the post-it notes on the classroom walls. Once all of the students have posted their notes, I ask them to read all of the responses and collectively sort the post-its into groups around similar themes or ideas. Developing these categories requires the students to read and discuss the post-it notes carefully, noting the similarities and differences in their individual responses to the prompt. I then ask the students to explain how they decided which response to include in each group.

Many responses focus on individual skills the student have developed as English majors (e.g., Because I'm an English major, I can read effectively, I can write whatever I need to, I listen and understand not just what people say but what they mean, etc.) but others focus on what they can now do for others (e.g., I can help people improve their writing, I can help people organize and complete group projects, I can help people understand and solve problems, etc.). To close out the exercise, I ask the students to write a few paragraphs on how they might employ the skills and abilities they identified to make a living and serve others.

This exercise accomplishes several course goals. First, it encourages the students to identify how being an English major has impacted what they know and can do, not only to improve their own lives, but also to help others. As a collaborative exercise, it promotes useful conversation in class—students can compare their responses with their peers' to better understand the wide impact of the major. Completing the exercise promotes vocational reflection by helping the students consider the useful ways they might employ the skills and talents they have developed in college.

Life Goals Exercise

For this informal writing assignment, I ask the students to list what they now see as skills or abilities they have developed as an English major or ways majoring in English has impacted their lives. Next, I ask them to list their short- and long-term personal and professional goals. Finally, I ask the students to connect the two lists: how can they apply what they learned as

an English major to help them achieve the goals they wrote down? I urge them to be specific in their responses, to think of concrete, realistic steps they can take to achieve their life goals, drawing on the skills and abilities they already possess.

This assignment helps students connect two important aspects of vocation: self-knowledge and life goals. For too many undergraduate English majors, thoughts about what they are learning and what they hope to accomplish in life run along separate, parallel tracks. They too seldom reflect on the connection between what they are learning and what they want to do with their lives or fully appreciate how they might employ the knowledge and skills they are acquiring to identify, clarify, and achieve their personal life goals. This assignment is designed to help them identify and reflect on those vital connections.

Serving Others Exercise

Vocation is a theme we constantly revisit in the capstone course. With this exercise, I return the students' attention to what they read, talked, and wrote about in the first unit of the course—what it means to have a vocation. I ask the students to identify needs they perceive in the world. They can list whatever they like, whether those needs are local or global, personal or public, small or large. The requirement is that they identify needs that concern them and speak to their heart, ones they feel compelled to do something about. I then ask them to explore how they could draw on their personal gifts, skills, abilities, and knowledge to address those needs in some way and improve the lives of others.

As I previously noted, the definition of vocation students compose in the first unit of the class tend to be career-centered. They tend to link vocation with employment—the job they will get after they graduate. While the class can help students reflect on their future careers, the conception of vocation I am trying to advance in the course is broader. It is also service-centered, inviting students to consider how they can use their skills and talents to serve others in ways that bring meaning and purpose to their lives. Paid employment is not the only way student will accomplish this goal. Many will find their vocation though volunteer work and their daily interactions with family, friends, and other members of the community. This exercise is designed to help students reflect on this broader sense of vocation and to recognize how the English major has prepared them to serve and improve the lives of others.

Resume Exercise

For this exercise, I ask the students to bring their resumes to class so they can up-date the "skills" section. (Since the students are so close to graduating, most have already drafted a resume. If they haven't, then they prepare one for this exercise.)   Based on what they have

read, written about, and discussed in this second unit of the course, I ask the students what they now want to list as the skills on their resume that might interest future employees or make them attractive applicants for non-profit or service organizations. To spur their thinking, I distribute readings that focus on skills and abilities employers currently look for in applicants or identify why corporations and non-profits find English majors attractive applicants, such as "Why English Majors Are the Hot New Hires" (Martinuzzi, 2013), "English Majors Get Jobs" (Corrrigan, 2019), "English Majors Among Most Desirable Employees, Says Google" (McKeon, 2018), "Why I Hire English Majors" (Struass, 2013), or "11 Reasons Why New College Grads Should Pursue Nonprofit Careers" (Thurman, 2010). Through this exercise students better understand how majoring in English has prepared them for a wide range of professions or service opportunities, again reinforcing the idea that vocation involves helping others, rather through paid employment or voluntary service.

Helping students identify the skills, abilities, and aptitudes they have developed as English majors is central to our department's capstone course. With this knowledge, students are better able to identify careers that might interest them and make a better case for themselves as applicants. More importantly, though, understanding what they learned as English majors helps students identify and act on their vocations. As a university, we believe all people are called to serve the common good. Teaching the capstone course has taught me how to help my students recognize the wide range of skills and abilities they now possess, embrace and own those gifts, and identify how they might use them to help others in meaningful, life-changing ways.

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Josh Thompson

A Case for Independent Reading as a Mental Wellness Intervention

Abstract

We know that our students often live incredibly busy, stressful lives, which has negative effects on their mental health and wellness. We also know that suicide is still one of the leading causes of teenage death. In response, many school districts across the country have begun taking measures to increase awareness about student mental health and wellness as well as access to mental health resources for students. English teachers can also be part of the solution. We know the transformative power reading has to impact student lives. We honor its influence in our classrooms every day. This article argues that daily independent reading is a mental wellness support and encourages more educators to incorporate it in their curricula.

Keywords: independent reading, mental health, mental wellness, mindfulness

Introduction

Educators and administrators have long been concerned with the mental health and wellness of students. Local and state governments, however, seem to be focused on these topics only more recently. Still, there is a growing trend of increased attention on student mental health and wellness. Many school districts have started conversations about student mental health, establishing mental health days, incorporating more mental health resources and initiatives, and pushing for greater access to mental health services for students. Given the state of student mental health and wellness, these actions are even more critical.

Adolescents deal with serious mental illness directly and indirectly (DeSilver, 2019). A 2018 survey conducted by the American Psychological Association showed that teenagers reported significantly worse mental health and higher levels of anxiety than any other age group ("Stress in America," 2018). These results are consistent with other findings. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, 70% of adolescents note that anxiety and depression are major concerns among their peers (Horowitz and Graf, 2019), and serious depression has been on the increase per the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2017). These findings align with a 2019 analysis by Jean M. Twenge et al, which shows that young adults experienced a considerable rise in serious psychological distress, depression, and suicide between 2005 and 2017.

Of course, only certain school personnel (namely school psychologists) can treat mental

health disorders. However, when it comes to student mental wellness, teachers and administrators can have a significant influence. One such method schools increasingly incorporate is mindfulness (Dunning et al., 2018; Sapthiang, Gordon, & Shonin, 2018). Put simply, mindfulness is being fully present and aware, being in the moment and undistracted by things going on around us (Jaret et al, 2019). The practice benefits students' mental wellness (Dunning et al., 2018). In young children, mindfulness has been shown to nurture executive functions: inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility (Bauer et al., 2019). The development of executive functions can predict over time "low levels of negative emotion, better empathy and conscience development, committed compliance, and higher levels of social competence" (Bauer et al., 2019). Relatedly, mindfulness develops students' emotional regulation (Roemer, Williston, & Rollins, 2015).

Moreover, research shows that mindfulness practices in schools reduces student stress and anxiety (Bauer et al., 2019; Dunning et al., 2018; Hoge et al., 2013; Janz, Dawe, & Wyllie, 2019; Sapthiang, Gordon, & Shonin, 2018). The act of being in the moment has a significant impact on student mental health and wellness and is perhaps the main reason why schools are incorporating mindfulness. However, in addition to mindfulness, I propose that educational leaders and teachers look to another practice for benefitting student mental wellness: daily independent reading.

The Benefits of Independent Reading

Ask any educator who teaches with daily independent reading, and they will tell you that the practice (re)kindles a love of reading in students. My students always note that they read more books and also that they consider themselves better readers thanks to daily independent reading—auspicious results, especially when we consider the benefits of reading in relation to stress reduction and emotional regulation.

Readers know that feeling after closing a great book: we get lost in the pages and come back to reality totally rejuvenated. Some of us even need a few minutes to reorient ourselves. Becoming engrossed in a book allows our minds to focus on the world the author creates in their pages instead of whatever worries and stresses that might be plaguing us. In this manner, reading parallels mindfulness, the focus on being fully present. I've witnessed these mindful moments firsthand. Students frequently share how independent reading calms them and helps them focus. For instance, I administered a survey to students in my English 9 Honors, English 10, and English 10 Honors classes in October 2019, which asked them about their experiences with daily independent reading. One student responded, "Independent reading time is a time of the day where I can just read in silence. It helps my mental health, too, just to have around 20 minutes a day of silence just to relax and gather my thoughts, or maybe to

just escape into a good book." Other students responded similarly. Reading gives us a chance to just be, which engenders mental and emotional balance.

This reduction in stress helps readers relax, which in turn supports their mental wellness. In fact, an entire branch of psychotherapy draws on the restorative power of reading: bibliotherapy. According to Vries et al (2017), "Bibliotherapy is a therapeutic process of guided discussion of literature that provides an experience used to treat emotional and behavioral problems" (p. 49). The authors note that, in general, "[b]enefits from reading include increased self-esteem, providing comfort, and coping with challenging experiences" (p. 54). However, "[w]hen reading is coupled with processing or discussion as it is in bibliotherapy, research has proven additional positive outcomes in emotional, social, and cognitive domains" (p. 54). Vries et al (2017) also note that reading lessens depression and anxiety, reduces feelings of helplessness, and lowers stress.

While bibliotherapy, like all therapy, should be conducted under the supervision of a licensed and trained mental health professional, reading books in general can offer similar benefits. A primary component of any independent reading program is a thriving reading community. Students have to talk about and share their reading. While different than a bibliotherapy session, the conversations about books that occur naturally from independent reading help students cope with issues, examine relationships, and learn more about the world around them—which can, in turn, help them work through various aspects of their own lives.

Despite the reduction in stress and anxiety, many students do not read as much as they might like. When I ask my students, one reason runs throughout a majority of their responses: a lack of time. Teachers, parents, caregivers, administrators, anyone working with students knows that children and adolescents, especially high schoolers, live incredibly busy and often stressful lives. In addition to the typical school day and accompanying homework, many students participate in afterschool activities, have jobs, attend community events, and somehow manage to find time to socialize with friends. As many of my students put it, there simply isn't much time to read. Consequently, if they don't have as much time as they would like to read or even to read at all, students miss out on the benefits reading offers. Therefore, daily independent reading becomes even more necessary. Teachers, especially English Language Arts teachers, can remedy the situation by building this time into their daily lessons, and administrators can encourage their teachers to incorporate daily independent reading into their curricula and support them in that endeavor.

Racial and Economic Barriers to Access to Mental Health and Wellness Services

Schools provide students many services, including mental health and wellness, and public school has been often called The Great Equalizer because it provides these services to all students regardless of race, socioeconomic status, and other demographics. Therefore, despite how much difficulty students and their families may face in locating services outside of school, in school, students can rely on this access. When looking at the racial and economic barriers to access to mental health and wellness services, it is evident that having these services in schools—psychologists, mindfulness programs, and daily independent reading—provides one remedy to the problem.

In their study on improving access to mental health resources for low-income families, Hodgkinson, Godoy, Beers, and Lewin (2016) note that, even though the United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, the level of poverty "continues to exceed that of many other industrialized nations" (1). They also state that "[l]iving in a poor or low-income household has been linked to poor health and increased risk for mental health problems in both children and adults that can persist across the life span" (1). However, despite these documented ill effects, poverty remains a barrier to accessing mental health facilities, treatments, and professionals. Hodgkinson, Godoy, Beers, and Lewin (2016) report that, "among children experiencing poverty who are in need of mental health care," an estimated "<15% receive services, and even fewer complete treatment" (3). The results for working-class individuals aren't much better. In her audit study of mental health access, Kugelmass (2016) found that "help seekers who are. . .working class are at a disadvantage with regard to psychotherapists' accessibility" (9).

Kugelmass' (2016) results also demonstrate that, when we examine this issue with a racial lens, Black people face even more obstacles regarding access to mental health care. Other research confirms this racial disparity. A 2016 national study of racial and ethnic discrepancies in mental health care for children and young adults showed that—even though young people generally aren't prone to see a mental health specialist—2.3% of Black or Hispanic adolescents were likely to seek mental health care compared to 5.7% of white adolescents (Marrast, Himmelstein, and Woolhandler, 2016). The authors of the study do explain possible reasons for the disconnect. They note that cultural stigmas about mental health may play a role as well as potential distrust for available doctors. However, while these explanations might hold true for some Black or Hispanic people, Marrast, Himmelstein, and Woolhandler (2016) focus the problem on the marginalized communities and fail to address oppressive power structures. From a systematic perspective, more alarmingly, a shortage of child psychologists across the country creates a barrier to access: these professionals

often do not serve areas with greater concentrations of Black and Hispanic families (Marrast, Himmelstein, and Woolhandler, 2016). And even when Black and brown people can find therapists, their requests for appointments are often not taken (Marrast, Himmelstein, and Woolhandler, 2016). As Kugelmass (2016) found in her study, therapists are more likely to see middle-class white people than middle-class Black people or any working-class person of any race.

Conclusion

Considering the benefits of reading in reducing stress and anxiety and helping students be in the moment, daily independent reading is another intervention schools can and should use in nurturing student mental wellness. This understanding is even more pressing when we remember that many students experience a lack of time that prevents them from being able to read outside of school. Here, I must again emphasize: most teachers do not have the education and qualifications to diagnose and treat students with mental health issues. I am not arguing that we should add more to our list of responsibilities and become mental health professionals. However, I am encouraging us to think about the benefits of daily independent reading on our students' mental health and wellness.

This framing of daily independent reading as a mental wellness support becomes even more critical when we think about the research on the systemic inequality of access to mental health and wellness services. When Black and brown students and their families cannot locate services, let alone make an appointment with a mental health and wellness professional, students can still access some of these services through their schools. As seen, daily independent reading can offer similar benefits to mindfulness, helping students be in the moment and reducing their stress and anxiety. Therefore, incorporating daily independent reading into our practice ensures that students have access to the mental wellness support it provides. Teachers are not mental health professionals, but we can create systems in our classrooms and schools that give students the time they need to escape into a good book and just be in the moment.

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Faith Shelton

Teaching Hip-Hop as Poetry

Abstract

Hip-hop should be taught with the same respect as poetry within the classroom. Teaching hip-hop can allow students to see themselves as writers, make poetry more approachable, engage students, and give practical use to poetry. Hip-hop is often wrongly labeled as inherently bad, reflecting our societies' prejudices. Yet many hip-hop artists use their platforms to talk about complex topics and give a voice to those who need it. Whether students listen to hip-hop or not, they are affected by hip-hop culture and should have the tools to analyze this artform. Hip-hop is easily incorporated into traditional units in the English classroom, but is also able to stand on its own because of the many complex issues it tackles, like race, gender, and mental health.

Introduction

Students can often feel as though English instruction is not relevant to them, especially subjects like poetry. Poetry may even be interesting to them, but many students do not see any usefulness within it. Introducing hip-hop into the classroom in an authentic and relevant way, can help bridge the gap between English instruction and contemporary students. Hip-hop is poetry and when students realize this, they begin to see poetry in the music they listen to everyday. Hip-hop can lead students to write their own poems or raps as it makes concepts like figurative language, rhyme, meter, and sound more approachable. Though hip-hop is poetry, it also functions as activism, an outlet for students' creativity, and more. Hip-hop can function as many things, giving students a wide variety of ideas to explore and skills to employ within this one art form.

Position

Educational theory shows that teachers should incorporate all types of media within the classroom, not just novels. They are encouraged to bring in paintings, film, non-fiction text, and more to encourage students to apply their close reading and analytic skills to all art. Within this line of thinking, hip-hop, among other music, has a clear place in the classroom. Though some critics claim that hip-hop is problematic or vulgar, rap can take many forms just like any artform. Hip-hop disrupts the status quo and unapologetically points out problems within society, making some uncomfortable. Problematic elements of hip-hop, like misogyny and homophobia, reflects our society. However, many wrongfully view hip-hop as the source of these problems. Students should be given the opportunity to dissect and analyze hip-hop for themselves in the same way they do with poetry and other literature. Many students

already listen to this genre of music and those students that do not are still affected by its influence. Therefore bringing hip-hop into the classroom can better equip students to comprehend and analyze this art form.

Why Hip-Hop?

Hip-hop, unlike other music, is most poetic because of the fast-spoken lyrics, lending itself to an increased use of poetic devices. Alexs Pate, among other critics, in his book *In the Heart of the Beat: the Poetry of Rap*, defines rap as poetry and identifies imagery, texture, meaning, structure, form, rhythm, and flow as elements of rap. He also writes, "Perhaps most significant is that rap/poetry has become the first exported literary form that has emanated from African American culture" (Pate, 2010, p. xvi). This is important to keep in mind when using hip-hop in the classroom. Students and teachers should remember when using rap as a form of expression that it was developed by African Americans and to use it with respect to this. However, this doesn't mean that the art form is exclusive to African American students. Rappers like Eminem are great cases to examine because even as an "outsider" to hip-hop culture, he is still accepted by the rap community because of his transformation from poverty to celebrity and the authentic situations he writes about.

Rationale

As the literary merit of hip-hop is established, it is easily brought into the English classroom and analyzed as poetry. Marc Lamont Hill in *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip-hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* writes about "culturally relevant pedagogy" consisting of "academic achievement (or more specifically, student learning), cultural competence, and socio-political competence" (Hill, 2009, p. viii). To teach hip-hop well, it is important to keep all three of these components in mind when designing instruction. Hill later talks about the challenges of teaching hip-hop, especially as an outsider to the hip-hop community, "hip-hop will frequently produce feelings of discomfort, alienation, and frustration…such feelings are an inevitable part of the pedagogical process. In order to move beyond these feelings, hip-hop based educators must take up the ethnographic task of 'making the strange familiar' and 'making the familiar strange'" (Hill, 2009, p. 125). Teaching anything that is complex and outside of our own cultural backgrounds can be challenging. However, it is only when these challenges are overcome that we can reap the rewards of listening to, reading, and discussing the poetry of rap with students.

Authenticity of Instruction

Hip-hop in the classroom can easily become a gimmick to relate to students. Hill designs his

own instruction using rap that was not a part of "Top 40 songs" to expose students to music they may not be familiar with. This also stops instruction from being a strained attempt to try to connect to students. By using solid hip-hop "texts" that are well-written and part of a sort of hip-hop canon, it is clear to students that rap can be seriously studied and that it is not a fun break from "real" literature. While hip-hop should not be just a gimmicky way to relate to students, it can connect their out of school lives to their in-school lives. Bronwen Low writes in *Slam School: Learning Through Conflict in the Hip-Hop and Spoken Word Classroom*, "students' out-of-school (and hallway) culture become the explicit stuff of curriculum, given that this is usually what is part of the 'null' curriculum or what schools don't teach" (Low, 2011, p. 2). Using hip-hop in the classroom breaks out of the canon of English instruction and brings relevant and engaging material that was created by African Americans into the classroom. This representation is important in protecting against the danger of a single story that the canon is often responsible for.

Hip-Hop in Instruction

There is a myriad of ways to use hip-hop in the classroom. One example is using it as a tool to teach grammar and poetry, which can be easily implemented. Having students go through their favorite rap songs searching for concepts like appositives or strong verbs is an engaging way to show students that all writers use grammar to create a piece of writing. Traditional poetry units can also be enriched by adding hip-hop. A unit that explores gender could analyze "Keep Ya Head Up" by Tupac Shakur to facilitate a talk about gender inequality, "I wonder why we take from our women/ Why we rape our women, do we hate our women?/ I think it's time to kill for our women / Time to heal our women, be real to our women" (Shakur, 1993, ll. 20-23). In this song, Tupac directly calls out to his community to change the misogynistic culture, making a great model for students looking to use rap for activism. Tupac uses an art form that stereotypically only objectifies women, to bring awareness to the treatment of women.

Other songs like Kendrick Lamar's "Complexion (Zulu Love)" can be analyzed and start a conversation about topics like colorism and race. Lamar writes "Dark as the midnight hour, I'm bright as the mornin' Sun/ Brown skinned, but your blue eyes tell me your mama can't run" (Lamar, 2015, ll. 17-18). Here Lamar uses metaphor to create new associations to dark skin. The use of concepts like this show students how figurative language can make a powerful impact on the reader or listener. Artists like Logic use hip-hop as a platform to talk about mental illness. In his song "1-800-273-8255", he writes "It can be hard/ It can be so hard/ But you gotta live right now/ You got everything to give right now" (Logic, 2017, ll. 65-68). Logic uses his platform to encourage those that are dealing with mental illness to keep going and not to give up. Tupac, Lamar, and Logic all use first-person, making each song

personal and unique to their own individual experiences. Students can use these songs as an inspiration to write their own raps to discuss the problems they see in their own community. When we validate these artists as writers, and as writers of poetry, we show our students that are already writing their own raps that they too are writers. In this way, hip-hop gives students a new identity and a new lens to view the world.

Though hip-hop is easily incorporated into units and text sets, it also can stand on its own. The many facets of hip-hop leave much to explore. The lyrics, music, music videos, and the artists themselves are all great ways for students to better understand a hip-hop piece. When students are able to identify all the elements of hip-hop, they can apply what they have learned to make their own personal poetry. Much like Tupac, Kendrick, and Logic, they can write to bring awareness to the issues they see every day. In *Slam School,* Low writes about a prompt that students used to create their own raps, "Students wrote a 'persona poem' in the voice of someone outside their sphere of reference whom they would not usually communicate with but might imaginatively impersonate" (Low, 2011, p. 55). She goes on to talk about the personas they used including a father who leaves his family, "an American soldier in Iraq," and "Planet Earth". This assignment asks students to think about the lives of someone or something completely unlike them and give them a voice through rap. This can create empathy and a new understanding for the lives of someone or something they at first felt alienated from. It also shows students that they can use writing to become whoever they want.

This assignment alone opens up room for discussion about complex topics like the difference between the speaker of a poem and the author, which can change students' views on what it means to have an authentic voice. This activity should be introduced with mentor texts that model this for students. Low uses the slam poem "Skinhead" by Patricia Brown, an African American woman who puts herself in the shoes of a white supremacist,

> The face that moves in my mirror is huge and pockmarked,
> scraped pink and brilliant, apple-cheeked,
> I am filled with my own spit.
> Two years ago, a machine that slices leather
> sucked in my hand and held it,
> whacking off three fingers at the root.
> didn't feel nothing till I looked down
> and saw one of them on the floor
> next to my boot heel,
> and I ain't worked since then. (Brown, 1992, ll. 11-20).

Though this is not set to a beat, the performative poem opens up the assignment by demonstrating how powerful poetry can be and inspiring students to do the same. She sets up a story for this man, making him 3 dimensional. She uses strong and even gruesome imagery to get her point across. The language in this poem sticks to the listener and when students watch her perform, they can see the way she moves her hands and emphasizes certain words. The idea of white supremacy is given a face and a story, making her theme of race more complex and meaningful. Students can use this as inspiration to give flesh and blood to their own poetry and ideas.

Conclusion

Hip-hop has earned its place in the classroom with its poetic features, complex themes, and socio-political awareness. Though not all hip-hop is appropriate for students, in the same way not all poetry is appropriate for students, there are many rich hip-hop "texts" that would fit perfectly in even traditional poetry units. Not only is hip-hop a great literary form, but it also can give many students a voice to talk about the issues they see in their own lives and communities and to explore their own identities. Many students are already listening to or reading, writing, and even performing raps, yet tragically these students are not validated as writers or readers of important texts. Through bringing hip-hop into the classroom, students can receive this validation and representation that is badly needed by so many students, especially students of color. Hip-hop, when used in authentic ways, can become a tool that students use to create their own powerful writing.

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Jessie Sawyer

Bringing Society Inside the Classroom

Abstract

This essay explores the necessary linking of students' out of school lives with their in-school lives. By creating a comfortable environment where students are free to develop individual opinion on taboo topics and controversial issues, students will be more engaged and eager to learn. As mentors and educators, teachers should be incorporating texts, references, and other classroom content that mirrors what students see throughout their everyday lives. Diversity exists in all aspects of each student's world, and should be the center of classroom discussion. Rather than sheltering students from the world around them, it is a teacher's job to educate students not only to take standardized tests, but how to interact with the evolving society students are a part of.

Introduction

Incorporating student out-of-school life within the classroom is often an area of concentration that is overlooked or ignored. Outside the classroom is a world filled with social injustice, equity issues, environmental awareness, and taboo subjects, all of which tend to go undiscussed out of fear of losing classroom management through student disagreement, confrontation, or discomfort. However, these topics surround students throughout their everyday lives. They are living in two different worlds: the classroom, and the *real* world. Without these two worlds intersecting, the classroom will never truly be relevant for the student, preventing them from being able to apply the skills they learn in the classroom to their everyday lives. It is the teacher's responsibility to create a bridge that connects these two worlds, and to guide students to look at the world around them with a critical lens. Including diversity and a range of topics within the classroom is not a means to ignoring school curriculum, but a way to educate students through real life events and situations, so that they can grow to be well-rounded educated citizens. Including out-of-school life within the classroom teaches students how to think for themselves, and apply those skills and acquired knowledge to other areas of their lives, making education transferable to the students' future, and outside lives.

Position

Talking about diversity and complex subjects is often left out of curriculum. However, it's these complex conversations that make up our society –a society in which includes young students. By educating our students on societal issues, teachers can train them how to interact with one another while discussing topics people oftentimes find debatable. Teachers

can create a classroom environment that accepts disagreement not as an uncomfortable element of conversation but as a means to learn from each other. By increasing complex conversation in the classroom between students, rather than the students receiving lectures by the educator, teachers become more relatable to the students. This open conversational tone creates a setting where students are welcome to share their thoughts and opinions, as well as ask questions about topics that seem confusing or unclear.

The reality that teachers are educating students, not to be future teachers, but to be citizen leaders, businessmen and women, police officers, etc. is a realization that is lacking in school curriculum. Including real life material that relates to students' personal lives and the growing society in which students live, creates a bond between education and society. This bond is essential for students to be eager for knowledge inside the classroom, not just to pass standardized tests, but to be able to apply in classroom education to outside the classroom. The goal should be for students to grow as people, not test takers. Students are expected to adapt to various teaching styles and content that may never match their identity. This makes school the enemy in the average student mind, ultimately creating the divide between the students in and out of school worlds. By adapting to the students and this diverse, taboo world that is kept secret from school, they will feel included, and identify with their peers and teachers more easily. As of now, diversity, real life events, and movements are a distraction from the classroom, when they should be the center focus.

Rationale

The English classroom is often thought to provide writing and reading skills. However, how those skills are taught is not concrete. By incorporating societal issues happening in the students' world, the teacher can present reading and writing skills in a way that encourages differentiation, and therefore keeps students challenged and engaged.

Cultural and Community Collision in the Classroom

 Teaching in a society that has been heavily influenced by increasing numbers of immigration, means there will always be students of various races, ethnic groups, and cultures in one classroom. The goal should not be to create a curriculum that pretends every student is the same, but rather create an environment that discusses multiple cultures and communities to educate students on these different groups. This guides students to not only personally identify with classroom content, but to learn from those different and alike from themselves. Joanne Dowdy and Deborah Campbell explain in their article, "The Dance of Diversity" that incoming students are only becoming more diverse. She explains that our society today is

"[f]aced with the contending forces of the modern classroom. Cumrot (2002) stated that schools have become a meeting ground of cultures where the worlds of the students meet the worldview of teachers" (Dowdy & Campbell, 2008). Dowdy also discusses that it is the teachers' responsibility to first educate themselves on students' backgrounds before bringing these topics to the classroom. To improve academic achievement, it is crucial teachers become more familiar with the cultural backgrounds of their students, and to incorporate these backgrounds into lessons that relate back to the cultures in the classroom. By doing so, students will better identify with classroom content, as well as learn about new cultures and topics that they may wish to explore further.

Other communities, such as LGBTQ+ within youth culture, address sexuality, a typically taboo topic for classroom discussion. However, if done in an educated way, this academic conversation between students could potentially decrease LGBTQ+ harassment within school systems and improves mental health awareness. "Beyond the Dialectics and Polemics" discusses recent efforts school systems have been making to improve the treatment and mental health for LGBTQ+ students. These efforts consist, mainly, of support groups for these students. While these support groups are a wonderful movement to make students feel safe at school and in society, everyday classroom instruction and conversation can improve student understanding of various genders and sexualities. If teachers educate students inside the classroom on this issue, and use this hostile situation that occurs within the very hallways students use, they can begin an academic conversation about this social issue relevant to their lives in and out of school. The authors write in the same article, "[m]any advocates found that one of the best ways to support LGBT students was to create safe spaces where they could congregate, socialize, and talk about issues that were important to them without feeling threatened or ridiculed" (Liboro, Travers, & St. John, 2015). By creating a safe space within the classroom environment, students will feel less pressure to seek outside counseling, harassment will hopefully decrease, and a sense of community will develop. This is just one example of a social issue that surrounds teenagers today, as well as others that should be addressed in the classroom.

In her *TedTalk* "How teachers can help kids find their political voices" Sydney Chaffee explains that teachers are not only educating students to be achieving students, but to be well rounded people as well. She tells her audience of her own experience with juggling classroom management and conversational topics that bring various opinions. Chaffe eases fellow teachers' fears as she handles complex student conversation in a strategic way, while still showing herself as a vulnerable *person* that may not have all the answers. By teachers portraying themselves as people rather than a person with all the answers, students will be shown that in conversation about societal issues, there is not right or wrong answer they will

be expected to memorize for a test. By demonstrating an environment where taboo subjects are no longer taboo, students can have mature conversations with their peers and develop communication skills that require them to share opinions, and respect others they hear.

Differentiation Using Diversity

To include these complex conversations in classrooms without the teacher lecturing entirely, it is essential to create a well-balanced list of assignments that allow students to express their own ideas, be creative, and be interested in the material they are learning. While working on reading and writing skills, choosing literature by authors students can identify with is essential for academic and social success. Rather than redundantly teaching novels such as *The Scarlett Letter*, students should be exposed to various cultures and styles of writing through mentor texts, so they can use the material they analyze in their own writing. As well as choosing literature that discusses complex issues the teacher wants students to tackle, teachers should select literature that illustrates how to maturely discuss these topics. By using mentor texts that are relevant to the teenage experience such as the graphic novel *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel and *With the Fire on High* by Elizabeth Acevedo, teachers can effectively provide relatable examples of literature with the goal that students can see themselves reflected in the curriculum. These novels are just two examples of the many mentor texts that exist. Mentor texts can be other novels, as well as poems, articles, and other forms of writing that model formal and informal writing techniques. Incorporating texts that reflect student identity back to the student, as well as provide new outlooks, encourages students to share their own opinions on matters addressed within the texts they are introduced to. With mentor texts to guide them, students can adopt writing techniques they see modeled in these examples to showcase their own lives and personal experiences in their work. By giving students the resources to develop their own ideas, and providing examples to show how to execute them, teachers can give students agency to decide what area of focus they would like to further explore to engage students in the reading and writing process.

Although the English classroom primarily focuses on reading and writing, neither of these tasks will reach their full potential without direct conversation. Socratic seminars that begin with an open-ended question and allow every student the opportunity to speak is a way for students to engage in a complex discussion. Group and individual project ideas similar to *TedTalks* or podcasts, where the student researches a certain societal issue or other topic of their interest, can be ways of adopting in class conversation to out of classroom life in assignment form. These interactive project ideas allow students to add comic relief, individual opinion, and their own creative spin. For the not as talkative students, forms of artistic learning to appeal to visual and hands-on learners can be incorporated as well. In the

article "The Dance of Diversity" the authors discuss the benefits for using art as a means to educate. "Research has confirmed that students who use art-based learning perform better on tests of comprehension, than those who study from textbooks and take standardized tests" which tells us that our ways of educating need to contain a large variety of options (Dowdy & Campbell, 2008). Much like writing, other forms of art provide the student with a level of freedom that tests and textbooks do not.

Conclusion

Diversity should be an everyday topic of discussion within the classroom. Students should be able to match what they see in their everyday lives with what they are taught in the classroom. It is crucial for teachers to connect students' out-of-classroom worlds within classroom curriculum. The evolving society students live in is not to be ignored when inside a classroom, but embraced and discussed in an educated matter so that students can relate to their school system and carry essential skills developed through these complex discussions to outside the classroom.

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Mythbusters in Student Teaching

Abstract

Student teaching represents one of the capstone experiences of the English education program. Indeed, it may be the most influential of experiences in the formation of future teachers. Unfortunately, many would-be student teachers have undue fears about the student teaching semester. This article is intended to disabuse future student teachers (and their cooperating teachers and college supervisors) of some false notions (myths) they may carry around, notions which may either discourage them from entering the profession or may unduly interfere with their preparation for the student teaching semester.

Aside from the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975), the basic apprenticeship for teacher training is the student teaching semester. Typically assigned during the student's final semester of the senior year, student teaching is the capstone experience for teacher candidates in English education. From the faculty point of view, student teaching is the program's opportunity to place its imprimatur on its graduates. Indeed, student teaching may be the most formative experience of an English education major's college career.

This much is "true."

But, for the first time in their college education, student teaching interns find themselves external to their four year institutions. They are assigned a school where they will face the high stakes internship that seemingly everyone has told them about. Given the challenges and importance of this internship, teacher candidates often report feeling pressure and anxiety.

Many of the fears that have dogged candidates prior to student teaching contain elements of "fake news." In an effort to dispel unneeded anxiety and undue worry, herewith is some "sage wisdom" from the "field": five myths that beleaguer future "practitioners."

Myth One: It Doesn't Matter Where You Student Teach. That's like saying it doesn't matter where you live. The intent of this maxim is to imply that one can learn from a variety of sites (which is true), and that therefore one site is as instructive as another (not necessarily true). But, contrary to popular opinion, there is evidence that it would be wise for student teachers to be assigned to sites similar to those they would likely select upon graduation:

"…the school context in which student teaching occurs has important implications for the later outcomes of teachers and their students and … teacher education programs

and school districts should consider placing student teachers in schools that are similar to the schools in which they are likely to teach once they enter the workforce" (Goldhaber, Krieg, Theobald, 2017).

Myth Two: The Methods Course Will Prepare You for Student Teaching. What I'm about to say sounds like heresy (true confession—I am a methods teacher), but the truth is that Nothing Can Prepare You for Student Teaching. As I tell my English majors all the time, "If you can't live with ambiguity, get out of English."

Of course the methods class is vital to survival in student teaching. What this Myth speaks to is the "culture of the school," an entity so different –and unpredictable—that no single body of knowledge can speak to or prepare one for—what a person is likely to face in the 21st century school. Deal and Peterson (1999) define school culture to include "a school's norms, unwritten rules, traditions, and expectations." The complex nature of the school as a social organization explains why the supporting framework of cooperating teacher, college supervisor, and intern coordinator are necessary during the student teaching semester.

In this complex environment, even the most seasoned of professionals will admit to seeing almost daily events they never could have anticipated.

Myth Three: Student Teaching Will Prepare You for the Job Interview. This myth carries the kindest rebuttal of all: Student teaching IS the job interview. Finally, some good news. Student teachers get to meet their future employer on site, get to demonstrate their ability and attitude, get to observe the conditions under which they will work the following year(s). Student teaching prepares English candidates for the job interview because they can answer questions by providing examples of real life experiences that they have had during the student teaching experience.

What's more, they have "live" references usually anxious to see them come aboard.

Myth Four: edTPA is a formative educational experience.

Reality: edTPA is a total disruption of the student teaching semester. Here's the edTPA's self-described "cocktail party" definition: "The Teacher Performance Assessment" (edTPA) is a student centered, subject specific, multiple measure assessment of teaching. It is designed to be educative and predictive of effective teaching and student learning" (Petroff, Whittaker, & Coffman, 2012).

Who could argue against such outcomes? But the reality lies in the demands upon student

teachers—just getting acclimated to their schools and classes. In the midst of planning lesson plans, learning students' names, learning the school's rules and norms, student teachers are asked to complete the assessment by the middle of the student teaching semester. The result is emotional stress and a drain on energy that prevents student teachers from "getting to know and develop relationships with their students and cooperating teacher" (Shin, 2018).

Myth Five: Don't Smile Until November.

Maybe a grimace, you say? This well-intentioned piece of advice against "letting them see you smile" is based on the principle that some "distance" between student teachers and their students is needed to maintain discipline in the classroom. But there are many positive ways to maintain discipline and order in the classroom, and among them is good teaching. Students who are engaged with learning have less inclination to be disruptive. And we also know that good teaching is relational. So the focus needs to rely on student-teacher interaction, not on superficial externals or nonverbal behavior like smiling. Truth be told, a teacher who can smile may exude confidence.

There are probably endless myths and half-truths to most professions. For the would-be student teacher, the best case scenario is a supportive environment where the novitiate is free to learn, to grow-- even to make mistakes. That's a reality we (and they) can live with.

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SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO VEJ'S SUMMER 2020 ISSUE

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: May 1, 2020

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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