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Lou Ventura

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The English Record

Aims

The English Record publishes original peer reviewed contributions that focus on the field of English education. *The English Record* features articles on pedagogy, essays, commentaries, program descriptions, reflective narratives, book reviews, poetry, and occasional student work. Please check the website www.*nysecteach.org* for more information.

Submissions

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically to Lou Ventura via e-mail at **englishrecord@olean.wnyric.org.**

Manuscripts should be prepared using MS Word. All parts of the manuscript should be double spaced. Please number all pages consecutively. Each manuscript should include a cover sheet with the author's name, affiliation, position, a short two or three line author bio, preferred mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Identifying information should not appear elsewhere in the manuscript. Please include an abstract on the cover page of no more than 100 words. Manuscripts must conform to APA standards. Manuscripts that do not utilize APA will not be considered for publication.

All images, tables, figures and additional materials should be sent as separate files with a figure heading and notation within the manuscript for preferred placement.

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Cover Art

Chloe Kottwitz is from Bolivar, New York and a student at the New York State College of Ceramics, School of Art and Design at Alfred University. She will graduate in 2021 with a BFA and an Arts Management Minor.

A special thanks to **Mary Ring**, a senior at Olean high school and an English Department intern, for her help in formatting this issue.

The picture bellow served as the cover art for our 2018 spring/summer issue (68/2). Unfortunately, we failed to recognize the artist, Courtney Brisky, for her work. Courtney is an Olean High School graduate and currently a student at Villa Maria College in Buffalo pursuing a bachelor's degree in animation.

ANNUAL ANNOUNCEMENT
FOR NYSEC PROGRAMS AND AWARDS

The New York State English Council understands that educators involved with professional organizations are more informed about current information on national and local programs and initiatives. The programs and awards supported by **NYSEC** provide opportunities for professional leadership, promote excellence in English education, and foster collegiality and camaraderie among ELA educators throughout New York State. These programs and awards are the heart of our mission. These programs and awards help keep **NYSEC** educators informed, enthusiastic, and unified. We encourage everyone to help us celebrate the outstanding teachers, students, mentors, and programs that we have in districts all across the state. Please visit the website where each letter and application is available in digital format: **www.nysecteach.org.**

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Awards presented to exemplary ELA programs, which support creative instruction and learning, that have been in place for at least three years.

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Educators nominated by colleagues who inspire excellence in students as well as teachers.

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Named after a former **NYSEC** President and Executive Board member, this award honors
one or more cooperating teachers who have mentored future English Language Arts teachers
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Letter from the Editor
Lou Ventura

For the second year in a row, *The English Recor*d has been recognized by NCTE's Standing Committee on Affiliates as an Affiliate Journal of Excellence.

In her email informing me of the honor, Linda Walters-Moore, NCTE's Administrative Liaison, encouraged those of us working with the journal to "toot" our "own horn"—easier said than done. I sometimes find we teachers are not so good at "tooting our own horns," and I think that has something to do with how we view our roles as educators.

We commonly find ourselves working cooperatively, not only with our students, but with parents and siblings, community groups, and philanthropic organizations, and we recognize our cooperative work is always most effective when we can tap into the generous skills and abilities of our colleagues.

That spirit of collegiality we cultivate with our teaching neighbor across the hall, or with a teacher from a neighboring district makes our efforts most productive, and organizations like NYSEC and NCTE help us extend our collegial reach beyond simple geography, and that's where this journal comes in.

So I would like to thank everyone who has had a hand in the production of *The English Record* over the last year: Associate Editor (and my wife) Sally Ventura, our peer reviewers from across the state, and of course our contributors who in this issue represent observations and best practices from New York, New Jersey, Minnesota, and West Virginia.

So yes, we at *The English Record* are very happy to again be recognized by NCTE as an Affiliate Journal of Excellence, but in the spirit of collaboration and collegiality which permeates our work, we must admit, there's a lot of recognition to go around.

Playing Composition: Procedures of Gamification in Course Design

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Abstract
The ubiquity of gamification in education has led to numerous articles about best practices in teaching through games. However, the work on gamification has not included enough focus on the role of play as a fundamental basis for the potential value of game-based learning. Through looking at arguments about the positives and negatives of gamification in the context of theories of play, I argue for gamification as an approach to course design that attempts to create particular types of experiences for students through rules and procedures. This argument is placed in the context of composition studies and exemplified through *Kairos*, a cooperative game I created for a first-year writing class.

Playing Composition

Composition should be more playful. The seriousness of fighting not to be just a service course, of training students to write and think well, and of trying to shape itself into a full-fledged discipline, often leaves out the advantages of play. Organizing a composition course around the more playful tenets of gamification theory would allow for more experimentation with writing, could take away some of the focus on grades and writing only to the teacher, and could make motivation in the course more internal for students. The process of making educational activities, classes, or elements of classes into games, typically called gamification, is now ubiquitous in education. Why games? In *Reality is Broken,* McGonigal (2011) uses positive psychology to argue that games give meaningful tasks with clear boundaries and a good chance of success. For McGonigal, games are a "*purposeful*

escape" but also display qualities that can be used in so-called real life (p. 6). That focus on meaning is too frequently ignored with gamification, which too often relies on the trappings of games like badges and trophies, levels, or stilted narratives, reducing internal motivation (Bogost *Play,* 2016; Pesce, 2014). These can leave out the vital element, actual playfulness in a game, and miss the broader point of gamification: not to move something that was not a game into a game format but designing a particular type of experience. By thinking about gamification less like making a library assignment into a game and more like designing an experience with particular qualities, gamification can be a valuable process.

Those qualities do not just have to be fun either. Playfulness is often a key quality of a game, but tension, confusion, difficult compromises, or risk-taking can all be experiential goals of a game—officially educational or otherwise. In *The Art of Game Design* (2008), Schell argues that a game designer "does not care about games. [. . .] When people play games, they have an experience. It is this experience that the designer cares about" (p. 10). He makes a strong distinction between the game and the experience one has with it, just as there should be a strong distinction between course materials, like readings and a syllabus, and the actual experiences of the students taking the course.

So the purpose of gamification here is to make composition more playful in order to allow for a variety of specific, designed experiences, not just to add external motivations or hope for a sense of fun. Play can be fun, but it is more than that, and one of my goals for play was to encourage experimentation by students in their writing. Game design becomes a useful field to consider and use as a tool for creating those experiences. Composition Studies can embrace gamification if it is understood as the act of designing a particular experience with a major element of play. Throughout this essay I explore gamification as designing playful experiences and consider their value for Composition Studies,

exemplified through a game-based composition class. I further argue that gamification's value for Composition Studies in part is in helping instructors and administrators re-think their approaches to class and program policies, less in terms of individual rules that must be followed with specific consequences, and more in terms of rules that work together to design experiences and set the conditions of possibility for classes. To approach these goals I will briefly discuss gamification in relation to course design and then turn to Bogost's theory of procedural rhetoric in preparation for extending it away from video games. Next, I will work through many of the elements of my own *Kairos* composition game (see Appendix A for game manual) to explore how rules and procedures functioned, both successfully and unsuccessfully, to create particular experiences throughout the semester, then conclude with a return to issues of course design.

Designing with Rules

During a recent fall term, I experimented with teaching an entire composition class as an extended game. Points, levels, digital rewards, self-pacing, frequent feedback, and other game elements took center stage, which all took a great deal of time to set up. In fact, setting up the class syllabus proved to be one of my biggest problems. The class needed to have a syllabus of course, and one that met certain basic expectations of my university; at the same time, this particular class needed a game manual to explain the rules, procedures, and expectations of the games. Should these be two separate documents, or should they be merged into one? I started with them separate, put them together, then extracted the basic syllabus to make two again. A colleague of mine who was experimenting with the same basic game for her class ended up with just one syllabus/game manual document. This little to and fro ended up serving as the catalyst for what is a primary value of employing gamification—the creative design of rules to develop and shape the possibilities for types of learning experiences in class.

Gamification is not so much about adding levels, fun, or even competition, but more about pushing instructors and administrators to think about what those rules and procedures teach students and the impact they have on students' experiences in the class.

The rules here are not just statements like "no cell phone usage in class," or "cell phones may be used if they are out for course-related matters," although those are rules too. Rules are like little algorithms or bits of computer code; they set the possibilities for experiences (at least when they are followed). The two examples about cell phones are not just rules in the sense of someone getting in trouble or not; they establish parameters around the types of experiences one can have, or not have, in class, presuming the rules are followed. To put it another way, Micciche (2014) noted a shift "away from the individual-community binary and toward writing as a curatorial, distributed act" (p. 494). If writing is about collecting and deploying a wide variety of things in the world, many of which are acting on their own, all those things are what people write *with*. In designing a curriculum, the rules that set the possibilities for the class are important writing tools for students. Those rules work alongside the students and help shape papers and experiences.

Therefore, the value of gamification is often not in the overlay of rewards or narrative or bonus levels in a class, although these too are writing materials. The value is in the process of designing class parameters, which can treat even readings and resources as writing tools. In Purdy's (2014) review of how design has been used in composition studies, he did not note a course design strategy in his five main goals (p. 615), but he did briefly consider "course curricula" and "program-level organization" in his own reflections. He argued that,

> *Design* offers both a vocabulary for and a way of thinking about composing that is capacious and action oriented. It offers a robust notion of composing that

> cuts across disciplinary boundaries and prepares us and our students for the future possibilities of composing (emphasis in original, p. 635).

Our course design approach can have this action focus, in terms of considering the effects of rules and tools put into play for students, and thinking about course design can be both about writing-related content and about effective procedures, ideas, and materials. Course design, in this sense, is more like architecture where others will act and relate to each other in particular ways based on the structure created and the space within that structure.

Gamification in a variety of forms is certainly a trend in education, at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels (see Bertoli, 2014; Gee 2011; Kapp, 2012). For example, Bertoli, a sixth-grade teacher, writes in the online gaming site Kotaku about his article "Samurai Yetis and Ninja Werewolves: How One Teacher Turned Sixth Grade Into an MMO." The article shared an experiment he conducted focusing on assessment. The experiment was based on easily acquired experience points which allowed players to level up at ten point intervals. A concrete reward for the top scoring alliance they could form was the final goal for many, with more rewards available for the successful completion of other tasks.

The hope for this kind of motivational fix from games is significant. In the *Chronicle for Higher Education*, Salter (2011) emphasized new points of view, teaching through simulation, and utilizing teamwork and collaboration as some of the potential uses and values of organizing small aspects of classes, or even entire classes, around gaming. However, Bissell (2010) explored motivation through immersion too. He noted that "surrender is always partial" (p. 39) in video games. The player has to submit to the game and its rules, creating a freely chosen immersion, but many of the players' actions still control how the game proceeds—unlike watching a movie, for example. Students certainly have that partial control, but

encouraging free surrender to the game-oriented class is more difficult. Making game elements non-mandatory or not tied to major grades can be an important part of keeping that freedom, but then the game must be enticing enough to draw students to that experience.

The problem is that so many of the examples which focus on surface elements of games as add-ons to the classroom may enhance motivation for a time, but frequently without fundamental changes in instruction. Playfulness is lost, as is the freedom, motivation, and experimentation that can come with play. Bogost, whose work on rhetoric and games I will discuss shortly, has argued in "Gamification Is Bullshit" (2011) that gamification has been employed by businesses and marketers as a way to take some of the cultural cachet of video games and make people think that those companies are modern, innovative, and fun; ultimately, that type of gamification, according to Bogost, is a repeatable add-on, missing the "interactions with behavioral complexity" and other more vital elements of games. At times, his critique applies in education as well, although the lack of easy profit and low-tech aspects of some gamification moves in education may ultimately help push for a more thoughtful use of games.

Along with the gamification concern, questions of curricular design remain vital issues in a broad sense. Heard (2014) emphasized discussions of the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* in arguing that scholars ought to "reconsider curriculum design in the context of creativity, responsibility, curiosity, and other desirable habits of composition" (p. 315). More specifically, Heard advocated for making curricular design "inventive" (p. 320) in ways that encourage the participation of designers, instructors, and students. This inventive direction is valuable, and administrators and course designers can move to an even more experimental level by designing courses that achieve more than paper-based outcomes. Lanham (1986) noted, "All these diverse activities, from Post-Darwinian biology to Post-Modern

art, attempt a single great reversal, insist that play and game matter as much to *homo sapiens* as ordinary purpose, which has constituted the argument of the rhetorical curriculum since the Greek Sophists" (p. 134). There is an exploration in playing games and a freedom that is valuable, but that freedom is all based on working within a system of rules that can be changed when a different experience is desired. Gamification can bring a sense of playful creativity in combination with careful consideration of rules or code, reinvigorating composition course design.

Procedures vs. Procedures

Play and games in conjunction with procedures was central to the work of Bogost, who, in *Persuasive Games* (2007), argued for "procedural rhetoric" in the realm of video games. Bogost articulated a theory of persuasion that shows how the rules of video games—what the software will and will not allow a player to do and the results of various actions in the game—work to move the player to particular behaviors or thoughts. In one of his more well-known examples, Bogost explored how the game "*Animal Crossing* deploys a procedural rhetoric about the repetition of mundane work as a consequence of contemporary material property ideals" (p. 268). In the game's town, one has to do work in the game to get money, and then there is constant pressure to move up in house size or material possessions, yet one still has to deal with the mortgage payments. In this procedural rhetoric there is a fairly specific critique of a version of materialist capitalism, but the notion of procedurality can be extended to areas like the classroom, whether it is ostensibly framed as a game setting or not. A good place to start in most composition classrooms is with the way students submit work and receive feedback: traditionally, a process much slower and less frequent than the video game feedback loop Bogost suggests. Gee (2005) makes clear that feedback can be made faster by combining procedures or working with the messier video game procedures

when designing classes and syllabi thereby creating new possibilities and experiences for students.

Using principles that are a bit broader than Bogost's notion of procedures, Gee (2011) has argued that games can provide important teaching opportunities. The following six examples are taken from Gee's list of twelve ways games can teach

- First, they focus on well-ordered problems, not facts and information.
- Fourth, they lower the cost of failure so that players will explore, take risks, seek alternative solutions, and try new styles of play and learning.
- Sixth, games give copious feedback and they assess all along the way to ensure that the player is always well prepared for what comes next.
- Eighth, they ensure that at each new level, players face new problems that challenge the routine mastery they have developed through lots of practice on the last level (this has been called "the cycle of expertise").
- Ninth, they use narrative in two ways to create engagement. They often have stories that make clear why the players are doing what they are doing and what it means. And they allow players to create their own stories through the consequential choices they have made in the course of game play.
- Eleventh, they deal with transfer as "preparation for future learning." You can see how well players have learned by seeing how well they do in similar later and harder games or problems in life. ("Games and Learning")

These are concepts I tried to incorporate in this game course, ordering the levels of the game, treating course

materials more as tools than as readings, letting everything be redone to pass a level, giving regular feedback, increasing the complexity at each level, having a narrative for the game structure and bosses to defeat along the way, and focusing on feedback and lessons as things for future use in the semester. Gee focused on video games as his model, but of course some aspects are transferable to our slower classroom spaces. These are principles to consider for course design, and what they attempt to do is shape a space of particular possibilities. The trick is to translate these principles into specific rules or procedures for the class. For example, lowering the cost of failure can be made into a rule of sorts by allowing rewrites. I attempted to increase risk-taking in papers by giving points simply for proposals of independent projects not on the syllabus, and by making them almost necessary to earn an A in the class.

Put another way, when designing a course or syllabus, teachers often ask what learning objectives they have, what readings they want to use, what lessons and topics they should cover, and how grades will be determined. They also ask about what the attendance, classroom courtesy, late paper, academic integrity, and various other policies ought to be. Game design thinking can re-orient these questions to concerns like how to create particular types of experiences, what is the desirable range of possible actions in class, what effects particular syllabus elements are likely to have on the class, and what baseline conditions might be most productive for a class. As Sirc (2002) said, "Designing spaces, I think, is what it's all about. [. . .] The spaces of our classrooms should offer compelling environments in which to inhabit situations of writing instruction" (p. 1-2). Sirc used an architectural metaphor to talk about both the physical structure and the experiential aspects of the classroom. I believe this design angle is on the right track and can be taken to more specific

places in the creation of policies and procedures in documents like course syllabi and main lessons.

Ways of Gamifying

To use procedures for play, and to create particular experiences, I taught a class set in the fictional realm of Kairos, where students had to earn points, level up, and write a lot in order to (as a group) defeat Cicero and win the game. This involved a lot of flexibility, allowing students to work with their own due dates, choosing what activities to do and not to do, and proposing their own quests and assignments. The students went through a three-step process: first they were wary, then they accepted the new flexibility, and finally they had many questions.

"Wait, so what is due next class?"

"Now, just to make sure, when is this paper due?"

"I know you said this, but do we have to bring papers to class next time?"

That was the first two weeks of class. By about five weeks in, the student responses had shifted.

"I know, I need to turn stuff in."

"Am I going at a good pace for keeping up?"

"So can I really propose my own assignment?"

One student, two weeks into class, asked again if anything was due the next day, or if we had due dates at all. I explained again that they had the whole semester and that no particular writing was due the next day or any day. He said that's what he thought, but it was just hard to adjust after twelve years of prescribed activities and dates. The procedures set in place related to these questions created discomfort for a while, but also pushed many students to feeling more control over their work and pace in the class.

The notion of personal responsibility has been somewhat skewed by political discussions that sometimes abuse the term, but individual responsibility was one of the main factors that pushed me to try a game-based class. I don't

want to be one of those teachers who grumps and grumbles about students, most of whom are trying pretty hard. However, I consistently heard questions along two common lines: one about how to get an A, often connected to a question of how did I *lose* points on this paper, and the second about what was due in class the next day. So, much of the personal motivation for trying a game course was to create a situation where students would be personally responsible for when they turned things in, and where they would systemically earn points, with nearly no sense of losing points.

At the same time, I was aware of some of the ideas about gamification related to assessment and motivation—with competitive elements, various tokens of achievement, and a sense of play all as important factors. The continual immediate feedback that comes with many video games was a consideration as well, with the goal of creating an experiential loop that reflected the video game process in which a player turns a car left, instantly crashes, and immediately registers not to turn left there. So I wanted a course that would have lots of writing, to be done at the student's own pace (as much as feasible), with brief bursts of immediate feedback as best I could do in a writing course. I will note that this class had twenty-three students and was my only section of this particular course that semester. One tension in the course was between playfulness as non-goal oriented and other game elements emphasizing goals like the successful completion of a project or level. Koster (2014) noted that some theorists say "play is non-goal-oriented and games tend to have goals," but he put play and games together as experiences based on "practice" and "recognizing a particular sort of pattern" (p. 36). Playing can be part of a goal-oriented process.

In attempting to avoid the "bullshit" Bogost discusses, I attempted to make the setting and narrative of the game relevant to the class, but it was still an overlay for the most part. In *Video Games and Learning: Teaching and Participatory Culture in the Digital Age*, Squire (2011) pointed

out that "good games find 'the game in the content'" (p. 19). This is an essential distinction between trying to force playfulness or gaming on something and using the ideas of games to approach ideas in a new way. Games and education that are meaningfully content-driven are still evolving, and even as games are becoming a familiar part of pedagogical conversations, much remains unexplored. Rules and procedures are not arbitrary, nor are the characters, activities, or stories for the game. The class content should drive the procedures and rules for the game, and in the same way, rules can help re-create experiences of the content. For example, specific writing situations can be used not just to determine the audience or tone of papers, but to create experienced scenarios and interactions in the classroom, where the constraints and choices can mimic a version of the scenario.

At a wider scope, rules can make classes work in a more linear or exploratory manner. In "A Pedagogy of Play: Integrating Computer Games into the Writing Classroom," Shultz Colby and Colby (2013) explained,

> In a classroom based on a pedagogy of progression, one assignment or reading leads to the next with little variety or exploration. [. . .] With an emergent pedagogy, teachers introduce writing principles and strategies in order to open up a studio-like space for students to work through those strategies on their own. When gameplay such as *WoW* is added to an emergent pedagogy, students discover exigencies within the gamespace that need to be addressed through playing the game. (p. 305)

Even in games, a linear progression versus an environment to explore creates very different experiences, and which experience to emphasize is an important early question for someone designing the rules for a course. The *Kairos* course sought to create more emergence with options for different assignments, varied pacing, varied orders to complete levels, and the creation of alternative assignments, but simply by

having levels with sequential numbers (1-7) worked to create more of a progression focus, potentially limiting exploration (see Appendix B for course schedule and details on levels).

With another case, the rules around grades are vital for designing the experience. In "Crossing Battle Lines: Teaching Multimodal Literacies AAThrough Alternate Reality Games," the co-authors presented an alternate reality game as a class, but they did not assign grades for it, noting that trying to combine games with traditional grading expectations resulted in the loss of some of the cooperation encouraged in alternate reality and games that did not feel like games (Nelson, et al., 2013). In my context, no grades was not an option, as is the case for many, but the intent was to make it a cooperative situation, particularly through the rule of making a game win something that would benefit the whole group.

The introduction to the game manual for my *Kairos* course states,

> Your quest is to save the city of Kairos. You can play a variety of roles in trying to do so. The situation is that a neighboring imperial power thinks you can't rule yourself, and you have to convince their ambassador, Cicero, who is your de facto president, that you can take care of your own city-state together. You are all fairly young members of the city-state, but your communities think you have the potential to make up the ruling senate. 80 percent of you must reach at least 80 points to take control of the city again. If this happens, the class wins the game, if not, the game beats the class, and Cicero has everyone imprisoned, so support your fellow citizens.
>
> Cicero believes strongly in language as a way to show thoughtfulness and wisdom, so take this journey to the capitol building as a chance to hone the skills you will need to win him over. This journey of writing will require self-reflection and thought about

> ideal structures and institutions for working with others. (Newcomb, 2013)

The scoring system for this class used seven levels, each with two minor, one medium, and one large assignment or activity. Those assignments were all established beforehand, so students could choose activities and work at their own pace, and each level had a boss figure to work with or against in the narrative of the class game. Point values were associated with each assignment size: 1 for each minor, 4 for a medium, 10 for a major. Students could do what they wanted, but if a student completed all minor and medium assignments and four majors (in keeping with requirements of our composition program) that student would earn 82 points and a B-. A person could also propose bonus missions (writing), and could get bonus points or deductions on each activity too. For example, a major paper that is a Rogerian style argument (making the case to the "boss" for that level) required students to address how the audience and their views were treated, so points could go up and down for that. Students could also earn a bonus point or deduction based on clarity and sentence-level execution. I am focusing on technical details for the class here, but those details are precisely the point. Thinking in terms of what the procedures should be for class and for how they create environments, behaviors, and experiences is the value of game design thinking for a document like a syllabus. Ultimately, students used my game manual, not my syllabus.

In the class there were no due dates, but instead a pace at which I worked through the class, going about two weeks per level or unit. Also, I tried to treat the class sessions more like a series of workshops on important writing topics that students would apply to a variety of assignments. That decision to conduct writing workshops was both a result of the rule that allowed students to work at varied paces and was also the basis for experiential elements of the class, including an intentional sense of greater differences between one class session and the next.

Kairos also includes a map, badges for each level and each major assignment completed, and support early on for students who need to learn how to manage their time in a class without hard due dates (see Appendix C for level overview and planning sheet). As another important procedural element, all assignments were set up to be submitted online through personal pages on a class wiki, with short but immediate responses from me to each piece of writing. The submission technology and procedure allowed students to turn in work almost any time from almost any place, emphasizing flexibility and personal responsibility. Finally, the competition is about winning control of Kairos. If eighty percent of students get eighty or more points, they win as a group. I cannot share scores, since those are tied to grades ultimately, but I have the Aristotle prize for the top scorer and Senator prizes for the next three, which the winners could allow me to share on their wiki space and mention in class. I discuss some of the results and conclusions from the course below, but for the moment, this is a picture of some of the rules set in place to establish different behaviors in the class. The cooperative goal of eighty percent of the students reaching the eighty-point mark turned out to be of little significance in the class until the end of the term, when it became more of a motivating factor for students. Nonetheless, the cooperative goal is an example of a rule I can change in the future to change the game experience for students. Ultimately, the rule turned out to be an example of a game concept forced into a classroom situation that did not add significant procedural value to the class. While Bogost warned against rules of this sort, the eventual effects of some rules can be hard to determine without actually implementing them in the classroom.

Adjusting Rules and Course Design

To further this discussion of game design in relation to rules, Robison (2008), in "The Design is the Game" argued that

game designers and composition instructors do the same sort of thing. Regarding game designers she says,

> In a post-secondary writing course, for example, we might decide that the goal of the course is to give students practice with writing for an academic audience. That is the "global statement." The "stories," then, are the series of articulated experiences we want students to have while coming to learn how to communicate to an academic audience. Once the global statement and stories are spelled out, we can use those as "bookends" to build a series of writing and reading assignments. (p. 362)

Of course, having goals for a course is standard operating procedure, and often the main assignments work towards those goals, but sometimes in the middle stage, she mentioned, the "stories" are left out. The course design is a place for creating experiences, and thinking in that experiential way is where design comes in, and the rules and procedures for a class are the details that set the experience in important ways. As Bogost (2007) pointed out, some games, through the procedures they have us go through repeatedly, with particular types of feedback, influence us to start thinking or acting in a new way.

One new behavior for many students in the *Kairos* game class was a slightly different writing process. I did not push many of them as far as I usually push students to revise some documents; however, they did receive extensive immediate feedback to use when writing new documents, making it more of a long term constant revision of writing strategies. There was lots of quick feedback, but that kept me on our wiki (where they submitted work) constantly writing back to them. The wiki technology was incredibly valuable in making it easy for them to submit their work, collect their work, or collect badges for completed tasks. The writing process then compelled students to apply strategies, ideas, and feedback concerning one activity to subsequent activities.

Ultimately the freedom established by the class rules may have been a bit much for some students. I had to start implementing strict due dates for a few students to give them a chance to pass the class, and a couple did not. However, others thrived and by the end were coming up with their own writing projects for class credit. In the future, I might make students fully complete a level before moving to the next, which would reduce their freedom a bit, but focus them on completing something without feeling like they can just wait and do things later.

With the game rules as a design experiment of sorts, I would make other changes to the experience. One main change I would make would be to integrate the activities in each level more completely. The minor and mid-level activities tended to be forms of practice or work on skills I wanted the students to have, but I would make them lead much more directly into the larger paper for each section. In this sense, rather than working on a skill they need to apply in the larger paper, which did have the advantage of letting me talk with them about transfer constantly, I would have the smaller activities really be part of the larger paper in some way, and I would tie each activity more directly to the narrative of overcoming a "boss" figure for the relevant level.

As part of assessing their in-class game, the *Crossing Battle Lines* game group (Nelson, et al., 2014) wrote up a few general changes they would make after their own game design experiment:

1. crafting a high-quality narrative that includes a satisfactory ending for the students, however difficult this might be even for professional game designers;
2. designing each level based around a rhetorical or research goal in the hopes that students would give more attention to those goals than they did in our experiment;
3. allowing more time for game completion so that students would have more time to revise their work,

> create high-quality arguments in each level, and improve their already excellent collaboration and digital literacy skills.

The Crossing Battle Lines general principles can be used to develop specific rules and can serve as reflective questions to ask about other game courses. The *Kairos* course worked better at the second point, designing levels around rhetorical goals, than it did around the first goal, creating a good narrative with a strong ending.

This brief discussion of possible changes is again an effort to think about a course and key documents like a syllabus as a set of instructions for creating experiences and encouraging particular types of practices. In this sense the syllabus should be thought of less as a contract, which has rules to break or not with agreements by multiple parties, and more like a game or other designed experience. The syllabus is not just a set of readings and assignments due, but can be a set of procedures that move participants toward particular behaviors or understandings. When a syllabus has a rule about late papers, it is ultimately teaching procedurally about timeliness. This is all well and good, but the impact of that, or any rule, on the experience of the class as a whole should be considered, and rules that tie more directly to the content can be developed. The value of gamification here is not in some automatic motivational or fun advantage it gives but is in providing an example for thinking about the use of rules for designing learning experiences.

Reworking Rules

Ultimately, the decision to keep the game document separate from, but partially consistent with the syllabus, worked out since the game manual was viewed by the students as procedures to work with and adapt from, not just as rules to follow or items to complete. The Kairos course experience received a lot of positive feedback from students, and they all liked knowing exactly how they were doing in terms of points

throughout the semester. They generally valued the flexibility of no strict due dates, and it made the class feel like a series of writing workshops with brief individual tutoring and feedback for each participant. A couple students expressed appreciation for the class's gaming elements but noted the class fell short of an actual game experience. Also, I was unsure about the value of all the badges I was putting on student wiki spaces, but once I started seeing students carefully rearranging them in more appealing ways, and even had one student ask about a badge she thought she should have received, I would credit the badges with some motivational value.

Many liked the sense of greater control and choice over the class experience. Some talked about how it helped motivation and interest—simply because they could earn points in a game sense, but others noted it might be good to include a due date track option because the degree of freedom was too much for some first-year college students. One student referred to her learning disability in noting that the work-at-your-own-pace aspect was particularly helpful for her. She still admitted procrastinating at times but felt like she could process things at her pace, and then create many of the assignments closer to the end of class.

One problem turned out to be the degree of playfulness the game concept inspired in some students even when assignments required a serious response. A sense of play was an explicit goal for the course, but for some assignments I hoped for play as experimentation more than play as silly scenarios some students created. Here, thinking about the course as a set of designed rules allows me to put other rules in place to encourage more seriousness if necessary. As important as play can be to a writing course, the rules can push for some types of play experiences over others.

The larger picture is the integration of the course's narrative with the rules, procedures, and activities. In a critique famous in video game circles, Hocking (2016) described the "ludonarrative dissonance" he found in the game *Bioshock.* The

dissonance is between "what it is about as a game, and what it is about as a story." A course can be thought of in these terms. What is the story a course is trying to tell, even about writing or critical thinking? How do the procedures and rules support or contradict that narrative? A class where creativity is a big part of the narrative but treated negatively through the assignments and procedures would have that ludonarrative dissonance. Ultimately, the class narrative and rules helped overcome the difficulty I encountered in trying to get students to adjust to the level of personal responsibility the course required. In the future, I would even set some deadlines along the way, based not only on my experience with the course but also on my colleague's experience who conducted a course similar to mine. Too many moments were forced, and the workload was significant. In response to these observations, I will take some of the rules and procedures from this class and use them as I design future syllabi, and I will take the thought processes of trying to design the game experience and start applying that to future course design. The approach to course design and the possibilities created by some of the rules of the game are the material worth keeping.

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Appendix A: Game Manual Excerpt

K: ai+r'.o;s."

Game Manual

Scenario:
Your quest is to save the city of Kairos. You can play a variety of roles in trying to do so. The situation is that a neighboring imperial power thinks you can't rule yourself, and you have to convince their ambassador, Cicero, who is your de facto president, that you can take care of your own city-state together. You are all fairly young members of the city-state, but your communities think you have the potential to make up the ruling senate. 80 percent of you must reach at least 80 points to take control of the city again. If this happens, the class wins the game, if not, the game beats the class, and Cicero has everyone imprisoned, so support your fellow citizens.

Cicero believes strongly in language as a way to show thoughtfulness and wisdom, so take this journey to the capitol building as a chance to hone the skills you will need to win him over. This journey of writing will require self-reflection and thought about ideal structures and institutions for working with others.

Game Objectives:
To earn as many as points as possible individually and as a group to take control of Kairos by having at least 80% of the participants score at least 80 points.

Roles:
These role options can guide the type of writing and your topics to some degree. We can use people in each of the roles, and they will serve as a sort of identity for you and your web/portfolio page for the term.

Scientist—Should focus on experimental data and numeracy,

and can aid others with these areas.
Intellectual—Broadly looks at philosophical and cultural issues, with specific details of course.
Civic leader—Directly emphasizes policy issues at various levels of public life.
Businessperson—Focuses on genres that will apply to marketing, planning, and other business work.
Artist—Emphasizes creativity, innovation, and artistic topics.
Educator—Works on issues of clarity and exemplification in helping others learn from written material.

Resources Required: (texts)

Assorted Blackboard articles
Bullock, Richard. *The Norton Field Guide to Writing* 3rd ed. New York: WW Norton & Company, 2013. Print.
Composition Program Handbook 2013-14. Ed. Rachel Rigolino and Joann Deiudicibus. SUNY New Paltz. Web.
Game instructions with map/scorecard (bring to class every day)
New Voices, New Visions 2013. SUNY New Paltz. (Aug. 2013). Web.
The Purdue OWL. Purdue U Writing Lab, 2013. Web.

Tools for game:

1. Sentence Types
2. Parts of a Sentence
3. Parts of Speech
4. Figures of Speech
5. Rhetorical Devices

Game Web Site—you will create your own page on our wiki site and all your main writing and information will go there.

Levels:

There are seven levels in the game. Everyone starts at level one and can work his or her way up. The levels are as follows, with main game/class objectives for each listed, along with the player's title at each level in bold:

1. Writer level—know thyself (objectives 2, 4, 5) **Citizen**
2. Audience level—know and adapt to others (objectives 1, 4, 6) **Apprentice**
3. Mode level—understand and use various types of writing for different purposes (objectives 1, 3, 9) **Canvasser** (rallies support a person at a time)
4. Genre level—grasp detailed, recurring social situations and adjust to the expectations for multiple genres (objectives 1, 2, 3 , 6) **Campaign Leader**
5. Information level—show good judgment in finding and using information to make your case (objectives 7, 8, 10) **Investigator**
6. Situation level—put all your skills together to respond thoughtfully to difficult writing scenarios (objectives 1-10 potentially) **Rhetor**
7. Innovation/Reflection level—know yourself again as you have changed, and use that knowledge to create your own approaches to solving writing problems. (objectives 4, 5, 6) **Senator**

*Turn in pieces one at a time or all writing from a level once you complete the level. We will work at a pace of about two weeks (or four class days) per level, but you may move faster if you wish (or slower if you must). The pace of play and writing is *your responsibility.*

Scoring:

Minor writing tasks are worth 1, mid-level problems are worth 4, and major projects are worth 10. You can get a bonus or reduction for overall quality and, for mid and major projects, a possible bonus or reduction for work on specific task or goal of that assignment/task.

Do 4 of 7 major (40), 7 middle (28) and 14 minor (14) tasks for the main points=82. Adequately completing all the work earns you a B-grade. However, you may choose to skip work and miss those points. As game-director, I will also be free to give bonus points to increase and reductions to decrease scores based on the quality of the work. That includes up to two points up or down for overall quality and up to two points up or down for a specific characteristic we are working on for that activity.

Additional bonus points may be awarded for different achievements during our regular meeting sessions. You may do additional major activities (the other 3) for 4 points each (same as a middle level activity), making your total possible 94 points if you did every activity at an acceptable level.

You will receive written feedback on each level, and hopefully a fair amount of verbal feedback throughout the term. Use your fellow citizens as resources as well. (Note: you must do **at least 4 of the major tasks** to be eligible to pass the class).

There will be a **reduction** of 1 point for every day missed, 2 points for every day over three missed, and 3 points for every day over six missed. Three days late equals one day missed. Adjustments will be made for special medical cases and family emergencies.

Players earn badges for major tasks, each with a short description of what finishing that task means. 16 base points are available at each level. Players level up as they turn in at least three activities for a level and have those approved. You may complete as much or little work as you wish, and may go faster or slower than our two-weeks-per-level pace in our meetings, but **you are responsible for completing enough work to succeed in the game**.

Bonus: Any time up to a week before our last regular meeting, **any player or group may propose a bonus quest** or task. One extra point may be awarded simply for the proposal—which should be

detailed, specific, relevant, and convincing. Additional points may be awarded for completion of the task, based on the agreement with the game-director. Any proposal may be rejected or negotiated.

Players may redo any mid or major activity (with a few exceptions, like the oral presentation and the mid-term) or go back to work on a previous level at any time. However redoing an activity is just that—doing a completely new one, not just making a few changes to the first version. Each major paper turned in should have a rough draft that a peer read and gave feedback on (or it will not be accepted).

Rewards:
-Markers noting each level a player has earned.
-Badges for each major task successfully completed (earning the baseline 10 points or more for the major projects).
-Aristotle Prize for the highest point total by an individual at the end of the game.
-Senator Prizes for the next three highest scores by individuals at the end of the game.
-Possible special achievement badges for particular tasks done well, based on a player's role.

Appendix B: Class Schedule and Levels

Schedule of work and readings: (Game starts week 2 at level 1 and 0 points for all players.)

Beginning
M 8/26 – no reading due
Introductions, diagnostic (based on common summer reading), introduce game approach to class with brief look at syllabus.

Th 8/29 – read *NFG* Part 1, ch. 1-6

Free write, thorough explanation of syllabus, use of wiki with instructions, and how the game works, rhetorical situation discussion based on *NFG*. Rhetorical triangle. Email to get into closed class.

Level 1 – Writer: (Convince the Mentor to let you move on)

1. Home – reflect on your personal beliefs and values (and where they came from), then continue to write about your thoughts on your writing skills now, literacy, process, who are you as a writer, and connect the personal values to your writing. (Mid-4; presentation of voice as a writer)
2. Create a character profile for the game for you, with name, etc. (on class web space – this is where you can put badges, level info, tips for others, anything you want, but none of own info is required) (Minor-1)
3. Describe home and college, then write about leaving home, the purpose of education, and coming to college (Minor-1)
4. Fellow travelers – who and what are important influences, texts, value systems, institutions, and why? Include reference to and some analysis of two relevant sources? (Major-10; specific to general and personal to cultural)

M 9/2 – **Labor Day, no classes**

Th 9/5 – read *NFG ch. 9 and 22-25*
Writing Process Seminar; start L1-2; intro L1 writing activities

M 9/9 – read *NFG ch. 16*
Free Writing Workshop; Discuss genre and profiles; start L1-3

Th 9/12 - read *NFG ch. 7*
Invention Workshop; discuss reading; work on L1-1

Level 2 – Audience (Improve relations with the Scoffer to move forward)

1. Audience analysis for major paper 1 (item 4 in this section) *see Linda Flower (Minor-1)

2. Write a social media post – or series of them – on a social media site, twitter, facebook (can do group page), tumblr, etc. – that works for a variety of audiences or multiple audiences; then also write the same thing for a family member, then again for a professor in a class – (Minor-1)
3. Problem of getting followers on a blog or on twitter. Attracting attention and style, while not losing it with manipulation in your tactics – trying to be sustainable here. (Mid-4; ethical attention grabbing) *see Richard Lanham
4. Use Rogerian argument to write to an audience *who completely opposes you* about a small, but controversial topic relevant to what Kairos should be like (could fit with real world or be fantastical), with at least two sources (Major – 10; kind and effective treatment of opposing viewpoint)

M 9/16 - read *NFG ch. 26-29*
Introduce portfolio; Sentence Workshop; Intro Sedaris Forensics activity for extra points

Th 9/19 – read Linda Flower handout (Blackboard)
Audience Workshop; L2-2

M 9/23 - read *NFG ch. 10*
Rogerian Argument workshop; other forms/types of argument; work on L2-4 and/or L2-1

Th 9/26 - read *NFG ch. 32-33*
Ethos/Pathos/Logos; Logical Argument Workshop

Level 3 – Mode (Pass the Philosopher's test of purposes to advance)

1. Make an argument three times using various voices, styles, and sentence structures in very grammatically correct ways—perhaps to do propose a plan, law, policy, etc. for the city-state. The problem is that you need to give purpose to the town, and you can base it on your role. Must show that you are flexible and technically proficient (tie to key skills for future). (Minor-1)

2. Tell an expressive or creative story that argues a point, and legitimately have some fun doing it. The problem is to entertain others and keep self-motivated to work. (Minor-1)
3. Educational and entertaining video – with script, put on your site. Keep it short. Check out options for editing software. (Mid-4; well-organized and clear transitions)
4. Expand one of the three earlier activities listed in this section to a longer, single work. It should include at least three modes out of narrative, argument, analysis, description, definition, and exposition. (Major-10; clarity of purposes)

M 9/30 - read *NFG ch. 41*
Define Modes; Close Reading Practice (academic sample text); Creating a Constitution Workshop

Th 10/3 - read *NFG ch. 30-31*
Introductions Workshop; Thesis Workshop; L3-1

M 10/7 - read *NFG ch. 34-35*
Discuss reading; use categories or compare/contrast for L3-2; Bad News Workshop; catch up on activities/work/rd workshops

Th 10/10 - read *NFG ch. 36-37*, *Bring your own interesting book to class*
Practice defining and describing; work on L3 activities; Read/Think/Write session

Level 4 – Genre (Get the Investor to take interest in you and fund you forward)

1. Write a grant proposal for something to help you with town (based on an actual funder that you find and sample proposals we explore) If time allows, we will put together a panel to review these and choose recipients (with bonus points involved). (Major-10; fits the genre expectations)

2. Write a response to article or blog that is big in the public arena – and make it fitting, but fairly long and serious for one of these. Link to it on your page. (Minor-1)
3. Design a visual argument – under 100 words allowed, to get someone to say "that's cool," "what was that?" or "I wish I'd done/thought of that" (we will do a pop-up gallery or get library or other space to display our visual arguments if possible). It should be for some issue or aspect of our city-state you want to promote; think in terms of a public-service announcement (PSA). (Minor-1)
4. Write a short profile of an important figure who could be a basis for something of value in Kairos. (Mid-4; clarity of prose) **Mid-term assignment—written in class.**

M 10/14 – **Columbus Day, no classes**

Th 10/17 - read *NFG ch. 52-55*
L4-3

M 10/21 – **Midterm,** read *NFG ch. 17*
Discuss L4-1; Midterm (L4-4) in class

Th 10/24 - read *NFG ch. 20-21*
Conclusions Workshop; Discuss reading; work on projects with teacher consultations

Level 5 – Information (Befuddle the Librarian with your accuracy and breadth of knowledge)

1. Get a Wikipedia article published. Or do a major update (print before and after – or one of their tasks listed). You may find and choose another, similar site that serves as a sort of online encyclopedia about something of interest to you. Multiple sources will be required. (Major-10; synthesis of sources)
2. Library assignment—Annotated Bibliography to go with our library session. Includes how you found sources and a brief synthesis. (Mid-4; quality of sources)

3. Citation activity, creating in-text citation and works cited for four different items (book, scholarly article, popular magazine article, web site), then adapt one to APA and to Chicago. (Minor-1)
4. Find two informative web sites and do a comparative critique of their strengths, weaknesses, biases, likely accuracy, and any other issues relevant to them as information sources. State what you would and would not use each for. (Minor-1)

M 10/28 - read *NFG ch. 43-45*
L5-4; Introduce Wikipedia assignment and develop research plan for it or other project

Th 10/31 - read *NFG ch. 46-50*
MLA Workshop; L5-3

M 11/4 – **Library Day,** read *NFG ch. 11-12*
Start L5-2

Th 11/7 - read *NFG ch. 13*
Ask re: future workshops; Evidence Nag Day; Body of Evidence Workshop

Level 6 – Situations (Persuade the Hegemon to accept your ideas)

1. Group project with a proposal for ideal public arena, ideal college education system, or philosophy statement/constitution with commentary and evidence (like constitution with explanatory commentary as long as the document itself). Research into examples and cited evidence is required. These will all receive up/down votes by the class as a whole if time allows (Major-10; high level of details and examples)
2. You have to give positive and critical comments that are quite honest to two classmates each day of speeches. Do this as effectively as possible. (Minor-1)

3. Do your own Ted X talk – following their policies, but keep it 3-5 minutes. Topic could be something of importance to our city-state. (Mid-4; engaging delivery) **Speech—required.**
4. You want to get a meeting with the notoriously tough-to-reach Cicero. Write a creative email/letter to succeed at that task (Minor-1)

M 11/11 - read *NFG ch. 56*
Great Speeches Structure Workshop; discuss readings; practice speaking; cover speech requirements

Th 11/14 – no reading due
Set up L6-1; Group proposals activity to distribute X bonus points based on something writing-related. Make case in writing, then present, then we vote/decide.

M 11/18 - read *NFG ch. 40*
Develop narrative for part of your speech; draft workshops/project work; individual instructor consultations

Th 11/21 – **speeches**, no reading due
L6-2; L6-3

Level 7 – Innovation and Reflection (Overcome your Rival Twin, to show real difference and change)

1. Finish with return home and reflection on where you have been in writing for the class (do for portfolio cover letter) (Minor-1 – **required for portfolio**)
2. Create your own multi-genre piece that deals with a problem we come up with as a class, or re-do significant materials for this game to make it better. (Mid-4; innovation)
3. Do a radical revision of one of your earlier large projects. It must include a cover letter explaining your changes and the reasons for them. The changes should include a new format, stance, audience, or other fundamental difference. (Major-10; degree of change—while on the same issue)

4. Complete your portfolio (Minor-1 **required—choose two major papers, one with sources, diagnostic, midterm, and final**)

M 11/25 – **speeches**, no reading due
L6-2; L6-3

Th 11/28 – **Thanksgiving, no classes**

M 12/2 – Purdue OWL exploration for reading
Transfer Workshop; Using Purdue OWL in the future; L7-1; Create a Writing Game/Revise this class game/Multi-genre work/L7-2

Th 12/5 – reading TBD; *bring all written papers and portfolio materials to class*
L7-4; Curse of Knowledge; Writing Formulas; work time

M 12/9 – reading TBD; *Turn in complete portfolio*
Prep for Final; All assignments/levels due today; last questions and topics

Final
Th 12/12 – **Common Final Exam, 8:30 am –**
Announce Game results for class and individual awards

Make an argument to the game-director about what did and did not work with the game, what should be kept, and what should be changed. Keep it focused on one or a few most important items. Include specific problems and game parts that worked, rather than just trying to be general and nice. (Pass/Fail, Base points for this is 0, but can earn from -3 up to +3 based on the work).

Appendix C: Level Summary and Planning Table

Levels:
There are seven levels in the game. Everyone starts at level one and can work his or her way up. The levels are as follows, with main game/class objectives for each listed, along with the player's title at each level:

Level	Description	Course Objectives	Player Title
1	Writer *know thyself*	2, 4, 5	Citizen
2	Audience *know and adapt to others*	1, 4, 6	Apprentice
3	Mode *understand and use various types of writing for different purposes*	1, 3, 9	Canvasser
4	Genre *grasp detailed, recurring social situations and adjust to the expectations for multiple genres*	1, 2, 3, 6	Campaign Leader
5	Information *show good judgment in finding and using information to make your case*	7, 8, 10	Investigator
6	Situation *put all your skills together to respond thoughtfully to difficult writing scenarios*	1-10	Rhetor
7	Innovation & Reflection *know yourself again as you have changed, and use that knowledge to create your own approaches to solving writing problems*	4, 5, 6	Senator

*Turn in pieces one at a time or all writing from a level once you complete the level. We will work at a pace of about two weeks (or four class days) per level, but you may move faster if you wish (or slower if you must). The pace of play and writing is *your responsibility.*

Scoring:

Type of Writing Task	Base Points Per Task	Number of Possible Tasks
Minor	1	14
Mid	4	7
Major	10	7

Learning Alongside Them: About Student Choice and Modern-Day Slavery

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Abstract
When students are given opportunities to study meaningful social issues of their choosing, they become empowered agents of change within and beyond the classroom. In this article, a tenth-grade teacher explores what happens when her students vote to study modern-day slavery. Students decided collectively to culminate this study by educating families, district staff and officials, and community members at a student-organized event with multimedia presentations. Through this project-based learning unit, students developed agency and ownership, and experienced increased engagement as they worked with authentic audiences in multiple genres.

Learning Alongside Them

One October morning two weeks into our study of modern slavery, I asked students to use a Silent Journal Pass protocol to respond to "The Price of Nice Nails," an investigative report by *New York Times* reporter Sarah Maslin Nir (2015). Nir found that nail salons regularly underpay and abuse workers in an industry that generates huge profits for business owners; new employees are often charged for their training and tools, and then work without being fairly paid for an extended apprenticeship period of weeks or even months.

> Lawsuits filed in New York courts allege a long list of abuses: the salon in East Northport, N.Y., where workers said they were paid just $1.50 an hour during a 66-hour workweek; the Harlem salon that manicurists said charged them for drinking the water, yet on slow days paid them nothing at all; the minichain of Long Island salons whose workers

> said they were not only underpaid but also kicked as they sat on pedicure stools, and verbally abused (Nir, 2015).

Many of the women who work in these salons speak little English, and their widespread status as undocumented workers leaves them powerless to report labor rule violations.

I expected students to be shocked by what they read, especially because lots of my female students get their nails done regularly, and we live only an hour north of New York City, where much of the investigation took place. Asking them to first write silently in order to process their reading seemed like a way to ensure that they would consider the content of the article on both an emotional and an intellectual level. However, as my first period class completed the statement projected on the board, "What stood out to me about this article was…," I heard whispers throughout the room. "Remember, this is a SILENT journal pass. We will have time for a discussion afterwards."

"But wait, Miss," Alejandro spoke from the fourth row. "This isn't about slavery. Why are we reading this?"

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Two weeks earlier, when the students in my two sections of tenth grade English at Excelsior Academy had voted to study modern slavery as a cohort, I hadn't been sure where to start. The documentaries that I researched about slavery seemed too intense to use as an entry point, and most articles were either too vague to be impactful, or too laser-focused on one of slavery's many forms, when I wanted more of an overview of the issue. Stumbling upon Lisa Kristine's TED Talk, "Photos That Bear Witness to Modern Slavery" (2012), I found that it offered important basic information, while provoking the emotional impact that I thought would hook my students. We would watch the talk, and then come up with our own working definition of slavery.

The talk begins with the fact that as of 2012, there were at least 27 million people enslaved around the world. Kristine shares that "today, entire families can be enslaved for generations over a debt as small as $18. Astonishingly, slavery generates profits of more than $13 billion worldwide each year." She shows an image of an entire family whose hands were permanently colored red and blue from the toxic dye they were forced to handle as forced laborers in the textile industry. She shares the story of an eight-year-old boy who was trafficked into the Ghanaian fishing industry, where he handles one thousand-pound nets full of fish and lives in constant fear of drowning. He passes down the abusive behavior he has learned from his master. None of my students spoke as the talk played, and the room stayed silent when it ended.

During that brief second after the video ended, but before I switched on the lights, I asked students to jot down any initial thoughts they wanted to remember. This gave me a minute to compose myself because viewing Kristine's photos had left me feeling a bit breathless myself.

"So, based on what you saw, what is slavery? What are its characteristics? Write down a couple of ideas that seem important, and then we'll share out loud."

After a long pause, I could sense from the way they were shifting in their seats and looking around that my students were ready to share their observations. I pulled up our Google slideshow so I could take notes as students spoke.

"I think slavery is when a person is denied their basic rights," Kayla called out.

"Ok, good start. What kinds of rights are we talking about?"

"Maybe the right to work a job that pays enough money to live?"

Vincent jumped in. "It seems like slaves are always forced into some type of labor, whether it's making bricks or having sex." I was glad to see that no one laughed when he

used that word, since talking about prostitution in class was new territory for me as a teacher.

As I added that to our slide, I wondered out loud if anyone wanted to add anything. "Remember, this is a working definition, so we can change it as we learn."

"The people in the pictures all look really demoralized. Like, why would they stay if they thought they could do better?" asked Jason.

"Thanks for adding that. If everyone feels comfortable with this set of characteristics, let's all write this down so we have it in our notebooks." The idea of creating a class definition that we could reassess as we went felt right to me. My students and I were collaborating in the truest sense.

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Two weeks later, I didn't have an easy answer to Alejandro's question about the nail salon workers. I had wondered how our definition of slavery would evolve over the course of our study but had not anticipated that students would so quickly find their way into the gray areas surrounding this issue.

"Ok, fair question. Let's go back to our definition of slavery that we wrote. We said that slavery is when a human being is denied his or her basic rights without his or her consent or knowledge. We agreed that it involves someone forced into some type of labor. So, you're saying that these women aren't enslaved. Why isn't this slavery?"

"These are just people working for a low wage. My dad had to do the same thing when he came here, and now he has his restaurant." Alejandro often spoke proudly about the hard work that went into his parents opening their own business, just down the street from school.

Aboya looked at her classmate as she spoke, her eyes big and her voice accusatory. "Would you want to work a job like this? Where you got sick and barely got paid?"

Ignacio jumped in to defend his friend. "No, but that's why I'm going to go to college."

Aboya answered, "I think it is slavery, because when they agree to work at these jobs, they have a different expectation of what the job will be like. They expect to make enough money to live."

"Why don't they just leave and get better jobs? I would." Renee looked down at her long, purple nails as she spoke. "It's not like they're locked up."

The students didn't reach a consensus on whether this was slavery or not, but as the impromptu conversation continued, I felt grateful that they were so engaged in considering the question. We didn't finish the Silent Journal Pass, but I felt optimistic that our conversation was worth diverting my lesson plan.

Over the weeks that followed, we read an investigative report from the *New York Times* on sea slavery, which shocked all of us in its brutality (Urbina, 2015). We learned together about the thousands of Southeast Asian men who are trafficked onto Thai fishing boats, having been promised a well-paying job and realizing their mistake only once they were out at sea, far from cell phone service and the promise of help. These men were beaten and barely paid, just so that Thai seafood companies could fulfill the demands of their customers.

We read excerpts from *Sold* by Patricia McCormick (2006), a story chronicling the life of a young Nepalese girl who is sold into prostitution. Although the story is fictional, it closely resembles the experiences of many young women around the world, and my students were in disbelief that the protagonist's stepfather sold her into such a dire situation, and that her mother allowed it to happen. A new dynamic grew in the classroom, as I struggled alongside my students to understand the world in a new way. I felt there was something magical about experiencing all of this together, building our sense of community as we learned.

This was confirmed when more than half of my students chose to stay after school for our optional viewing of *The True Cost*, a documentary about sweatshop labor (Morgan, 2015). We learned that some of our favorite clothing brands purchase their clothing from sweatshops in Bangladesh and China, and we watched footage of the immediate aftermath of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, in which over a thousand workers were killed. After watching, we wondered together about the difference between sweatshop labor and slavery, and whether we, as consumers, were powerless to change what was happening.

The more we learned, the more we all saw how widespread corruption and greed make it difficult to end slavery. In so many of the places we studied, government officials were complicit or even guilty of oppressing the people they were supposed to protect. For example, we watched a Nicolas Kristof video about his visit to a Cambodian town where the brothel was supported by the police chief (Bracken, 2009). Even though I already knew that these kinds of things happened, the depth and breadth of our learning gave me a new understanding of how widespread slavery is. I felt frustrated at times when I thought about how little the United States seems to care about what is happening to victims, and how corporate interests overshadow the preservation of human rights. My students were often outraged by the injustice, and I wondered often why some people think teenagers are apathetic. All of our eyes were slowly opening wider, and the truth was painful.

Since I had never undertaken this kind of work with my students, I checked in frequently to see if they were still enthusiastic about the topic; there were times when I was afraid they would get bored with studying such a heavy topic for two months. I asked them to reflect on their learning and interest level frequently. By the end of October, I had collected some telling writing from them, which revealed how they were processing the subject.

Brendin had initially admitted that he was disinterested in learning about this topic, so I was eager to read his reflective writing. He seemed to have found value in the work we were doing, and he said, "I wouldn't want to be ignorant of such an important topic." However, in the same piece, he expressed a feeling of powerlessness to effect change that left me uneasy, claiming that "there is nothing that I can do about this." I didn't want my students to feel disempowered. Clearly we couldn't end slavery from our classroom in Newburgh, but couldn't we do something to address this issue? My students needed to find a way to share their newfound knowledge with families, friends and the community. That would make them feel as though they were actually using what they learned to create change.

Naisha was horrified by bonded labor, a system very similar to indentured servitude, wherein people agree to work off a debt, but are often tricked and manipulated into never-ending servitude that can even be passed down to their children. She learned that bonded laborers in countries like India are overcharged for necessities like food and a bed to sleep in, so their debt shrinks at a rate far lower than what was initially promised. Naisha wrote that "[…] nobody really wants to help" end slavery, but she also thinks that "[t]he first step is to educate people […]" She seemed to feel empowered by the knowledge that she had gathered, and she was motivated to build awareness, calling that her "first action."

Arguing About Slavery

At this point, we had moved so far away from the curriculum other tenth graders were learning in our building, that I wondered frequently about my earlier decision to let students decide what to study. I decided that students would write an academic essay before we moved forward. The year before, I had worked extensively with this same group on argument and research writing. They had learned how to use logos, ethos and pathos to enhance their work and to help them

effectively convey their personal understanding of their sources. Once we had built our collective knowledge around modern slavery, it seemed like the right time to reinforce those argument writing skills. After a quick refresher on what makes a good research question, I asked students to brainstorm research questions individually. We then compiled a class list and voted for the questions that were the most provocative. Students wondered the following: How are victims of sex trafficking recruited? What are some factors that place victims in danger of being trafficked? Are consumer boycotts of companies that use sweatshop labor a viable solution? Why or why not? Why would someone agree to enter bonded labor? What can be done to reduce modern slavery? Each student then chose one of those questions as a starting point, and I added to the rigor of the previous year's assignment by requiring students to incorporate research from *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*, one of the academic databases offered by our school library.

Through her research, Taina learned that closing sweatshops could cause more suffering for the people who work there. She wrote in her final draft,

> Child labor couldn't and shouldn't be justified in any way, but no one is forcing these individuals to take on sweatshop labor. No one is forcing the parents of these individuals to take on sweatshop labor. This can be their only source of income for the time being, so how can we take that away?

Her essay reminded me of the complexity of the issue; it was clear there were no simple answers. Gabby pointed out the ignorance of the general population, writing

> When slavery is thought of, often many think of African American plantation workers and domestic servants of the 19th century . . . Even your favorite stores and brands may have repulsive conditions and exhausted workers behind the curtains of the pretty store fronts. Our first priority as a species should be to

> see beyond the fronts and cover ups and reduce the vastness of this unheard issue.

This made me wonder again why we often leave current issues out of our ELA classrooms, when students care so much about the injustices in our world.

Now What?

As we wound down our argument writing, I started to wonder how we might go about finishing our unit. It had been so different than any other unit I had taught, and ending with a typical project or report seemed like a wasted opportunity. My students had seemed to enjoy having input into our study over the past couple of months, so I decided this could be another opportunity to get their input and honor their ideas.

That Monday, as my students pulled out their journals, I told them I needed their help:

> To be honest, I'm not sure where we should go from here. We have learned so much together, and I want you to care about whatever we do to tie together our slavery unit. If we could do anything in the world as a culminating project, what would you want to do? Maybe make a list of three or four ideas in your notebook, and then we will talk as a class.

A few minutes later, I compiled ideas on the board as we talked through some of their thinking. Several students wanted to invite a survivor of slavery to speak in an assembly, but they didn't know how to find one. Daniel and Thomas, two students who loved any opportunity to use their computer science skills, proposed coding an educational website. Elise and Kayla hoped to write and film a news report about slavery around the world that could be aired on our school television station. During my ninth period class, Nick suggested holding a Slavery Awareness Fair, where community members would visit various stations to learn about slavery in all its forms.

Although I appreciated my students' creativity and passion, I struggled deciding whether we could undertake these

projects. Was this a smart use of my too-little time with my students? Would it detract too much from writing instruction, or preparing them for their upcoming Regents exam? In order for the projects to be an authentic learning experience for the students, they needed to take ownership from start to finish. But most of their ideas involved a public audience, which made me wonder, what would happen if their projects failed? It is hard to give control of your classroom over to your students, and even though they had chosen our topic months earlier, this felt much bigger.

I met with my principal twice that week, trying to figure out what to do next. He had encouraged my work since the beginning of the year and appreciated that my students were studying such a timely and relevant topic. I knew that I needed his support if we were going to move forward with these projects, and fortunately he was impressed with the variety of ideas the students had generated. He reminded me that this was a chance to provide an authentic audience for their learning, which is something we value at Excelsior Academy. During our second lengthy conversation, I decided this was a risk worth taking. I wasn't totally convinced I was making the smartest decision but shutting down my students when they were excited would have clearly been the wrong choice.

That Friday, I presented each class with the list they had made earlier that week. I asked all fifty students to pick their top three choices of projects: event planning, looking for a survivor to speak, or creating either the website or news report. They submitted their choices to me in writing, with a rationale for why they were interested in each. I combed through their submissions carefully, using what I knew about their personalities and talents to create groups, while ensuring that everyone got at least their second choice.

Roughly twenty students signed up to plan the fair, and with my help, they quickly divided themselves into two groups: one that would work on publicity and logistics, and one that would create informational materials to distribute at the actual

event. The website group, the news report group, and the survivor outreach group each had about ten students, and I promised my classes that we would devote two days a week in class to working on this project. My social studies and computer science colleagues offered to let students work on those projects in their classes as well, and the three of us decided that the projects needed to be completed by the first week in February, which was six school weeks away.

I felt a mixture of enthusiasm and apprehension as we asked students to create group calendars, send emails and start planning their projects, but we tried to let students run things as much as possible. My colleagues and I put structures in place that we hoped would allow for accountability and reflection from each student and instituted weekly checkpoints that would allow us to give students credit for their progress. We asked project managers to keep us apprised of their group's status by preparing weekly reports with their teams, and to ask the teachers for help with their group dynamic only if they couldn't handle an issue on their own. Project-based learning is never without its challenges, and a few students in the website design group took advantage of these self-directed blocks of time, sometimes playing video games instead of working. But overall, students seemed to grasp the idea that their work was important, and they wanted the night of the fair to go well, so the majority took this opportunity seriously.

I watched the group planning the event work together to edit an email to our school's principal. I smiled as I read over Angel's shoulder:

> This fair would be a way to notify the general public about the various forms of slavery that are still happening today, worldwide . . . This is an important situation that demands everyone's attention and we would like to bring light to it. Are you available to meet on Friday during either 1st or 4th period?

Soon the date was set, and students had a tangible timeline in front of them.

The group that wanted to host a survivor of modern slavery faced some of the biggest challenges. They spent hours emailing survivors who were working as anti-slavery advocates, and who might be willing to travel to Newburgh to talk. Some didn't write back at all, and others responded that they were traveling for work and didn't have a day to come to our school. Students also realized that we didn't have a budget to pay for travel expenses, let alone a speaking honorarium. Yet their determination and perseverance were amazing, and on more than one occasion I found them working diligently after the school day had ended. Eventually, they got an email back from Evelyn Chumbow, who was unable to visit, but offered to Skype with them. Initially this seemed like another disappointment for their group, but we decided together that a recording of an interview would be a perfect artifact to show off at our Awareness Fair. Maribel and Jason researched Chumbow's life online, and wrote interview questions, and Keilah agreed to conduct the interview during the call.

Chumbow's story was heart-wrenching; her mother thought she was sending her teenage daughter from Cameroon to the United States for school. Instead, Chumbow found herself imprisoned in a house in Washington D.C., where she worked as a domestic slave, cooking and cleaning with no pay and an abusive master. Watching my students take part in this interview gave me chills, and I could tell by their faces that this interaction would stay with them for a very long time. Afterwards, the group members agreed that although their first couple of weeks had been discouraging, their work had paid off.

Two days later, they heard back from Stacy Jewell, an American woman who had been a teenage victim of sex trafficking, and she agreed to a Skype interview also. She shared that she was kidnapped after a man offered her a ride late at night, which ended by him delivering her to a pimp who threatened her and her family if she tried to escape. Jewell's childhood had been similar to the backgrounds of many of my

students, so her story hit home in a different way than Chumbow's. After that interview, the survivor group decided to share footage from both interviews. This meant that the group would have two powerful short films to screen at the event, which was, by this point, less than a week away.

Fitting the Pieces Together

The night of the event, I was nervous, but not as nervous as my students were! They rushed around, barking orders at the younger students from our school who had stayed after school to help set up the cafeteria and the nearby classrooms. Fifteen minutes before we were set to open, I looked around the cafeteria and had to choke back tears. The five country tables were ready with posters and pamphlets and staffed by the students who had researched slavery in those countries. Guests could learn about common industries that use slave labor and trafficking victims in India, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, China, and perhaps most importantly, the United States.

Two of my most outgoing students were poised by the "How Many Slaves Work for You" survey table, where ten computers were set up for people to take the survey created by Made in a Free World. The smell of coffee filled the space, and our fair trade vs. conventional coffee blind taste test table was piled high with cups and stirrers. The "Fly to Freedom" station was ready, complete with a student photographer who would document participants' pledges as to how they would help prevent slavery, and Tweet them to CNN's initiative by the same name. Down the hallway, participants could also view the recorded interviews with Stacey Jewell and Evelyn Chumbow, and the students who recorded those interviews led quick debriefs afterwards. The website and news report groups waited eagerly to show off their work.

As our principal greeted the crowd, I was grateful to see how many people had turned out for our event. Members of our central administration, including our superintendent, were

there, and got to hear firsthand from our student experts. The guest list also included representatives from local non-profits, mentors from IBM, students' families, and community members. A reporter from a local paper even showed up and was interviewing students!

A few short hours later, the cafeteria was emptied of the over two hundred attendees, and my students were smiling as they tiredly recounted conversations they had during the event. Out of the fifty students involved in planning the fair, two hadn't shown up, and I heard some grumbling from their group members. Other than that, everyone seemed tired, but proud. I was anxious to hear from them the next morning, once they had gotten some sleep and had time to think.

My hope had been that students would finish this knowing that they can create change, even if that simply means educating people in their own community. This project also embedded many of the project management skills that we strive to teach at Excelsior (planning and implementing deadlines, collaboration, etc.), and provided an opportunity for genuine student-driven leadership. I had, after all, decided to pursue this culminating event, with the support of my colleagues and principal, because I agree with Cathy Davidson's claim that "[…] kids want to learn and can propel themselves to all kinds of learning as long as there is a payoff, not in what is won or achieved in statistical terms, but what is won and achieved inside, in the sense of self-confidence and competence" (85). I had felt confident that they could achieve what seemed like a lofty undertaking, but now I needed to figure out how they interpreted the events that had taken place. When I read the reflective essays that students wrote after the event, I was struck by how overwhelmingly positive they were. While many admitted that the projects had been stressful at times, they appreciated the autonomy that they were given, and believed that they had done something positive.

During the fall, Brendin had written "[...] there's not much that I can personally do." Three days after our event, his

feeling of powerlessness had evolved into a sense of confidence and accomplishment, evident by his admission that "I saw how much work we had really done." His observation that attendees of the fair left "contemplating how they could make a difference" reinforced the idea that students were able to use their knowledge to impact their community and the world.

Naisha's satisfaction was evident in her essay. She wrote about her new perspective, that "people like to buy things for themselves and for others not knowing the true expense of the items." She recognized the challenges that were inherent in this process of collaboration, and felt proud that she and her classmates had "managed not to quit." Her observation that they "made the world just a little better" was a powerful one.

As I continued reading their reflective writing, I knew that most of these students would not only grow into more critical consumers, but also into empowered citizens who believe in the power of using knowledge to promote change, even if that means starting small.

Our Work Continues

I have been working weekly for the two months since the fair with a group of twelve students out of the original fifty; they have named themselves the Excelsior Awareness Committee. They have been staying after school once a week to plan a lesson about modern-day slavery for seventh graders in our district. I am guiding them by sharing my own expertise about what an effective lesson for middle school students might look like, but they have been making the decisions. After some debate, they decided that seventh grade students are old enough to learn about the horrors of slavery, but young enough that they might be more receptive. The members of the committee also decided that teaching students in their classrooms, as opposed to planning an assembly, would allow for more interaction and discussion around slavery. They feel

empowered to share what they have learned with younger students, and I wonder what's next for this amazing group of young people. I can't help but feel that it was worth bringing student voice and choice into my classroom.

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Navigating the NYS "Assessment Ecosystem": Assessment Use Argument for the NYCDOE ELA Performance Task

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Abstract
A NYS high school English educator's classroom is shaped by a plethora of English assessments, where the English Regents exam may feature prominently. In New York City, English teachers are also required to administer some measures of student yearly progress; the ELA NYC Performance Task is one of these assessments. This paper uses the framework of an Assessment Use Argument (Bachman & Palmer, 2010) to examine whether this exam's intended consequences align with its actual uses. Specifically, the analysis brings to light how test developers in NYS must be cognizant of how their tests fit into a classroom's assessment ecosystem.

Introduction to Assessment Use Argument Framework

As a former middle and high school English teacher in the NYC Department of Education (serving in two Brooklyn Title-I schools), I administered the ELA NYC Baseline Performance Task every year, twice a year. Because of the nature of the task (synthesizing academic texts to construct a several-page argumentative essay), this biannual benchmark assessment consumed a non-trivial amount of classroom time, student effort, and teacher scoring energy. As I administered the task throughout my years of teaching, I found myself critically examining the functions of the test and how it fit into the "assessment ecosystem" of my school. By assessment ecosystem, I refer to the complex network of classroom, city, and state assessments administered by a school to its students throughout the year, and the ways in which these assessments interact, competing for niches in school-wide usefulness across

teacher teams, individual instructional relevance for teachers, and the time and energy of students. Each year I struggled to understand how to best integrate this city assessment—a standardized, time-consuming and effort-intensive exam—into my local classroom practices in a way that would best serve my school, myself, and my students while managing the demands of other assessments in our assessment ecosystem (especially the NYS ELA Regents exam). Each year I found myself instead wondering how it made sense to take so many days away from my students' classroom instruction for this Performance Task that seemed to be primarily used to calculate my teacher ratings.

The more I thought about it, the more I felt confused about the use of the city-wide Performance Tasks within my school's assessment ecosystem, wondering how it was leading to fair and beneficial consequences that would justify the substantial amount of time and energy the assessment required from me and my students. In my position as teacher, however, I was not able to cohesively articulate why I found the test to be so undeserving of my classroom time and mental energy. It was only with my transition out of the classroom and into academia that I was able to look back at the test through the lens of the Bachman & Palmer assessment use argument framework in order to more closely examine what aspects of the exam were causing my confusion.

An "assessment use argument" (AUA) is a tool that is used, as the name implies, to defend the uses of an assessment. Bachman & Palmer (2010) created this AUA framework to help test developers determine whether an assessment's intended consequences aligned with that assessment's actual consequences. The framework provides a series of claims that logically construe a justification for the consequences of an assessment to stakeholders, providing a sequence of claims that can either be supported or refuted with evidence from the assessment itself and the processes surrounding its scoring and interpretations. As Messick (1989) argues, content, criteria, and

social consequences of a test are inseparable, and to judge whether an assessment is functioning as it ought to, one must make "an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the *adequacy* and *appropriateness* of *inferences* and *actions* based on test scores or other modes of assessment" (p. 5). Therefore, it follows that Bachman & Palmer's chain of claims begins with how the test scores are produced from the content of the test, then looks at how those scores are interpreted, leading to an examination of the decisions made based on those interpretations and finally a review of the consequences of those decisions.

In line with the recent practice of reviewing tests through an assessment use argument (Papageorgiou & Tannenbaum, 2016; Chapelle, Cotos & Lee, 2015; Jia, 2013; Pardo-Ballester, 2010; Wang, 2010; Llosa, 2008), this paper will follow an argument-based approach to examine whether the intended consequences of the ELA NYC Performance Tasks align with their actual use as I experienced it in the classroom. I analyzed the extent to which the assessment yields valid and appropriate interpretations and uses (Kane, 2006), and in the processes highlighted several gaps between the test's intended consequences and its actual consequences. The body of the paper is a synthesis of the warrants and rebuttals for each claim suggested by the framework and their supporting evidences and rebuttals, drawn from evidence collected from the NYCDOE literature, the Performance Task itself, and other relevant outside documents, as well as my own experience using the exam in the classroom.

ELA Performance Task: Measures of Student Learning (MOSL)

The Performance Tasks assessments themselves are created by the NYC Department of Education each year. As explained by the *2016-2017 Advance Overall Rating Guide*, "These tasks were developed by the NYCDOE with input from

NYC teachers, subject-matter experts, and assessment experts" (2016, p. 20). The intended use of the ELA Performance Tasks (Baseline and Final) is to measure student learning over the course of a year in order to calculate teacher performance scores as per the NYC Advance Rating system. Though schools may choose to give this exam as a formative measure only, I will be examining the assessment for how it functions as a local measure of student growth in conjunction with teacher rating scores. When necessary to draw on specific test evidence, I will be specifically examining the 10th Grade 2015-2016 End of Year ELA Performance Task, though many of the arguments apply to the 9th Grade and 12th Grade Performance Tasks, as well as the Beginning of Year Performance Tasks.

When used for high school teacher scores, this test is only administered to high school English students who are *not* taking the NYS Regents Exam (in other words, because11th grade is when students take the Regents exam, they do not complete ELA Performance Tasks). Schools' selection committees each year must determine an assessment, a target population, and growth measures that will inform part of teachers' final performance scores; the ELA Performance Tasks are one of the assessment choices. According to the *2016-2017 Advance Overall Rating Guide,* the data and materials from these performance assessments are also supposed to be used in order to shape instructional plans and assess student work throughout the year (2016, p. 14).

In the ELA Performance Task, students must write an argumentative essay responding to a provided prompt. Students must read and synthesize two texts representing differing perspectives on the topic in order to formulate their response. The task also includes two Text-Dependent Questions (TDQs), one for each text. The assessments are administered twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. Students are given 90 minutes to complete the exam, which can either be administered as one block or in two sessions, depending on the school's schedule. Students receive one booklet with the task

and the readings, as well as extra paper for writing and planning. Students receive the same accommodations as they receive on other state or classroom tests.

The ELA Performance Tasks are graded on the same rubric in the fall and spring; in the fall, students' own teachers can grade their exams, while in the spring, the exams must be graded by a different teacher. The rubric has six grading criteria, each aligned with a Common Core State Standard: Trait 1 Reading: Text-Dependent Questions (R1.1), Trait 2 Focus: Argument (W.1), Trait 3 Command of Evidence (W.1, RI.1), Trait 4 Counterclaims (W.1), Trait 5 Organization and Coherence (W.1) and Trait 6 Conventions (L1, L2). This means that the TDQs count for 1/6 of the final score, while the essay counts for 5/6 of the score. The criteria are rated on a scale of 0 – 4 in increments of 0.5, 0 meaning No Evidence, 1 meaning Below Standards, 2 meaning Approaching Standards, 3 meaning Meeting Standards, and 4 meaning Exceeding Standards. There are slight modifications in the language of the rubrics between the criteria for grades 9-10 and those for grades 11-12.

Review of ELA Performance Task using an Assessment Use Argument

Test scores.

In order for an assessment to be fair, its scoring must be consistent. For a city-wide assessment like this, consistency means that the same kind of production response on a test item leads to the same score across classrooms, schools, districts, and ultimately the city itself. Inconsistent scoring makes it difficult to argue that interpretations based on test scores are valid. However, this test has an inherent conflict of interest: teachers both administer the exams and rate the students' responses, even though the same teachers are affected by the decisions made based on the scores. The NYC Department of Education seems to be aware of this threat to consistency, as

they have instated extensive regulations about test administration and group norming procedures, as well as pages of material clarifying scoring criteria. Unfortunately, I find that there are still areas where this conflict of interest is not mitigated by the regulations surrounding the exam.

For instance, a problem with the exam directions that negatively affects the consistency of test administration and thus test scores is that the directions never explicitly spell out *why* the students are taking the assessment, even though this information is very important and affects how students may contextualize the test within their assessment ecosystem. It is very clear to students why they take most tests: classroom assessments usually factor into students' final grades, whereas tests like the Regents exam require certain scores for graduation, and AP English exams are important for determining whether the course can substitute for college credit. However, every time I administered this Performance Task assessment, students would ask me why they had to take it, as it was not explicitly stated in the test directions or on the testing booklet. I was aware that the explanation I gave for why students were taking this test could greatly influence my student scores, as I had seen students decide the test was not worth their energy and put little effort in or decide not to take it at all. Because growth on these performance measures would be used to determine my teacher ratings, it was very important to me that students give the assessments their best efforts. So, to address student concerns about assessment purpose, I would explain at the beginning of the year that the tests were low-stakes, only being used to assess student writing skills to help teachers plan instruction for the rest of the year. Though many students would complete the tests for this purpose, some students would predictably complete it with very little effort or not even take the test at all. However, at the end of the year, I would use the assessment scores not only to look at student growth but also as a final local grade for my students, which meant the students took the exam much more seriously.

Though not officially sanctioned, many teachers at my schools also followed this practice. This significantly changed the administration of my test from one sitting to another, not to mention the inconsistencies these types of practices could lead to across the school, the district, and the city as a whole. But if I did not give my students a sufficient explanation for why taking the test benefitted them, many students may not have taken the test *at all*, which would have severely impacted my teacher ratings. This forced me to construct some kind of purpose for the exam that students saw as relevant to them and worth their energy, even though that construct reduced test administration consistency. Further discussion of the purpose of the assessment will be examined in Part IV: Consequences.

Interpretations.

According to the *2016-2017 Periodic Assessment Selection Guide*, the ELA Performance Task scores are intended to measure students' knowledge of Common Core-aligned skills, and the difference between the students' scores at the beginning and end of the year are supposed to measure student growth in those skills. Therefore, ideally, interpretations of Performance Task scores would be meaningful with respect to the curriculum and skills taught in the ELA high school classroom, impartial for all high schoolers taking the test, generalizable to reading informational texts and writing argumentative essays in the high school classroom, and relevant to and sufficient for the decisions to be made about teachers' instruction of those skills. However, because the test only allows for interpretation about a subset of student skills, I argue that the score interpretations are not sufficient to make decisions about teachers' instruction in the classroom.

As seen by the Performance Task Rubric CCSS-alignment and the *ELA EOY Scoring Guides,* the ELA Performance Task only measures a small subset of specific Common-Core aligned skills: RI.1, W.1, L1 and L2. These skills only relate to reading and analyzing informational texts

and writing argumentative essays. Even the standards targeted by the Performance Task are only measured in part: NYS Standards RI.1 and W.1 both contain descriptions of skills that are relevant to the English classroom but not the test (for instance, developing research questions and inquiring into areas of interest). Also, because four strands out of six on the rubric measure one skill, W.1, test results ought not to be interpreted as growth on all Common Core skills but as student growth on primarily one skill: argumentative writing.

In order to be sure that the scores from the assessment are valid interpretations of the test construct, one must be sure that students clearly understand the construct being assessed and the directions for producing the responses. However, the assessment does not clearly communicate the construct it intends to assess. This leads to discrepancies between what students produce and what the rubric measures. For instance, although the task rubric measures student ability to draw inferences from the readings (related to RI.1), the task directions do not ask students to make inferences; I found that I was often unable to rate students as a level 4 because they had not made inferences (even though inferences were not called for in the directions). However, rating students based on the inferences they are able draw about particular content areas is problematic from the standpoint of impartiality. Though the Periodic Assessment Selection Guide clearly states, "Students are not required to bring outside knowledge of content or topic to demonstrate mastery of the skills identified in the rubrics" (2016, p. 15), the 10th Grade ELA Scoring Guidance indicates that the topic is based on a specific learning curriculum: "A skills-based, standards-driven rubric accompanies each task and, where feasible, is content agnostic so that it can be used in a variety of ways with other curricular and instructional materials . . . *Topic selection in each grade and subject was influenced by New York City scope and sequence documents*" (2015, p. 1, emphasis added). Though an exam may be theoretically "content-agnostic," the topic of the exam becomes

very important when students are required to make inferences based on outside knowledge of the topic. Because the topics align with the NYC scope and sequence documents and not all schools follow the NYC scope and sequence topics, some students have an advantage over others.

This is especially problematic when some students may have outside knowledge about the topic because of their socioeconomic status. For instance, on the 10th Grade Beginning of Year ELA Performance Task in 2014, the topic was farming, which some of my students have never encountered, either because they have lived in the city all their lives or because they immigrated from another country where farming was not the same as US farming (for instance, some of my students did not know what a zucchini was, as they did not have experience with community gardening in the same way that students with higher socioeconomic statuses or different cultural backgrounds might). Also, the 10th Grade End of Year Performance Task in 2015 was about health care. Students with a higher socioeconomic status, who may have parents who are doctors or have standard doctor visits due to having health insurance, might know more about the standard health care described in the articles than my students who often take advantage of the free health care clinic provided at our school. This would affect the number of inferences they would be able to make and unfairly disadvantage my students.

Additionally, the scores on this task were not sufficiently related to the decisions being made based on these scores. In the ELA classroom and in alignment with Common Core State Standards, teachers are expected to instruct students in more than just skills related to informational texts and argumentative essays (for examples, skills relating to speaking, interpreting literature, and researching). However, the interpretations of the ELA Performance Task scores are used as a substantial part of holistic decisions made about teachers' instruction. These test interpretations are just not *sufficient* to weigh as heavily as they do in decisions about rating teachers.

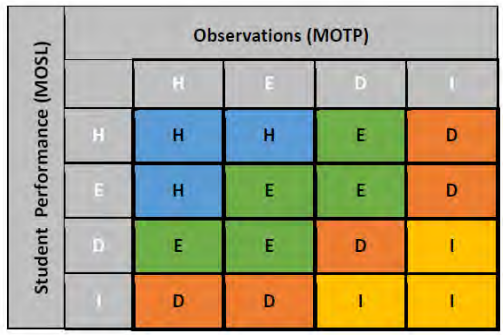
If teachers are being rated on how they teach W.1 more heavily than other standards, then there is the potential for (and I think, evidence of) assessment driving instruction in ways that ought to be more closely examined.

Decisions.

Decisions based on the ELA Performance Task ought to be equitable for teachers and students, taking into consideration existing educational values and legal requirements. Though the literature published by the Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers Union argues that the combination of measures contributing to teacher ratings, including measures of student learning like the ELA Performance Task, "helps to ensure fairness and accuracy of teachers' ratings" (*2016-2017 Advanced Overall Ratings Guide,* p. 2), the use of student scores to measure teacher ratings can lead to serious professional consequences, among them false negative classification errors (or decisions made based on scores that inaccurately reflect student skills) are very serious.

In New York City, a teacher's rating is informed by both measures of their practice (calculated by observations of their administrators) and by measures of their student learning, as New York State's Education Law 3012-d dictates that teacher effectiveness must be measured in multiple ways to ensure fairness of ratings. Student learning specifically is measured both by performance on state exams and growth through local measures, the ELA Performance Tasks being one of these local measures a school can use. A combination of MOTP and MOSL scores leads a teacher to an overall rating of Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, or Ineffective.

Table 1: HEDI Rating Matrix



Student Performance (MOSL)	Observations (MOTP)			
	H	E	D	I
H	H	H	E	D
E	H	E	E	D
D	E	E	D	I
I	D	D	I	I

According to the *Guide*, the combination of measures "helps to ensure fairness and accuracy of teachers' ratings" (*2016-2017 Advanced Overall Ratings Guide,* p. 2), which implies it protects teachers from false positive or negative classifications. However, the chart clearly illustrates that a teacher who receives Highly Effective or Effective ratings from their administrator could still be classified as Developing or Ineffective due to low student performance on a combination of local assessments (like the ELA Performance Tasks) and state assessments. Therefore, the false negative classification errors could still happen under this system if student performance scores are low on the ELA Performance Tasks.

This is problematic because low teacher ratings have serious professional implications. Teachers given a Developing or Ineffective rating can be required to undergo additional administrative monitoring. This is both stressful for the teacher, especially because receiving an Ineffective rating for two years can lead to job termination, and burdensome for administrators who then need to monitor the situation. However, the seriousness of these ratings and the possible negative consequences are not clearly reflected in the MOSL literature. According to the *2016-2017 Advanced Overall Ratings Guide,* the purpose of the multiple measures is only to "provide

teachers with access to various sources of feedback and more support to develop as educators" (p. 2), and it states that additional monitoring is in no way meant to be disciplinary. There is no mention that making decisions based on these measures is high stakes and controversial. For instance, in spring 2016, the NYS Board of Regents determined that certain state assessments could not be used in teacher evaluation or employment decisions, to allow time for teachers to transition into new state standards as they were being revised (Woodruff, 2016). If certain state assessments could not be used for teacher evaluation or employment decisions because time is needed to transition into new state standards, shouldn't the ELA Performance Task (which is also linked to state standards) be included in that group? The consequences of these decisions will be discussed further in the next section.

Consequences.

The official Department of Education literature paints a rosy picture of how ELA Performance Tasks can be beneficial to students and teachers using the test. However, there is a discrepancy between what they say the test consequences will be and how I experienced those consequences as a teacher, primarily regarding how they imagine tests will be useful throughout the year and how assessment data will benefit students. This discrepancy seems to derive from a lack of understanding of school assessment ecosystems.

First, the literature primarily states that student data from these ELA Performance Task assessments will benefit students because teachers across the school can use the Performance Task data collaboratively to plan individual and school-wide instruction, using the rubric throughout the year as a tool of formative assessment. However, the literature does not account for the competition of the state Regents exam. For teachers across a school to collaborate across grades, they need to be able to compare data across grades. However, if a school chooses to use the ELA Performance Task, not all teachers will

administer it, as one grade (in my schools, 11th graders) will instead take the Regents exam. The Regents rubric, though, has different strands of assessment than the ELA Performance Task rubric, which makes it difficult to compare data across rubrics (not to mention that the Regents exam assesses far more standards than the ELA Performance Task, as discussed in Part II: *Interpretations*). In my experience, schools are often more invested in ELA Regents assessments because the results of those scores are more consequential for the school at large. This means that when cross-grade collaboration and data analysis does happen, it often happens in light of the Regents rubric and Regents data, meaning that teachers administering ELA Performance Task benchmarks, ostensibly for formative assessment purposes, may also be required or encouraged to administer state-assessment based benchmarks as well to facilitate this cross-team collaboration and planning.

The literature states that data from ELA Performance Tasks is meant to allow teachers and administrators to work together in a cycle of continuous improvement. However, in my experience, I never discussed my ELA Performance Task scores with an administrator to determine how to strengthen my practice, and I rarely even discussed those scores with a grade team. Instead, school conversations always revolved around Regents data, and even when I was not explicitly preparing 11th grade students taking Regents exams that year, I was always expected to be preparing students to take the Regents exams. Therefore, I always conceived of the ELA Performance Task as a summative assessment meant merely to measure my teaching, not a formative assessment to help me make instructional decisions throughout the year.

This leads to the biggest discrepancy of all: though the literature surrounding the Performance Task says this assessment will provide data that is beneficial to help students learn, it is primarily used as an evaluation of teacher practice and to make teacher rating decisions. The students, the primary stake-holders, who sit for this test for four class periods (or

even up to eight class periods if they have extended time), *may not be receiving any of the intended benefits of this test*. This leads to the problems I observed and described in Part I: *Test Scores*, where students may not feel that the exams are worth their effort, leading teachers to change testing administration procedures to encourage them to take the test.

This also leads to serious questions of equity. In some New York public schools where students may have more positive feelings toward school-based literacy and testing in the classroom, benchmark exams like the ELA Performance Task may not have been problematic. As a white middle-class student in a suburban public school in Rochester speaking "standard English," I took many standardized literacy tests without questioning their purpose; I always assumed I would do well and that the tests would be beneficial for me. Though I was required to take English Regents exam, my AP English teacher hardly spent any time preparing my class for it, assuring us that we would do fine without needing to worry or study. My student experience with the NYS ELA Regents exam lies in stark contrast with my teaching experiences with it: my fellow teachers and I certainly did not take it as a given that our students would ace the Regents exam. In fact, several of our students were prevented from graduating because they had failed that exam. This elevated the Regents exam's importance within our school's assessment ecosystem to almost an obsession, as practically every English assignment was expected to prepare students for this exam. Additionally, school-based literacy and English testing is much more complicated for students who speak different dialects of English at home. The students in my diverse Brooklyn classes were learning to navigate the complexities of code switching between "Englishes" (Baker, 2008) as many had a "home" English that sounded very different from the "formal" academic English required on the ELA Performance Task. The interaction between students' linguistic identities and their perception of academic standardized testing is superbly

complex, and it would take another paper's worth of discussion to paint the nuances of it here. Suffice it to say that this dynamic meant that adding another layer of standardized English assessment to my classroom's testing ecosystem was not something to take lightly.

Students throughout my teaching tenure questioned, struggled with, and resisted this ELA Performance Task, sometimes to the point where I found myself calling students' homes and involving my administration for disciplinary action—all for a test that was functionally only rating me. I felt it was wrong to put my students through this emotional battle just for the sake of my teacher rating. I hope that future dialogues around this test will not only center around how to make this test more equitable regarding teacher ratings but also how to implement it in a way that ensures students clearly receive benefits from this testing.

Conclusions

In this era of standardized testing, test developers must be aware that their assessment does not stand alone, but rather functions within a testing ecosystem. English classroom teachers administer a myriad of tests that may serve either distinct or overlapping purposes. If an assessment's purpose overlaps with other tests, especially with tests that may be more prioritized by the school (like the NYS ELA Regents Exam), test developers must be aware that this may shape the use of their exam. This is extremely important to recognize from a social justice standpoint, as students for whom standardized tests are difficult may resist taking tests that do not have clear benefits for them—which is especially problematic for teachers whose ratings are determined by these test scores. Thus, I recommend that New York State test developers pay particular attention to the assessment ecosystem of the classroom to make sure that their tests are serving their intended purposes.

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Morning After the Storm

Kimberly Kearney
Our Lady of Mercy School for Young Women

All seems still
except for the redundant solo
of a mellow-throated twill
answered by a rolling series
of chirring syllables, chattering
back and forth
from within droopy-leafed maples.
Pendants of water atop green blades
beckon to bathe the blades
as they build towards the sun
who, this morning, rises shyly in shine
from behind her veil of fog.
All seems still, until,
the sun grins and her light streams through the veil
washing all green to greenness rarely seen
and bloom is triggered, then explodes,
outside and within the pen
of the poet
whose eyes and ears
dwell in welcome.

Kimberly Kearney has been an English teacher for 40 plus years at both public and private high schools in New York State and still loves teaching as much as she did the day she started teaching in 1975. She is a past recipient of the New York State English Teacher of Excellence Award given by the NYSEC and a published writer of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Her poem, "Test Taking," appeared in *The English Record* in the Spring/Summer issue in 1998.

Doing *THE WORK*: Profile of a Critical Pedagogue

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Abstract
This article defines the term "the work," as used by urban educators, with specific examples iterated through the profile of a teacher. The teacher in question teaches English Language Arts to students who are in a self-contained or 12 to 1 classroom.

Introduction

Urban spaces in particular are rife with educators who unintentionally diminish the importance of students' experiences to the acquisition of new learning (Emdin, 2016 p.136; Gay, 2010, p.42; Paris, 2012, p.91; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p.25). These well-intentioned educators often enter urban classrooms and address children of color with the mindset of "middle class schooling practices" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 25). More often than not, they are increasingly disappointed when there is no traction in their efforts among students. In such instances, I am brought in to support teachers as they attempt to "teach." The realities of my job as an instructional coach are grounded in the need to help teachers unpack their implicit biases as they relate to the needs of their students. It is my ethical charge to move teachers away from the language of "these kids can't," to "how can I improve my pedagogy to be responsive to students' needs, and the setting in which I chose to teach?" Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz refers to the holistic education of children through socio-emotional relationships as *the work*.

The work is a colloquial term that encapsulates the tenets of critical pedagogy, social justice and the culturally

responsive spectrum (e.g., cultural reality, culturally relevant and responsive). Pedagogues who do *the work* perceive their students not as entities to enact education, but rather as human beings who require holistic attention and support. These educators appreciate and value the cultural spaces that urban youth live within (Paris, 2010, p.93; Kirkland, 2013, p.19) and seek to dismantle traditional methods of learning in order to produce achievement that extends beyond the attainment of good grades.

I consider myself fortunate to work with "*the work*-oriented" educators. These individuals often have the capacity to enact long-lasting changes within their schools, even after my collaboration with them is complete. In this manuscript, I am profiling one such pedagogue: a special education teacher named Ms. Morris.

Ms. Morris and *The Work*

This school year, I am fortunate to work with Ms. Morris (pseudonym), a second-year teacher at the Bronxview Middle School (pseudonym) in the Pelham Bay section of the Bronx. Although Bronxview Middle School (BMS) is less than ten minutes from affluent Westchester County, the school services 81% of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. Racial demographics are as follows: 65.6% as Black, 28.5% identify as Hispanic, and 3.5% identify as Asian. Although students identify racially as Black or Asian, a large portion of the population hail from regions of the Caribbean with African or Indian ancestry.

Ms. Morris is a second-year special education teacher who "gives a damn." During the 2016-2017 school year, she taught in a collaborative co-teaching model. She found the relationship was very difficult. When asked to elaborate, she expressed that her colleague could not relate to her students and exhibited evidence of implicit bias against colleagues of color. Ms. Morris described a specific instance when she was told to "be quiet" by her co-teacher during an intellectual

argument. While the two were ultimately able to reconcile their differences, Morris decided that she wanted to teach in a 12 to 1 setting or a self-contained class where she could have full autonomy over her instruction.

She believes that within the realm of special education, students in self-contained settings are not intellectually stimulated as a result of deficit-related beliefs. Instead of fixating on these perceived academic deficiencies, she wanted the content to be relevant to students' experiences. She believes that building academic skills is feasible through responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010, p.56; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p.28). She states, "If a teacher can relate to the concept or subject they are teaching, then it makes the teaching process more enjoyable. If I enjoy teaching it, then students will enjoy learning." Ms. Morris's intellectual decisions, however, are not the only reason her students gravitate to her.

She exudes a "realness" that her students appreciate. During one of our early conversations, she recalled an interaction she had with one of her students. This student prefers to write the term "king" before his first name. Their dialogue, as recounted by Ms. Morris, is below.

Student: Ms. Morris, do you know who I am and how I view myself?
Morris: No, tell me, cause I'm interested to know why you call yourself king.
Student: Listen, my father always tells me to put myself on a pedestal
Morris: *Starts clapping*. It's interesting that you say that. Do you know what I refer to myself as?
Student: What?
Morris: Queen Sanchez
Student: Oh. *Laughs at the pronunciation of her name*.
Morris: Do you know why I think of myself as a queen?
Student: Why?
Morris: Because you know what? People that don't look like you and I, they want us to be something else, something that's

negative. When you place yourself high, they can't take you from up there. My mother always taught me growing up, no one can take your crown. Don't allow them to. You will not give me any name in front of what I've been named. I am a queen, I'm giving myself to that. I hold myself to those high expectations. You guys should, too. You are a young black man growing up in a tough world, a world where you may probably never be accepted. As long as you're giving yourself that king title, you are gonna have king behavior, and that is gonna take you throughout your life.
Student: Why?
Morris: Let me tell you something, my young black brother, you cannot only be a rapper or an athlete. You're not here to entertain them. You are here to be who you are, whatever that is, and be great at that . . .. Listen, be careful with the society we live in cause this society will paint you a picture that is not your reality, and I'm tellin' you that now.

Ms. Morris indicated that the young man she spoke with ultimately left the conversation feeling reaffirmed in his purpose and finding her comments to be "deep." There is certainly no doubt to her authenticity as a critical pedagogue who believes in *the work*. Her comments in the above exchange are an indicator of the level of respect she holds for the students as a result of her own lived experiences. She does not perceive her students as individuals to be managed, but rather personalities to strengthen for academic and social contexts that are not sensitive to their specific needs.

Curricular Decisions

Like many schools in New York City, BMS utilizes the state recommended curriculum, *Expeditionary Learning*. There are a number of concerns with the document, most notably the lack of recently published responsive texts (e.g., *Dragonwings)*. Furthermore, the units and lesson plans within the curriculum do not explicitly encourage teachers to make the

content relevant to students' lives. Teachers vary in the ability to internalize culturally responsive theory and pedagogical practices. Some teachers are still focused on multiculturalism, while others are invested in students' cultural realities. Given this spectrum of ability, not all teachers have the capacity to make pre-constructed content relevant to students lived experiences (Emdin, 2016, p.131). This results in larger issues such as classroom management, student engagement and lack of student investment in their own learning (Emdin, 2016, p.137, Sealey-Ruiz, 2011).

Ms. Morris was aware of this based on her experiences in the year prior. As a result, she solicited me to present her case to the principal: create a hybrid curriculum that pulled culturally relevant texts from both the seventh and eighth grade curriculum. She used some aspects of the lessons provided, but she ultimately wanted the students to access content that they would find of immediacy to their own lived experiences. We were successful in our lobbying, and she was able to select the following books from both curricula: *Inside Out and Back Again, To Kill a Mockingbird, Lyddie,* and *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass.* The protagonists of the aforementioned texts represent Morris's yearlong essential questions: 1. How do individuals survive in challenging environments? 2. How do culture, time, and place influence the development of identity? 3. How does reading different texts about the same topic build our understanding? 4. How do writers use narrative techniques to convey characters' perspectives?

Despite her intuitive capacities to make the content relatable to her students, she still struggled to find an instructional design that aligned to the Common Core State Standards and stimulated her students' intellectual capacities. Her initial unit plan, adapted from *Expeditionary Learning,* saw students spending four weeks on central idea and supporting evidence. There was little variance in the teaching point throughout her modified unit plan, including a lack of opportunity for students to critically analyze the content they

were reading. Through conversation and collaborative planning, we revised her pacing calendar.

The overarching standards of the unit would still be RL.8.1, and RL 8.2: determining supporting evidence and the central idea of a literary text. We chose to remain with these two standards to ensure that students were given multiple opportunities to demonstrate comprehension of what was read. Simultaneously, however, we designed questions that prompted students to unpack extended metaphors, author's craft or historical fiction pieces written through narrative poetry. We embedded opportunities for students to practice analyzing poems through traditional literary analysis and composition of their own pieces. *Inside Out and Back Again* is a narrative poetry novel, hence the desire to emphasize the previously mentioned concepts. While some would be overwhelmed by the inclusion of so many "higher order" tasks and activities, Ms. Morris was undeterred.

Teaching *Inside Out and Back Again.*

Before highlighting Ms. Morris's successes with teaching *Inside Out and Back Again*, it is important to frame her intentionality around choosing this novel as her first. She states,

> Teaching about the refugee experience of a 10-year-old girl, a Vietnamese girl—me, I am West African, my parents come from West Africa Liberia. Many of my students' families come from Jamaica, Guyana, Dominican Republic. A lot of our stories relate back to this 10-year-old Vietnamese girl's story. Why? Because her family is experiencing life as refugees. A lot of our families experience life as immigrants to America. So like my story, the students' stories all tie into one.
>
> What happens? It relates back to this main character. So, if you can make teaching the experience of the main character of a novel relatable to your own,

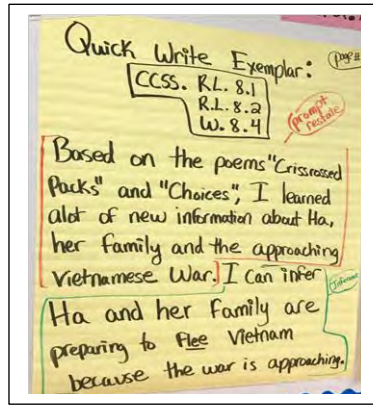
> then the experience for the students becomes a lot more powerful. Because the point of teaching is allowing it to be relatable to students. Because when a student can relate to a certain concept, then they understand it better. It becomes more simple.

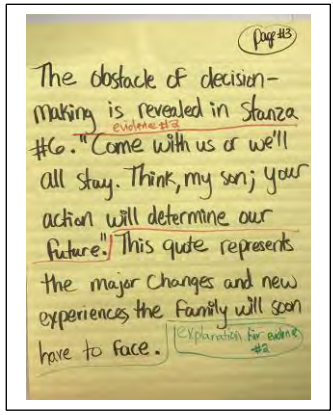
Ms. Morris's quote exhibits a number of interesting ideas. First, it illustrates that the motivation for her pedagogy is grounded in empathy for her students' experiences. She acknowledges their familial experiences as immigrants and the implications on identity formation. It is something she is aware of given her own background. Second, Ms. Morris's instructional choices are not grounded in the desire to cover content for the sake of doing so. She is intentional about teaching her students to read and write well by exploring themes that are of relevance to their respective lives.
One of the first tasks students were asked to complete was a short response that unpacked their newly acquired understanding of Ha, the main character, and her family's life in Vietnam.

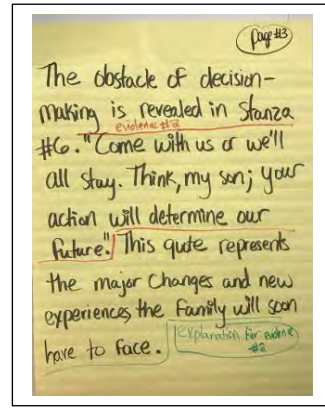
Morris was initially hesitant about having her students write the short response. Her hesitation stemmed not from believing students could not complete the task, but rather that they would feel frustrated with the writing process. She said, "my students haven't had great experiences with writing. I don't want them to turn off or shut down because they are having a hard time creating a claim or explaining evidence." Her concerns were certainly legitimate, but not insurmountable. We began by unpacking the skills students would need in order to complete the short response. First, students would need to be able to unpack the question posed to them. Second, students would need to create an assertion or claim, and identify evidence to support their belief. Finally, from a formatting perspective, students would need to condense the information into a paragraph with appropriate transitions. We created a series of graphic organizers that students could use to help with the claim and evidence. Ms. Morris and I then worked on an

exemplar paragraph that she would use to model the synthesis process. Figure 1 is an image of her sample paragraph with mark up from the lesson.

Figure 1. Ms. Morris's model paragraph.



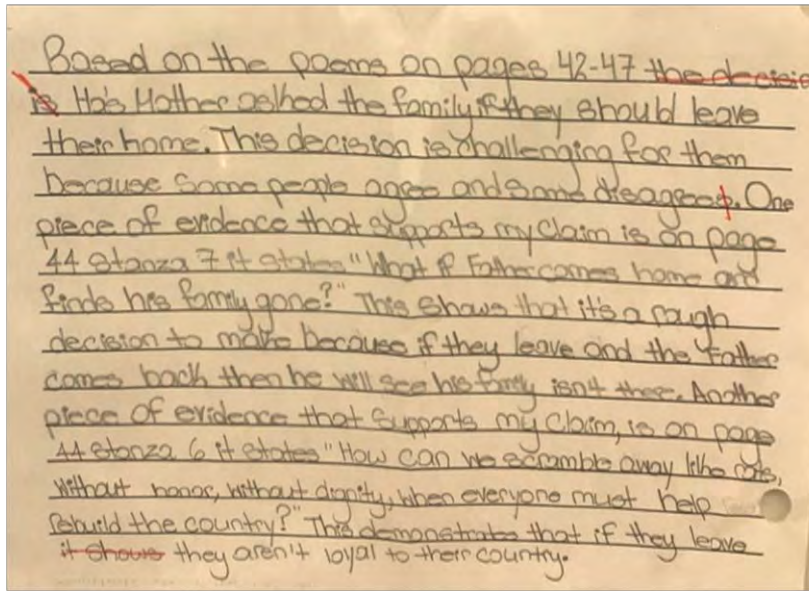


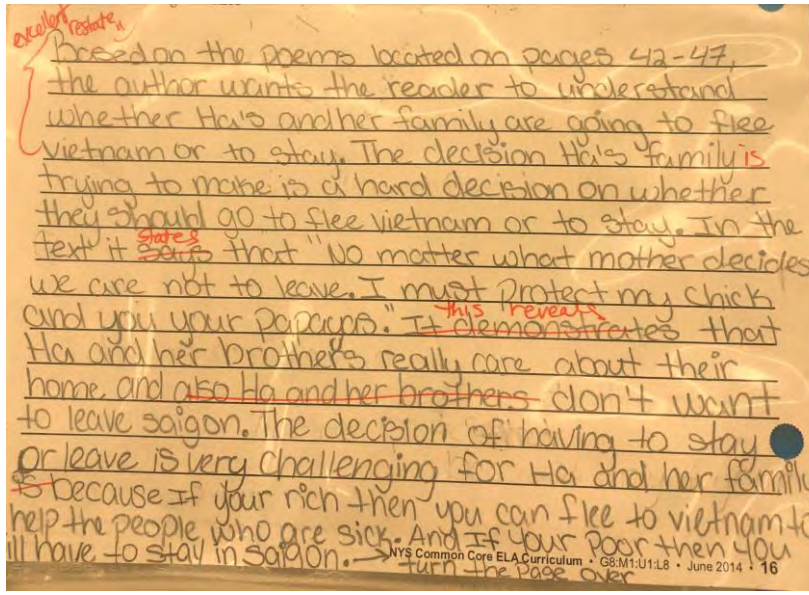


Morris found that the visual aid, coupled with the modeling or think aloud process was beneficial to her students. One of her students later approached her to say "thank you," because it made the writing process "feel much easier." Figure

2 highlights two student exemplars. The pieces were graded in accordance with the New York State two-point rubric. The authors of the pieces receive a score of three and four, respectively. The first example, according to Morris's evaluation, did not contain sufficient explanations of the connection between the evidence and the claim. The second example contained stronger details and explanation sentences.

Figure 2. Two exemplar pieces from the task


Based on the poems on pages 42-47 ~~the decision~~ is the Mother asked the family if they should leave their home. This decision is challenging for them because some people agree and some disagree. One piece of evidence that supports my claim is on page 44 stanza 7 it states "What if Father comes home and finds his family gone?" This shows that it's a rough decision to make because if they leave and the Father comes back then he will see his family isn't there. Another piece of evidence that supports my claim, is on page 44 stanza 6 it states "How can we scramble away like rats, without honor, without dignity, when everyone must help Rebuild the country?" This demonstrates that if they leave ~~it shows~~ they aren't loyal to their country.


excellent restate it

Based on the poems located on pages 42-47, the author wants the reader to understand whether Ha's and her family are going to flee Vietnam or to stay. The decision Ha's family is trying to make is a hard decision on whether they should go to flee Vietnam or to stay. In the text it states that "No matter what mother decides, we care not to leave. I must Protect my chick and you your papaya." This reveals It demonstrates that Ha and her brothers really care about their home. and also Ha and her brothers don't want to leave saigon. The decision of having to stay or leave is very challenging for Ha and her family because If your rich then you can flee to vietnam to help the people who are sick. And If your poor then you ill have to stay in Saigon.

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turn the page over

Ms. Morris has anecdotes of students expressing a stronger level of comfort with their writing that they did not have in instances prior. "This is what I hoped for," she said. "I wanted to help them realize how smart and talented they really are."

Morris also used small stations to reinforce students' understanding of the novel and build interpersonal connections to the themes. Within the small stations, students listened to audio files from *NPR* and unpacked the implicit meaning behind images from the war. Morris stated,

> The kids are hooked on this book! I can get them to do a lot of the academic work because they can relate to Ha and her experiences. At the end of the day, if they are reading, and enjoying themselves, that is all that matters.

Ms. Morris and her students will complete their reading of *Inside Out and Back Again* by the middle of December. Aside from relating the novel to students' lived experiences, Ms.

Morris also wanted to tap into their passions. She knew that her students enjoyed listening to reggae and hip-hop. Therefore, she created a final project in which students created a cypher, or a free verse rhyme based on a rhythmic pattern. The cypher is based on the unit's essential questions and students' relationship to Ha. Ms. Morris has also afforded students the space to perform the rhyme if they choose to do so.

Planning for Upcoming Novels

After the upcoming holiday breaks, Morris intends on teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*. "I'm really excited about teaching it," she declared. "Last year when we taught it as a whole class, we didn't have as much success as I would have hoped. I had a lot of success with my smaller focus groups, and I want to try to replicate that." The success that Morris is referring to was a healthy debate that occurred among her students. The debate was based on the end of unit assessment. When discussing the upcoming unit, Morris stated,

> *To Kill a Mockingbird*, at the end of the unit assessment, the students have to write an essay, in which, they argue, whether, Atticus Finch was right in supporting Tom Robinson, representing him, or not. The reason why I'm gonna stick with that is because, when I taught this last year, I like the different perspectives. Automatically, when you hear that question, the prompt, you think students are gonna go with the fact that, he was right because of the Golden Rule, okay, a white man defending a black man. But, I had a student write a different perspective, last year. ... The experience taught me that a student may take it beyond your level of thinking. Which is the whole point of thinking, because every day we're learning something new.

According to Morris's account, several students argued that Atticus should not have defended Tom Robinson as his divided attention affected the overall well-being of his children.

The "thinking" that she refers to is students seeing beyond the information presented and simply regurgitating knowledge (Freire, 1972). Staying true to *the work*, Morris wants her students to not use their education as a means for replicating the status quo; rather they are using the information to construct their own understandings of the world.

Although I appreciate *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a classical literary text, I was concerned around the subtle messaging as Atticus Finch as the "white savior" for the downtrodden Robinson family. There were also lingering concerns with respect to students seeing the relationship between the novel, the prison industrial complex, police brutality and Black Lives Matter. Ms. Morris's response to my concerns are below.

> The theme of this year, is the question that you see on my wall, how does culture, time and place influence the development of identity? So, we're going to be learning about racism in the deep South, in the 1930's, during the Great Depression. This is when this book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, takes place. The book is based on the Scottsboro Boys trial. So, I'm gonna be focusing on how race, basically, develops the identity of people back in the south, African American people and what their role was in society, and how they were viewed, and how they were treated, based on their race. How they developed as people because of how society has treated them, and that's the main focus . . .. Throughout this book, the theme is, the Golden Rule, treating others how you want to be treated. Throughout this book, my main point in teaching is, is really just having the Golden Rules stuck in the back of my students' mind. What does it mean to treat others how you want to be treated? Who needs to treat people the way they should be treated? Who? What particular group? Is it everybody? Is it the white race? Is it the black race? Who? That, is the main focus.

Ms. Morris knows that her students will not read the novel in a silo. Current events and their lived experiences will affect how students react to the characters and plot. Like a true critical pedagogue, she intends on directly addressing students' emotions through strategic opportunities for discourse. Students will draw parallels between the society of the 1930s and contemporary struggles as they relate to race and equity. Morris is extremely excited about the prospect of teaching the novel in her own space, but even more so about the novel serving as an opportunity to discuss topics that might be legitimized by other educators in the building.

Implications for Practice

In many ways, Ms. Morris is a rarity in the field. Despite her novice status, she possesses a confident understanding of *the work* and how it can be used to improve student learning. This is already evident in the student tasks and high levels of engagement in her class. Ms. Morris's character and pedagogical beliefs inform us of several important tenets of *the work*.

Valuing Student Voice.

If urban educators sincerely seek to do *the work*, then it is essential to respect students' opinions, even when it is information one might not want to hear. At the end of her class, at least twice a week, Ms. Morris engaged her students in a co-generative dialogue. Co-generative dialogues (Emdin, 2016) is an explicit conversation had between teachers and students to garner feedback on the efficacy of the day or week's lesson. Figure 4 highlights the simple reflection questions she asks of her students. Ms. Morris doesn't ask her students these questions for the sake of doing so; she implements the feedback and suggestions. In turn, students demonstrate their appreciation through increased engagement and investment in the content.

Empathy NOT Sympathy.

The media does an exemplary job of portraying urban students, or students of color, from a deficit-oriented standpoint. As a result, well-meaning educators enter these spaces and unwittingly become "teacher saviors." The savior mentality stems from having sympathy or pity for one's students. Students of color do not need pity. They need an educator who understands their experiences through a lens of empathy, and in absence of judgment. Ms. Morris shares similar life experiences to those of her students. In instances where she does not, she asked questions to learn more about them: their motivations, family and ambitions. Empathy is a legitimate sign of investment in doing *the work* with students as the pedagogue is hoping to serve as a catalyst for critical change.

Reflective Practices.

Recursive practice is a foundational aspect of effective pedagogy. In order to improve one's craft, it is important to continuously ponder the successes and failures of daily lessons. Reflection also requires one to actively solicit the feedback of peers, mentors, administrators and students. Ms. Morris actively solicits the feedback of her colleagues and students. Urban teachers who choose to remain in a pedagogical echo chamber often improve the least in comparison to those who are open to new ideas.

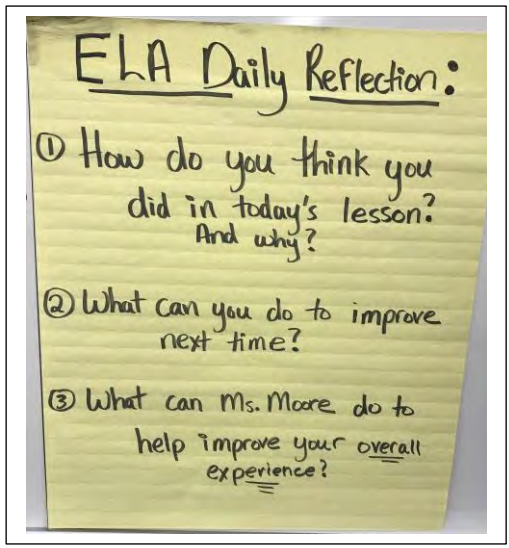
Instructional Design and Content Knowledge.

Teachers should be expected to have a strong mastery of their content and the general principles of curriculum design (e.g., Understanding by Design, formative and summative assessments, project-based assessments, etc.). True examples of *the work* occur through methodical instructional decisions. This also means that teachers must know the content they are teaching, in addition to the long-term concepts students will need throughout their academic careers. Students cannot break

the cycle of oppression, if not equipped with foundational information in the core content areas (e.g., establishing voice through verbal and written responses). Ms. Morris wants her students to be critical thinkers. She also acknowledges that they are learners in a system that values specific modes of determining proficiency. An adept educator knows how to manipulate content and curricula in a simultaneous manner to drive this focus.

The above list is by no means completely comprehensive and encompassing of the characteristics associated with those who do *the work.* Rather, I present these four traits as an initial framework for developing the capacities of other teachers who have the traits to become critical pedagogues but have yet to discover their voice.

Figure 3. Ms. Morris's co-generative dialogue



Conclusion

In a conference call with the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color, Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings said the following:

> We must move away from this belief that you only go to school to get a good job and make money. While this is true, schooling for the sake of moving up economically, isn't a true education. ... Prince William didn't need to go to school, but he wanted to get an education.

Urban educators who seek to do *the work* must keep this notion in mind. We must equip our students not only for economic success but provide them with an intellectual experience that emphasizes the importance of their cultural realities.

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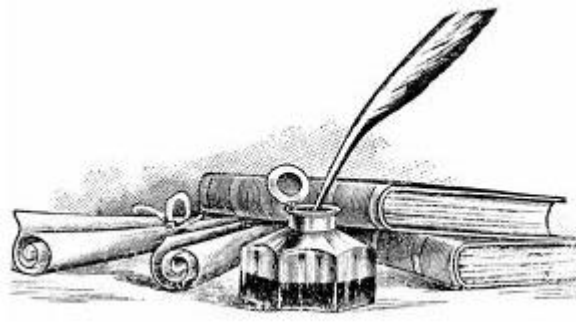
The English Record
Article of the Year



Congratulations to **Salika A. Lawrence** and **Tiffany Labissiere!** Their article "Using Critical Literacy to Frame Students' Interactions with Complex Texts" received the Volume 68 Article of the Year award at October's 2018 NYSEC Conference.

The Healing Classroom: A Curricular Approach to Disaster Recovery

Katie Redd
Herbert Hoover High School

Abstract
This article is a narrative reflection of my curricular response to disaster recovery. Schools in fragile states is an emerging, but important, field. Schools stabilize communities and promote recovery after natural disasters and post-conflict states. The education of our young people is essential to their academic success, and it is critical to their mental health recovery in the face of disaster. Studies have shown that written and artistic expression support student recovery, and that addressing student concerns in the classroom through dialogue and meaningful class projects can create a safe environment that lowers student stress and promotes mental well-being.

A Total Loss

In the summer of 2016, the unthinkable happened: Herbert Hoover High School, *our* high school, was flooded beyond repair. I remember lying in bed the night of the flood, staring at the ceiling, periodically checking my social media, imagining the Elk River water rising in my first-floor classroom. I imagined it filling the school up like a bowl, slowly and steadily rising, covering the desks and rising above the filing cabinets and the bookshelves, soaking the student work and the tests and the worksheets and the resources, and destroying everything I had assembled over the past decade of teaching.

The next day, when the waters began to recede, I went out to the school completely unprepared for what I was about to experience. I followed a work crew into the building, and with their help, forced open my classroom door. Inside, it looked like a washing machine had churned everything around,

completely upending the space. The desks and bookshelves were heaped upon each other in the center of the room, and it was impossible to tell what lay beneath the ankle-deep brown sludge that covered the ground in a thick, sticky slime. There was nothing left. Purple textbooks peeked out from the rancid mud, their pages wavy and their bindings broken. What remained on the walls was coated with brown smatter, and everything was permeated with the revolting scent of sewage, river water, chemicals, and debris. The only light cast in the room was from the glow of cell phone flashlights, and as my mind registered the total devastation, I picked up the *tick* of the battery powered classroom clock that hung on the wall just above the flood line. I reached up on my toes, picked it off its place, and walked out of the building (see Figures 1 & 2).

Figure 1

Figure 2

Over the years, I had amassed quite a collection of exemplars and mementos of my time with my students. I had a large poster in my room with the words *Everyone Has A Limit* melted in multi-colored crayon by a ninth grader who really dug concrete poetry. I had a laminated anime Athena that a middle schooler had created as a part of a mythology unit. I had a giant green and white Viking head that I carried with me from my former school. Tabitha, a seventh grader, spent a few days' worth of lunch hours in my room making it, so I would have the school mascot to display in my room. I had a box of "All About Me" objects made by a favorite 8th grade class. I had a laminated poster of a Converse tennis shoe with Hermes wings created by Alex, a student I had in the seventh grade who was killed in a car accident four years after he created it. I

had hung it up in the back of my classroom to remind myself that for some, life is very short, and I should do my best to give my students not only a good education, but a good experience in the classroom as well.

My students' creations and contributions are significant artifacts in my journey as an English teacher. They are the fruition of our academic work together, as well as the evidence of the relationships we have formed. These mementos carry the memories of our time together. My students may only stay with me for one year, but what they leave behind reminds me of the importance of what we do, and it inspires the curiosity of the next group of students that grace my door. The loss of my class keepsakes was difficult, and, like many who have suffered from natural disasters, the "sense of loss over treasured objects" is a familiar grief (Kawamura, 2013, p.9).

A Healing Curriculum

The English Language Arts classroom is an intersection of communication and the arts, and the creation of student work took on a new context after the flood. Students connect their own experiences to literature and express themselves in writing. Much of the work of the English teacher is to help students correctly interpret the messages they receive, while teaching them the tools to correctly communicate the messages they want to send. Teachers use art and expression to positively channel the mercurial emotions of teens into productive learning experiences. In a prolonged emergency and recovery response situation, art and expression become necessary—and proven—outlets for emotions. Research on schools in fragile states has shown that

> [R]esponsive classroom activities such as discussions and planned lessons about the disaster, may be more practical than teacher-mediated mental health interventions. A few examples of post-disaster curricular activities in schools have been documented,

> including activities such as expressive writing and art activities. (Johnson & Ronan, 2014, p. 1077)

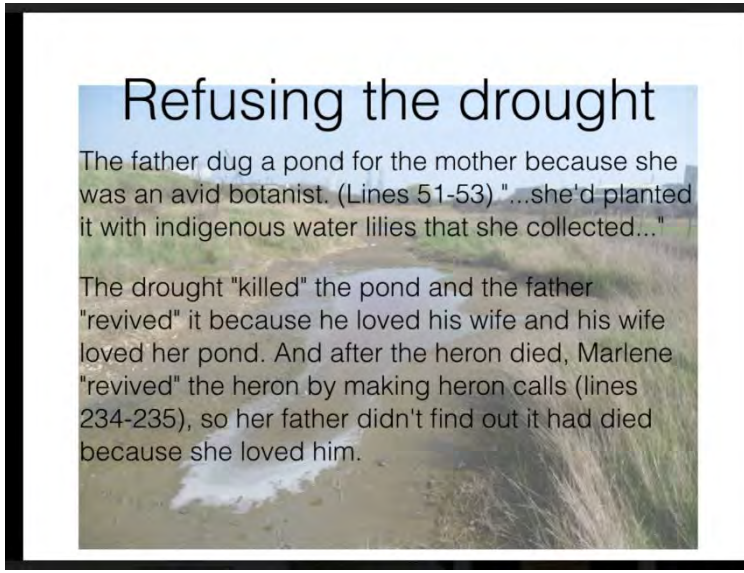
Allowing students to use art and writing to communicate their emotions and ideas gives students a healing space in which to express themselves.

I did not initially write a flood recovery curriculum—that curriculum grew from a response to my students and their own thoughts and discoveries as the year progressed. The curriculum cannot help but reflect the loss, construction, and reconstruction all around us. The students naturally gravitate to projects, lessons, and themes that tackle loss and rebirth, and they connect to the scenes of natural disasters they read in literature. They have an uncanny sense of what disaster means to those created characters, and they have an ability to empathize with others not only in their own community, but elsewhere. These students see the world through the lens of the flood, and this perception is reflected in their lesson engagement as well as in the work they create. Disaster and post-conflict recovery is an emergent field, and while there is not much research about the "efficacy of various policies" to mitigate the effects of disaster, interventions such as the reopening of schools and attention to students' mental and physical health have a positive impact on children (Kousky, 2016, p.86). After the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, teachers reported they were "guided by their own knowledge of student needs and interests rather than particular school policy or guidance document" (Johnson & Ronan, 2014, p. 1083) when planning their curriculum and guiding class discussions.

My curricular response to the flood grew organically from the needs of my students. Students returned again and again to flood themes and natural disasters in novel and short story units. Talk of the flood infiltrated daily discussions and student presentations. One such response was a student-created collaborative Keynote presentation on the short story "Night Calls" by Lisa Fugard. The story is about a young woman, sent to boarding school after the death of her mother, and the

strained relationship that developed with her father as a result of their shared loss. The scene is an ailing wildlife sanctuary, ravaged by drought. In their presentations, the students as a whole delved into the theme of loss and destruction, as well as the theme of longing to reconnect with a loved one and with nature. Students inherently recognized how the setting—the drought—represented the emotional drought demonstrated by the characters. Students also lingered on the scene of the mother's study, where her possessions lay untouched years after her death. Students recognized the meaning of objects and how they kept a memory alive—even a person alive—by their mere presence. The photographs and videos they created as a part of their presentations spoke of the story, but it also spoke of their personal experiences. In this way, we were able to extend our thoughts about our own lives into the thematic discovery and analysis of the literature (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

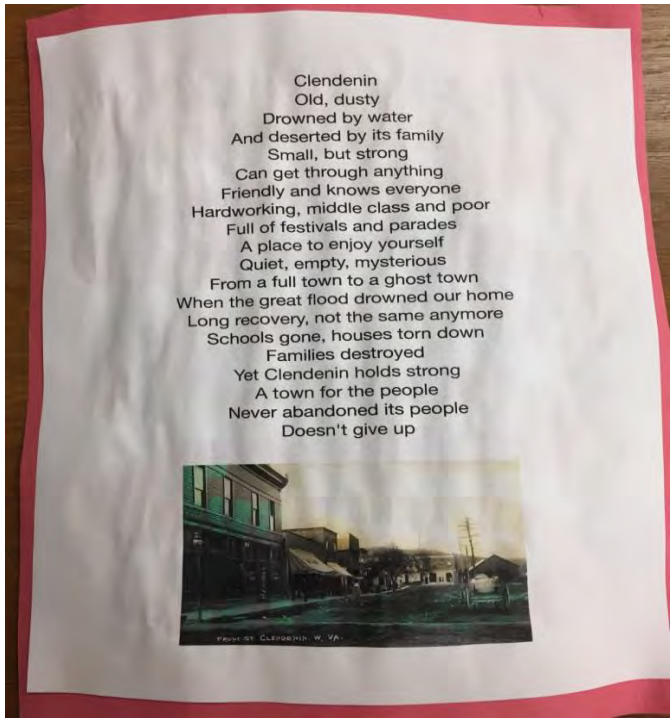


Another student project that made an impact in the classroom was a Book-in-the-Bag oral report on Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth.* Buck, a West Virginia author, evokes the theme of the destruction and rebirth of the earth in her novel. A flood wreaks havoc on the land and forces a family to move away from its home to start over. For the report, students assembled five to seven objects that symbolized the novel's themes. As the students analyzed the novel through their artifacts, they explored their own personal connections to their flood experiences. My students were able to connect to the struggles of characters placed a century ago in China, and they were able to gain insight into their own hearts and minds through literature. As a culminating activity, the students wrote poems and stories based on the themes of the novel and submitted them to a writing competition. One of my students won the high school category of the competition with her piece, *West Virginia Is*.

In addition to a curricular response in the traditional English class, my Creative Writing class has been an especially important place for student written and artistic expression. Students complete "Where I'm From" poems based on the work of George Ella Lyon and place poems based on Carl Sandburg's "Chicago" each year, bringing in photos and objects to inspire their writing about who they are and where they are from. To complement their writing, students bring in personal artifacts and research local photographs in online archives to inspire their sense of place. This activity has been especially evocative since the flood. Many students lost significant possessions in the event, and they write down their memories, turning them into art and poetry. In that first fall back after the flood, there were students who had no photos of their youth; they had to go searching amongst relatives to find mementos and photographs stored away in their homes. There is a sense of hopefulness that comes across in their creations, as they recreated through words the lost objects and places of their lives. I had them create a digital visual presentation of

their poetry, complete with voice over, music, and photographs, and I had them bring in photographs and objects that inspire their writing so that we can talk about those objects. Objects in writing become art, and those objects can structure and inspire critical and complex thoughts and emotions the students have towards the trauma they have experienced. This type of artistic expression can be seen "as windows into their minds (with varying degrees of opacity), and at the same time as a dialogue—a social action, a discursive investigation of the existential question *Who am I now?*" (Gerge & Pedersen, 2017, p.61), (see Figures 4, 5, & 6).

Figure 4



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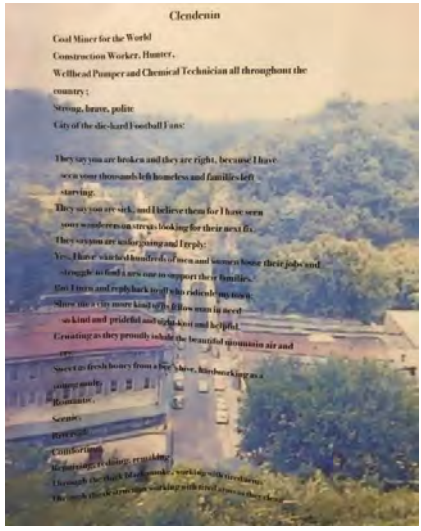
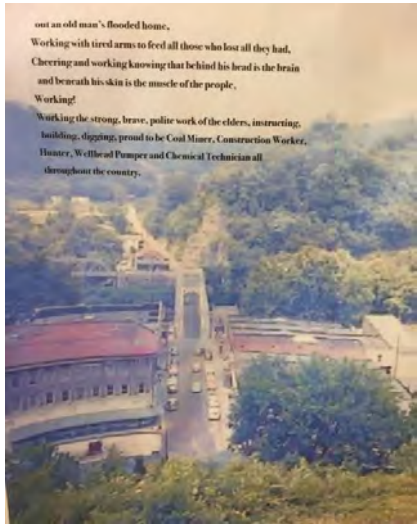


Figure 6



Class Creation as an Affinity Building Behavior

Allowing children to personalize their classwork gives them control over their environment and promotes affinity building in the classroom. Classroom management is particularly important in fragile states; the importance of creating and maintaining a "safe-space" for student educational and psychological support is essential. Research has proven that "classes which [have] settled down into a state of affinity . . . [have shown that] students' post-disaster stress was more decreased than in other classes" (Kawamura, 2013, p.13). Working to create meaningful class projects is a key curricular approach to building relationships and interpersonal connections; these projects affinity-build in the classroom.

Classroom management and curriculum work hand-in-hand to aid students in trauma recovery. My students engage with each other's classroom creations, and their class discussions open a dialogue to their experiences—from the worst-case scenarios to those of us who were barely touched by the flooding. Most importantly, by acknowledging our experiences in the construct of the classroom, we are able to speak and create freely without loss of control. The group experience creates structured activities and discussions in which students can comfortably participate and focus on the academic work as well as connect to personal experiences if they desire to do so. In this manner, school group experiences are a critical component to student success, in that they allow a venue for students to focus their energies on work and positive creative experiences.

A Need for Teacher Training

Schools allow students to find a safe environment after natural disasters and in post-conflict situations by providing a "hard-won piece of everyday life" (Kawamura, 2013, p.6). Teachers help students focus on everyday educational activities, and schools help neighborhoods move from disaster

to recovery by reopening and creating a firm foundation for the community.

Emerging studies have proven that teacher training for schools in fragile states can provide targeted support for children's mental health and psychological development (Kawamura, 2013, p.6). School is one of the main environments in a child's life, and teachers are important facilitators of mental health recovery after natural disasters and post-conflict situations. Students exhibit improved academic recovery when "teachers acknowledged the students' experiences, facilitated peer-support and encouraged children to express their disaster experiences artistically" (Peek & Richardson, as cited in Johnson & Ronan, 2104, p.1077). It is important that teachers receive curricular and classroom management training after these traumatic events. Many teachers shy away from addressing trauma situations, in fear that they will do more harm than good (Johnson & Ronan 2014). It is important that teachers receive training, guidance, and support from mental health professionals to guide them in creating a healing curriculum and a safe environment for student success.

A Pervasive Issue

In the English classroom, we have a space to connect both globally and locally through the stories we read and the stories we write. Before our flood, there were tornadoes in Joplin, Missouri, and Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy devastated communities in New Orleans and New York State, respectively. Since the flood, Hurricane Harvey tore through Texas, Hurricane Irma ripped through Florida, and Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico. My students are aware of the power of these events over human lives. The English classroom gives them a safe space to talk through the trauma they evoke and to create powerful multimedia texts and images in which to address the world around them.

The students embody the school itself, and it is through their continued presence that the school stays alive. It is the students' healing work to build on the traditions of the school and to create Herbert Hoover High School in whatever form it takes, whether that form is a shared middle school, a temporary lodging off the side of Route 119, or, someday, a bright and beautiful new building that we can call "home." And it is the teacher's healing work to create a safe, productive space in which the students can engage in their academic work as well as express themselves through that work.

There is a growing need for teaching professionals across the country to engage in productive dialogue and training on education in fragile states. Students and school staff benefit from research-based professional development and training in the face of natural disasters and post-conflict situations. Through increased professional engagement in this emerging field, a healing curriculum is within our reach.

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Reexamining Revision: Analyzing the Revision of Institutional and Popular Culture Texts

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Abstract
This article reexamines revision in the composition classroom by helping students address and analyze how texts are in constant revision outside of school in both institutions and popular culture. Drawing from scholarship on the struggles that students face when understanding revision, it outlines an expanded approach to the writing process through an assignment in which students choose one act of revision, such as an amendment to a law or a remix of a song, and then analyze how the purposes, audiences, and genres of the text changed through the revision.

Reexamining Revision

In my English Composition I course, most students understand revision as the part of my syllabus that states students can revise each paper to receive a better grade. No matter how I presented revision in the classroom, my students often failed to recognize the need for global changes in their writing. Therefore, in the fall of 2016, I decided to reexamine the notion of revision by studying it as a topic for one of the essays in the class. I wanted students to investigate ways that texts outside the classroom, everything from institutional documents to popular culture products, are constantly being modified and revised.

The problem I was experiencing with my students was not uncommon. In "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," Nancy Sommers explains, "Because students do not see revision as an activity in which they modify and develop perspectives and ideas, they feel that if they know what they want to say, then there is

little reason for making revisions" (1980, p. 3). While Sommers' work, like much of the work on revision, occurred before the emergence of the kind of technology students have at their disposal today, Anish M. Dave and David R. Russell point out that, "despite the ease with which global revisions can be made with current word processors, students' perception of the task of revision may not have changed much in this regard over the last 20 years" (2010, p. 416).

Researchers have found that making goals of revision explicit improves writing (Bridwell, 1980; Flowers et al., 1986; Galbraith and Torrance, 2004), but students may not transfer these goals on specific texts to other kinds of revision. Nancy Welch writes that writers need to reconsider that

> instead of adapting a text to suit a particular reader or each sentence to suit a particular thesis, a writer may need to rethink that work of adaptation, question unity, uniformity, and politeness—even in, or especially in, her first draft. (1997, p. 30)

This questioning is what makes students uncomfortable and one possibility of why revision, even when taught through portfolio method, still does not result in significant changes to students' papers.

In order to bring Welch's revision as rethinking method into my classroom, I asked my students to study revision in changing documents, such as an updated website or changes to a law. Students also had the choice of studying an act of revision in an apology or an adaptation of a book to a movie. In preparation for this major assignment, we as a class analyzed how texts and the ideas they express are in constant revision to make sure students saw how revision is not only for college-level writers in their composition classrooms, but a process they will utilize when analyzing texts, other people, and themselves for the rest of their lives. It is a process that institutions, such as the government, and major popular culture figures, such as musical composers and movie directors employ through a variety of different ways in order to address

particular audiences and achieve particular purposes. The assignment I developed asked students to look to these institutional or popular culture examples as the subject of their work.

The Assignment

The major assignment asks students to study a process of revision in a different way than usual by looking outside the composition classroom to institutional and pop culture texts that had changed. In order to do this kind of work, I made the assignment broad in terms of what students could choose. The assignment prompt explains what they could choose to write on more in depth:

Major Assignment 3-Rethinking Revision

Overview

Many times when we think about revision, it is to improve a paper for a grade or to edit for a class. However, revision occurs constantly outside of the composition classroom and the university. Revision happens when you see how a Wikipedia page has changed or when an apology is issued for a statement. It also occurs both in print, digitally, and in human interaction. For the third major assignment in this course, you will analyze one text that has been revised and explain how this revision has changed the purposes and audiences of the text. You will also respond to how the ideas have changed as the revision of the text changed or if the ideas have stayed the same and why this might be important.

For this assignment, you can study a variety of different acts of revision, from an amendment to a law to a redesign on a website. The first place to start is to choose what kind of text you are thinking about for the revision. Once you have chosen something, then you will write a paper that outlines the changes

that were made and how these changes impacted the purposes and audiences of the texts before and after the revision.

Reflect on the following questions while doing this work:

-How much time was there between the draft and revised draft? What do you think this amount of time (or lack thereof) represents about the revision?

-What kinds of ideas changed as the revision of the text changed? Was the same main idea consistent or did it alter because of the revision?

-How have the purposes and audiences changed as the text changed? Did the genre change? If so, how is it being approached now and what does that mean?

-What role does deletion (taking certain terms or sentences out of the first document) serve in the revision process?

-To what extent are there differences in revision and remix?

Format
This paper must be 3-5 pages double-spaced, typed and stapled or paper clipped. It should use 12 point font Times New Roman or some font equivalent.

Due Dates
The dates for this assignment are on the course schedule.

Many students had questions from the beginning about what I meant by "text" in the assignment prompt. I fretted over using this word mainly because I thought students would think of print and not other media. However, I also wanted the assignment prompt to be clear, and I knew that if I used a broader word than "text," many students would be confused. In

order to explain the meaning of “text” for this assignment, I showed the class the university website, which had recently been revised in terms of design and structure. We started on the university homepage and discussed what was located at the forefront of the screen, such as photos of smiling students, the slogan "Self-made starts here!" and the new computer classrooms in the business building. After looking over what is central to the website, I asked the class what was difficult to find, and students answered that email, Blackboard, and other features for current students and faculty were hidden in the top right hand corner and the viewer had to press a specific feature to even have them show up. The old university website featured more prominently the daily uses of university life in a more user-friendly manner. We looked back at the assignment prompt and I asked the question, "How are purposes and audiences different in the revised website compared to the old one?" Students commented that the revised website, with its concentration on photos and the slogan, seemed much more designed for an audience of prospective students. This led to a discussion on the purposes like recruitment and university identity that shape a university website.

The class then analyzed another revised text, a video of Stephen A. Smith apologizing for a video and series of tweets in which he seemed to be blaming victims of domestic abuse. This analysis of purpose and audience let students practice with a more complicated revision than the university website with arguably higher stakes. They had to analyze the shifting genres in which Smith made his first statement on video, apologized on Twitter, and then apologized on video again. We analyzed why he and his employer ESPN utilized different media throughout the apology process. Students then had to analyze how Smith's ideas changed as he apologized and how these shifts in ideas led to shifts in purpose and audience.

Once we analyzed the revision of these texts, I asked students to brainstorm ideas for their essays. I was expecting many of the students to write on a revision to a law such as an

amendment, and some did (mostly concentrating on the Nineteenth Amendment interestingly enough). However, many took this notion of revision in a way I had not anticipated. Some decided to investigate the revision of one song to another song. In other words, many of the students wrote about sampling and remixing in music.

For example, one student concentrated on the revision of lyrics and beat from Marvin Gaye's 1977 "Got to Give It Up" to Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams' 2013 "Blurred Lines." This student challenged whether the song should be considered revision or plagiarism, specifically because in 2015, Thicke and Williams were found in copyright infringement of Gaye's work. The student argued that it was in fact plagiarism because there was not enough originality in "Blurred Lines" to make it only a revision. This was a place I had not necessarily thought the assignment would go, but it was fascinating how a student would see it that way. This particular choice of a revision project brought up compelling questions of what an "original" draft means.

Another student concentrated on the apology of Major League Baseball player Ryan Braun when he first stated that in 2011 he did not use performance-enhancing drugs and denied test results when he got caught using them again in 2013. This time, Braun came clean that he had used PED's throughout that time period. The student focused on Braun's initial denial and the purposes for the apology in 2013, especially in how it related to his being one of the stars of the Milwaukee Brewers.

Students also concentrated on state laws, such as gun laws in New Jersey that had been tightened in the past decade and revision of the legal drinking age to 18 and then back to 21. Other students wrote about the adaptations of *The Hunger Games* and *Harry Potter* from books to movies. No student wrote on a Wikipedia page which was surprising to me because it was an example in the assignment prompt, and I thought it would be a fairly accessible choice.

Response from Students

Out of the major assignments in the composition course, the rethinking revision analysis assignment was many students' favorite, most likely because it allowed them to explore topics in government and pop culture that were not frequently part of the composition classroom. Students were able to write about something that interested them. Going into this assignment, I predicted that most students would write about a digital text or a law because they seemed most clear. Ultimately, students were more interested in writing about pop culture than I expected them to be, in part, because I think they were interested in demonstrating what aspects of pop culture meant something to them.

The idea of analyzing from the "original" draft to the revised one also created an insightful point for students about what "original" means. Many of them stated they were not sure what counted as original with certain aspects of what they were analyzing. With songs that were revised or sampled, students wondered about the line between plagiarism and revision.

They also explored the role of authorship. Many were surprised through their research that most of the songs they wrote about were not written by the singers themselves, but by ghost writers. Students were curious about the extent of who should get credit when songs are sampled. They asked questions such as, "Should the ghostwriter receive some credit in the music video?" and "What kinds of credit was the original author getting financially?" The exploration of revision when it involved multiple authors allowed students to think about the role of peer review and conferences in their writing. Some began wondering, "If a peer reviewer gave them an idea, should this person get credit in their paper?" The assignment created a way to investigate originality and authorship as well as collaboration and plagiarism.

Other students in the class commented on how much time that revision can take, specifically for amendments to a law. Many students found it took years or decades for the

revision of a text to change based on the cultural attitudes at the time. These students also remarked on the tinge of power and authority attached to revision—noting that changes to institutional or cultural power structures require revisions to reflect those changes. They wrote narratives about the struggles people went through to change a law or apologize for an event. Through this work, students recognized that revision is difficult not only for them as composition students, but also for people they assumed had a great amount of authority.

Conclusion

I went into this assignment with a particular goal in mind: to encourage students to understand that global revision (not just close editing) occurs outside of the composition classroom all the time. What students took from the assignment was much more than I expected. They found ways to be creative and to discuss revision in more complicated manners, connecting it to time, purpose, audience, genre, originality, and power.

This work took a lot of scaffolding in order to avoid student confusion about what genre to choose. In class and for homework, students brainstormed what revision they would analyze. In class, I discussed individually with each student what they were working on during workshop time to make sure everyone was working with a text related to revision. At the beginning of drafting, some students were only summarizing the revisions and not analyzing them. In the future, I will spend more time modeling how to analyze for this particular essay.

I will also spend more time at the end of the semester asking students to reflect on what they learned about revision from the assignment. Their final portfolios contained more global changes than I expected, and I wondered if that was from the assignment, but I am not sure. Approaching revision as reflection is a process I want to focus on more the next time I teach this assignment.

The revision assignment clearly addresses instability in revision. Students were able to acknowledge that major authority figures and artists struggled with revision. They were also able to observe that revision is a part of institutional structures and pop culture in a way that defines their lives and helps them to understand revision in the classroom as well.

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Engaging Students With Assigned Books: Setting Goals and Assessing Outcomes

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Abstract
Many literature teachers include "choice" reading in their curricula to help students develop a love of books and become avid readers. However, whole class instruction remains the predominant structure in secondary English classes. Generating and maintaining students' interest in teacher-assigned texts is often a struggle for teachers, and books required for English can sour kids on the experience of reading "for fun." While teachers sometimes have their choices of texts for whole class instruction restricted by administrative or department mandate, this discussion will address how, when teachers are clear about their desired "big picture" outcomes for students and use those outcomes to drive classroom instruction and assessment, they may find their students more receptive to studying required texts.

Engaging Students with Assigned Books: Setting Goals and Assessing Outcomes

Just before school started in the fall, when my husband and I took our son, Elijah, to "Meet the Teacher" night, I knew 5th grade was going to be a good year for him.

"So what do you think of Señora Tacheny?" I asked.

"She seems really nice—and did you see her classroom library?!? It's awesome!"

Elijah is a reader, and the fact that his new teacher had her shelves stocked with *Percy Jackson, Harry Potter, Guardians of Ga'Hoole, Alex Rider, Hunger Games* . . .. Well, let's just say she had him at "Hello." If it were up to me, I think I'd keep Elijah in 5th grade forever. He reads voraciously during class time for Readers' Workshop, he doubles and

triples his 30 minutes of assigned reading homework each night because he just can't put his books down, he spends one day each week in a book club discussing a common text with a flexible small group of peers (grouped sometimes by interest and sometimes by ability), and his teacher reads aloud to the class daily. Before Elijah ever set foot in Señora Tacheny's class he was, of course, already turned on to books, but the literate environment she has created in her classroom has fed his passion and furthered his motivation for and practice of reading.

Forging Reading Connections

Language arts teachers at all levels want to forge these kinds of connections between kids and books because it's now common knowledge that the more students read, the better readers they become. To master almost any skill, extensive practice is necessary; reading is no exception. Back in 1988, in an extensive study of reading outside of school, Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding investigated a broad array of activities and their relationship to reading achievement and growth in reading. They found that the amount of time students spent in independent reading was the best predictor of reading achievement and also the best predictor of the amount of gain in reading achievement made by students between second and fifth grade. Remarkably, the highest achievers in fifth grade read books up to 200 times as many minutes per day than did the lowest achievers (p. 296). Developing good readers is not an end in itself, however, because other studies (Cullinan, 2007; Marks, McMillan, & Hilman, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 2007) indicate that reading achievement is related to school achievement generally. The more students read, the better they perform overall academically:

> Every measure that looks at pleasure reading and its effects on student performance on standardized tests of reading ability—*and* science *and* math—tells us that

> the major predictor of academic success is the amount of time that a student spends reading. In fact, the top 5 percent of U.S. students read up to 144 times more than the kids in the bottom 5 percent. (Atwell, 2007, p. 107).

Eager readers are good students, so when teachers can help students discover the wonder of books, they are equipping them for future academic success. As a former English teacher myself, however, I know there is another slightly selfish reason why English teachers want their students to connect with books: Strong connections evoke good responses. If students are engaged with their class readings, they will be more likely to actually complete assigned reading, have better attitudes about the readings, and participate in class discussion. Those discussions will necessarily be richer and more interesting—and therefore much more fun for us, the classroom leaders.

This is an exciting time for young adult literacy. Many kids are gobbling up books, most likely for a variety of reasons. It has now been over thirty years since Nancie Atwell (1987) published the first edition of her seminal text *In the Middle*, introducing her reading and writing workshop approaches to the nation. Her ideas about how to develop readers and writers have transformed pedagogy in countless intermediate and middle schools, including Elijah's. Students are being given time to read and the freedom to choose their books, and they are responding enthusiastically and becoming avid readers. The vast array of quality young adult literature available today probably plays a role, as well. Countless books and book series currently in print feature strong, believable young adult characters, compelling problems, and engaging action. Students can find characters their own age grappling with important, relevant issues in whatever genre they are drawn to—fantasy, mystery, science fiction, historical fiction, etc.

But what about those occasions when we want the whole class to experience a text together? Even Atwell (2007), who has written a book-length manifesto, *The Reading Zone*,

about the importance of connecting individual students with individual books they love, acknowledges the "benefits to older students when they spend some of their times as readers engaged with a smart adult around a significant—and age appropriate—work of literature" (p. 114). Studying texts as a whole class is still the predominant structure in secondary English classrooms, and teachers often struggle with catching and sustaining students' interest in assigned books. When a particular text becomes assigned reading, instantly it becomes more arduous and less fun to read, for, as Mark Twain (1979) writes in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, "Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and . . . Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do" (p. 22). When reading a book is an assigned obligation, it will always be more difficult to urge kids into Atwell's (2007) "reading zone," the intense, pleasurable involvement that readers experience when they are living vicariously through their books (p. 21).

As teachers, we want all of our students to enjoy the books in our curriculum, but we know that some (many?) will not. Adding to this teaching challenge is the fact that within most classrooms of students, there will be an enormous range of reading abilities and interests. How can a teacher successfully guide the striving readers and the high fliers through the same text required by the district curriculum? This is a question I was confronted with head-on recently when, as a part of a sabbatical from my teacher educator position at St. Olaf College, I reentered the secondary language classroom and taught *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Twain, 1979) to two classes of seventh graders. In some ways, *Tom Sawyer* is an excellent text for middle schoolers: the protagonist is their age, he's funny, he defies authority, and he gets himself into lots of trouble. However, the 19th century language is difficult for students to navigate, and even many of the stronger readers in my classes found their journey through the novel slow and laborious. I tried several strategies to support the students through the text: I read aloud large sections of text so that

students' comprehension would benefit from fluently, appropriately-inflected language; I previewed reading assignments so that students were familiar with the plot in advance; I encouraged questions and willingly cleared up any confusions, assuring students that I didn't expect them to "get" everything on their own; and I even skipped a few particularly dense sections.

Although my host teacher generously allowed me to teach two of her class sections autonomously, she had three other sections of 7th graders and wanted all of the students to "stay together." Thus, I needed to work within the established curricular and pedagogical structures. Some practices—like devoting the majority of class time to reading and discussing the text, and writing journal entries that previewed ideas in the upcoming daily reading—felt good to me. Others, however, did not. For example, I struggled with assigning students numerous "study guide" questions for each of the thirty-five chapters, having students study vocabulary words divorced from their textual context, and administering a lengthy unit test that focused largely on plot details. Many students struggled, too, with the volume and sort of work required. What was my rationale for assigning these activities? What did I *want* students to learn? What *were* students learning? How was their understanding of and appreciation for *Tom Sawyer* enhanced by this work? Was their experience with this text a positive or negative reading experience? After much thought, I discovered I didn't have good answers for these questions. I realized that the underlying source of my discomfort in the classroom was my lack of vision for the unit. I lacked a clear rationale for many of the learning activities I was assigning students because I lacked a clear picture of what my instructional goals were.

Setting Learning Goals

Staying just one step ahead of the students is a far too common reality for hurried, harried, overworked teachers. Some of us tend to live day-by-day, asking each evening: What

am I going to do in class tomorrow? If we're more organized, like my host teacher, we may plan the whole unit in advance, knowing which chapters we'll assign each day and what learning activities and assignments will transpire over the course of several weeks. However, even when we are well-planned, our teaching may tend toward "getting through the book" without really thinking about our purposes and goals for teaching it; I argue that when we lack these big picture goals, we can unintentionally kill students' connections to, and aesthetic enjoyment of, the books we assign. Identifying teaching goals and objectives should not be just an academic exercise required of student teachers and novices in the field; it is an essential practice that guides meaningful instruction for all teachers.

Teachers need to know—and need to articulate to their students—*why*, for example, the class is reading *Tom Sawyer*. Besides simply getting through the pages of the book or gaining familiarity with a "classic" work of literature, what are the desired, worthwhile outcomes of the unit? If we fail to plan with our intended outcomes in mind, we can easily busy students with tasks that actually run counter to meaningful learning. When we get caught up in mundane assignments, asking students to identify characters, relate who did what to whom, define vocabulary words, etc. we unintentionally send the message that understanding literature is all about extracting facts and that reading literature in school has nothing to do with enjoyment or pleasure. Reader response theorist Louise Rosenblatt (1994) makes the distinction between reading a text for the enjoyment of the "lived-through experience"—reading aesthetically—and reading for information to be taken away after the reading—reading efferently. Although readers can adopt either stance and can shift back and forth between them when reading a text, Rosenblatt contends that literature is primarily meant to be read aesthetically, and we destroy its power and beauty when we approach it largely in the efferent mode.

By requiring my seventh graders to complete the lengthy, plot-based *Tom Sawyer* study guide, I was forcing them both to read for information and to interrupt their reading at frequent intervals, almost insuring that they would not enter Atwell's (2007) "reading zone" and engage fully in the world of the text. Further, I was sending the clear message that, when reading literature, remembering plot details is of primary importance. This message was reinforced by the unit exam, which required recalling information and operating almost exclusively at the "knowledge" level of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy instead of asking students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills. Although understanding a novel's plot is important base-level knowledge and can certainly serve as one instructional goal, alternative activities and assessments could address the facts in a more efficient, less burdensome manner. Well-crafted essay questions, for example, can assess basic knowledge and comprehension of a text, as well as students' abilities to analyze and evaluate it.

Simply wanting students to understand what a quality work of literature says is a spare motive for teaching a text; if a teacher or a committee has chosen to include a particular work in the curriculum, something more compelling should be driving the choice. Master teacher and English pedagogy expert Kelly Gallagher (2004) explains that we can ask students about what a text says to make sure they have literal-level comprehension, but that the teacher's job is to ask the deeper, more meaningful questions "What does it mean?" and, ultimately, "What does it matter?" (pp. 86-91). A month after teaching *Tom Sawyer* to seventh graders, I had the opportunity to teach *Slaughterhouse-Five* (Vonnegut, 1999) to tenth graders. This time I spent significant time considering my goals for student learning before planning unit activities and assessments. For example, helping students through the complicated, disjointed plot was definitely a goal of mine, but I also wanted them to understand how the jumbled nature of the text sheds light on its themes, how structure contributes to

meaning. To get at "What does it matter?" I framed the novel study with the question "What are the costs of war?" and we returned to this question frequently throughout the unit.

Gallagher (2004) asks himself each time he begins to teach a novel: What do I want students to understand about this book that they probably won't get on their own? (p. 198). Teaching *Slaughterhouse-Five,* I wanted students to be able to discuss physical, intellectual, and emotional costs of war, and I wanted students to be able to explain various ways in which the author, Kurt Vonnegut, conveyed his anti-war message in the book. Once I identified the significant, "big picture" learning outcomes, I could then make sure to plan student activities and assignments that aligned with my goals. For example, I began the unit with an anticipation guide that asked students to consider their opinions about issues that would surface in the text (e.g., the necessity of war, the justifiability of killing civilians, the possibility of intelligent life on other planets, etc.), and then revisited their responses after students completed the text. Because the plot was complex and did not follow a chronological order, after the first couple of chapters I guided students in the creation of a timeline to help sort out meaning at the literal level. I also created a study guide for students that provided them both with a place to keep track of characters and a resource for contextual information about the work and thematic commentary. Students were not required to respond to traditional "study questions" for each chapter; instead, to prepare for our Socratic seminar discussions, students needed to come to class on seminar days ready to contribute two higher-order thinking questions. Further, students participated in group work which culminated in a class presentation on one theme, motif, or symbol in the novel, elements that they were later asked to discuss on the unit exam.

We need to have a clear vision of the "take away" learnings that we want students to retain years after they leave our classrooms. Identifying our desired outcomes for students will remind us why we are teaching a text and will help us

focus our instruction on what Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005) call the "enduring understandings" (p. 17). In five years, regardless of the quality of our teaching, students will not remember all the characters and plot details, but these are not key elements of an aesthetic encounter with literature. We want them to engage fully with the text during the reading experience, then wrestle with the big ideas afterward, and when we focus our teaching on these big ideas, the learning will have greater staying power.

Assessing Learning Outcomes

After identifying a clear vision of the desired learning outcomes, the next task for teachers, according to the "Understanding by Design" model of instructional planning developed by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), is planning how those goals will be assessed. Wiggins and McTighe argue that learning is enhanced when teachers follow the principles of "backward design" (p. 17). The typical planning sequence for teachers is to ponder daily learning activities first, then later, when the unit is winding down, to think about assessment. When this order is turned upside down, however, and teachers decide upfront—before they ever begin teaching—how they will assess students' understanding, the instruction will likely be more aligned both with the assessment and with their goals for the unit. Only after teachers have established the desired learning outcomes for students and determined how they will check for understanding should they think about planning learning activities and consider the "What am I going to do in class tomorrow?" question. When the learning targets and assessment tools are clearly identified first, teachers can make sure their instruction aligns with their goals.

Unfortunately, this kind of alignment is not generally the rule. We tend to make assignments without really thinking about whether or not they support our objectives. Instead, we need to ask ourselves whether or not the study guide questions, for example, are helping students achieve the essential learning

outcomes. If they are not, we need to develop different activities that do. Similarly, we need to ask whether or not our assessments are giving us information about how well students are achieving the unit objectives. If our assessments do not align with our objectives, we need to revise them. In conversations with my seventh grade host teacher, I learned that her major goals for teaching *Tom Sawyer* were for her students to "get the funny parts," to compare and contrast Tom's life and culture to their own, and, because they had read *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens, 2000) two months prior, to make connections between the lives and writings of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. As I observed her fifth hour class every day before teaching the sixth and seventh hours myself, I could see these goals reflected in her teaching. Her comments and explanations, class discussions, and journal prompts were aligned with these goals; however, other activities were not. A major purpose of the random study guide checks and the weekly vocabulary quizzes, for instance, was related to "needing to have more grades in the gradebook" and not to assessing progress toward "big picture" learning objectives.

But *can* more skills-based objectives like vocabulary building be desired learning outcomes when exploring literature? Of course. Learning literacy skills within the context of literature study and authentic writing is far superior to learning them in isolation, but it is important to analyze the learning activities to make sure that they indeed *do* actually help students acquire the desired skills. To illustrate, asking students to memorize the meanings of words that appear in *Tom Sawyer* without actually looking at where and how the words are used in the text will neither help students understand the novel nor teach them how to use the words appropriately in their own contexts.

Aligning instruction and assessment with clear learning objectives allows teachers to monitor their teaching effectiveness, and it affords them the opportunity to use formative assessment during the unit to meet students' learning

needs. Formative assessment lets teachers know whether or not their instruction is, indeed, inching students toward the unit outcomes, and if student performance is found lacking, teachers can use the assessment results to change course—before the final exam when the learning window is usually closed. Planning and modifying teaching based on student assessment evidence is a key instructional skill that is simplified when teachers are certain of their desired learning outcomes.

Engaging Students with Assigned Books

When teachers keep their eyes trained on the "enduring understandings" they want their students to take from their classroom literature experience, and these outcomes drive pedagogy and assessment, students may be more likely to connect with assigned books. Using literature to explore compelling questions like "Why do kids rebel against authority figures?" or "What are the costs of war?" is more engaging for students than bogging them down with assignments focusing on minutia. When we ask students to adopt an efferent stance to the literature read for English class and complete assignments that are not connected to enduring understandings—privileging "correct answer" questions, worksheets, and exams instead—we risk destroying connections to and enjoyment of the books we assign.

Students have a wide variety of tastes when it comes to literature—just as teachers do. Not every student will like or connect with every book that we assign, and we shouldn't make that a goal. We should, however, do what we can to lessen the chances that students will tune out their required readings completely and view English class as a busywork-intensive sentence instead of an opportunity to read and discuss significant texts. A student can feel ambivalent about a book, yet still engage with it and have a meaningful learning experience if we have clear goals that focus on the big picture and we assess and teach in accordance with those goals. For

example, on the *Slaughterhouse-Five* unit evaluation form, one student wrote "I would have preferred a different book; I disliked it!" However, she also responded, "I learned not to take stuff so literal . . .. I like that you make us think." Students may not love whole class books like they do "choice" books, but upfront planning that aligns instruction with assessment and focuses on enduring understandings could, at the least, decrease the chance that reading motivation is squelched by English class. If we're lucky, teaching to enduring understandings might even increase the likelihood that students leave class with a positive experience that furthers their motivation for and practice of reading.

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