The English Record

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The New York State English Council
Editor
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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 *nysecteach.org* for more information.

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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 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 be returned.

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Kossandra Mueller is an 8th grade student at Van Wyck Junior High School in the Wappingers Central School District. She loves to draw and use her imagination, and hopes to one day pursue a career as an artist.

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Letter from the Editor
Lou Ventura

On August 21st while much of the world was anticipating a solar eclipse ranging from total in places like Nashville, Tennessee to partial in our extreme southwest corner of New York State, I, my wife Sally, and Marcia Kelly (more on Marcia later) along with five dedicated Olean High School students were heading up Rock City Road in Olean, NY to visit an empty cabin tucked away in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains.

While you could never tell from looking at it today, the cabin was once the playground, writing commune, and spiritual retreat for some of the most important American minds in art and literature in the early 20th century. Men like Ad Reinhardt, whose *Abstract Painting* now hangs in the Museum of Modern Art among the Rothkos and Pollocks; Thomas Merton, eventual Trappist monk and one of the most influential and widely published spiritual writers of the 20th century; and Robert Lax, Marcia Kelly's uncle, who poet and critic Richard Kostelanetz writing for the *New York Times Book Review* in 1978 called, one of ". . . America's greatest experimental poets … the last unacknowledged – and, alas, uncollected – major poet of his post-'60s generation." Marcia's father, and Lax's brother-in-law, Benji Marcus would let Lax and his friends, on summer breaks from Columbia University, stay at the cabin where they listened to jazz, held novel writing contests, and built treehouses, the kind of summer antics one would expect from college students and budding geniuses.

So our outing was part homage to the end of the summer, part acknowledgement of the beginning of the school year, but most importantly, another activity sponsored by the Lax Club, a student group dedicated to the study and continued interpretation of the poet's work. Marcia, as usual, was more than generous with her time and enthusiasm, all of us working

together to make sure her uncle's work lives on in the hearts and minds of Olean's young people.

I was a little disappointed that our turnout wasn't better, but several interested members decided to go to special eclipse viewing events instead. Not wanting students who decided to come with us to lose out, I ascended the hillside with a homemade eclipse viewer in hand, prepared to see the sun. When the time came, we left the cabin and looked through the make-shift viewfinder peering at the bright but diminishing dot shining against the side of a modified cereal box. The eclipse made this experience more than just another English teacher moment. The cabin visit turned out to be a completely serendipitous juxtaposition between two seemingly unrelated subjects: science and the arts.

Much has been said lately about STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and even more lately, maybe even grudgingly, about STEAM (science, technology, engineering, ART, and math). This movement has now taken on the importance of all things educational, championed not only by educators, but politicians, and maybe most importantly, by the business world, which in turn may account for the political interest. And let me be clear; I have nothing against science, technology, engineering, and math or the jobs we've been promised they'll produce. Our students do need to be prepared to fill society's need for well-educated engineers and scientists, but the very fact that the arts were originally left out of the equation makes their inclusion feel like something of an afterthought, as though science and math will finally find some useful and practical applications for the arts in the "real world." This approach makes me wonder if our STEM counterparts may not be completely clear about what we English teachers do, which is as much our fault as anyone's.

Which brings me back to Lax –

During the early part of Lax's career, he had some success with conventional forms and content, publishing several pieces in *The New Yorker,* as sure a sign of validation in the poetry world then as it is now, but Lax eventually abandoned conventionality, and the United States, for the Greek Islands, and a more experimental kind of poetry. Among Lax's greatest poetic achievements is his long minimalist poem "Sea and Sky" published in 1965. The poem consists of single words, sometimes single syllables, written in long, vertical columns down the center of page after page of description of landscape and seascape, all dependent on careful, thoughtful, precise observation of the natural world, the world he observed every day on the Greek Islands of Patmos, Kalymnos, or whichever one he might be calling home at the time.

How different is that from what Darwin did in the Galapagos Islands, where his theories and his ground breaking work *The Origin of the Species* took shape dependent on careful, thoughtful, precise observation of the natural world, from finches to tortoises? How different is that from what Galileo did, observing heavenly bodies through his telescope to change the understanding of how the solar system functioned? How different are Lax's observations from Audubon's, Tesla's, Einstein's, or Hawking's? Scientific theory depends on some of the same skills as any artistic process: observe, record, innovate, create. The fact that the artist and the scientist may end up in different places, and may be functioning with different goals in mind, doesn't mean they aren't, in some very fundamental way, about the same business: observe, record, innovate, create.

As we prepared to leave the cabin that day, I was struck by one more serendipitous connection between science and the arts. Lax's most important work before he decided to dedicate himself to the minimalist, concrete poems of his Greek Island period, was a long poem that used traveling circuses as its backdrop and primary source of imagery,

circuses he learned to love during his boyhood in Olean, a poem R. C. Kenedy, British art critic and one time curator of London's Victoria & Albert Museum, called "in all probability, the finest volume of poems published by an English-speaking poet of the generation which comes in T. S. Eliot's wake."

The title of that poem? *Circus of the Sun.*

Circus of the Sun indeed –

Members of the Lax Club at the cabin: Taryn Nasuta, Grace Ventura, Zayba Chauhdry, Julia Rakus, Natalie Sova, Sally Ventura (moderator), Lou Ventura, Marcia Kelly serving as photographer

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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Dr. Ruth E. Everett Award:
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 in their student teaching or intern programs.

In celebration of the programs and awards' recipients, **NYSEC** holds an Awards Ceremony every year at the **NYSEC** Annual Conference, held in Albany. All mailing, due dates, membership forms, and application information are also available online at **ww.nysecteach.org.**

The English Record Receives 2017 NCTE Affiliate Journal Award

We are pleased to share the news that NYSEC's journal, *The English Record,* was one of six affiliate journals to receive the NCTE Affiliate Journal Award for 2017.

The award committee cited the spring 2017 issue (vol. 67, no. 2) for its "excellent variety in approaches and genres," and writing that was "clean and clear throughout" with "several well-developed articles that represent critical thinking and thoughtful insight" as well as the "inclusion of a few true research articles, each with a clear connection to classroom practices."

The editors would like to thank all those involved in the work of the journal, especially our dedicated review panel and our contributors, whose professionalism inspires them to share their work with our readers.

The affiliate will be honored in November during the NCTE Annual Convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

Did you know that

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Quivers, Parties, and Eco-Systems: Classroom as a Culture in Pre-Service Education

Charles Howard Gonzalez
University at Buffalo

Abstract
The purpose of this research was to discover what an educator must do to turn a space, specifically an English Methods classroom, into a culture. Findings revealed that when the instructor introduced an open space in his classroom, it created an atmosphere that allowed the pre-service teachers to open up to each other and eventually discover intersections in their identities. One must allow for an open space with students in order to transform the classroom into a living, breathing culture.

Quivers, Parties, and Eco-Systems: Classroom as a Culture in Pre-Service Education

Today's students are no longer only products of their immediate community; they are influenced by social media, video games, and a number of other means. At the same time, many teachers do not live in the same neighborhoods as their students or the schools in which they work. As a result, individuals are "less likely to be products of a stabilized and mostly homogeneous local culture" (Fecho, 2013, p. 118). For teachers and students, the classroom can now function as another community and culture. The design of the classroom is an important aspect to learning. The *space* in which learning occurs is just as important – if not more important – than *how* one teaches. Some of the best teachers situate their classrooms

as an extension of the community in which it is located. This is something Dr. Rock Stanton, the subject of my observations, did on a regular basis. His class could see he was hyper aware of where he was teaching and that location was very important to him.

The context of a classroom can be local or global when using technology as a learning device. There are new ways of learning that are "not necessarily connected to academics or schools" but are "just as special, technical, and complex as academic and school ways." These new ways are "connected to contemporary digital technologies and the myriad of popular culture and specialist practices to which they have given rise" (Gee, 2004, p. 2).

Research by critical pedagogy scholars has given significant consideration to the relationship between the everyday activities of students and the "cultural politics of schooling" (Hill, 2009, p. 250). Scholars (e.g., Kellner,1995; Giroux & Aronowitz, 1991) have maintained that for teachers to start to understand the outside-of-school lives of their students, classroom activities must include the everyday lives of all members of the classroom. Traditional classroom design insinuates a teacher-centered environment and allows educators to take an authoritative stance while students "sit in rows facing the front, the teacher's desk and whiteboard" (Cozza, 2010, p. 89). The student's position prevents the teacher from fully partaking in the class or feeling part of the community because of the distance between the students and the teacher.

Cozza's (2010) research informs us of the importance of classroom environments. The physical set-up of a classroom can "affect interactions between students and the teacher during class, as well as interactions among students, and can hinder

class discussion" (p. 93). In a student-centered environment, it is important that all members of the classroom face each other—especially during class discussions. Class discussion is necessary for a successful student-centered classroom because "students should be able to share their ideas with the teacher and their classmates, rather than having the teacher lecturing or talking the entire class period" (p. 93). The design of this learning space should allow for everyone to collaborate by working in cooperative learning groups or pairs on learning activities. All members of the classroom should be encouraged to take control of the space they share.

Educators, with the help of their students, can transform their physical space into a place where they can become a close-knit community. The term *culture* has anthropological and biological connotations: the anthropological view is a shared way of life, while the biological definition of culture is an instrument in which items are grown (Eisner, 2002). Seeing the classroom as a culture can ensure all members of the classroom get the most out of their experience. In order to have shared experiences, the members of the classroom need to connect by communicating their ideas, feelings, and personal stories (Eisner, 2002). Through these shared experiences comes a sense of community. The classroom can be a culture where both teachers and students grow—physically, mentally, and emotionally—into something better.

For Dr. Rock Stanton, and many educators like him, creating a space for students to grow and connect with other members of their classroom is one of many essential functions of being an effective teacher. As I entered into this project, the following question helped guide my observations: What are the

techniques this educator of pre-service teachers (PSTs) uses to shape his classroom? For this study, I employed an approach that allowed me to take an in-depth look at Stanton within his classroom. Prior to my observations (Spradley, 1980), I planned to position myself as "participant as observer" (Glesne, 2011, p. 64), but due in large part to my preexisting relationship with Stanton, I grew into a "full participant" (p. 65). I was accepted early on as part of the class. He requested my feedback throughout the semester, and he often invited me to contribute when it came to the planning of lessons.

When I first met Stanton, he spoke about teaching as something that is "constantly changing and never the same thing for very long." He joked with his PSTs that he could teach a course on Advanced Teacher Cart Maintenance based on his first years as a teacher—instead of being assigned a classroom, Stanton was given a cart to push between five rooms. "That was my first taste of teaching as a professional and it has proven to be that ever since." To Stanton, teaching doesn't take place in a room, it happens in a space; he learned early on how to create a learning space no matter where he and his students happened to be: "I think good teachers thrive off of being able to change and adapt and do the best that they can do with what they're given and not feel beaten down by that or upset." As a result of this philosophy, when Stanton was assigned a room that seemed less than adequate for his Methods class, he did not let it impede the learning that would take place.

As he entered his English/Language Arts Methods course on the first day, Stanton appeared to be prepared for anything and everything. He was pulling a cart full of supplies with two bags draped over his shoulders and a pad of large

Post-It notes tucked under his arm. The tables ran down the center of the room, arranged in two rows so they faced each other rather than the front of the room; they were heavy and clunky and might as well have been nailed to the floor. The tables weren't the only issue. The room layout made it difficult to determine where the front of the room actually was. While the projector pointed toward the wall closest to the entryway, the large chalkboard and conference table were at the other end. The wheels on one side of the chalkboard were missing, making it crooked and difficult to move. None of this seemed to worry Stanton at all. He pulled a chair up between the rows of tables with his back to the deformed conference table and damaged chalkboard. He never sat in the chair; on it he placed a legal pad that had notes scribbled on the first few pages. He pulled out stacks of papers from one of his bags and placed them on the table to his right.

Review of Research

Creating the Other

In America, the middle class is becoming more and more diverse. The lower classes are falling deeper and deeper into poverty while the upper class is becoming wealthier and wealthier. The outcomes of America's diversity are also felt in our classrooms. As teachers remain as White as they've always been, the student populations of non-White students are beginning to outnumber their White counterparts (NCES, 2013). More and more students are being marginalized and Othered as populations become more varied. Schools are becoming "spaces where the Other is treated in harmful ways" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 26). Work needs to be done to reduce the amount of oppression that occurs in our classrooms. Although

marginalization based on race is widespread, this is in no way the only way students are oppressed by their classmates, their teachers, or their schools.

Educators like Stanton are interrupting and working against the culturally constructed models that have been in place for generations. More schools need to change the current atmosphere in order to create a culture of acceptance. When students begin to feel support and encouragement, they will begin to bring their true selves into the classrooms.

> The school needs to be an affirming space, where Otherness (such as racial difference or queer sexuality) is embraced, where "normalcy" (cultural or sexual) is not presumed, where students will have an audience for their Othered voice(s), and where the Other will have role models. (Kumashiro, p. 28)

Altering people's thoughts on oppression "requires disruptive knowledge, not simply more knowledge" (Kumashiro, p. 34). The power that comes from the same old knowledge can be quite crippling to this ever-changing population of students. Stanton's teaching practices assist his PSTs in discovering ways *all* of their students can work together and grow as a culture; schools should be affirming places, safe places, and dependable places for all students—not just a select few.

Domesticated Education

The use of standardized tests and scripted curricula has caused many teachers to focus on student results rather than building relationships. Recent educational reforms are transforming schools from supporting spaces into competitive market places. These changes are derived, in part, from the Neoconservative movement. Neoconservatives desire "a return

to discipline and traditional knowledge" (Apple, 2006, p. 9). They believe the actions of all teachers are "subject to much greater scrutiny" in the form of regulated autonomy. Some state governments in the U.S. have not only indicated the subject content that teachers are to teach, but "also have regulated the only appropriate methods for teaching" (p. 42). Neoconservative policies are based not only in a notion of returning to some long-gone past, but also in an irrational fear of the "Other." This fear is articulated by supporting "a standardized national curriculum, attacks on bilingualism and multiculturalism, and [higher] standards" (p. 39). These reforms are a way to manage a situation that Neoconservatives feel they lost control of decades ago. Their perception and outlook on America is filled with an overwhelming feeling of loss: "a loss of faith, of imagined communities, [and] of a nearly pastoral vision of like-minded people who shared norms and values" (p. 40). Neoconservatives believe the only way to change what they see in America is to force people (students and teachers specifically) back to a traditional way of life.

Finn (2009) defines changes like these as domesticated education. These reforms are "associated with working-class classrooms. Methods are traditional and teacher centered. Discipline and control of students is authoritarian. Ideal students are docile and obedient" (p. 255). This domestication of the education system that Neoconservatives are constructing "leads to functional literacy, literacy that makes a person productive and dependable, but not troublesome" (Finn, 2009, xvi). Troublesome students (and teachers) are how we got into this "mess" to begin with, according to Neoconservatives. The scripted curricula that these reforms are implementing in schools are domesticating for both teachers—who are made to

feel that they are not competent enough to create their own unit and lesson plans—and students—who are not given the freedom to think and talk about class content in an organic or personal way.

Communities of Practice

Through his teaching practices, Stanton models for his PSTs that they cannot just force their classroom into becoming an affirming or safe place; this kind of classroom is achieved when people are "offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common" (Greene, 1995, p. 39). Turning a classroom into a positive place is cyclical: Space to discover is created through the commonalities of everyone in the community and finding commonalities comes from discourse and discussion: "The pace and direction of growth are influenced by the features of the environment in and through which [students] live" (Eisner, 2002, p. 158). This shared way of life also needs space to grow. While the teacher may be the facilitator of creating an open space, students need to be involved in the development of this space.

Communities of Practice (COP) are "social learning system[s]" (Wenger, 1998, p. 1) and are a result of a positive classroom culture. Introduced to PSTs in teacher education programs to both model how they can be used and to emphasize how beneficial they are, the COP that PSTs and in-service teachers gravitate toward offer an opportunity to "learn about and situate their practice, facilitate relationships with professional colleagues, engender a sense of belonging, forge a spirit of inquiry, and impart a sense of professional competence and identity" (Heath & McDonald, 2012, p. 22). Heath and

McDonald facilitated cohort-based learning situations that were comprised of teachers who wanted to "deepen their knowledge and expertise" (p. 23). Heath and McDonald hoped that allowing educators to set aside some time to think and talk about teaching would inspire introspective practice that would extend beyond the usual meeting places. They anticipated this procedure would "facilitate the sharing of best practices among faculty and staff from different corners of the campus and provide a forum for the expression of common concerns and challenges" (p. 23). Many of the participants expounded on the "meaningful exchange between [their] colleagues" in their post-interviews (p. 24). When classrooms are given space to grow into COP, all members are encouraged to build lasting relationships that empower them to learn from one another by sharing experiences, stories, and ways to focus on chronic issues, difficulties, and problems.

Learning-Selves and I-positions

Part of becoming a COP is discovering who the learning-self (Phillips, 2010) of each member of the classroom is. Phillips explains that the learning-self consists of the mind, the brain, and the body in motion—all at once. Teacher education programs that create COP for their PSTs allow them to

> replay past memories of a learner, project these memories into the present as a student teacher, in relation with mentor teachers, teacher educators, children and adolescents; negotiating expectations and ideals, beliefs and values; while enacting a dream, fiction, and expectation of who a teacher is. (Phillips, p. 635)

Discovering the learning-self can often be a complicated endeavor for both teacher and student. Phillips's research suggests creating a new narrative of how teacher educators communicate and perceive PSTs may be in order. By creating conditions in which to "tolerate and value the uncertainty of development in teacher education," these courses become "transitional spaces, to practice a pedagogy of dilemma, openly discussing the influences of unresolved conflicts upon emerging teacher identity" (p. 642). Meanwhile, Fecho (2013) employs "I-positions" (p. 121) which serve to illuminate many of the aspects of one's personality—even the intersections of which an individual may be ashamed or would like to change. Through dialogue, people uncover the multiplicity of the positions they inhabit. As individuals develop relationships, they take part in dialogues of "conflict, criticism, agreement, [and] consultancy" (p. 118). I-positions can function as a lens through which we view ourselves.

Examples of I-positions could be

> "I as domineering,"
> "I as thoughtful,"
> "I as enjoying punk music,"
> "I as a dweller in cities." (p. 120)

Through writing and communicating, individuals can manifest their dialogic selves. If teachers "come to acknowledge the existence of dialogue across I-positions and external contexts," then they put themselves in line to "imagine ways that writing can extend and deepen those dialogues" (p. 121). Fecho used writing prompts to create conversations and full-class discussions that helped his participants discover their I-positions.

Discovering, and being aware of all aspects of student personalities or I-positions is important in developing a classroom into a culture. Often unbeknownst to them, adolescents reside in two significantly distinctive worlds: "the one outside schoolhouse walls, where they exercise a vast amount of self-determination, and the world inside high school walls, where virtually every phase of their lives is dictated" (Fredrickson, 1976, p. 2). With the help of their teacher, adolescents can recognize these worlds and all the pieces that make up these worlds; the sooner they can identify these worlds, the sooner they will be able to maneuver around them. Frederickson's solution to what he calls the "dejuvenilizing" of schools—a way to individualize programs and provide a sense of community to students—consists in an "open education" and "open space." This "openness" is a way to reverse students' "apparent counter-productivity" (p. 3). When students begin to engage in the content of class though discussion, the classroom starts to transform into a culture.

Putting Open Space into Action

Movitz and Holmes (2007) found that student engagement makes learning more meaningful as well. Their research focused on bringing learning centers from the elementary grades into secondary classrooms in order to determine why the excitement of learning centers was nearly absent from most high school classrooms. They explored how they could recreate the enjoyment and meaningful learning found in elementary classrooms in their own spaces. Although creating learning centers was hard work, students reaped the benefits of the "hands-on, minds-on, active learning" that occurred (p. 69). These learning centers included multi-

sensory and differentiated activities that helped meet the various student interests, ability levels, and needs. In these centers students engaged in "individual and group work requiring cooperation and collaboration" (p. 69). Movitz and Holmes sought profound activities that connected to educational content rather than "fun" or "cute" activities. Moving from one learning center to the next affects student attention, productivity, and success—as does the frequency of breaks in a lesson or class period.

The movement around the room between the learning centers—at one point Movitz and Holmes (2007) had seven different stations in the room—contributes to more than just the academic success of the students; it also influences positive social interactions from which students benefit. Adolescents "need to try out their ideas with [their] peers during this adolescent transition into adulthood; they are learning to fit into the adult world" (p. 69). The centers provide students with various occasions to build social skills and to interact with classroom content in new and fresh ways. These students were never told why each activity was important; the significance and meaning making was discovered through the hard work and learning that took place. "The use of learning centers added meaning and excitement to learning and taught students to assume responsibility for their success in the classroom" (p. 73). Because many of the students recalled learning centers fondly from elementary school, they were eager to participate in them.

Methods

Context of Study

This study was conducted at a large university in the Great Lakes region of the United States. I observed two semester-long Masters-level teacher education courses (*English/ Language Arts methods* and *Strategies in Secondary Schools*) designed for PSTs. These two courses have always been taught in conjunction with each other at this institution; in the year of my study, Stanton taught both courses.

The course, *Methods of Teaching English/Language Arts* (MOTELA), met once a week for three hours and focused on a multitude of approaches and teaching techniques to effectively prepare PSTs in teaching the secondary grades. Some of the topics covered were

- Planning and writing lessons and units
- Exploring uses of technology
- Understanding and developing methods of assessment
- Developing teaching materials and activities
- Providing for differentiated instruction for a diverse student population (including those with special needs)
- Learning about state and national professional organizations as resources for continuing professional development in English education

Artifacts

Field Notes. I attended every meeting of the MOTELA class, and took field notes by hand. These consisted of quotes that stood out to me at the time, as well as notes from the lesson or class interactions. These were used as a kind of annotation to be added to my transcriptions.

Audio and Video Recordings. All class meetings were audio and video recorded and the transcripts served as a way to return to Stanton's words. At the end of the semester I had about one hundred hours of recorded data. As a full participant in the class, I was not always able to see everything or hear everything that occurred, so the audio and video recording allowed me to revisit the class meetings. I transcribed the recordings weekly and began to develop a list of codes. My transcriptions took into account any and all gestures or other actions and movements found on the video recordings.

Interviews. During the first week of the semester, I conducted a pre-interview with Stanton, as a lead-in to the course and to understand his stance toward PSTs and his position regarding students from diverse backgrounds. We also had impromptu weekly meetings, usually the day before class to discuss the upcoming class. I documented these in my field notes. At the end of the semester I had an informal interview with Dr. Stanton that was audio recorded and transcribed.

Participants

Dr. Stanton. In our pre-study interview, Dr. Stanton identified as a White, middle class, teacher in his late thirties with ten years of teaching experience—first in secondary public schools and then at the university level. The PSTs in Stanton's course were all working toward certification in Secondary English/Language Arts. For a demographic description of the PSTs in MOTELA, see Table 1.

PST Pseudo-nym	Part of Prev-ious Study?	Sex	Race	SES	Raised	Other Identity Added?
Tiffany	N	F	White	Middle	Suburban	Lesbian
Jack	N	M	White	Middle	Suburban	---
Vanessa	N	F	White	Middle	Urban	---
Sean	Y	M	White	High	Urban	---
Natalie	Y	F	White	Middle	Rural	---
Zoe	N	F	White	Middle	Suburban	---
Ian	Y	M	White	Middle	Suburban	---
Ruby	N	F	---	Low	---	Algerian

Table 1 PST Description and Self-Identifications, including School Preference

Results

Teaching Through Metaphor

The ecologist, the archer, the movie producer, and the party host were metaphors Dr. Stanton used to help his PSTs find their own teacher-selves. From the first day, Stanton was committed to helping his PSTs grow into teachers. He positioned himself as an expert in his classroom, but he was not authoritarian. An essential aspect of his stance as an educator, and something he frequently attempted to instill in his class—particularly when it came to incorporating teaching methods—was connecting outside-of-school lives with the persona presented in the classroom in order to create a community in their learning space. Within the first hour of class, Stanton asked them to think about how they could make a difference in the world right at that moment. "Can we make people hear us, see us, know that we're in this classroom—how can we do that as a group?"

These kinds of issues were always on Stanton's mind, but especially when he was teaching. Throughout the semester, Stanton and the PSTs discussed how to incorporate things that were going on in their students' worlds into the content of the classroom. They tried to integrate the lessons and units with the "things that are important to the students, who they are as people, [and] where they came from." Stanton continued:

> Bringing those things into your classroom—constantly drawing those out of your students, constantly talking about big issues that are in the news, or that you know they are struggling with in their community—and using those things and leveraging them as well as the literature, as a way to really understand the content and the course… It will give them a better understanding of themselves and of the world and their possible role in the world, as they become adults.

By facilitating a space for his PSTs where they could contend with and discuss the big ideas he introduced to them, Stanton was modeling a mediated space of learning. His use of metaphor also assisted in creating this space.

The Class is a Culture. By comparing the culture of a classroom to that of an ecosystem, Stanton illustrated the importance of community building. On the first day of class he asked his PSTs to imagine the class as an enclosed environment. "You can do things to that environment that will negatively affect it, or you can do things to improve the environment to make it more suitable for life." As the class started to picture their space, Stanton explained that if they allowed for it, "magical things will happen." The mitigating factor in this environment is about the community that is built. "Things that you didn't think were possible can become

possible." Stanton exemplified this ecology metaphor of classroom culture every day, always pushing his PSTs to do the same in the lessons and unit plans they created for class, as well as in moving forward into their lives as teachers.

Teaching With Arrows. One of the first metaphors Stanton used to explain teaching was that of an archer. He explained "archers have different arrows for different jobs." Whether a squirrel or a deer or a turkey, there are different arrows for each. In one of his first guided imagery sessions of the semester he asked his class to imagine the quiver—the tube where archers keep their arrows: "I want you to have a teacher quiver." As Stanton guided his PSTs deeper into the imagery session, he asked them to visualize saving away the arrows that will be important in the future. These arrows, while they may not yet be ready to use yet, will "become gold later on." He urged them to start thinking like a teacher immediately. "Don't just put on your teacher hat when you come in for class. You are now and always will be a teacher." He urged them to keep these lesson ideas in a physical or digital space where they could be built on and assembled into "the perfect arrow for the perfect moment." Stanton whole-heartedly believed that teachers always think about teaching. The encouragement and support he offered his PSTs played a major role in how they constructed their teacher selves during the semester.

Host of the Party. Another metaphor Stanton used was teachers as hosts of a party. He was always up, standing and moving around the room, checking to see that everyone had what was necessary. He engaged with the PSTs and allowed them to provide their thoughts and opinions. Most importantly, he made sure everyone was at ease. By modeling this behavior to his PSTs, he allowed them to figure out the

best ways to accommodate their future students. Stanton explained that good hosts know everyone's background, likes or dislikes, as well as what every person needs. He asked the PSTs to picture their classroom as a dinner party. Tuning into the needs of everyone is important:

> I like to get people to talk to each other, so… maybe I'll have a certain seating order—because seating order can ruin a party. You don't want the two people in the room who hate each other sitting together.

From the questions and class activities, to the topics he discussed, Stanton always had a purpose for everything that went on in his classroom, in order to reduce any negative interactions and to ensure students enjoyed themselves. This metaphor came to life when, during their co-taught lesson, Natalie and Sean grouped the class members into specific groups in order to get the "best discussions" according to Natalie. They also wanted to get students away from working with their neighbors so they moved everyone around. While the idea of a party may seem like an easy-going activity, it takes work to be able to create the most dynamic seating arrangement.

Teacher as Producer. A third guiding metaphor for the class Stanton used was teacher as producer. As mentioned earlier, Stanton worked hard to bring the outside-of-school lives of his students into the classroom. Creating space for his PSTs could allow "students to take the class and go in a direction that they think is worthwhile, that they think is important to them." Seeing themselves as movie producers about a third of the way through the semester, established a creative tone to the class. Stanton believed that when teachers take on the role of executive producer, it helps make sure the

class is going in a worthwhile direction, but "it is important to let [the students] be the directors." In this case the students are the creators while the teacher just oversees what direction the students are going. The teacher should provide "wide paths toward something important or useful" but the students should figure out exactly where they're going, even if it is in the wrong direction:

> Going down a dead end might have a purpose. You might want them to get pushed up against something and realize, "Oh, we went the wrong way. We need to back-track and then go forward again in a different direction."

The producer should be aware of where the project or lesson is going, while not restricting it so much that the students do not have power to direct which way they think it should go. Stanton showed his PSTs ways of being conscious of what may happen if their classes moved in any direction and they responded by putting his metaphors into practice. When Zoe taught her micro-lesson, she allowed the class members to take the lead on deciphering a short story after she admitted that she "had a little of trouble" figuring out a passage. By confessing she did not have all the answers, the members of the class were given permission to take the discussion in a direction they thought it should go. This led to a very lively discussion that may not have occurred if Zoe maintained a strict control over interpreting the literature.

Building Community

Every day Stanton lived a real life version of his "classroom as ecosystem" metaphor with his PSTs. Stanton started modeling and discussing how to build their classroom

into a culture from the very first day: "I think spending time really thinking about how you are going to build a community in your class is really important. If you have a strong community, other things in your class will go well." They made his words their own in order to maintain "that community throughout the semester and school year and [do] things that help build that community." Through their activities, products, and lessons they created, they were able to avoid things that might damage their future ecosystems.

During Week 6 Stanton introduced his PSTs to some "how-to" guides on Imgur and other image sharing websites. In groups of two the class created their own how-to guides for community building. Stanton didn't put many restrictions on this assignment; his only requirement was that each pair build a visual guide based on the texts they were reading in class. In Stanton's open space classroom, the PSTs felt free to add in elements from class discussions or online conversations, which they understood to be just as important as the texts they were reading.

While this activity was about building community in the classroom, it also reinforced a core concept regarding literacy tools in the classroom. Stanton believed teachers should try to shift between low-tech tools and high-tech tools, depending on need. Typically he would have started by handing out big pieces of poster paper to hang on the walls, but this day's assignment was to create a digital guide. According to Stanton, "those pieces of paper do not have a life outside of the class." He explained why in some cases it is important to create a virtual guide:

> If we make something that's digital . . . you can print it, you can see it in the future, you can share it with

> your students, you can share it with other teachers, it will be more alive.

Stanton's modeling of multiple composition tools in the classroom helped the PSTs consider outcomes when it came to lesson and unit planning.

One example of creating community came through the "how-to community guides." During the Week 6 assignment, Stanton asked his PSTs to build the how-to guides for community building in small groups of two or three. He didn't put many restrictions on this assignment; his only requirement was that each group build a visual guide based on the texts they were reading in class. He also told the PSTs they should feel free to add in elements from both in-class and online conversations, which they all understood to be important. With their future classrooms in mind, these PSTs created how to build community guides that accomplished two tasks. First, the project considered their students' out-of-school lives and second, it encouraged the PSTs to reflect on their teacher selves. The PSTs created a wide range of products—from a slide show to a digital poster to a process flowchart. Each of the guides reflected a fondness toward building a community in the classroom. Sean and Zoe created a flowchart (Figure 1) that described the tasks the teacher and students could take in order to build a community. When they presented this guide to the class, Zoe explained that "membership [in] the community is determined by participation in mutual pursuits; these shared activities manifest in academic events and social worlds." She explained that the social worlds "inform authentic co-learning between teacher and student" and that the academic events are "rooted in the authentic co-learning." Zoe and Sean's guide

presented multiple pathways for this co-learning to build identities for the group through individual growth.

When I asked Sean and Zoe to revisit this guide at the end of the semester, they indicated that most flowcharts have arrows to show an order of things, but theirs did not. Sean told me that flowcharts without arrows "don't always work in a bidirectional sense, but this one does." Zoe felt that the absence of arrows keeps it from becoming a prescribed order of things. There are many ways to build a community and this shows a variety of ways, according to Zoe and Sean.

Creating Space

Stanton showed his PSTs the characteristics of creating positive space early in the semester. His awareness of creating space included many different strategies, all of which involved students taking control of the classroom in a very inclusive and positive way. He advocated for getting students out of their seats and moving around the room, rather than interacting from a static position. When PSTs presented their micro-lessons between the third and tenth weeks of the semester, it was their first opportunity to teach the class. His critique was always forthright and honest, but was never imparted in a harsh manner. A great example of this comes from his evaluation of Ruby's micro-lesson. Stanton assisted in the continual creation of community by giving suggestions of how to bring her students' out-of-school lives into the foursquare activity she used. His critiques worked to assist both the individual teaching and the other PSTs watching and taking part in the lesson.

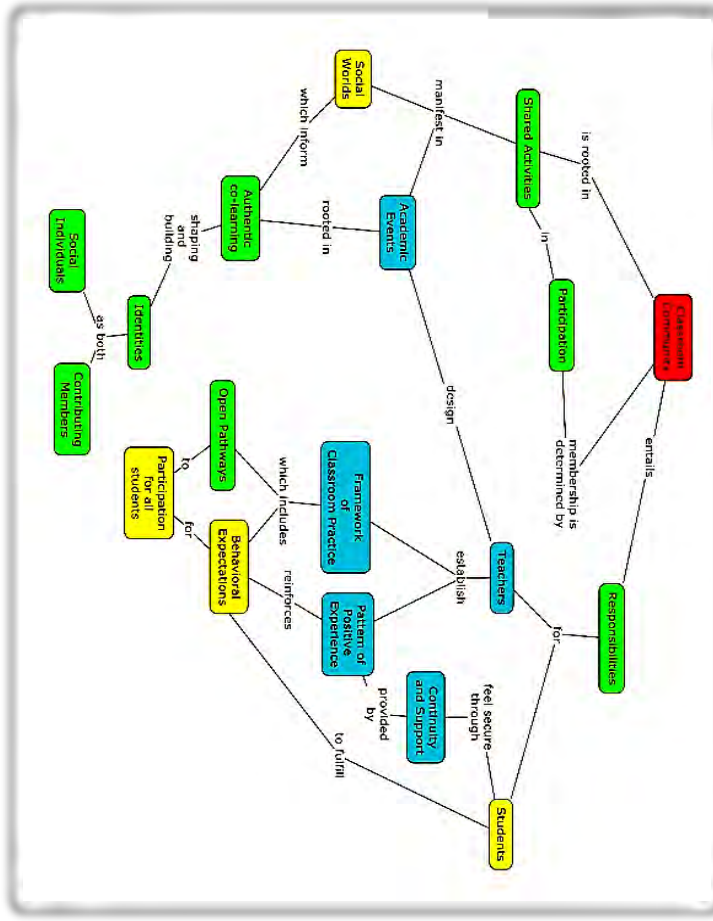

Figure 1. Zoe and Sean's "How to Build Community" visual.

Stanton started his analysis by letting Ruby see that there was little space for the students' own experiences in her lesson. "What I would have loved to [see] was something where they have a chance to think about their own lives, things that might represent bigger things." He then posed questions to get her thinking about parts of her own life and items in her house. "Think about the things on the walls; is there anything that has a greater meaning beyond just the object?" At this point he addressed the rest of the PSTs:

> Always start with the student's experience and always go back to it. Always start there and then expand out from it: from the way they're interpreting the world to what else is going on—you want to grow it out from the insides of your students.

By describing a back-and-forth dynamic—an expanding lesson creation—Stanton reveals a functional technique his PSTs can implement to make space for their students' lives in the classroom.

At one point in the semester Stanton noticed many of the PSTs addressed a lot of questions to the online discussion board about Digital Video (DV) and whether DV composing could be considered an authentic assessment. He took part of the next class to discuss this. Drawing on his own teaching experience, he suggested that DV "opens up a realm of possibility in my classroom." Stanton explained that he did not just use DV as a fun activity in his classes; as a teacher he embraced a DV composing stance. He believed in giving the members of his class a choice and letting them build off their own knowledge. The nature of the English/ Language Arts class is that "not every assignment is going to be something students are going to want to keep forever and show their

friends" but, he explained, "you can make them move closer to that direction [with DV composing] as opposed to going the other way."

The metaphors Stanton discussed with his class in addition to the classroom tools he modeled, all have a way of creating an open and positive space for students in the classroom. Strategies like these have major effects on the kinds of teachers his PSTs will become. By being host of his own party or the executive producer and facilitator of the PSTs' learning, Stanton created the perfect mediated space in which everyone could contribute and participate.

Classroom as Culture

Although the PSTs did not have their own classrooms yet, Stanton gave them many opportunities to make their shared space their own, starting with their micro lessons and going all the way to the end of the semester when they all presented their unit plans. By giving them so many chances to think and act teacherly, the PSTs were able to pick up on the "magical things" Stanton told them would take place in the classroom when they started to imagine it as an ecological environment. They could really see how the classroom is a fragile setting: the slightest change could affect it. They also discovered that recreating setting after it has been disrupted, making it again suitable for life, is a difficult task. Stanton's words were coming true; when the PSTs put in the effort, things they didn't think were possible were becoming possible. By the time these PSTs were preparing to enter the classroom as student teachers, they all understood the true meaning behind this metaphor.

Suitable for Life. This was especially true when the PSTs started working on their classroom management plan—plans that assisted them in creating an environment "suitable for life." As one of the final tasks in Stanton's course, he assigned this work for a couple reasons: first, it was a fusion of all the topics he and the PSTs had discussed over the last fifteen weeks, and secondly, it served as a document the PSTs could use in both their student teaching placements and their own classrooms.

All of the PSTs composed their management plans using their unique voices. For example, Zoe's management plan was a direct result of the guided imagery sessions with which Stanton engaged the PSTs during the last third of the semester. After the first of these sessions, Zoe told me she had an eye-opening experience as she realized that she is a teacher who will have a "challenging classroom academics-wise," but also be a teacher who asks her students to be "a little more creative or expressive than they might be in other classes." Zoe began her management plan with student expression. Considering the cumulative work during her semester, she focused on creating a dialogic classroom:

> [It] will be a dialogic learning community that emphasizes discourse and discussion in which student voices are fostered and encouraged… [It will] engage a variety of diverse voices and perspectives [and] function by creating and using student space.

Zoe's classroom management plan also addressed the learning space she hoped to create, "in which students feel safe and supported, and to which they can bring thought and material from their own lives." Allowing her students to bring out-of-school interests and culture into the classroom was something

that comes directly from Stanton's Mediated Spaces of Learning. Zoe and Ian are representative of all of the PSTs in their creation of Stanton's metaphor of the classroom as a culture. They all engaged with their future students in their management plans in diverse ways, using the tools they discovered during the semester, creating open space to nurture learning.

Discussion

Just as students do not arrive at school as blank slates, neither are classrooms vacant of historical and cultural elements; there are many features already in place when a teacher arrives on the first day of class. It is "shaped by practices long established by tradition and experience, practices that are unconsciously at work in the minds of both students and teacher as the activities of the class begin" (Kutz & Roskelly, 1991, p. 17). Stanton understood this and worked hard to impart this awareness to his PSTs. He did not use metaphors merely as a fun or easy way to describe what it was like to be a teacher; he passionately and ardently believed in these comparisons. He used these metaphors to help push against the traditions imbedded in the field of education. His methods course *was* an ecosystem. As mentioned earlier, Stanton spoke to his PSTs about how the slightest change could disturb the balance of the ecosystem. He paid strict attention each day to make sure the culture he was creating in his classroom was not negatively affected. Focusing on topics that may seem trivial to PSTs—such as how to organize cooperative learning arrangements—is important to the culture of class because students arranged into the wrong groups can often lead to chaos.

As a professor who truly understands what PSTs are going through and the anxieties and concerns they maintain—especially in their final semester before student teaching—Stanton creates open space for the members of the class to discuss their feelings which is an important part of being a teacher and a teacher educator. Stanton told me as I was preparing for this study "at least one person will cry during the semester—and it may be me." Stanton reiterated this point to his class on the first day. He was not wrong in this assessment; the PSTs' emotions always seemed to be in high gear throughout this course. Being aware that they would all be dealing with overcoming their anxieties was part of their journey to become teachers. The classroom space, when working as a culture, is the perfect place for everyone to examine and consider the feelings they are experiencing. All members should feel free to speak their minds or investigate something in their personal lives without repercussions from anyone in the room.

Providing a space for all members of the classroom to recognize and realize features of their identities by interacting with the world, their communities, and each other allows the learning space to become a place of transformation. This can be seen in the creation of the Classroom Management Plans Stanton's PSTs created. These were not simply disciplinary or behavior modification documents. These plans were a guiding thesis for how to approach their classes. In many ways, each Classroom Management Plan incorporated all the previous aspects of metaphor and learning tools. The PSTs were envisioning true transformation by thinking teacherly. Creating space for this to happen contradicts the domesticated education model (Finn, 2009) that exists in so many poor and

working class school districts in which students are taught to follow directions and taught how to work instead of how to think. The open space Stanton established in his classrooms flies in the face of the domesticated paradigm. One wonders how students attending school in a low socioeconomic neighborhood can truly understand democracy or independence or freedom when they are not allowed to speak or move without permission and when they are looked at as Other. Even though he never used these specific terms with his PSTs, Stanton allowed them to be socially just and provided a space in which to engage with a social justice pedagogy, by connecting with the out-of-school lives of the members of the classroom. He was working to dismantle the effects of social efficiency that still exist.

Conclusion

The PSTs learned from Stanton, not only through his words, but his actions as well. His metaphors went beyond being simply descriptions of what it is like to be a teacher; the PSTs were forming and understanding their own selves in the context of education. Their dialogue was transforming them into what Fecho (2013) would describe as an "I as teacher." He wrote that as we understand our I-positions and our surroundings, we are "simultaneously in dialogue with the many cultural contexts within us" (p. 118). Stanton was able to create a space that allowed his PSTs to try on and reject different identities until they ultimately took on the position of teacher.

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Creativity in Class: An Environment for Success

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Abstract
Creativity has become increasingly useful in a twenty-first century world in which career flexibility has been identified as an extremely valuable asset. However, the New York State common core English Language Arts standards, with respect to the most recent updates, do not include specific standards for creativity, and more specifically, creative writing. In this paper, I will consider whether the current standards foster or restrict an environment for creative writing. Because students must be able to adapt and innovate to succeed, creativity is essential in the classroom. As such, schools need to help students develop creative mindsets, and I will argue that there is flexibility in the classroom to enhance creativity.

A Space to Break the Rules

Recent studies have shown that in order to advance and grow in a technologically advanced job market, one's ability to creatively adapt to change is vital. According to a 2010 survey conducted by IBM which includes feedback from over one thousand Chief Executive Officers worldwide, creativity was identified as the number one asset for a twenty-first century employee. Likewise, in her article "Where's Literature in the Common Core" in *Educational Leadership*, professor Barbara Bartholomew (2012) notes that "amid the coming decades of continuing change . . . students will need to be equipped with not only technical know-how but also creativity, insight, adaptability and the capacity for expansive thinking to make and remake their professional identities" (p.85). This

"expansive thinking" can be nurtured in high school ELA classrooms through creative writing.

In high school, I was introduced to creative writing in an elective class. In this course, I was able to write in a different format than the general, informative writing assigned in other English classes. Because creative writing allowed me to break away from a more rigid, formulaic approach, I could use this freedom of expression to improve the quality of all my writing and communication. However, I was rarely presented with a creative writing assignment outside of my chosen electives. Without these classes, I would not have developed as strongly and freely as a communicator. Because creativity is necessary for an emerging professional's success in a rapidly-evolving, twenty-first century world, creativity, especially in reference to writing, should be nurtured at the secondary education level.

In an ELA classroom, creative writing assignments allow students to write in an unrestrictive environment and can support a natural and genuine expression of ideas. As I begin the process of becoming a New York State certified English teacher, I have become aware of the need for creative writing at the secondary level. After reading student work such as informative essays, the rigid format used to write these papers is apparent. With a few exceptions, the papers followed the given guidelines for the particular topic, but the individual authors' voices were lost in the generic formatting.

Instead of starting or ending a paragraph after five sentences, for example, a student should feel comfortable when elaborating or condensing certain points within the paper based on relevance to the paper's thesis. While using a specific format when writing papers is not detailed in the standards, the

standards are often applied in conjunction with these writing methods to prepare students for state-mandated assessments. Although using a general format for papers—such as the five-paragraph method—may be beneficial in the beginning stages of the writing process, students should aim for a more personalized approach to writing.

According to Dr. Sandy Pool (2017), a poet shortlisted in 2010 for the Governor General's Award for English Language Poetry and author of *Undark: An Oratorio* and *Exploding Into Night*, students need a "better background in contemporary writing." Pool (2017) said, "Many students enter the university classroom with a very set notion of what a poem 'is.' I spend a great deal of time trying to change that." At St. Bonaventure University, Pool's creative writing poetry class was the first class in which I felt completely free to take risks in my writing without the fear that distancing myself from a specific format would be detrimental to my grade in the course.

In the beginning of the semester, Pool discussed preconceptions about poetry such as the tendency to use rhymes. Then, we worked to create pieces that challenged these rules. By the end of the semester, I could more decisively critique my peers' writing. Furthermore, I could explain or even defend the creative decisions in my own writing, including informational pieces. This confidence to personalize my writing enabled me to approach all forms of writing with more purpose and a better understanding of how to express my ideas.

Classroom Application

As I began to familiarize myself with the NYSCC-ELA standards in my first high school teaching placement, I

immediately noticed that creative writing is not one of the writing standards. In fact, the word "creative" is only mentioned a few times, including in the appendices. While I have heard much talk about the standards—both the benefits of a state-wide, standardized education system and the supposed restrictiveness of the guidelines—I did not fully comprehend the basis of these views until I observed a classroom and planned my own lessons.

As I watched my advising teacher continuously plan and execute lessons, that supposed restrictiveness regarding the application of the standards was not apparent; the lessons never excluded a space for creative intuition. In fact, many of the lesson activities encouraged creativity. My advising teacher opened each class with a thought-provoking, open-ended question that either tied directly to the forthcoming lesson or was simply an exercise to allow students to think and write about an unconventional topic. However, as a pre-service teacher, my lesson plans could not be as flexible as my advising teacher's plans. His justifications for each lesson could build upon his previous experience and his understanding of each class's specific needs. In my situation, I had to rely more on the advice and resources available to me.

As I began to plan lessons for my edTPA, a document combining taped lessons and a written explanation, I needed to show alignment between my activities and the standards. This process demands an explanation for every teaching strategy included in the lesson, so I had to be prepared to defend any creative liberties in my plans. This intensive process encouraged me to find ways to implement creativity in conjunction with any chosen standard.

For instance, I used my advising teacher's strategy and opened my lessons with an anticipatory set, which often included a written reflection. I also used my advisor's method of presenting visuals and asking students to create sentences using both the visual and a specific vocabulary word. This encouraged students to explore and express their own choice of connectivity. While there is no creative writing standard specifically, teachers can introduce creative writing assignments in conjunction with any of the standards. While covering the standards and specifically trying to create an environment for creativity was challenging in the beginning, I felt more confident in my planning as I became more comfortable with the possibilities of extension for any chosen standard. Because creative writing allows students to understand themselves as unique thinkers, I knew that this more natural expression would be beneficial to all aspects of an ELA education and career readiness.

Intersections between Analytical and Creative writing

While creative writing and other activities used to encourage creativity can easily be included in lesson plans, the degree of emphasis is largely based on a teacher's professional judgement. If desired, a teacher could quite easily avoid creative writing completely, as it is not one of the stressed writing forms. However, Dr. Amanda Winkelsas, program director of adolescence education at St. Bonaventure University and former secondary English education teacher in New York City, is among those who believe in the importance of implementing creative writing at the secondary level.

According to Winkelsas (2017), "While there does seem to be an emphasis on nonfiction [in the current NYSCC-

ELA standards], I wouldn't agree that this means nonfiction at the expense of creative writing." Winkelsas (2017) also noted that writing forms can be intersectional. She said,

> We do have an obligation to prepare students for the kinds of literacies that are most utilized, which generally has to do with information and nonfiction texts. However, these informational and nonfiction texts rely on many similar skills and strategies as those required of creative texts. Especially as we look now at media and information literacy, writers in those areas are increasingly blurring the lines between creative and expository texts.

As such, all forms of writing can benefit from a creative approach. The ingenuity to create these works does not have to be reserved for creative writing classes; in fact, informational writing can be approached with an imaginative mentality.

In an article featured in *The Atlantic,* the significance of this intersectionality among different writing forms is clear. In her article "The Writing Revolution," journalist Peg Tyre (2012) argues that a solid foundation for writing is taught through an analytical approach, and creative writing is not the best way to produce proficient writers. However, Tyre (2012) allows for an expansion of this writing foundation. She includes other teachers' experiences in her article. For example, Tyre (2012) references Judith Hochman, a teacher who works in a writing-reform school in NYC. Hochman contends that while the basics of writing must be taught, creative expression can follow.

Hochman says, "The thing is, kids need a formula, at least at first, because what we are asking them to do is very difficult . . . later, when they understand the rules of good

writing, they can figure out how to break them." This ability to break the rules of writing is what contributes to a strong, multi-faceted writer. While this article does not advocate creative writing as the main approach to teaching writing, the skills to become an effective creative writer are built into the other forms of more informative writing; students just need the confidence and space to break away from these rules in the appropriate situations.

However, the space to break these rules of writing is not directly written into the NYSCC-ELA standards, and the most recent updates to the standards do not stress creativity significantly more than the original standards. According to a 2017 NYSED fact sheet regarding the most recent updates to the standards, the revisions to the writing standards "… include seven standards grouped under two strands: Text Types and Purposes, and Research to build and Present Knowledge." As stated in Appendix A of the writing section included with the NYSCC-ELA standards, "the Standards leave the inclusion and evaluation of other such forms [in addition to narrative writing] to teacher discretion" (p. 23). While this may seem distressing to those who fear that creativity is lacking in public schools, clearly the inclusion of creative writing skills is supported.

Conclusion

As noted by Pool, a narrow view of creative writing can be detrimental to a student's relationship with writing. While initially the lack of stress placed on creative writing in the standards may seem alarming, this vagueness surrounding the inclusion and approach to creative writing could create a less structured atmosphere within which students have more liberty to break away from the rules of informational writing.

With fewer boundaries and specific standards of proficiency, students can create pieces that are liberating divergences from expository writing.

Creativity demands higher-order thinking skills, and as students begin to test the boundaries of their writing, their message and purpose within each piece will be a clearer, more natural extension of their ideas. While the current NYSCC-ELA standards at the secondary level do not emphasize creative writing, the space to incorporate this form of writing in the classroom is available. In fact, teachers who exercise the freedom necessary to incorporate creative writing assignments could produce a classroom environment that lends itself to other exciting and innovative opportunities for their students.

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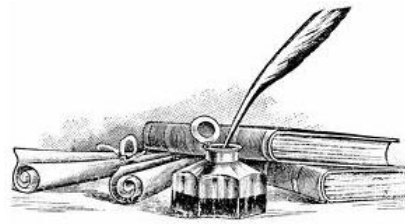
The English Record
Article of the Year



This award is given to one author that was published during the current volume year. Nominations will be sent by members of the blind review panel and executive board to the editor for selection. The award will be presented at the awards luncheon at the conference.

The Vol 67 winner is
Nicole Sieben
SUNY College at Old Westbury

Using Critical Literacy to Frame Students' Interactions with Complex Texts

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Medgar Evers College
Tiffany Labissiere
NYC Literacy Coach

Abstract
This paper describes how one high school teacher used the "Serial" podcast to foster critical literacy skills for secondary students, applying inquiry processes and scaffolding techniques to guide them through close reading and analyses of texts. By high school, student academic histories may include gaps in literacy development; some students can decode and read fluently but cannot analyze and synthesize texts to draw conclusions, or make inferences about the author's purpose—foundational skills essential to critical literacy. This study offers strategies for using critical literacy as an instructional approach throughout the planning and implementation of English language arts lessons.

Using Critical Literacy to Frame Students' Interactions with Complex Texts

Seeking out creative ways to engage struggling readers while supporting their literacy development is an ongoing quest for most teachers. The challenging part is finding ways to remediate and address foundational literacy needs while giving students access to complex texts – an expectation in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (2010). How do you provide struggling readers with access to complex texts while building literacy skills? This was the primary question we sought to answer through this action research project. We were

particularly curious about strategies to help struggling adolescent readers interact with and think critically about complex texts.

We used critical literacy as a framework for scaffolding students so they demonstrate proficiency above and beyond the Common Core State Standards (Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015). To literally and inferentially question texts, students question the author and interrogate the text (Fisher & Frey, 2016; Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015). Teachers select challenging texts that engage students so they are motivated to persist through the material. Using critical literacy as an instructional stance requires purposeful planning, teaching, modeling, and guidance (Lapp & Fisher, 2010). In this paper, we describe how one teacher implemented a unit that provided struggling readers in a high school inclusion English class with access to complex texts. First, we discuss the expectations for working with texts and what teachers need to consider when planning. Next, we discuss critical literacy and explain its benefits as an instructional approach. Then, we present an authentic example to show how this approach was used to support high school students. The paper concludes with recommendations and consideration for using the approach as well as future research.

Expectations for Working with Texts

Teachers strive to incorporate practices that develop students' literacy in authentic ways, while pressure from high stakes tests still prompts teachers to narrow the curriculum (Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015). A close look at the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (2010) shows expectations for students to be challenged to think critically, to evaluate sources, and to read a wide array of texts that examine social issues. These expectations are clearly identified along with

specific skills and suggested texts that can be incorporated into the curriculum. What is missing, however, are recommendations for strategies teachers can use to support students' development in these areas.

One goal articulated in the CCSS for students from grades 6 through 12, is that students should be able to analyze arguments and develop their own argumentative writing (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). As students move up the grades they should move beyond expressing an opinion on a topic and begin presenting an argument in which they identify evidence to support their assertions, which also include alternative perspectives (counterclaims) to their argument. Although students are often familiar with the persuasive genre when they reach high school, few can articulate a clear argument supported with objective evidence from credible sources. Most claims are personal and rely on emotional appeal. Drawing on students' academic background, specifically their knowledge of persuasion, helps build understanding of argument.

To meet the Standards, we need to consider two aspects of the English language arts curriculum: literacy demands (skills) and texts (content). Reading literature and informational standards requires that students know how to evaluate sources, synthesize information from multiple sources, and cite evidence to support their assertions. Writing and speaking standards require that students present clear, coherent ideas and engage in critical discussions with peers. Language standards require study of word choice and the impact of vocabulary on overall meaning.

A complex text can be more than print. Audio can also be used as complex texts to challenge students and foster critical reading and analysis. One way teachers can identify

complex texts is to use the Text Complexity Multi-Index (TCMI), a process for selecting the appropriate texts for students (Hiebert, 2013). This qualitative method diverges from other quantitative ways of identifying text levels, namely Lexiles (Hiebert, 2013). To help identify material that will challenge students, TCMI focuses primarily on the qualitative features that account for variations within the texts, namely meaning; content, cultural and literary demands; language (includes sentence length, vocabulary); and structure (Hiebert, 2013).

When teachers use TCMI, they must consider the specific needs of students as well as how to incorporate the texts as part of a diverse set of materials to support all readers (Hiebert, 2013). Therefore, teachers must know how to identify and select complex texts, specifically by examining text features such as "text density, challenging text structures and discourse, use of unfamiliar or archaic language, and extensive background knowledge demands" (Fisher & Frey, 2016, p. 403). Helping students read and understand complex texts is possible when teachers transform their instructional practice.

One challenge is that teachers struggle to find ways to foster students' close reading of complex texts, particularly "how best to support their most challenged readers, who are performing well below grade-level expectations" (Fisher & Frey, 2016, p. 404). Close reading is not new to literacy instruction (Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015), but close reading is often taught in isolated lessons (Fisher & Frey, 2016). To address this issue, teachers need to think strategically about text selection and opportunities for students to interact with texts on different levels across genres, particularly for those students reading below grade level. An approach to teaching complex texts at the elementary level is to use

- *Learning intentions*: daily goals communicated and explained to students throughout the lesson
- *Teacher modeling*: teacher thinks aloud to show students how teachers navigate complex texts
- *Close reading*: students actively read, re-read, and mark up the texts
- *Scaffolded reading*: Small group instruction to provide guided practice and teacher prompts
- *Text-based collaborative conversations*: peer-to-peer discussions about the texts
- *Wide reading*: independent reading of teacher-approved texts; student accountability reinforced through reading logs and response journals.

(Fisher & Frey, 2016)

Critical Literacy as an Instructional Approach

Although critics may argue "critical literacy … appears to lack a consistently applied set of instructional strategies that would mark it as a coherent curriculum approach" (Behrman, 2006, p. 490), some core practices exist in critical literacy classrooms. A review of the literature provides an overview of common elements found in critical literacy classrooms:

- Read supplementary texts
- Read multiple texts
- Read from a resistant perspective
- Produce counter-texts
- Conduct student-selected research projects
- Take social action

(Behrman, 2006).

Critical literacy asserts that students are active participants in their learning because they engage in problem-posing and problem-solving. Building on Freire's work

(1983), this perspective takes a social justice stance by positioning "literacy as a tool for individuals to become empowered by questioning texts" (Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015, p. 9). Therefore, teachers and students address or explore the transformative nature of literacy and its role in galvanizing change through social action. Texts spark discussions and move students beyond literal interpretations towards debates about social issues (Freire, 1983).

In classrooms that foster critical literacy, teachers and students closely examine a myriad of texts to construct new understandings as they try to explain larger issues of social justice (Gainer, 2010; Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015). In these instances, teachers and students engage in inquiry in order to propose solutions to societal issues (Behrman, 2006), to consider the socio-political implications of counter-narratives, and to study how perspective can be shaped by language (Behrman, 2006; Gainer, 2010; Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015). Students begin to understand that texts do not exist in isolation (Gainer, 2010; Lapp & Fisher, 2010).

One goal of critical literacy is to help "students to develop the practice of questioning why social, political, racial, economic, gender, and religious conflicts occur, their consequences to society as whole, and the roles they each can play in this now and in their futures" (Lapp & Fisher, 2010, p. 156). Given the plethora of media sources we encounter today, students need to be critical consumers of information and they must have the ability to create their own texts (Gainer, 2010). With this in mind, educators need to think about how to foster civic-minded citizens who develop a mindset attuned to critical literacy.

To help students engage in critical literacy and to think critically, teachers create opportunities for students to explore diverse texts, to closely read and analyze texts, to determine

which voices are left out of the discussion, and to ask questions about language, power, and disadvantaged groups (Gainer, 2010; Papola-Ellis & Eberly, 2015). By analyzing the disciplinary vocabulary and language usage in the text, students gain access to particular ways of thinking and communicating. These stimulating tasks increase student engagement and motivation (Guthrie, Wigfield, Humenick, Perencevich, Taboada, & Barbosa, 2006). Through such experiences students can also discuss different ways of interpreting sources and presenting information. Adolescents in particular are engaged with texts when they can draw upon real-world connections (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Students in these inquiry-focused classrooms re-position themselves as actively engaged citizens who examine texts, study language as well as the author's word choices, and recognize how texts can be used as evidence to support their assertions.

Designing and Implementing a Critical Literacy Unit
Background and Context

Chance High School (pseudonym) is a large urban school with over 2000 students. During the 2014-2015 school year most of the students enrolled at Chance High School (60%) were Hispanic, 16% were Asian, 14% were Black, and 9% were White. At the school, 19% of the students have Individualized Education Plan (IEPs), 12% were English language learners, and 71% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Only 35% of the students demonstrated college and career readiness. Students' performance on the English Regents (Common Core) – the New York State standardized exam taken in grade 11 – shows the average score for the school was 70%, which is above the passing score for the exam (66%).

The second author taught grades 9, 10, and 11. Most of the students in her 11th grade class were struggling readers. About 22% of the class had IEPs. Of the 24 students in the class who took the English Regents most (59%) scored below the school's average and the passing score for the exam; for special needs students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) the average score was 57%, and for general education students, the average score was 61%.

The second author used a modified workshop model during her 45-minute English class. There was a mini lesson to model specific reading and writing strategies or procedures; in-class time for students to practice and apply strategies taught by working independently or in groups; and ongoing assessment to guide her instructional decisions to determine whether to re-teach or scaffold students during small group instruction or teacher-student conferencing. To document classroom practice, we collected daily lesson plans as well as the second author's reflective notes and comments after the lessons, which captured her decision-making. Instructional materials used to teach the lesson (e.g., PowerPoint, charts, and teacher-created artifacts and models) were also collected along with students' responses to in-class experiences. We took a close look at these data to conceptualize classroom practice, particularly the ways struggling readers were guided through their analysis of complex texts. We focus our analysis on previously identified elements of critical literacy practices to identify ways to teach complex texts.

Text Selection: "Serial" Podcast

The "Serial" podcast is based on a criminal case. A 17 year old, Adnan Syed, was arrested and convicted in Baltimore, Maryland for the murder of his ex-girlfriend, Hae Min Lee in 1999 (Chicago Public Media & Glass, 2014). One key element

of this court case, which has propelled the ongoing debate of whether Adnan is innocent, is that the case was based primarily on the testimony of one witness—Adnan's friend, Jay, who claimed he helped bury Hae's body (Chicago Public Media & Glass, 2014). The host of the podcast, Sarah Koenig, invites listeners to join her on a search for answers to what really happened as she presents evidence such as documents, investigator's notes, testimonials from the police, as well as interviews with individuals who remember the events from 1999 (Chicago Public Media & Glass, 2014).

From a critical literacy perspective, the Serial podcast provides an audible text that allows students to ask a question: Did Adnan Syed really kill Hae Min Lee? Students were presented with evidence from multiple perspectives and asked to closely examine the credibility, usefulness, biases, and what arguments could be made based on the sources.

Before the teacher designed the unit "Serial Podcast Analysis," she had focused her instruction around students' short responses and extended responses to standard Common Core texts. Students could earn points in the short response and extended responses; however, they struggled with the reading comprehension section. One goal for implementing this unit was to incorporate more diverse, real-world texts into the curriculum to develop students' critical thinking and argument skills.

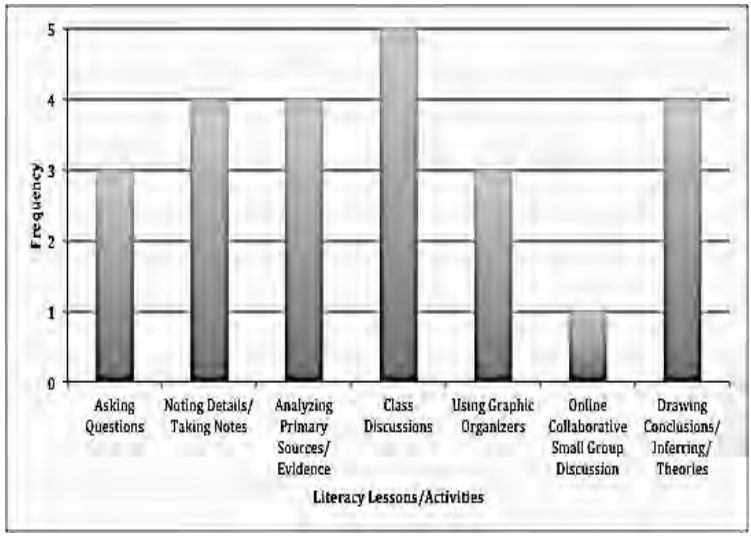
Literacy Practices

The four-week unit, "Serial Podcast Analysis," was implemented in the second author's 11th grade inclusion English class, which (as described above) included special needs students with IEPs and general education students. The unit introduced students to various literacy practices, which included active reading strategies and discussions about the

texts. Throughout the unit, students listened to the podcast independently. While in class, students read various texts across genres (i.e., newspapers, interview transcripts, and audio). As shown in Figure 1, the lessons and in-class experiences emphasized literacy skills and strategies. The literacy practices were introduced in the following order:

Week 1: analyzing details;
Week 2: asking questions and drawing conclusions;
Week 3: creating theories/delineating arguments;
Week 4: argument writing.

Figure 1



Although these literacy practices often overlapped, Figure 1 shows the number of times each literacy practice was noted in a separate lesson plan. For example, class discussion was used most often during each week of the unit. The

discussions were always sparked by teacher-led questions such as, "What do you notice about the details of the case?" or "What is the author's argument, how does she support her argument with evidence?" Noting details, analyzing primary sources, and drawing conclusions were also used frequently to engage students with the texts. One of the class discussions was facilitated online. Students used Edmodo.com to respond to a teacher-created discussion prompt and then to reply to three classmates online.

The following active reading strategies were taught to help students draw conclusions, infer, and generate theories about the text:

- It Says, I Say, So
- Because, But, So
- Generating opinions about physical evidence
- Delineating arguments
- Using graphic organizers to note details about the texts

A rubric was also distributed to students early in the unit. It was used to guide students' active reading and note taking. Students used the rubric (Appendix A) to self-assess. The rubric was also used during teacher-student conferencing to provide students with feedback on their use of the strategies introduced during the mini lessons.

Each lesson throughout the unit placed emphasis on building students' academic language. The lessons facilitated opportunities to build the foundational skills for students who needed scaffolds to support their use of academic vocabulary so all students had access to challenging, authentic texts. Some examples of the academic vocabulary encountered in the Serial podcast are *intent, "mens rea," motive, prosecutor*, and *alibi*. Scaffolds such as the graphic organizer in Figure 2 allowed all students access to the same material regardless of their reading levels. Furthermore, prompts guided students to think more

about how the language and vocabulary related to the overall meaning and ideas presented in the text. Additionally, using graphic organizers afforded students the opportunity to practice note-taking and summarizing details. For example, during lesson 1, students were instructed to use the Cornell note-taking method while focusing on key words and definitions in their notes.

Cornell Notes
Topic: Criminal Law

Questions	Notes, Key words, definitions
How does a prosecutor prove someone has a criminal mind? Why is… What does it mean to…. Who is responsible for... Who determines...	

Summary: The criminal system is...

Figure 2: Note Taking Form from Lesson 1

Students were provided with several models and prompts to help scaffold their ability to ask questions, draw conclusions, and make inferences from the data presented. This helped students use academic literacy skills such as their ability to ask questions about the text. During analysis of Episode 6: The Case Against Adnan Syed, a teacher-created model (Appendix B) showed students the process of moving from note-taking to using a graphic organizer to facilitate their inquiry process, specifically developing questions for further analysis of text.

During lesson 1 (Appendix C), various questions were used during class discussion to scaffold student comprehension

of the text by developing their understanding of the legal concept "alibi." The skill focus of the lesson was analyzing details. Therefore, the questions guided students from the lower level of comprehension, specifically locating and recalling details, to critical thinking and analysis by drawing conclusions and interpreting the details collected from the text. For example, students were asked general understanding questions such as: *What is an alibi?* Then after reviewing questions about key details, students were asked to think more about the author's purpose: *Why do you think the author (Sarah Koenig) interweaves descriptions about where she is? How does this technique help her storytelling?* Finally, students were asked to make inferences then develop arguments based on their interpretation of the evidence: *What do think about Adnan's "memory lapse" argument? Do you think the prosecutor had enough evidence to convict Adnan?* These teacher-created questions were used to gradually guide students' inferences about the evidence presented, the author's claims, and ultimately students were expected to make a determination about arguments by recalling details and sharing insights on their interpretations of the notes collected from the text. This process required that students think about the details and insights gained from different perspectives while considering plausible interpretations of the information.

Throughout this unit, students examined, juxtaposed, and questioned texts. Students considered sources, closely evaluated texts for credibility, and answered questions to support their comprehension. The texts included print and nonprint sources that were used to present alternative perspectives to the issue under investigation (Table 1). A guest speaker with legal background was invited to class to provide students with an introduction to criminal law and additional content information.

Table 1. Texts, Literacy Practices, and Tools Used During the Unit

Texts	Literacy Practices/ Goals	Tools/ Sources Used
PRINT TEXT: "All things truly wicked start from innocence" Ernest Hemingway AUDIO TEXT: Serial Podcast with 12 episodes (Within the podcast students encounter a range of texts and primary sources)	Listen carefully take notes of important details Ask questions and create theories about the case and profile of your characters Note-taking using Cornell Notes Quickwrites	Smartphones— for listening at home (iPhone users download-ed the podcast on iTunes for free. Android users downloaded the podcast on SoundCloud for Free) Guest speaker invited to class

PRINT TEXT: *NYTimes* OP-ED: Will 'Serial' Change How We Talk About Crime?	Summaries Discussions	to present on the criminal law system from the perspective of an experienced lawyer

To foster students' critical thinking about the text, Serial, teacher-directed questions were used to guide students' analysis. On day one of the unit, students listened to the podcast for 5 minutes, engaged in discussion for 10 minutes and repeated this process once more before responding to the questions below.

- What details were the most important so far?
- Why were these details important?
- What do you think about the podcast, so far?
- What seems uncertain at this point?

These questions guided students' analysis of the text and afforded them the opportunity to raise questions about information that appears to be lacking and unclear in the podcast thus far. The questions were also used as formative assessments, prompting students to evaluate the information they received as the unit progressed.

The fourth week of the unit focused on argument writing. Students were taught a specific strategy for producing a response: State the Claim, Evidence, Explain Evidence, Explain (S.E.E.E). During the third lesson of the final week,

students were introduced to the essay and asked to develop a thesis statement and introduction to the essay.

> *Using last week's notes, draft your introductory paragraph of this essay. Your introduction should include*
>
> - *Engaging lead (Start with a question, quote, or bold or challenging statement)*
> - *Background knowledge about the case*
> - *Thesis statement (What is your position on the case? This should be a clear and concise statement)* (p. 10)

This writing assignment occurred after students had built background knowledge of the text, having listened to the podcast and discussed the text. The final performance assessment for the unit was an argument essay analyzing and evaluating the podcast. Students were instructed to write an essay in which they discuss and evaluate whether Adnan was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. They had to support their position with evidence from their research. Overall, students were engaged throughout the Serial Podcast Analysis unit. Most students (40%, n=27) said they liked the podcast.

All students with high quiz grades said they enjoyed the podcast. Students who earned higher quiz grades had better arguments for question 12 on the quiz.

- *Do you think the prosecutor had enough evidence to convict Adnan? Support your argument with evidence. (Use the S.E.E.E. strategy)*
- *Sarah Koenig uses the words "giant brown eyes, like a dairy cow" to describe Adnan's appearance, what does this description reveal about Sarah's judgment?*

Results showed some differences based on gender. In contrast to the male students, female students presented well-articulated written arguments in response to the prompt above. The

female students provided more examples and elaborated more to the writing prompt. The male students, however, were a lot more vocal during class discussions than the female students. During class discussions, male students made connections, provided evidence from the various sources, and posed questions about the issues raised in relation to the legal system and injustice.

Conclusion

Students were engaged throughout the unit because emphasis was placed on specific tasks that provided opportunities to achieve success (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). We found that using critical literacy as an instructional framework facilitated problem-posing, problem-solving, and authentic learning. Students made connections to the community beyond the classroom, and closely examined socio-political issues. Students developed critical perspectives and increased understanding of social justice and civic engagement, specifically the legal / justice system and how power, perceptions, and evidence can be used to advance an argument.

The texts were used to further develop students' understanding of literacy practices as well as social issues and helped to build their vocabulary about the legal system while supporting their close analysis of texts in order to advance their interpretations and assertions on the subject. The students' practices moved along a continuum from a lower level interaction towards a more critical literacy stance. During this transition students moved from literal interpretation of the text or reading for understanding and building background knowledge towards using texts to advance an argument, examine social issues, and position themselves within the larger discussion of social justice by identifying ways to take action about injustices they perceived in the justice system.

This was evident as students used graphic organizers to take notes on key details. Then they used the notes to develop their own questions, respond to peers during discussions, and develop written arguments. To ensure the effectiveness of the approach, the authors suggest using all components together to develop a comprehensive model (Fisher & Frey, 2016).

Implications

There is still more work to be done on changing the perception of what constitutes text in schools. We need to do more to help students move beyond traditional concepts of reading texts so they develop literacy skills that can play a pivotal role within the larger society (McDaniel, 2004). Teachers need to provide students with access to varied texts—across genres, levels, and content—so students are able to "navigate multiple text sources, think critically about messages embedded in texts, and carefully create their own texts" (Gainer, 2010, p. 364). Incorporating non-traditional texts into the classroom can help students engage in critical inquiry by analyzing and deconstructing complex texts. Popular culture can provide access to alternative counter narratives to mainstream texts, which can be used to facilitate broader discussions about social issues, media, and the socio-political implications of how perspective and voice are positioned within a particular narrative (Lapp & Fisher, 2010). We recommend that teachers use research on contemporary issues and topics to promote student-centered inquiry.

We need to talk more about "problems with the design of the study or ideas for future research." At the secondary level, one consideration is the feasibility of implementing all components on a daily basis given restrictions on the literacy block; most teachers do not have extended time with students because the classes are typically 45 minutes. When using

critical literacy, teachers need to consider engaging students with challenging, authentic texts in order to introduce them to skills and strategies, rather than teaching close reading in isolation (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Finally, when selecting texts we recommend that teachers make interdisciplinary connections and not teach reading isolated from content (Behrman, 2006; Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

From a critical literacy stance, teachers can engage students by incorporating authentic learning experiences that challenge social norms which oppress those who are voiceless. By using these types of experiences to promote student inquiry, students who may previously have been disengaged and marginalized in academic contexts see how they can participate in school practices. Further research can highlight some of the ways in which male and female students engage with texts. Specifically, whether the nature and content of the text as well as the ways in which students are asked to respond to the text (e.g., orally or in writing) impact students' critical literacy and depth of critique.

When teaching complex texts, first, the teacher needs to be strategic about text selection and must specifically consider ways to incorporate authentic texts that provide students with background knowledge about different perspectives on controversial issues. By examining controversial issues, the teacher can facilitate opportunities to juxtapose texts with alternative perspectives. Texts should include print and nonprint sources on or above students' grade level. Texts should also be authentic, yet use academic language to discuss real-world issues. Complex texts can be drawn from different types of texts and genres including audio, nonfiction, and primary sources. Second, teachers need to be mindful about modeling and scaffolding students throughout their interaction with texts. Teachers need to use various

techniques, including explicit instruction, examples, and peer-to-peer collaborative tasks, to help students unpack challenging texts. Finally, teachers need to guide students through the inquiry process by facilitating opportunities for students to ask questions, explore, and identify solutions to social issues.

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Appendix A: Rubric for Active Reading Notes

Name _____Date _____

Text: _____

Skill/Definition	Needs Work	Proficient	Highly Proficient
Questioning: I can ask thoughtful and probing questions that facilitate deeper understanding of the text.	None of the questions use sentence starters. Questions are mainly text-based, show little variety and require little thought to answer.	Some of questions use sentence starters. Questions are not text-based, but show little variety and require little thought to answer.	All of the questions use sentence starters. Questions are text-based, show great and require thought and reflection to answer.
Analysis: I can use observations or evidence from the text to develop strong debatable conclusions and insights about the text.	Analysis is not based on textual evidence or observations from the text. Conclusions are not debatable and lack insight about the text.	Analysis is based on evidence or observations from the text. Conclusions are debatable but lack insight.	Analysis is based on strong evidence or observations from the text. Conclusions are highly debatable and show real thought and insight.
Summary: I can write a cohesive, detailed description of the text that focuses on important details and non-debatable facts.	Summary lacks cohesion and misses important details from the text. Summary contains subjective information and opinion.	Summary shows some cohesion and important details from the text. Summary contains some subjective information and opinion.	Summary shows strong cohesion and selection of important details from the text. Summary contains no subjective information or opinion.

Grade: _____

Teacher Feedback: _____

_____

Student Reflection: _____

_____

Appendix B

Teacher-Created Notes and Graphic Organizer
My raw notes about Episode 6

"The Case Against Adnan Syed"
Palm print on a map
One page was ripped out, the part showed Lincoln Park
Who took out the page?
What evidence pointed toward Adnan's guilt? (According Sarah)
Did he ask Hae for a ride?
Why didn't Adnan remember that phone call from the police?
He didn't try to contact Hae? (If someone you loved disappeared, would you keep trying to contact her?)
Note at trial? "I am going to kill"—Who wrote it? Did Adnan write it?
Dave—Neighbor boy told his daughter that he saw a dead body. Who showed the neighbor boy the body? He was with a friend and he showed him a dead body in the trunk. He denied ever saying this.
Kathy house—Saw Jay and Adnan behaving shady.
Why does Kathy remember this story so vividly? Did the case and details of the case cloud her story?
Who was Adnan on the phone with? Did another person know about Hae's murder?
"it's not good for me"—
Jen 7:09-7:16 Hae was being buried according to Jay.
Adnan-
What is the big one? Smoking gun—The Nisha call
Why did Adnan call Nisha right after strangling his girlfriend?
Adnan remembers details that support his defense.—I was at school at that time

Text: Episode 6: The Case Against Adnan Syed

Questions- What are you wondering while you read? Circle three questions you want to analyze and write your response on the opposite side. In addition, generate two of your own questions with responses.	Analysis—What did you think about it? How did you react to this information? What answers did you find out?
What evidence pointed toward Adnan's guilt? He didn't try to contact Hae? Why? -------> Note at trial? "I am going to kill"— Who wrote it? Did Adnan write it? Your Turn: What are so many different scenarios that could explain those words on the note? Why does Kathy remember this story so vividly? Did the case and details of the case cloud her story? Your Turn: Who was Adnan on the phone with? Did another person know about Hay's murder? What is the big one? "The Smoking Gun"	Some reasons why Adnan did not contact Hae are because he was not with her anymore. Therefore he didn't care where or who she was with the night of her disappearance. On the other hand, he could have been trying to play dumb and innocent, so that no one would suspect him of murder. (Teacher model)

Why doesn't Adnan care anymore? "You don't really know me!" What point is Adnan trying to make at the end of the episode?	

Appendix C

Teacher-Created Discussion Questions

Text: Serial Episode 1: The Alibi
Skill: Analyzing Details
General understandings
What is an alibi?
What do other people say about Adnan?
Who is Adnan?

Key details
According to Jay, who dug the hole to bury Hae Min Lee?
Asia McClain wrote a letter to Adnan, what did she say in the letter?
How did the prosecutor prove that Adnan had a "criminal mind"?

Author's purpose
Why do you think the author (Sarah Koenig) interweaves descriptions about where she is? How does this technique help her storytelling?
Sarah Koenig uses the words "giant brown eyes, like a dairy cow" to describe Adnan's appearance, what does this description reveal about Sarah's judgment?

Inference
What kinds of relationships did Adnan have within the community? Strong or superficial?
"No one can come up with any proof"—Adnan

"My case lived and died in those 21 minutes"
After 15 years, why do you think the journalist took on this story?

Opinions/Arguments
What are your first opinions of Jay?
If your friend said he was going to kill his girlfriend, what would you do?
What do you think about Adnan's "memory lapse" argument?
Do you think the prosecutor had enough evidence to convict Adnan?

Join our group on Facebook!
New York State English Council (NYSEC)

i dont do poems
Shemar Turner
Olean High School

I dont do poems

i dont do poems

i dont do poems

im like Mr T

screw poems

i dont do poems

i dont do poems

if i wrote it

itd be a fools poem

i dont do poems

i dont do poems

in all my life

i would never choose poems

theres red poems

and theres blues poems

but still i never do poems

i lose poems and i bruise poems

i miss my due dates when theyre due poems

theres fun poems and theres cool poems

but still yet i never do poems

i dont read i dont speak poems

these things are not for me poems

some people sing some people bleed poems

these things dont seem to be poems

people trust poems people love poems

thats the difference between us poems

Shemar Turner is a senior student athlete at Olean High School in Olean, NY with a strong interest in film making. This poem began as an English class assignment and became a video poem through his work in an Audio Visual Production class at the Cattaraugus Allegany BOCES Center.

(Editor's Note: To see the video version of the poem simply search "Shemar Turner i dont do poems" on YouTube. The video can also be accessed by using the accompanying Qr code and a smart phone.)

Supporting Student Writers: One High School Writing Center

Brian McAuliffe and Mary McGlone
Ward Melville High School

(Editor's Note: The Ward Melville High School Writing Center was selected as a 2017 NYSEC Program of Excellence and recognized at the 2017 NYSEC Conference in October.)

"Central to the workshop-based approach is talking, and that is why … student conferences are so successful: as students talk through their writing with others, they come to realizations they couldn't achieve on their own."

-Nicole Boudreau Smith,
"A Principled Revolution in the Teaching of Writing," *English Journal* 106.5 (2017): 73.

Evolution

Although writing centers (or writing labs) were not uncommon in high schools in the 1980s and into the '90s, they have faded away in more recent decades, most likely as a result of school districts' increasing budgetary demands and new programs required to meet changing standards. However, some districts have renewed their commitment to writing centers as a way to support struggling, mainstream, and advanced students and to supplement instruction. As colleges report weaker writing skills among incoming students, high schools are responding with increasing emphasis on the skills students need to succeed in college and career. A renewed focus on writing skills elevates instruction and benefits all students. Our experience in establishing and expanding a successful writing center at Ward Melville High School on

Long Island may serve to encourage other school districts to create or revive a writing center in their own schools.

Currently entering its fifth year, the Writers' Block serves a population of 1,775 students in grades 10-12. The writing center evolved from serving students in literacy classes to reach a wider range of students, as teachers and the English department chair recognized the potential value for all students. From the beginning, the writing center has had momentum from administrative support: the English Department Chair, Brian McAuliffe, was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the writing center, and the principal, Alan Baum, and superintendent of schools Cheryl Pedisich, added their commitment as they witnessed its success. Consistent with the goal of reaching more students, the writing center was moved from a generic classroom to a central location in the high school library in 2015. It is now open every period of the school day and after school, staffed by at least one writing coach (English teacher) per period.

To help establish the writing center and focus its vision, Mary McGlone was hired as a part-time coordinator in January 2016. Since that time, student use has grown and the writing center has become an integral part of the school. Under the guidance of Brian McAuliffe, the English Department Chair, she wrote a mission statement and philosophy, conducted a writing survey, and began thorough record-keeping about student use of the writing center; she also expanded the scope of the writing center, pushing in to English, social studies, and science classes to conduct mini-lessons in various writing skills.

Core Beliefs

A clear sense of purpose was essential in establishing the writing center as an integral part of the academic culture of

the school. No matter how the writing center evolved, it had to be based on solid writing tenets so as to keep its focus on serving the needs of student writers. The mission statement and philosophy grew from those beliefs as well as from conversations with teachers, students, and administrators. Our mission statement follows:

> The primary mission of the writing center is to support writing and the teaching of writing at Ward Melville High School. We are a resource for the entire school community—including students, teachers, and staff—offering advice, resources, inspiration, and a place to write. The aim is for the writing center to be a hub of writing, both academic and creative. The writing center welcomes all students in all grades, in all subject areas, at all skill levels, and at every stage of the writing process.

The writing center's mission is based on the following pedagogical beliefs:

- We value writing for various purposes, including writing to learn, academic writing, and writing for self-expression.

- We support writing across the curriculum (writing in all subject areas) and endeavor to facilitate writing instruction and writing in all classes.

- We focus on the writing process, which encourages writers to invest time, energy, and thought at every stage of writing, from prewriting (brainstorming, mapping, conversation), planning (thesis statement

development, outlining), and writing (drafting) to revising (literally "re-visioning") and editing.

- The aim of the writing center is to give writers the skills to become better and independent writers.

These beliefs inform everything we do, from the language we use while working with students to how we conduct writing conferences to deciding what our outreach efforts will be. For example, we call ourselves "writing coaches" because what we do is more in line with a coaching role than a teaching role: we observe, motivate, suggest, and question, but the extent to which the writing changes is entirely up to the student writer. Writing conferences are writer-led, in that the writer decides the focus, content, and pace of the conversation. While writing coaches may make suggestions, our primary role is to support student writers by asking questions that help them recognize the decisions they have made and can make. We call those who come to us writers or student writers to emphasize that role and their ownership of the writing, and only the writer writes, revises, or edits the piece. This approach will help the student to become a better writer by guiding the skills needed for improved writing.

Authentic and Academic Writing

The Writers' Block at Ward Melville High School, staffed by English teachers, is open every period of the school day and after school. Students may make an appointment or drop in when they are free: during their lunch, study hall, or after school. The after-school period (10) is sandwiched between the end of the school day and the time that after-school clubs and sports begin, so all students are available. To accommodate the popularity of this time period, the writing

center offers period 10 workshops several times a semester for groups of students on such topics as fragments/run-ons, essay planning, and research paper skills. Conferences are usually sequential, sometimes workshop-style, and if two writing coaches are available, we have two simultaneous conferences. Writing conferences are typically one-on-one sessions, but if several students sign up, the writing coach conferences with small groups of writers. Mini-lessons in classrooms enhance writing instruction in various subject areas.

While we see students at all grade levels and subject areas, the primary users are seniors seeking feedback on college essays and students working on essays for English classes. Keeping thorough records allows us to see increasing use in social studies and science, and also helps us to direct outreach efforts. For example, even after the beginning-of-the-year library orientation that included a tour of the writing center, tenth-graders remain our most infrequent users. While this may be due primarily to scheduling (they are less likely to have free periods or study halls during which they can visit us) and to classroom instruction and types of assignments, it has also helped us decide to increase outreach to grade 10 teachers—through short presentations at department meetings, friendly emails to teachers, and classroom visits and mini-lessons, upon invitation. Following outreach, we usually see an uptick in student use in those areas or grades. Interestingly, we have noticed that students are likely to return for coaching in another assignment or subject area once they have experienced the value of a coaching session. For this reason, we have to be patient in building a base.

It has been enlightening to work with the same student writer for multiple assignments, getting to know the student's skills and being able to focus on what would most benefit his/her writing. Student writers often need to build trust before

they share personal writing. The insights we coaches have gained by working with students on academic assignments—not only into their writing skills and habits, but their interests and personalities—helped us to have relevant, personal conferences about their college essays, resulting in higher quality writing for the student. There is nothing more gratifying than ending a conference with a student who has worked hard and is palpably pleased with the personal college essay she/he has written, who walks away smiling, headed for college not only with a great essay but deeper confidence and solid writing skills—and what a wonderful experience for the student to have before college!

Our central location in the school library has helped us to become a visible "hub of writing" for the entire school community: students or staff can stop by with a quick question, to borrow materials, or to use our quiet writing space for any writing task. Because we aim to be a resource for the entire school community, we actively reach out to teachers to support their teaching of writing: we maintain a small writing library that includes resources for teachers; we are available by email to answer questions; and we are available to come to classes to offer mini-lessons on various topics. Short presentations at department meetings have raised awareness about how we teach writing and have also led to collegial sharing of teaching materials and visits to classes for mini-lessons. Mini-lessons to advanced science classes about research skills brought more students to the writing center. We found that once students had a positive experience of the writing center, they sought us out for assistance in other classes.

Creative Writing

To expand our mission as a center of creative writing, we established the Writers' Block as a resource for creative writers. As a resource for writing contests, we posted information in the writing center and on the writing center webpage, and we served as "home base" for several writing contests. The Long Island Language Arts Council's contest, open to 10th-graders, drew 21 participants after the coordinator visited 10th-grade English classes with information and encouragement. The in-school writing portion of the contest was coordinated by the writing center, and follow-up letters invited participants to form writing groups to share their writing. As a result, we had more 10th-grade visits and several meetings of an impromptu writing group after school. Members of the school's literary magazine also came by to get information on writing contests and share their work before submission. Supporting creative writing among students is an area that seems to have unlimited potential, and we look forward to this area expanding even further.

The writing center provides a unique opportunity to explore students' writing habits and skills. We believe it is important to support all students at every stage of the writing process, but our suspicion proved true when we looked at our sign-in sheets: students overwhelmingly came to the writing center late in the writing process (primarily editing), and most were motivated by teacher incentives. In order to get insights into student writing habits, the coordinator created a writing survey which was administered to seniors in their English classes. Those results revealed that students need support early in the process, do not feel confident in their writing skills, and tend not to make a plan before writing. Interestingly, the students who reported planning before writing also reported

enjoying writing and rated their writing skills higher than those who didn't plan.

To support students early in the writing process, we encouraged teachers to send students to the writing center before writing a first draft. Mary also pushed in to classes early in the process to offer mini-lessons in prewriting and planning. We found that once students had a positive experience, they tended to make appointments on their own, even without teacher incentives. These conferences often led to the richest writing conversations, as students learned to ask questions of themselves and explore their ideas more deeply. As the year progressed, more students signed up for conferences earlier in the process.

Looking Forward

Student use of the Writers' Block has increased over time. The number of student conferences increased about 30% from the fall of 2015 to the spring of 2016, and then over 50% of that to the fall of 2016. About twice as many students used the writing center in the fall of 2016 as had the previous fall.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, we held 1,359 student writing conferences. If each conference represents a different student (it doesn't, as we have many repeat users, which we so far have not tracked), the writing center served over 3/4 (77%) of our high school population. Over time, these numbers are expected to naturally level off, but this is promising growth for a relatively new program.

As the writing center has grown, district support has evolved. Beginning in the fall of 2017, every English teacher will be assigned to the writing center for one period a day for at least a semester (in lieu of a class). The coordinator responsibility will be reduced from .45 to .4 and will shift to a tenured English teacher. The high school's collaborative

history with nearby SUNY Stony Brook points to the potential for sharing resources, such as collaborating with Stony Brook students who work in their college's writing center. It remains to be seen how the writing center will evolve in the next few years. But if it remains true to its mission, the Writers' Block will continue to be a vibrant hub of writing for the WMHS community.

One especially satisfying moment occurred in the writing center at the end of the year: During exam week, the library abuzz with students studying for finals and the pressure palpable, a student hesitantly asked if she could sit in the writing center "just to write." In the noisy confusion of life, I wonder if that isn't the most valuable use of all.

"...in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul"
Max Ehrmann, *Desiderata* (1952)

Brian McAuliffe is currently Coordinator for the Accelerated College Education (ACE) Program in the English Department at Stony Brook University. He was Chair of the Ward Melville High School English Department for 10 years. He taught high school English for 43 years.

Mary McGlone was coordinator of the Ward Melville High School writing center until June 2017. She is currently a professional writing consultant in SUNY Old Westbury's writing center and teaches English at Suffolk County Community College.

Planting the Seeds of Wonder: Curiosity and the Classroom

Rebecca Quackenbush
Chester Union Free School District

Abstract
What happens when student curiosity becomes the driving force behind instruction and learning in today's classrooms? What happens when there is just as much, if not more, value in the questions as there are in the answers? This article examines the impact that creating space for and nurturing a sense of wonder has on expanding learning as well as nurturing self-directed learners. Inspired by Georgia Heard in her book, *A Place for Wonder: Reading and Writing in the Primary Grades*, readers are invited to re-vision what a Wonder Classroom might look like in today's educational environment.

Planting the Seeds of Wonder: Curiosity and the Classroom

Scattered around the classroom, second graders sprawl out with their piles of questions before them, carefully reviewing their wonderings in an attempt to pick "the one" for this week's Wonder of the Week. One particular student lay on his belly, meticulously scanning the index cards and sticky notes before him: How many clouds are in the sky? How long do snakes live? Why do our teeth fall out? After much deliberation, he chooses—What is death?—a question that might warrant a pause had it not been the same topic of his Heart Wonder book published three weeks earlier. Heart wonders are the types of questions that can't be researched, but instead invite a more personal reflection within one's heart (i.e. What makes a best friend a best friend?). Research wonders, on the other hand, can be researched through outside sources (i.e. What is the average size of the Great Blue Whale?). The

children sift through their stacks and label their questions with either a heart shape or a letter "I" (for informational) to designate the type of question they have selected. All wonders are welcome in our classroom, even the repeat questions. This practice nourishes and sustains a sense of community so conducive and integral to the voicing of wonders.

Creating Space for Wonder

I have always been interested in student-centered classrooms with curriculum built upon authentic student-initiated (whether individually or collectively) questions, ever since I first laid hands on a teacher's manual. Not entirely impressed with the scripted, formulaic approach to teaching and learning, my attention quickly wandered toward alternative sources of guidance.

While attending a conference at Lesley Universi-versity's Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I listened as Georgia Heard, co-author of *A Place for Wonder: Reading and Writing in the Primary Grades*, confidently assure her audience that creating a "wonder classroom environment" is the foundation from which deeper and more sustained literacy learning can take place. She offers several ideas for cultivating curiosity throughout the school day that don't involve or mention textbooks, workbooks or worksheets. What?! Take time to wonder? When?! Where would that possibly fit in the day?! I can hear the low buzz around me as the wide eyes of colleagues inch nervously to the edges of their seats.

Ms. Heard doesn't flinch, but instead calmly introduces "Wonder Centers," the Wonder of the Week being one of them. In addition, there is the Observation Window and the Discovery Table, to name a few. While it appears that many of my teacher peers are hearing "more work," I do not see any

imposition to an already packed schedule. Instead, I excitedly begin to envision the possibilities that such a shift, from delivering curriculum to co-creating it with my students, can have on both the teaching and learning that takes place in my room.

A Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with One Single Question

What happens when I invite the students' questions to take center stage in our lesson rather than the answers? Friday afternoon and the children gather at my feet. I read aloud excerpts of the book, *One Small Square,* by Donald Silver (1993):

> Go outside and catch a dandelion zigzagging to the ground. Pick up a rock that crumbles in your fingers. Look for the track left in mud by an ovenbird. Listen to the cricket rub its wings together (p. 3).
>
> Explore just one small square of a backyard—your own or someone else's—and you will uncover clue after clue about how nature works (p. 5).

And we quietly head outside armed with pencils, journals, and magnifying glasses. Little black construction paper square frames scatter the ground near the ash tree in the front yard of our school as small, round heads peek inside them. The children record questions and observations into their notebooks. Later on, back inside, we share out our noticings. To my astonishment, there are not many questions, besides the typical surface inquiries, such as: How many ants live in an anthill? How many caterpillars are there in the world? How are bugs born? In fact, my children seem more focused on trying to *answer* each other's questions. Barely a query leaves the lips of one of my students when a hand lifts and flaps around widely with an "Oooh! Oooh! I think I know

the answer!"

Overall the children seem more taken with answering questions than posing them. This makes me wonder: What role do I, as the teacher, play in the construction of such a paradigm? How might I, through the structuring of my classroom and instruction, reinforce the role of teacher as knowledge giver and student as receiver?

The following day I offer some of my own questions throughout our lessons as both models and invitations to wonder. Unnerving! As educators, we belong to one of the few professions known to ask questions we already possess the answers to. At first, it took some focused effort to ponder what makes me most curious. And then, I worried. Would my children laugh at me? Wasn't I, the teacher, supposed to know everything and have all of the answers? Would I be letting them down by exposing the truth, the fact that I indeed do not hold the key to knowing all? Despite my insecurities, I decide to take the leap anyway. And I quickly discover, as I begin to share my own curiosities with my students (When geese fly in a V formation, how is it decided who goes in the front? How do sharks live peacefully with certain fish and consider others to be a food source? When is it okay to lie?), that my children gradually become more comfortable with their own natural curiosities and are willing to ask more questions themselves.

Discussions about the possible ways that a question can be answered naturally lend themselves to conversations about the value of perseverance when, at first, an answer cannot be readily found. When it comes to this topic, most will readily agree that in this day and age, this type of determination is short-lived and even unnecessary, as access to information abounds. Where the argument usually ends, however, is on whether or not every question needs to be answered immediately. Whereas a quick Google™ search on a cell phone

has become commonplace, some maintain that there is a bigger learning value when we simply pause to appreciate the art of asking. To try "to love the questions themselves" only deepens and enriches understanding over time (Palmer, 1998/1999). Thinking back to our experience with the small squares and our nature observations, I encourage the children to first appreciate that a question does not always require an immediate answer. I compare their wonders to tiny seeds that grow with time and thoughtful thinking. The children nod their emerging understanding.

The Wonder of the Week

Over time, questions naturally wove themselves, and often guided many of the topics we pursued together during our year. The Wonder of the Week eventually became a specific part of our day when children could also have designated space to explore their own personal questions.

Here's how Wonder of the Week works in my classroom community. First, the students choose a question they have; it can be a spontaneous curiosity that emerges on the ride to school or a wonder that has been simmering for some time. We keep a simple pocket chart on our wall, aptly named the "Wonder Chart." Students record and safely store questions on index cards in the clear pockets designated with their individual names. The chart is available to the children throughout the day for recording and retrieval of questions, though a brief discussion regarding appropriate times to jot and post questions (definitely NOT during an administrative observation, for instance) might prove beneficial prior to implementation of the Wonder of the Week.

Once a question is selected (heart wonder or research wonder), children ponder collectively and/or individually for a bit, recording related prior knowledge in their notebooks.

Lightly echoing the familiar format of the KWL chart, the children begin here, instead, with their **W**onder and then jot their **K**nowledge. As the week progresses, depending upon the type of question selected, children are empowered with options as to how they proceed in their quest for answers. For research wonders, they can ask an expert, someone who holds specific knowledge and/or experience relevant to their question; look in a book or encyclopedia; consult the Internet with adult supervision; or watch an educational television program. Heart wonder questions, on the other hand, may invite personal journaling and/or conversations with others. Children are given time in the morning and afternoon to engage in any of these options; the focus is on the process. In some cases, as with speaking to other adults in the school building, I may arrange the meeting.

For instance, one young lady wondered, Why do we like different things? She asked her brother, since "he was the first person" she saw when she got home. He felt that if everyone were the same, it would be boring. Not completely satisfied, yet still convinced that this is a research wonder rather than a heart wonder, she wished to discuss her inquiry with our librarian's assistant. I arranged an appointment. After 35 minutes in the library, this little girl returned with two books—one on culture and one about hobbies. "I think these books will have my answer," she confidently asserted. And so, she dedicated her entire indoor recess time pouring over these two books at the u-shaped table, seemingly oblivious and/or disinterested as her classmates buzzed around her with board games and paper airplanes and blocks. Carefully studying the illustrations and trying to read the words in her books as best she could, "Now this I can understand . . . " she announced, and continued on.

At the end of the week, there is an open show and tell

share of new learning. The children gather in a circle and take turns teaching and learning from each other. The predictable sequence of the Wonder of the Week takes place over the course of each week and remains a welcome routine for my children as we proceed through the school year together. And the questions, both heart and research driven, continue to pile up in the individual student pockets of the Wonder Chart hanging on our wall, waiting to be chosen.

But Why?

Curiosity is the root of learning. Socrates said that wisdom begins with wonder, and Ellen Doris (1991) phrases it beautifully when she explains, "If a question is important to a child, then it is a good question to pursue" (p. 89). Questions and learning seem to coexist in a parallel universe, complementary to each other like pencil and paper or peanut butter and jelly. The great philosophers of Ancient Greece recognized and regularly practiced observation and question posing as part of their teachings (Aristotle, trans. 1943; Plato, 2003; Waterfield, 2000). There is an increasingly broadening concern that we have strayed from the valuable paradigm of curiosity and wonder, only to become entangled in a system that favors data-driven product over process (Elkind, 2001; Palmer, 1998; Smith, Appleman, and Wilhelm, 2014). Some may argue that children walk into schools full of wonder and questions, yet are often asked to hold their curiosities for later, so that teachers can "get through" the curriculum. I agree that we, as educators, forget that our responsibility is not solely to teach memorization or the mechanics of a task, but to spark a curiosity that empowers students to learn on their own.

And studies show that factors other than intelligence play a significant role in academic performance. Among the top "non-cognitive skills" is curiosity (Tough, 2013; von

Stumm, Hell, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011). Researchers at the UC Davis Center for Neuroscience offer insight into how piquing our curiosity changes our brains, enhancing overall learning and memory. One of the study's co-authors, Mathias Gruber (2014) suggests "curiosity puts the brain in a state that allows it to learn and retain any kind of information." Adopting a curious nature, therefore, provides the most naturally fertile ground for learning to take place. Consider it the hook. See it as the current along which new learning rides and sustains itself. When student-initiated questions become the focus and driving force behind instruction, lifelong learning is nurtured.

Planting the Seed for Wonder—Where to Begin

Recall the saying that you're more likely to remember something if you're interested in it. What about the content that must be taught, the curriculum that is mandated by school districts and states with little, if any, input from the students? Recent revisions to the standards have increased feedback from teachers, yet there are still feelings of frustration over time and where to fit it all in. I suggest that we need not readjust our already jam-packed schedules, and instead capitalize on the questions that inevitably arise and weave themselves into the lessons and events of the school day. To allow it to unfold naturally and embrace the journey with as much curiosity as we're hoping to instill and nurture within our students, we create a culture for such wonder to occur.

Returning to the same excerpt that I presented to my students at the beginning of this piece, courtesy of Donald Silver's *One Small Square* (1993):

> Go outside and catch a dandelion zigzagging to the ground. Pick up a rock that crumbles in your fingers. Look for the track left in mud by an ovenbird. Listen to the cricket rub its wings together. (p. 3)

> Explore just one small square of a backyard—your own or someone else's—and you will uncover clue after clue about how nature works. *(p. 5)*

Start small. Begin with what makes you most curious. Get comfortable with asking questions. Be okay with not seeking out the answers immediately. Resist the urge to discount your own personal wonders as silly or irrelevant. First, allow yourself the freedom to ask.

Then, create space, both figuratively and literally, for wonder in your own classroom. E.B. White reminds us to "always be on the lookout for the presence of wonder" (as cited in McKinney, 2016) You can't help but ask questions in a room bursting with engaging texts, captivating images, artifacts, and so on. Content-rich classrooms make wondering irresistible. Provide a pocket chart, a corner, or even a bookshelf, for students to store their questions and keep them safe. In some wonder classrooms, children keep their own "wonder boxes" filled with questions; Ziploc™ bags or even a notebook can easily do the trick (Miller, 2002). Above all, stimulating environments fuel children's natural curiosity and teachers who create this type of classroom instill a lifelong, real world disposition to explore, investigate, read, and learn. All children, and adults, need space to wonder – to ponder, research, and confirm or revise their understandings in order to create and articulate a more meaningful vision of the world around them.

Remember, turning to wonder is not an easy act. For some, the greatest difficulty rests in the letting go of knowing all. Embarking into unfamiliar territory, I have no idea what my students will ask. Yet, I recognize the humility it takes to ask the question in the first place, the courage required to inhabit the uncertainty. It requires a kind of love, love for self and others that opens our hearts to a desire for genuine

understanding. May my inquiry act as a springboard for re-igniting that sense of wonder that resides within all of us.

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No Subject Is an Island

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Abstract
One of the many things that intrigues me, a mathematics educator, is the relationship between the use of language in the English & Language Arts (ELA) classroom and the mathematics classroom, particularly in algebra. When proper mechanics are extended from ELA classrooms to mathematics classrooms, quantitative expressions and statements can be formulated with simplicity and clarity. From solving basic equations to exploring unique patterns such as the Fibonacci sequence, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary are as equally pervasive in mathematics as they are in the ELA classroom, thus making ELA essential in mathematics education.

No Subject Is an Island

"Stop, think, and listen." A phrase regularly heard by any student enrolled in my Algebra 1 course, and a phrase that marked a pivotal point in my education. My Calculus 3 professor was the most brilliant man that I had ever met, and as a sophomore in undergraduate school I heard him utter the same phrase for the first time. Such a simple statement, yet it was a phrase that hit me harder than the time a sucker punch broke my nose.

Do not raise your hand to ask a question. Process the information. Stop blindly copying what was written on the board. Stop pretending that you comprehend partial derivatives. Stop everything. Think about what is happening. Think not about how to memorize an algorithm, but contemplate what is important. What? Why? How? Listen to

what I am saying. Hear my words, but most importantly, listen to the language of mathematics; it is poetry.

"Stop, think, and listen."

The phrase allowed me to embark on a journey to truly embrace learning. However, in the world of mathematics, this journey had two possible destinations: pure mathematics or applied mathematics. Mathematicians in the field of pure mathematics, purists, have a desire to solve unique problems. Those in the field of applied mathematics, realists, have a desire to solve problems that impact the world around them. While purists can spend a lifetime on a problem that is apparently meaningless in terms of the world, a realist will take only moments to place the same problem in a waste basket. Realists will use calculus and computer science to intercept and destroy missiles, whereas purists would rather observe the innate marvels of the nature of calculus. Purists thrive on theory while realists flourish on practicality. Never having been one to care for the applicability of things such as quadratic equations, the Pythagorean Theorem, or sequences, I found myself as a purist.

As a ninth grade mathematics educator at Olean High School, I would, once again, bring new life to the purist established years prior. Two of my colleagues had prepared a Renaissance unit in which students explored the era's art, philosophy, and history and asked me to become involved by introducing a mathematics component. Knowing how the Renaissance helped cultivate a passion for discovering knowledge in mathematics, arts, and science, I gleefully accepted. How could I possibly decline an opportunity to provide my students a learning experience not geared toward a state-mandated exam nor a school mandated curriculum, a learning experience that focuses solely on the beauty of

learning for learning's sake? The purist in me could not have been more delighted.

Once Upon a Midnight Dreary, Mathematics Had Drawn Near Me

It is quite simple to dismiss statements such as "Le produit de la quantité trois de plus qu'un numéro et cinq de moins que le même numéro est exactement cent vingt-huit," "El cociente de un número y la suma de seis y el mismo número es equivalente a doce," and "Vier weniger als zweimal eine Zahl kann nicht mehr als ein Drittel eine deutliche Zahl sein," if we are not fluent in French, Spanish, or German; however, not being fluent in these languages does not mean each statement is incomprehensible. In the English language, the statements are translated as follows:

- The product of the quantity three more than a number and the quantity five less than the same number is exactly one hundred twenty-eight.
- The quotient of a number and the sum of six and the same number is equivalent to twelve.
- Four less than twice a number can be no more than one –third a distinct number.

The English language, though useful, regularly falls short as a tool to provide clarity in the meaning of such quantitative statements; alternatively, the language of algebra presents itself as a most valuable form of poetry, expounding quantitative analyses originating from any language. Using the language of algebra we can assert that the number discussed in statement 1 has a value of either -11 or 13, the number in statement 2 has a value of $-\frac{72}{11}$, and the comparison between the two numbers in statement 3 has a relationship represented

by a linear inequality with infinitely many solutions satisfying the inequality as seen in figure 1.

	Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3
Algebraic Interpretation	$(\blacksquare+3)(\blacksquare-5)=128$	$\frac{\bigcirc}{6+\bigcirc}=12$	$2\square-4\leq\frac{1}{3}\bigstar$

Figure 1. Do you think number sentences would be less frightening with bright colors and unique shapes?

The algebraic language requires the use of symbols, any symbol really, to be representative of unknown values (such as those in the aforementioned statements). Consequently, when a student states "algebra is math, not English," and "the alphabet isn't needed in math," I always agree. Algebra is a unique language, unlike any other. The alphabet truly is unnecessary in algebra; nevertheless, drawing unique symbols such as blobs, pinwheels, puzzle pieces, etc. can be quite cumbersome, and replicating each symbol can be problematic. The use of the alphabet proves to be more appealing due to efficiency and familiarity.

You may not perceive numerical sentences to be as eloquent as the works of Emily Dickinson or Robert Frost, but mathematics can prove to be equally as profound when written with the appropriate structure and syntax:

> In the language of mathematics, equations are like poetry: they state truths with a unique precision, convey volumes of information in rather brief terms, and often are difficult for the uninitiated to comprehend. And just as conventional poetry helps us to see deep *within* ourselves, mathematical poetry helps us to see far beyond ourselves—if not all the way up to

> heaven, then at least out to the brink of the visible universe. (Guillen, 1995, p. 2)

At some point along the way in the public education system in the United States, content areas became so specialized that both students and educators fail to utilize the vast connections between content areas such as ELA, mathematics, science, and history. I would be willing to bet (since research can attest to it) that the majority of those who read this article dislike mathematics, experience anxiety in a mathematics classroom setting, or possibly even fear learning mathematics. Imagine, however, in addition to appealing to the aesthetics and patterns of mathematics, I appealed to those who have a passion for ELA through the mechanics of algebra, a field in which grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation are equally as important.

Breaking Barriers and Discovering Beauty

Unfortunately, gleeful acceptance was coupled with a slight fear of tainting the Renaissance unit with a poorly designed mathematics component. I wanted to create an activity that built on prior knowledge from the Algebra 1 curriculum, was developmentally appropriate for ninth grade algebra students, and was relevant to the mathematicians, philosophers, and artists already established in the unit. Settling for meeting two out of three requirements, I chose to focus on the Fibonacci sequence. An exploration of the Fibonacci sequence would align with the ideal of pursuing knowledge, reason, and pattern as demonstrated throughout the Renaissance, in addition to scaffolding prior knowledge such as arithmetic, geometric, and recursive sequences covered in the Algebra 1 curriculum.

To determine the value of any term in the Fibonacci sequence, you must know the sum of the values of the previous

two terms. Knowing that the first term in the Fibonacci sequence has a value of 1 as does the second term, we recognize the Fibonacci sequence as $1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, \ldots$. The Fibonacci sequence can then be written as a recursive rule, $a_n = a_{n-1} + a_{n-2}$ where $a_1 = 1$ and $a_2 = 1$. This notation means that the value of the n^{th} term in the sequence, a_n, is determined by evaluating the sum of the previous two terms, a_{n-1} and a_{n-2} (i.e. $1 + 1 = 2$, $1 + 2 = 3$, $2 + 3 = 5$, …). Unlike the arithmetic and geometric sequences covered in the Algebra 1 curriculum that can be written using an explicit rule or a recursive rule, the Fibonacci sequence can be written solely using a recursive rule.

A closer examination of the Fibonacci sequence yields several unique results: the considerable appearance of Fibonacci numbers in nature, the relationship between ratios of consecutive terms, and the fact that the sum of the first ten terms of the sequence has a value equal to the product of eleven and the seventh term of the sequence. Not only does the third property hold true for the Fibonacci sequence, but students explore the validity of the same property for any "Fibonacci" sequence created with first and second terms of their choosing.

The previous paragraph depicts the three ways the Fibonacci sequence can be expressed: in the language of mathematical equations, in a representative sequence of numbers, or as a language-dependent description or explanation, which is often a bit less effective but for some students is the method of choice. However, that language-dependent description or explanation requires a level of vocabulary and sentence sophistication that some of our freshmen simply do not possess. Therefore, our students are sometimes unsuccessful in algebra, not because a lack of mathematical competence, but because of a lack of knowledge and skills traditionally attributed to the ELA classroom.

The Renaissance unit demonstrated that no single class or subject matter is of greater significance than another, but this is only clear when educators are willing to teach in a manner that appeals to the countless connections among disciplines. Possibly the greatest benefit of the Renaissance unit was that students experienced the learning process in a way similar to the educated class that preceded them by nearly half a millennia, a time and place that did not arbitrarily separate bodies of knowledge. I think you would agree, as ELA educators, that the greatest of all neglected academic connections is the link between ELA and mathematics. Perhaps we would be wise to collaborate and share our expertise for the sake of our students. The connections they make, like the ones I made preparing for the Renaissance unit, may be invaluable.

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The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children

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Abstract
This article presents a book review of Gloria Ladson-Billings' *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. Ladson-Billings presents research findings that describe how the lack of culturally relevant teaching practices may be an attributing factor to poor academic performance. Also, she proposes how changes to existing teacher preparation programs should be made to address this disconnect between research and practice.

The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children

In her book, Ladson-Billings questions existing teacher preparation programs by describing ways to alter the curriculum to include culturally relevant methodologies and literature to support academic achievement for students of color. The author is the Kellner Family Chair in Urban Education and Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She has worked extensively with, and conducted research on, teacher preparation programs.

Purpose and Rationale of the Study

Ladson-Billings chose to conduct the study to examine effective teaching of African-American students and how such culturally relevant teaching practices have helped students

achieve academic success while maintaining their own identity. She advocates altering teaching practices, not the curriculum, which is a more realistic goal, claiming a distinction between excellent teachers and excellent teaching.

Context

The study was conducted in a low-income African-American and Mexican-American community in northern California. The community of the study, Pinewood, has been dubbed one of the poorest areas based on various economic and social-service factors. Such economic and social issues have created an unfair distribution of wealth, sparking hostilities among Pinewood residents. Throughout the study, the teachers and the students in Pinewood continue to face serious economic, social, and political difficulties.

Participants

The teachers that were selected were nominated for the study by African-American community members of the Pinewood area. The participants were chosen on the basis of being effective teachers—their teaching abilities were based on student grades, standardized tests scores, high school graduation rates, enrollment in college, the ability to obtain a teaching position, and the use of culturally relevant teaching. The sample group of teachers was made up of college graduates with over ten years of teaching experience. Three of the eight teacher participants were Caucasian, the other five were African-American. The teaching environment in which these professionals obtained their teaching experience varied from rural to urban locations.

Research Methodology

This study was based upon ethnographic research (Glesne, 2011) over a two year period. Data was collected through teacher interviews and classroom observations that were periodically videotaped from September 1989 to June 1991. Throughout the teacher interviews, the author attempted to create "good conversation" to obtain ideas about the relationships between pedagogy and culture. Educators were asked questions about their own personal and professional backgrounds, about their philosophy of education, and about how they approach their profession while working with curricular mandates. The interviewees were invited to play an active role in defining their own teaching practices through collective interpretation and analysis of the interview content.

The classroom observations consisted of both scheduled and unscheduled visits that typically lasted from ninety minutes to two hours. These visits were selected at random times on a weekly basis. Most of the participants' classrooms were visited approximately thirty times throughout the research period. During the classroom observations, ethnographic field notes and audiotapes were utilized to document the practices that were being observed. The author often operated as a participant-observer (Glesne, 2011), attempting to conduct her research in a manner that would not distract her participants or alter the research outcome. After each observation in the classroom, post-observation conferences were often held to gather and reflect upon observed teaching practices.

The research that was gathered was collectively analyzed by the participants and the researcher focusing on philosophical and theoretical beliefs about the pedagogy. The participants used this analysis period to rethink and reflect

upon their own methodology and its place within a culturally relevant curriculum.

Key Findings

While African-American children within the Pinewood school district were often facing poor economic conditions, Ladson-Billings affirms that poverty was not the only plausible reason for poor academic performance, but the lack of culturally relevant teaching practices was. The major attempts by the school system to promote the success of the African-American student population were centered mainly on resocializing pupils to adopt the language, perceptions, and behaviors of the mainstream by utilizing ineffective programs. Such curriculums were primarily unsuccessful because of the school's negative attitudes towards non-standard English and student culture, biased teacher perceptions, and a lack of connectedness with pupils. The author finds that children taught in classrooms that implemented culturally relevant teaching practices and created an environment that supported equitable relationships that were cultivated beyond the school, produced pupils who not only questioned the inequalities that exist in today's society but were capable of becoming highly literate and achieving academic success despite severe economic and social challenges. Ladson-Billings finds that while the personality or teaching strategies of individual teachers may vary, the underlying ideologies that promoted culturally relevant teaching were key to the successful academic performance of African American children.

Conclusions

Ladson-Billings asserts that when African-American pupils are treated as competent individuals who can succeed, they are more likely to do so through the use of culturally

relevant teaching practices. She claims that it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that students feel academically and culturally safe and supported within the schools system to communicate an idea of cooperative learning that may often extend beyond the classroom. The existing pre-packaged curriculums that schools often use perform a disservice to both the faculty and pupils. Ladson-Billings advocates for teachers of African-American children to implement culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms by encouraging pupils to be intellectual leaders through real-life learning experiences, incorporating literacy and oratory to promote political thinking, and becoming knowledgeable in both the subject-matter *and* the students who they teach.

Educational Implications

Ladson-Billings proposes to change existing teacher education programs to better serve African-American students by recruiting teachers who have expressed a genuine interest in working with minority students. She believes that by modifying existing teacher preparation programs to stress the importance of merging pupils' culture with the curriculum and to allow student-teachers to observe African-American culture first-hand would allow teachers to gain a truer understanding of the educators' role in the classroom—to foster student thinking and create intellectual leaders. She also stresses the importance of recruiting teachers that have been immersed in the African-American culture and have had the opportunity to observe culturally relevant teaching practices over a prolonged time period. Finally, Ladson-Billings emphasizes a shift from the typically short duration of student teaching programs, stating that pre-service teachers of African-American children would benefit from longer, more in-depth student teaching experiences.

Critique

Literacy is typically centered on reading and writing activities in school that support the view of the majority. However, as Street (1993) asserts, it is a social practice that requires an in depth view into cultural settings. In my opinion, if literacy is so interconnected with social and cultural experiences, literacy education must also reflect and support the same social and cultural experiences of the participants, both the minority and majority. Therefore, literacy is somewhat synonymous with cultural identity even though the school curriculum, as it is in Pinewood, often seeks to segregate the practice from the context in which it functions. The "teacher-proof" curriculums that have been created and put into practice often reject the notion that literacy has no meaning apart from the cultural contexts in which it is used (Gee, 1996).

Unfortunately, many new teachers often fall into the "trap" of prescribed curriculums – opting to follow the school or district mandate due to fear of administrative action, or simply, as a result of inexperience. Ladson-Billings' calls for a longer duration of student teaching programs seems like a likely solution for the kind of teacher that is unwilling to either critique the system or advocate for change. As teaching is truly a learned profession that takes years to master, it seems that novice teachers would benefit from gaining more experience under the guidance of a master teacher. However, this, like some of Ladson-Billings' other proposals to change teaching practices and motivate teachers, is not a realistic one. With increases in college tuition and frequent changes to teacher certification requirements, how many student-teachers would prefer to make their teacher preparation programs longer? The ideologies that Ladson-Billings suggests are not necessarily reasonable methods of altering teacher current preparation

programs. Fortunately, many of her ideas do have solid foundation. It is important that educators participate in culturally relevant teaching practices to connect the lives of their students to the curriculum and to encourage individual success. Because this is often done at a superficial level in many schools, there must be more research that directly correlates the effectiveness of culturally relevant teaching to a growth in academic achievement, namely in standardized test scores. Although this seems problematic and extremely difficult to measure, there must be some connection to student achievement on the national level and culturally relevant teaching in order for the practice to be embraced.

Identity is the most integral part of teaching and learning. Literacy is therefore situated and inseparable from the individual's own cultural practices (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005). In the Pinewood schools, the pupils' home and school cultural practices were incongruent, and the students' academic performance reflected the lack of conformity within the curriculum. The schools rejected the culture of the African-American children by disregarding the validity of "nonstandard English" and ignoring individual identities. Ladson-Billings advocates teaching that does not tell children what they need to learn, but links the necessary core subject-matter to students' cultural identities in order to create "real-life" learning experiences and promote highly literate individuals. The successful teachers observed in Pinewood offered contextualized, meaningful activities from which students' cultural identities were acknowledged and supported. It seems, however, that the temptation for teachers to use student culture as a bridge to more "relevant" or "traditional" subject-matter would be too great as a result of the pressures of standardized assessments and "teaching to the test." If educators' teaching abilities are measured, as they often may be in some school

districts, based solely on the annual test scores of their students, teachers are more likely to gravitate toward teaching toward the dominate culture to produce test-ready individuals. Ladson-Billings, in many ways, rejects this practice, linking it to the system to adequately address the needs of African-American children. The change in the education system must be greater than that of an individual program; it must encompass the ideals that support the New Literacy Studies—the concept that literacy is used in everyday life and that literacy practices are often carried across various domains (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005).

While classroom teaching should celebrate cultural and social diversity to promote learning, encouraging educators to use culturally relevant teaching practices is not an adequate means of closing the achievement gap between different social groups because the very nature of our education system seemingly encourages "domination," not freedom (Freire, 1997). For instance, in the U.S. the official language of instruction is typically Standard English (Freire and Macedo, 1987). The practice of oppressing both the native-language and, consequently, the culture of minority groups is often wide-spread throughout the school system. Such cultural discontinuities between home and school, often due to negative attitudes about native-language retention, often affect student learning (Nieto, 1999).

The complex nature of literacy is challenging the current curricula as literacy is ever changing and does not adhere to the traditional definitions that existed in the 20th century. As the literacies that children encounter outside of school shift, the way in which children are taught must similarly transform in order to effectively prepare them to successfully function in society. Due to technology tools, children are exposed to a vast quantity of literacy practices that

can only serve to develop their literacy skills, not only at a faster rate, but in an entirely new direction. Thus, to effectively prepare our children for the future, the cultural and social practices of the individual – such as maintaining a native-language or incorporating the use of new technologies – must serve as a foundation for education. Nevertheless, such change cannot occur while the school system reduces the child to a number, to a single test score in order to supports false notions of literacy development.

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