The English Record

The New York State English Council

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The English Record

New York State English Council

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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The English Record **is looking to expand our review panel. If you are interested in serving as a member of the review panel, please forward a letter of interest and a copy of your curriculum vitae to englishrecord@oneonta.edu**

Letter from the Editor
Kjersti VanSlyke-Briggs

I love that we can open this issue with some exciting news. At the November National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention, *The English Record* will receive honorable mention for the affiliate journal award. The editors would like to thank all of our authors and the manuscript review panel for their excellent work. It is because of the wonderful material we have to work with and the fabulous guidance of the review panel that *The English Record* will receive this honor. The names of these valuable contributors can be found in the table of contents and under the review panel listing in the opening pages of each journal. Thank you for your service and professionalism! The issue that was sent to the selection committee was Spring 2016 (Vol 66 No 2).

If you are interested in seeing your name in print and helping craft a great publication you can always send us manuscripts (details on how to do this are found within this journal) or you can join our review panel by emailing us at englishrecord@oneonta.edu. We are also always looking for great cover art, so feel free to send along original work to be considered for the cover as well.

Opening a new academic year with this news was a good start and I'd like to keep that momentum going. I hope you also started your school year off with good news, optimism and energy. Mine always starts to wane mid-October as the germs and stacks of papers begin to pile up. That is why the NYSEC annual conference has perfect timing. It gets me rejuvenated to hang on till winter break and then ready to start spring semester renewed. NYSEC provides other outlets to stay connected as well. In addition to the wonderful conference and our journal, we have the newsletter and our Facebook site.

Each of these opportunities to grow professionally are successful because of member participants. People like you! Join in the conversation and grow with us as we head into a new academic year.

The pages of this journal have much to offer. There is something for every level of educator from elementary to pre-service teachers. Chris DiLeo addresses novice and pre-service teachers reminding them to inspire and reminding us that teaching is after all "a human enterprise." Cristina DeLuca Savarese writes about nonliteral language and the benefits for adolescents, an important read given the over focus on informational text in some schools. Yet another article you should be sure to check out is Amy L. Tondreau and Alyson T. Rumberger's on the negative impact of scripted curriculum in today's data and accountability obsessed education field. The authors of this issue of *The English Record* remind readers what is important. Because after all, it really is *about students.*

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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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.**

Scripted Curricula and Restricted Identities: The Realities of Teachers and Students in an Audit Culture

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Abstract

We examine the impact of the Common Core State Standards and scripted literacy curricula in a New York City public elementary classroom. We argue that these texts perpetuate dominant, middle-class values and situate our critique of them within the broader literature on deficit discourse around Emergent Bilingual students. Utilizing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, we investigate the language and images used to construct models of ideal readers, ideal teachers, and ideal citizens. We explore how teachers can reconcile the constraints of the audit culture with their own desire to create a more responsive and diverse curriculum.

Scripted Curricula and Restricted Identities: The Realities of Teachers and Students in an Audit Culture

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) play a large role in school reform. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have adopted these standards with the intent of curricular alignment, aiming to create national consistency and rigor. For many states, this means increasing the expectations for student performance, as schools strive to produce students who are college and career ready. A move towards national standards is also a move towards a more equitable education for all children.

However, the effort to enable all students to reach higher standards coincides with the intensification of an audit

culture with a focus on measurement of student and teacher effectiveness (Apple, 2004). The standards are tied to accountability systems and scripted curricula, which limit how they are implemented at the local level. The interaction between these structured curricula and an environment that holds teachers accountable for their fidelity of implementation is problematic. This context not only constrains the materials that teachers may utilize in their classrooms, but also discourages teachers from experimenting and tailoring instruction to the needs of their particular students. The constraints of new curricular reforms leave little space for student identities and responsive practice, and the interaction between the policy constraints and the scripted curricula itself hinders teachers' abilities or willingness to deviate from the materials they are given. As Banks (2004) has argued, a one-size-fits all curriculum has negative consequences for both mainstream students and those outside of the mainstream. However, we argue that this linear conception of literacy development is especially challenging for students whose language development diverges from the dominant linear conception of literacy progression because they are more likely to be positioned as deficient or failing when their literacy development deviates from the perceived "norm". There are great ramifications to this label for students in a context where success is narrowly defined and attached to high stakes. Through these factors, opportunities for teachers and students to enact agency in shaping the literacy practices most relevant to their own contexts are limited by the larger audit culture. In an educational climate in which commercial scripted curricula is conflated with particular student outcomes and high-stakes testing, it is important to consider whose interests are served by the valorization of these products.

New York City is among the first large urban school districts in the nation to select curricula aligned to the new standards, recommending first-generation curricula and promising to support schools in purchasing and training teachers to use the materials. In response to this political climate, 86% of New York City public schools (grades K-8) have adopted at least one of the NYC Department of Education's "recommended" Core Curriculum programs (Lapham, 2013). Students in high-poverty areas are most likely to be taught using mandated scripted curricula (MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004); consequently, the interaction between scripted curricula and the audit culture intensifies the pressures on these students and their teachers to conform to the "standard". While advantaged districts are able to exert more choice over curriculum, schools with high Emergent Bilingual populations that often face additional economic challenges are incentivized by district-advocated and subsidized curricular materials tied to high-stakes testing because they are positioned as failing. The curriculum of low-performing schools is shaped by the culture of accountability and standardized testing (Finnigan, Bitter, & O'Day, 2009; Mintrop, 2004; Oakes, 2008); in this context, scripted curriculum is an issue of equity.

In this article, we will offer an analysis of a scripted curriculum that is currently in use in the New York City public schools. Structured around the CCSS and intended to address the instructional shifts that come with the standards, this curriculum is built around thematic literature for children, with one central text for each unit. While the essential questions and overarching curriculum goals may strive to "create a culture of inquiry around the unit text sets and tasks," close reading and text-dependent conversations are the immediate goals of lessons that make up all six units for first graders. The *Coming to America* unit consists of seven lessons; the structures of

these lessons are consistent with the whole curriculum. Each lesson consists of ten pages, replicating the same pattern of activities each day. The teacher's guide provides an explicit, scripted routine for each component, such as whole-class discussion and read aloud. This rests on the conception of a unilinear model of development in the acquisition of literacy skills. Street (1984) referred to this as the autonomous model and argued it could not adequately account for culturally and linguistically diverse ways of expression or achievement. Teachers are held to the pacing guides outlined by the curriculum publisher, with classrooms progressing through the same lessons at the same pace. Therefore, the culture of inquiry that the curriculum intends to foster seems unlikely if implemented with the fidelity expected of New York City teachers.

We argue that the teacher's guide and the pre-selected trade boook construct a dominant white American identity in contrast to a multilingual immigrant identity. While we analyze the impact of this particular curriculum, we argue that the issues we raise could occur within the enactment of any curriculum when it is situated within the current policy context. We situate our critique of these texts within the broader literature on deficit discourse and its implications for multilingual students. Utilizing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, we investigate the language and images of the program and its accompanying texts. We seek to interrogate the underlying assumptions of these seemingly neutral texts to reveal what literacy identities are valued with special consideration of Emergent Bilingual and immigrant student identities. We analyze curricular texts to uncover constructed images of ideal readers, ideal teachers, and ideal citizens. We raise questions about the curricular objectives and their impact on students and teachers, who must reconcile the privileged

discourse of the texts with their own desires to create a more equitable and inclusive curriculum.

Deficit Discourse around Emergent Bilingual Students

Dominant societal values are transmitted through the texts that students are compelled to read. All texts are pedagogic, and all discourses, including literacy, are inherently ideological (Carrington, 2003; Gee, 1989). Curriculum, at least in part, is the formal statement of what society believes is important for students to know (Monaghan & Saul, 1987), and research has shown the divide between commercial curricula and the lives of students who encounter them (Banks, 2007). The transmission of societal values is even more explicit when text selection is limited by the use of a commercial literacy program. A scripted curriculum, because it purports a one-size-fits-all view, makes assumptions about the literacy practices and identity markers of the students it serves. Commercial literacy programs claim to address the needs of any child, regardless of race, gender, or class, constructing a "normal child" through assumptions about what this child should know and be able to do (Luke, 1995-1996). Yet, classrooms are inherently heterogeneous, full of students with different identities and experiences. A scripted curriculum, in practice, then, prevents the acknowledgement and reflection of the lived experience of all students. The curriculum is unchanging, yet the population of students served in a classroom setting is continuously evolving, both from class to class and as students grow and learn over the course of the school year. By its nature, a scripted curriculum is fixed; it cannot respond to these changing needs and conditions.

As Banks (2004) has argued, the fixed nature of scripted curricula is problematic for all students. For mainstream students, a curriculum that only reflects dominant

values and identities is problematic because it does not allow students to benefit from the knowledge and points of view of those different from themselves. It also provides a misleading sense of security, as students develop misunderstandings of their relationships with other racial and cultural groups, as well as their own achievement within narrow constructions of success. All students' identities and sense of efficacy are affected by the limited opportunities scripted curricula provide to engage in literacy practices (Dutro, 2010).

However, the fixed nature of the curriculum has more profound consequences for students who deviate from the mainstream. We must acknowledge that certain literacies hold more power and privilege within both American society and the public school system. The role of language to normalize particular practices is inherent in policies and the curriculum created to enact them. Within the curriculum, particular identity and status markers, such as poverty, immigration status, or multilingualism, are viewed as deficient in comparison to the life of a middle-class, native English speaker. This constructs a binary between native English speakers, positioned as ideal readers, and Emergent Bilinguals. In fact, literacy as a set of discrete skills is positioned as a pathway to shedding one's previous identity markers in order to assimilate to the dominant culture. Students who are unable to conform to this narrow definition of success are often positioned as failing. These markers of success or failure have significant academic, emotional, and material consequences. For example, the ways in which students view themselves and their efficacy at school, as well as their placement in particular levels, classes, or groups may be affected. Often intersecting with social class, these markers of academic failure often lead to material differences such as a high dropout rate and the ability to earn a living wage (Dutro, 2010). Students struggle, often

unsuccessfully, to escape from the labels imposed on them by the curriculum and educational policy climate. We seek to disrupt this narrow conception of literacy development and achievement. Instead, we argue that literacy is something that all children have and use as a way to make meaning of the world. Children make meaning using multiple literacies, which are socially situated, interactive, and ideological.

Valdes (1998) argues that, "the teaching of English to immigrant students, rather than a straightforward and unproblematic practice, is a contested site in which there is a struggle about the role and the future of immigrants in our society" (p. 16). The curricular texts we analyzed conflate an immigrant identity with an Emergent Bilingual identity, indicating that these are synonymous. The teacher's guide uses the term English Language Learner, making assumptions that it is the English Language Learners who will identify with the concepts of immigration in the picture book. However, as Valdes (1998) points out, this complex work has no simple answers. We grapple with the terminology and identity markers for these populations, acknowledging that in many ways, the interests of Emerging Bilingual and immigrant students are the same, while there are still important distinctions to be made. In some instances, a student may embody both of these identity markers, while other students may identify with one or the other. For example, many immigrant students are Emergent Bilinguals, though most Emergent Bilinguals are not immigrants (Gándara, 2015). In this way, these students may have diverging curricular needs and interests. However, while many Emerging Bilingual students may not be literal immigrants from other countries, their status as linguistic outsiders, formed in the habitus of home and family (Bourdieu, 1977) marks them as de facto immigrants upon entering school. The social and linguistic status markers inscribed on the bodies

of these students make them vulnerable to the symbolic violence of tracking and academic performance labels. Therefore, the identities of Emerging Bilinguals and immigrant students are intertwined in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

Social class also complicates the discussion of student identities. There is an intersection between linguistic identities and socio-economic status; research has shown that approximately 75% of students classified as Emerging Bilinguals come from poor families, and the majority of these students are served by urban schools with high poverty rates and high concentrations of Emerging Bilingual students (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Yet, while most Emergent Bilinguals may come from poor families, the experience of living in poverty is not exclusive to Emergent Bilinguals, nor are all Emergent Bilinguals living in poverty. Therefore, we seek to acknowledge the complex ways that immigration status, linguistic development, and social class overlap and diverge to shape the fluid and multiple identities of students in varied ways. In our analysis, we seek to highlight both the intersections of these identities and the ways in which they are distinct. However, we emphasize the ways in which classroom realities shape the identities and lived experiences of these students. Those realities are, in turn, shaped by policies for teaching practice and curricular choices which reflect larger societal attitudes towards bilingual education.

While there is no consensus on the best practices for literacy instruction of Emergent Bilinguals, there are many who argue that viewing students through a monolingual lens is problematic (Gort, 2012; Palmer, Martinez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014). We align ourselves with Garcia (2009) in arguing for the use of the term Emergent Bilingual. This places

the bilingualism of these students at the center of the discussion and values their linguistic resources.

As we will demonstrate, the curriculum analyzed delineates specific instruction for Emergent Bilingual students as an add-on to the general curriculum, positioning all Emergent Bilinguals as a homogenous group that is inherently different than the general classroom population. When Emergent Bilingual students are taught using a scripted curriculum, the assumption is that language development is linear, when in fact, it is much more fluid and complex. Becoming fluent in English should not be the sole focus in the classroom. Rather, both languages must be valued and developed. However, rather than presenting bilingualism as an opportunity, curricular texts often portray it as an obstacle to overcome on the way to becoming an ideal reader.

Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks

We identify with a critical literacy orientation, which seeks to complicate the transactional approach to literacy instruction, where literacy is viewed as the transmission of skills detached from cultural context and ideological values. Literacy is "intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society" (Gee, 1989, p. 19) and these structures are reinscribed in curricular texts. Rather than adhering to the dominant conception of literacy in the audit culture, critical literacy seeks to question inequitable power distributions and empower marginalized voices. Taking the stance that the critical literacy agenda is fluid and continually being shaped by "the sociohistorical and political context, the changing communication landscape, teachers' and students' investments, and shifts in theory and practice" (Janks, 2009, p. 203), our goal is to respond to the current landscape of literacy instruction. We aim to deconstruct a curricular unit to

uncover its assumptions and ideologies about how children become literate and what literacies are valued discourses. We utilized Thompson's (1990) depth hermeneutics, which situates critical readings of texts within social and historical contexts and aligns with CDA.

Thompson's (1990) model advocates three phases of the depth-hermeneutical approach, which may be described as "*social-historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis,* and *interpretation/re-interpretation*" (p. 281). After situating our analysis in the sociohistorical context, we aim to engage in a formal textual analysis and interpretive explication of the implications of particular curricular materials and practices. For the formal level of textual analysis within Thompson's framework, we employed questions from Jones (2006) that focus on an analysis of power, positioning, and perspective. Therefore, we asked: *Who has power in the text? How is the reader positioned? What perspectives are privileged?* Jones (2006) argues that these three concepts are interrelated and embedded in text, talk, and images. They each work to produce and reproduce dominant ideologies and conceptions of literacy.

CDA is characterized by its focus on getting beneath the surface of language to reveal its ideological nature. With Luke (1995-1996), "we take the position that everything is discourse—that meaning is always deferred, that all texts are polysemous (i.e., have multiple meanings), that to privilege any particular reading of texts or the world is potentially authoritarian" (p. 19). In order to disrupt a reductionist approach to literacy development, we take a critical lens to the curricular materials that serve to reinforce structural inequities in reading achievement. Through the CDA framework, we will examine how language works to position readers in relation to power (Janks, 2009).

Methodology

As two former classroom teachers, we each encountered this scripted curriculum at a time when it was just coming to fruition. In the first year of its implementation, we were each tasked with providing professional development to teacher teams, supporting them around the new curriculum. As doctoral students, we were placed in part-time literacy coaching positions through a fellowship that aimed to establish a partnership between our university and two local elementary schools. These experiences raised questions for us about what was being conveyed through these texts, which were now the sole focus in the classroom. We decided to look more systematically at the curriculum, selecting an end of the year unit for first graders for analysis. Because we were working in urban school settings with many Emergent Bilingual students, we selected a unit relevant to their lived experiences as children caught between competing identities, languages, and cultures. More broadly, we knew that these concerns weren't unique to our context, as many school systems are facing the difficult juxtaposition of stringent accountability policies with a diversifying student population. Urban school systems aren't the only ones forced to reconcile these differences, as most of the growth in Emergent Bilingual populations has been occurring in Southeastern states (Gándara, 2015). For example, there are nearly 5 million children labeled as "English Language Learners" at any one time, a number that shifts due to frequent reclassification. This is approximately 10% of all U.S. students (Gándara, 2015). Designed for the largest school system in the nation, this unit seeks to address the experiences of this growing population through a unit focused on immigration and diversity.

Separately, we engaged in analysis of the teacher's guide and associated text, examining the language mapped on

to concepts of immigrants and Americans, teachers and students, native speakers and Emergent Bilinguals (called English Language Learners in the text), and experts and novices. We developed charts across the texts, exploring the language used to construct these binaries. Then, we coded our notes, developing emerging themes, before we came together to compare our analysis and look for correlation. The analysis that follows reflects the themes, language analysis, and images identified through this combined inquiry.

In the section that follows, we represent our analysis, which revealed some of the ways that power was enacted and assumptions were coded through the texts' structure and language. Through explication of teacher manuals and student texts, we aim to demonstrate that, "the interplay of overt and invisible ideologies is most evident in realist texts which thematize social issues, especially representations of bodies and behaviors marked by gender or race/ethnicity" (McCallum and Stephens, 2011, p. 370). We will examine the whole-class program first through an analysis of a picture book, and then the teacher's guide. Through our analysis, we seek to examine the valuing and marginalization of particular identities and ideologies perpetuated through these texts.

Whole-Class Text: *Coming to America* and the Immigrant Narrative

Coming to America is a whole-class picture book assigned by the publisher for the mandated curricular unit at the end of first grade. It tells the stories of diverse immigrant and migrant groups as they journeyed to North America. Literature for children is often portrayed as neutral and benign; *Coming to America*, upon first glance, also provides a warm look into the immigration experience. As we began our investigation, noting how both visual and print literacy

overlapped to illustrate clear themes, we noticed particular language that mapped on to the concepts of "immigrant" and "American." These language choices construct a hegemonic single narrative that reinforces a view of America as a benevolent, superior "melting pot." For example, America is described using terminology such as "better," "new," and "inspiring," "a great land" with a "spirit of strength and independence" (Table A). In contrast, immigrants' native countries are depicted with language such as "trouble" and "hardship," places full of "perils and poverty," where immigrants faced "persecution or the dangers of war and natural disaster." Multiple references to "very little money" position poverty as central to immigrant identity. By choosing to depict the immigrant experience as singular and predominantly objective, the text limits the ways in which teachers and their students might engage in a social justice discourse. Particularly when paired with the teacher's guide, this text selection invites a passive and detached approach to immigration, rather than a contestable account of multiple perspectives.

The first pages of *Coming to America* include the written text, "America is a nation of immigrants. Immigrants are people who come to a new land to make their home. All Americans are related to immigrants or are immigrants themselves" (Maestro, 1996, p. 2). The term "Americans" is positioned as powerful, as it subsumes the various immigrant identities into its dominant identity. The illustration depicts an Around the World Dinner, with children dressed in traditional outfits from different cultures, sharing cultural dishes. The practice depicted epitomizes the "contributions approach," which attempts to integrate multicultural content into curriculum by focusing on heroes and heroines, holidays, and discrete cultural events (Banks, 1995). However, simply

Table A. Picture Book Language

Immigrant	*American*
p. 8 -"Free of the trouble and hardship they left behind" -"They often had little money" **p. 11** -"Enough food to fill their hungry stomachs" -"Their new lives were very hard at first" **p. 14** -"They had little money to afford anything except the most basic necessities" **p. 18** -"It was still better than the perils and poverty they faced in their native countries" **p. 19** -"Recorded the exact number" -"Began to regulate" -"Count and question the new arrivals" -"They would see that those admitted were healthy and ready to become useful citizens" **p. 25** -"Those with health problems were marked with colored chalk" -"Examination by doctors" -"Some people were kept on the island for observation" **p. 26** -"Permanent health problems that would make it hard for them to work" -"Inspectors check the	**p. 7** -"They came in search of land and riches" **p. 8** -"Came in search of a better life" -"They hoped for freedom and good fortune" **p. 11** -"In search of a better life" **p. 16** -"New frontiers" **p. 17** -"A vast nation" **p. 21** -"Statue of Liberty, a welcome and inspiring sight" **p. 33** -"Has taken in countless refugees" **p. 34** -"They seek protection and shelter in the United States" -"They are still coming for the same reason people have always come—to make a better life for themselves and their children" **p. 35** -"This great land" -"The spirit of American strength and independence"

passengers" -"Inspectors look for signs of contagious disease" -"Passed inspection" **p. 27** -"They needed help" -"Translators did what they could to help" -"How much money they had" **p. 28** -"Had to show that they would work hard and stay out of trouble" **p. 29** -"Passed more laws limiting the number of people who could enter the country" **p. 31** -"The jobs they must take are often hard, with long hours" **p. 32** -"It helps them to feel more at home in a strange, new country" **p. 33** -"Forced to leave their homelands to escape persecution or the dangers of war and natural disaster"	

entertaining other countries' special celebrations can be counter-productive and may serve to perpetuate stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination with respect to diversity.

A discussion of immigrants' living arrangements reinforces stereotypes about particular minority groups. The text states that, "People who had come from the same country

usually stayed together. They felt more at home near others who lived as they did and spoke the same language" (Maestro, 1996, p. 14). This same concept is reiterated later in the text to make it clear that ethnic neighborhoods were common both in the past and in present-day America. This positions the reader as a member of the dominant, white middle-class, examining the practices of immigrant "others." From this perspective, there is "an assumption that culture provided particular rules for behavior that everyone in a culture abided by" (Gonzalez, 2005, p. 33), perpetuating a cultural determinism that normalizes the isolation and segregation of particular groups.

Of course, the text does not address the root causes of such segregated communities, including the public policies and legislation that contributed to the formation of racial and ethnic neighborhoods. The urban ghetto, neighborhoods exclusively inhabited by members of one group, was constructed during the first half of the twentieth century and reinforced repeatedly thereafter (Massey & Denton, 1993). However, the segregation of European ethnic groups was actually lower and more temporary than other minority groups. In fact, "European ethnic groups did not experience a particularly high degree of isolation from American society" and their ethnic neighborhoods were typically heterogeneous and a "fleeting, transitory stage in the process of immigrant assimilation" (Massey & Denton, 1993, p. 33). In the text, however, immigrants are framed as a homogeneous group without acknowledging a hierarchy of privilege within an immigrant population, one which might be affected by identity markers including language or race. Some immigrants may have been constrained to ethnic neighborhoods due to discriminatory housing practices, and not their own choice, while for white, European immigrants, ethnic neighborhoods were either diverse or temporary homes.

The most dominant theme in *Coming to America*, however, is the archetypal story of immigrants who travel to America searching for a better life, and, by working hard, experience mobility and success in their new country. The text constructs an ideal citizen, positioning those whose experiences do not align with this narrative as deviant. A nationalistic perspective of American superiority is evident throughout the text, such as an account of America's protection of countless refugees, or the acknowledgement that though immigrant's lives may have been hard, they were still better off in America than in their native countries. It is the closing pages of the text, however, that drive this message home most forcefully:

> America has been called a great 'melting pot' where many cultures, or ways of life, have blended together. But today, Americans have also learned to celebrate their differences. There is a growing appreciation and understanding of the special character and unique contributions of each cultural or ethnic group. Everyone, from the first Americans thousands of years ago to those who came only yesterday, has left a lasting mark on this great land…The spirit of American strength and independence is the spirit of its people - the spirit of immigrants and their children. (Maestro, 1996, p. 35-36)

This hegemonic narrative provides a happy ending to the story, but not necessarily one that reflects the reality of the lived experiences of many immigrants in the United States today. Children who have immigrated, or whose families have immigrated, may have difficulty finding themselves within a text that presents itself as all-inclusive. By not allowing the space for a critique of the immigrant experience or the reality of modern-day America, *Coming to America* may exclude the very students it seeks to empower. Though the text

acknowledges the adversity that immigrants throughout history have faced and continue to face, it ultimately perpetuates the "archetypal American story of upward mobility for immigrant families through hard work and sacrifice" (Campano, 2007, p. 17). Rather than empowering immigrant students who may identify with this text, children who attempt to match their own lived experiences with this dominant narrative may begin to identify themselves as falling short of this ideal.

In privileging the text *Coming to America* as the sole instructional text for this unit, the curriculum constructs both an ideal citizen and an ideal reader. Limiting instruction to a single text implies the audience of a single reader. This ideal reader is prepared to grapple with a complex text at the end of first grade, progressing in a predictable way along an assumed linear development of literacy skills and language fluency. This reader is also positioned as a cultural insider, exploring the experiences of immigrant others through the text and accepting the archetypal immigrant narrative, for, as Janks (2009) reminds us, when "we are the ideal reader of a text, sharing its presuppositions and the positions it takes up, then the text appears natural to use and it is harder to step back from it and to see it as a socially constructed representation" (p. 97). Thus, a seemingly neutral text, when it is the only voice heard, has the power to perpetuate dominant values and ideals about both immigrant and American identities.

The Curricular Unit: Immigrants as Others and Teachers as Technicians

The idealized identities constructed by the problematic text selection are also perpetuated in the teacher's guide. Students are also positioned as passive readers whose answers must be textually based. Their answers are only allowed to fall within "expected" parameters; they are unable to question the

texts, but must connect their thinking back to the texts' authority. Students are asked to engage in close reading of the text across each lesson, both whole-class and in small group work. The focus is on accountability to text-based questions at the exclusion of students' experiences, background knowledge, or emotional engagement with the text. Close reading is emphasized under the CCSS, requiring students to value "what lies within the four corners of the text" and devalue their own experiences and perspectives (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 4). This adherence to the text is more problematic for students whose experiences and language practices are not represented in classroom texts.

For example, when asking students to discuss what they think America was like when the first people arrived, the script prompts the teacher to provide the following think aloud: "When we are having a discussion about a book we are reading, I might have a good idea. But I should always go back and see what the text says to make sure my idea is right" (Table B). The focus on text-bound inferences serves to silence the personal or emotional connections of the students, as well as their personal knowledge of the immigration system, which may not conform to the official curriculum that teachers are now expected to implement with fidelity. The text itself is valued over the meaning that students can make from it, because what counts in this audit culture is whether students are able to produce the correct responses. In another example, the text discusses how Africans were forced to leave their homelands and into slavery. Rather than engaging students in a critical reading of this important issue, or allowing them to respond as empathetic readers, the teacher's guide limits discussion to a vocabulary question about the word "homeland." This missed opportunity exemplifies Apple's (1971) description of the avoidance of conflict in curriculum

and the positioning of students as recipients, not creators, of knowledge.

Table B. Pedagogical Language

Student	*Teacher*	*Expert*
p. 157 -"Awareness of America's rich diversity fosters intercultural understanding" **p. 159** -"Children may be confused" **p. 160** -"When we are having a discussion about a book we are reading, I might have a good idea. But I should always go back and see what the text says to make sure my idea is right" **p. 167** -"Provide sentence frames" -"For children who are not yet able to…" **p. 169** -"Help children make sense of…" -"Simplify" **p. 209** -"Guide children to recognize if they live in an ethnic neighborhood"	**p. 192** -"Remind children that reading with accuracy means reading without making any mistakes." **p. 212** -"Organize the class in small groups. Have children in each group make and wear the same color paper buttons… have children find friends with the same color button and then group together again. Guide children to conclude finding friends and grouping together is one way that immigrants can make their lives better"	**p. iv** -"The synergy between reading and writing is powerful—it speaks to the real-world lifestyles of 21st-century children while preparing them for college and their future careers" **p. v** -"Concepts are the foundation of knowledge. The digital revolution has resulted in an increase in the amount of and access to knowledge" -"Everything you need to get this generation of readers and writers ready to meet the challenge presented by the Common Core"

The close reading questions also provide "possible responses," implying that teachers require support in anticipating answers, and determining their appropriateness. This practice represents the deskilling of teachers, and suggests that the authors of the curriculum viewed their prompts as eliciting text-bound responses from students (Dutro, 2010). They do not, however, anticipate that students may have lived experiences that inform their responses. For example, a vocabulary question in lesson four states, "Life was better for immigrants in America than in their native countries," before asking what the word "native" means, anticipating a text-based inferential response. This assumes that students have no personal experience with immigration or assimilating to a new language and culture, positioning it as something that "other people" experience. An ideal reader is constructed who does not have personal experience with the difficulties faced by new immigrants and is learning about them through the text. The questions and expected responses make assumptions about the how children will approach the text and fail to consider the real and complicated responses that are elicited from children of diverse backgrounds. This structure also makes assumptions about teachers, deskilling them through structures which assume they lack the professional judgement to engage students' authentic responses in meaningful ways. Thus, spaces for teachers to engage with students around rich topics such as immigration or bilingualism are closed, and students are less likely to share their experiences once text-based "expected" answers are validated.

The teacher's guide also serves to perpetuate a bounded sense of culture that essentializes difference by assuming that all members of a group share the same beliefs and practices. This is evident in the recommendation that students work to create a brochure or poster to advertise an

"Around the World Dinner," which reproduces stereotypes and reduces multicultural content to essentialized notions. Instead of selecting a variety of cultural texts for a wide representation of diversity, the choice to highlight only one text mirrors dominant attitudes about what it means to be an American, and what it means to be an immigrant. This is further reinforced in the final lesson, which asks students to explain how the text shows that America is "a 'melting pot' of many different cultures blended together." This normalizes the pressure for assimilation of language and culture. Immigrant cultures are presented as absorbed into the dominant American culture, while languages other than English are marginalized. This constructs an ideal citizen defined by cultural and linguistic assimilation.

Immigrants are positioned as "other," creating a dualistic framing that reinscribes deficit notions and reinforces stereotypes. For example, in Lesson Six, the guide directs teachers to ask students, "Why might immigrants be treated poorly by other Americans?" and the expected student response is "because they look or act differently" (Table C), normalizing the need for assimilation. In the teacher's guide, as in the picture book, this creates an us/them binary, reinforcing stereotypes about immigrants and treating them as an internally homogeneous group. The curriculum does not create the space for students to question these assumptions, provide an opportunity for students to share their own experiences, or develop a critical stance towards this social issue.

Students who are Emergent Bilinguals are also depicted as a homogenous group in the teacher's guide. Small boxes added on to the curriculum provide tips for teachers to address the needs of these students; however, this does not include an alternate text or lesson, simply an add-on to the whole-class lesson. In Lesson Six, the prompt reads, "Guide

Table C. Textual Language

Immigrant	***American***
p. 189 -"What happened if people were found to be sick?" (They either stayed on the ship until they were healthy, or they were sent to other islands to get well.) **p. 199** -"Why do you think it was important for immigrants to be able to work?" (US was growing, and healthy people who could work were needed to help it grow.) **p. 200** -"Do you think it was fair that people with permanent health problems were sent back to their native country? Why or why not?" (Yes, because they wouldn't be able to work, and they might need a lot of care.) **p. 209** -"Why do you think immigrants often have to work hard jobs with long hours?" (They need money; they don't know English.) -"Why might immigrants be treated poorly by other Americans?" (Because they look or act differently.) **p. 213** -"The author writes that	**p. 179** -"Life was better for immigrants in America than in their *native* countries." **p. 185** -"*It was the most wonderful trip I have ever taken! I knew I was coming to my new home, and I would join my family in the New World*." **p. 190** -"What other feelings besides joy and excitement would people arriving in America have?" **p. 213** -"What are these refugees looking for in the United Sates? Why do they come to America?" (safety, protection, shelter)

refugees come to the United States to escape persecution, or cruel and unfair treatment. What are other reasons?" (They want to get away from the dangers of war and natural disasters.) **p. 219** -"How does the picture of the street fair show that America is a 'melting pot' of many cultures blended together?" (There are people of many different cultures enjoying foods, activities, and music of many cultures.) -"Immigrants have 'left a lasting mark' on America" -"How do you think the immigrants showed their spirit?" (They worked hard and were thankful even though they faced challenges.)	

children to see if they live in an ethnic neighborhood. What family members and friends live near you? Are they from [native country] too? Who speaks [native language]? What special days do you celebrate with neighbors?" Positioning this question as only for Emergent Bilingual students indicates a conception of non-dominant students as "a distinct, unified group that is somehow different from an invisible and mostly unspecified norm" (Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006, p. 505). In addition, it makes assumptions that Emergent Bilingual students are not native to America. This draws attention to the

intertwined nature of culture and power; though white, middle-class students may also live in neighborhoods with other students from similar backgrounds, this is not framed as "ethnic" or cultural. As Rosaldo (1993) argued, the more power one has, the less culture one enjoys, and the more culture one has, the less power one wields. These socially constructed practices are naturalised to the point of becoming invisible.

Perhaps the most powerful impact of the teacher's guide, however, is to frame the broader goals of the unit and the curriculum itself. For the *Coming to America* unit, the goal is to teach students to appreciate America's rich diversity and celebrate its cultures. In this way, the purpose of conveying ideology is clear (Carrington, 2003; Gee, 1989). However, this simplified celebration of diversity masks the underlying hegemonic narrative in which assimilation leads to success. Monaghan and Saul (1987) argued that, "The fact that today our basal series offer a little ethnic variety…simply shows that values have changed. It certainly does not show that society has abandoned the need to represent its beliefs in textbooks for reading instruction. Reading texts have been, and must ever be, value laden" (p. 92). The ideology of the immigrant narrative, hinging on the seductive language of the elusive American dream, is completed through the final close reading question posed by the teacher's guide, which asks how students think immigrants showed their spirit; the possible response reproduces the archetypal story: "They worked hard and were thankful even though they faced challenges" (Table C). In this way, hegemonic values are passed on the to next generation, and the idealized immigrant narrative is perpetuated.

The teacher's guide begins with a "Common Core Experts" page, where four university professors and consultants welcome teachers to the curriculum. Through the photographs and titles of these "experts," expertise is

positioned as coming from external academic sources, particularly, these four white professionals. Because the curriculum itself holds the knowledge and has the ability to influence children, the teacher's role is diminished to passive implementer of the work of these external experts. In this way, the curriculum is presented as advancing the students, not the teacher; the power resides in the curriculum itself and the experts who developed it. As Luke (2004) has argued, positioning the curriculum in this way is not neutral. Instead, it ties student achievement, teacher efficacy, and compliance with educational policy to the use of a particular product. This glorification of commercial scripted curriculum purports the product itself as the path to literacy achievement. The ideal teacher, then, is one who simply implements the curriculum as directed. Teachers are valued for their compliance, not for their independence or professional judgment. This deskilling is detrimental, as the interaction of the scripted curriculum with the associated mandates ultimately limits teachers' abilities to be more inclusive of students' experiences and language practices.

The genre of teacher's guides has been shown to include constructions of a generic child, teacher as deskilled professional in need of guidance, and learning as passive (Luke, 1995-1996). Teachers are positioned as subordinate through the use of imperative sentences instructing what teachers should do, including "simplify," "remind children," and "organize the class" (Table B). Through these instructions, teachers are constructed as active doers and students are constructed as passive, or "done-tos" (Janks, 2009, p. 74). In this context, knowledge is generated at the expert level, transmitted to teachers, and passed on, unchanged, to students. We argue, however, that best practices are context-dependent, and there is not one "right" way to teach all children. Teachers

must modify instruction to be responsive to student needs rather than authoritative claims. In purporting to address the needs of every student, this curriculum threatens to marginalize the most vulnerable students.

Implications

As we have argued, this curriculum unit constructs images of ideal readers and ideal citizens. Valuing particular literacy behaviors and identities over others reinforces inequitable power hierarchies. The idealized images constructed by both texts normalize a certain embodiment of a successful reader, while those whose identities and experiences deviate from the norm are marginalized. When examined within the social and historical context, this raises questions about what is truly being accomplished through the use of scripted curricula and how teachers can reconcile the constraints of the audit culture with their own desire to create a more responsive curriculum.

The classroom texts that students are exposed to foreground particular ideologies and conceal others. When text selection is narrowed, students are presented with one dominant narrative, which does not represent the range of student experiences. In this unit, the archetypal immigrant narrative is presented to students through the whole-class text. However, the lens of the dominant culture frames the immigrant experience, marginalizing the voices of immigrants themselves and sanitizing their history. This is problematic not only because it silences immigrant voices, but because it hides the structural inequality and racism that many immigrants face in American society. While this immigrant narrative is presented to students, an Emergent Bilingual narrative is presented to teachers in the teacher's guide. The separate sections that outline instructional practices for Emergent

Bilingual students serve to isolate those students as more dependent on the teacher and to conflate an Emergent Bilingual identity with an immigrant identity --both of which are "othered." It is up to teachers to bring these hidden experiences to light in the classroom, balancing the mandates they must follow and the needs of all of their students to create a space in which both identities are normalized and valued.

Navigating these competing ideologies can be challenging; however, some scholars have theorized ways in which teachers can enact agency and create spaces for authentic learning, despite curricular mandates. Campano (2007) argues for the adoption of "an inquiry stance into those very experiences that have been repressed, obscured, or excluded" (p. 4). This work can be done in what Campano (2007) calls the "second classroom," an ideological space that runs in tandem with and sometimes counter to mandated curriculum. This space provides the opportunity to view the diversity of the student population as an epistemic advantage, rather than a deficit, and to generate alternative practices that can facilitate the success of all students.

Regardless of the curriculum teachers are required to enact, thoughtful text selection and responsive practices can foreground marginalized perspectives. It is essential to create these spaces for students' multiple social identities and lived experiences in the classroom and curriculum.

Instead of enforcing narrow and normative literacy practices, curriculum materials have the power to embed critical perspectives on race, class, language, and gender. Incorporating multiple perspectives creates broader possibilities for emotional engagement, interrogation of power and privilege, and space for students' own experiences. This has implications for curricular developers as they are setting instructional outcomes and selecting texts to craft learning experiences.

If curricular materials themselves do not provide these opportunities, teachers themselves must embed critical reading within the curriculum. There is considerable evidence that students of a young age are able to engage in critical literacy practices (Jones, 2006; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Blaise, 2009). The responsibility and opportunity to engage in these practices ultimately lies with classroom teachers. They must first critically engage with any curricular texts they plan to use with students on their own, supplementing their own knowledge base when necessary. Once they have done this work themselves, they will be more equipped to support students in questioning, critiquing, and reconstructing texts.

Engaging students in an analysis of the way that their own lives provide connections and disconnections with curricular texts opens up the possibilities for lives lived outside of the mainstream. These opportunities allow all students to feel visible and valued, rather than feeling constrained by curricular expectations. Freire (1970), considered to be the father of critical literacy, has posited that it is only through naming our world that we might begin to transform it. For students whose identities are marginalized in dominant literacy practices, *naming* the larger injustices in their worlds can support their resistance of the discourses that constrain them and foster their participation in social action to address those injustices. This, however, requires a different stance towards teaching--one that moves away from "depositing" ideas from teacher to student (Freire, 1970), and toward a critical literacy pedagogy that encourages students to resist texts that do not value their identities, language practices, and literacies.

In this way, the curricular materials themselves can be taken up by the very individuals they aim to dominate for alternate ends, becoming the materials for resistance of the dominant discourse. Challenging the privileged assumptions

embedded in curricular texts, a critical literacy approach provides an important counter-narrative to the standards and text-based perspectives dominating the education system, regardless of the specific curriculum utilized. This is aligned with Foucault (1978), who argues that a discourse that seeks to dominate also provides the materials with which that domination can be resisted, leading to the formation of a "reverse" discourse. This can be achieved through providing opportunities for the process of reconstruction (Jones, 2006). For example, students could engage in critical discussion and critiques of a text, rewriting a text to alter the power, positioning, or perspective, creating a new text that disrupts the original, or even engage in social action inspired by their critiques of the text. Even when the curriculum is mandated, using it subversively allows teachers to resist and even flip the constrained identities valued by the curriculum. This reverse discourse can be a powerful tool for both teachers and students to question and revise the identities the curriculum assigns to them.

In addition to implications for classroom instruction and text selection, Emergent Bilingual students are in need of stronger education policy that will attend to their diversity, instructional needs, access to quality curriculum. With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act pending, there is significant debate about the role that standards, testing, and accountability will continue to play in the nation's schools. This debate has the potential to impact Emergent Bilingual students in significant ways. Currently, discussion of standards that directly address the needs of Emergent Bilingual students has been absent. Also missing from national policy discussions has been the need to recruit and develop teachers' skills for delivering effective instruction tailored to the unique needs of these students. Bilingual

education has been shown to result in better outcomes across English proficiency, reading, and college-going and life-long earnings for Emergent Bilingual students (Callahan & Gándara, 2014). While the New York State Department of Education now requires six semester-hours of study of language acquisition and literacy skills, this requirement applies to both native English speakers and Emerging Bilinguals, with no indication of how time is allotted to the study of the different needs of these populations. Just as the curriculum guides should not address the needs to Emerging Bilingual students as merely an add-on to the mainstream curriculum, teacher preparation should not relegate the study of teaching Emergent Bilinguals to an add-on component to mainstream literacy development. In both the curricular materials and teacher preparation, the needs of Emergent Bilinguals should be infused throughout, rather than a separate course or series of activities. An increased focus on delivering strong bilingual education to Emergent Bilingual students has the potential to improve the performance and outcomes for students across their lifetime in powerful ways.

Conclusion

Ensuring that teachers have an awareness of value-laden texts and the implications of their text selections is critical to their work with students. However, deconstruction of curricular materials and tradebooks alone is insufficient for subverting traditional power hierarchies. Gutiérrez and Orellana (2006) remind us that, "simply valuing practices does not alter the educational terrain or eliminate the very inequities that create the need to legitimize students' literacies in the first place" (p. 505). Engaging young learners in critical literacies also involves reconstructing texts in ways that diversify who is represented as literate is imperative to this crucial work. This

can be done through critical talk, the production of new texts, or social action. Reconstruction provides the opportunity to engage with the richness of student experiences, rather than operating from a deficit perspective. Providing underserved students with tools to subvert dominant discourses and resist the labels placed upon them is complex, controversial, and necessary.

As Carrington (2003) has argued, "in the end, literacy is about who you are allowed to become in a given society" (p. 96). We argue that any curricula that students encounter should not constrain their possibilities or their identities. The ideologies that are perpetuated through texts must empower students from diverse backgrounds and support all students' abilities to construct identities as readers, writers, and citizens.

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Dear Future Teachers: A Warning and Some Advice

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Abstract
Of all the challenges facing new and future teachers, entrenched negativity is the most dangerous. The system breeds it and many educators perpetuate it. But there is hope: You can avoid the pessimistic plunge. Here's a warning and some advice.

Dear Future Teachers: A Warning and Some Advice

Recently, I was in the faculty room and tossed out this question: "What advice would you give to people entering the teaching profession?"

Three teachers were in there with me--one picked at a day-old salad, his tie dangling dangerously close to the gelatinous, orangey dressing on the wilted lettuce; the next clacked away at the keys of one of the two computers in the room, her seaweed-colored Nalgene water bottle close at hand; and the last stood motionless, perhaps hypnotized or zombified, before the copier as it whined and thumped, collating and stapling packet after packet. After packet.

My question echoed somewhat in the windowless room (I had almost shouted it over the copier's drone), and through the wall a flushing toilet swooshed violently.

Those three teachers turned to me. I was stationed alone at a round table, my microwaved cheeseburger steaming, my finger marking my place in a book whose bright pink cover contrasted against the white table and pale, cinderblock walls.

Simultaneously, these three teachers said, "Do something else."

The computer-clacker hacked free a cynical laugh; the salad-eater picked at what passed for his lunch; and the copier-zombie turned slowly back around.

This reaction is not unusual. You soon-to-be-educators will encounter similar warnings over and over. Veteran teachers will regard you with tired, mournful faces, perhaps somewhat pitying and maybe even a little envious, and they will tell you to "turn back now" or "get out while you still can." They will state unequivocally that they would never become teachers now, not with the way things are.

These experienced teachers will regale you with stories of how this profession used to be rewarding, how students used to care, how parents once held their children responsible instead of casting blame outward.

This rose-colored nostalgia is mostly nonsense. At its most innocuous, these fond remembrances of teaching's glory days are sad testaments to people who've collapsed beneath a culture of negativity of which they are now the sunken foundation. At its most toxic, these bitter snippets of wistful longing are an infection to which you are the most vulnerable.

Be warned: You are at risk.

Your positivity, your eagerness, your enthusiasm--it is all at risk.

Do not be a victim.

Stay positive. I urge you.

No matter what, stay positive--that is your salvation.

You are bold and confident and ready to make a difference, but that is also your Achilles Heel.

When you're in that faculty room and the complaining starts, when your colleagues bemoan student laziness and administrative incompetence and parental obdurateness, when they cast their lure in your pond, do not take the bait.

Be polite, listen, but do not engage. Do not defend your beliefs, your philosophy, your pedagogy. Do not expose your gleeful optimism because your colleagues will diminish it with a minor laugh. They will shake their heads, call you naïve, and say, "You'll learn."

These teachers may think they mean well, and some of them still enjoy bursts of joyful teaching, but please, *please*, do not learn this lesson of negativity and despair. When they try to wrangle you aboard their ship of sorrow, simply nod your head, gather your things, wish them a good day, and swim off fast.

I am sorry if this sounds negative. I do not mean it that way. It is important, however, that you are shielded against what awaits.

You will want to get along with your colleagues, and this need to feel accepted makes you easy prey. The steps are small from complaining about lazy kids to gossiping about teachers to turning against your own students. And once that happens, ladies and gentlemen, it's all over.

Older teachers tell me it's best not to even think about how bad things are. It's all so depressing.

Does it need to be?

Students can appear lazy. Administrators can seem incompetent. Parents can be confrontational. Legislators in Albany prove just how out-of-it they are with every new unfunded mandate they ratify. The Common Core may be on its way out, but something else will take its place.

The history of American public education is a series of cycles: exams prove students are falling behind their foreign counterparts, new curricula and tougher standards are implemented, some kids improve and some don't, and testing shows students are still not performing well, and newer, better standards and pedagogical approaches are thrust upon teachers, and then testing shows yet again . . .

This is how it has always been. This is how it always will be.

I repeat: Stay positive.

In my ten years of teaching, I have learned a few important facts about the profession.

Number one: Teaching is a human enterprise.

You must be professional and likable. You must be part of the team, and yet unafraid to stand alone. Your colleagues will judge you, and very skeptically. If your students like you, your colleagues will say you're too easy. If the kids hate you, these same teachers will engrave your tombstone.

Teaching is a human enterprise, and you must get along with your colleagues, but they are not the reason you are there. What we do, we do for the students.

Teaching is not, however, a selfless endeavor. You are not a monk taking a vow of poverty and humility. You need not bleed for your students. You are a professional, and entitled to every benefit this career offers.

We have an obligation to our students, but they are not our clients. This is not a business. We are not businesspeople. We are Sherpas guiding inexperienced climbers along a path we know so that those in our charge might safely learn how to navigate for themselves.

Here's number two: Teaching is no good unless you enjoy it.

You must have fun. Enjoy yourself. Even when it's a slog and a trudge, enjoy it.

That is not to say that every day, every period, every moment with my students is some wondrous parade of glee. We may be Sherpas, but it is a Sisyphean excursion. It can seem hopeless, a mad sprint on a maxed-out treadmill, your heart thumping into your throat and your whole body

screaming for that final bell, that three-day weekend, that elusive snow day.

When those breaks come, luxuriate in them, but when you return to the classroom, enjoy it.

Never discourage your students. While a wake-up-call speech may be necessary for students to hear from time to time, it is too easy for such diatribes to devolve into merciless, critiquing rants that the students will completely ignore.

You tell the students to get serious, to work hard, to develop college-worthy study skills, but to them you're out of touch. Even as young as some of you are, to your students you're part of the adult machine and their objective is, and always has been, to dismantle that machine.

Instead of ranting--inspire.

Present a favorable image of adulthood. We cannot criticize teenagers for their immaturity and resistance to growing up if we're constantly moaning about adult responsibilities and bills and lack of sleep and how sometimes, even most times, we have to do things we don't want to.

If *that's* adulthood, what's the point?

Grow up, get smart, be serious: Welcome to the misery.

No.

We have a responsibility to shape for our students a positive and realistic future. It's good to be an adult. We must act accordingly.

This is a human enterprise. Stay playful and exuberant. Remind yourself why you got into this.

If my students enjoy my class, it is not because I taught them subordinating conjunctions or the paragraph template or the thematic meanings of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*--it is because I connected with them on a human level.

Be humorous. Be sincere. Vacillate from jokester to confidante to dictator to frenetic madman. Do whatever you can to engage them.

Sometimes you'll be strict, sometimes lenient. Your approach will vary depending on what the students need.

Use your strengths.

Forget the data analysis of test scores. Forget the excessive state standards and cookie-cutter Common Core. Forget the negativity.

Remember your students, and your obligation to them.

Go forth and give it your all.

You are the teacher. Whatever you do in the classroom, make it worth everyone's time.

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A Vision of Possibility: The Role of Cooperating Teachers in Preparing the Next Generation of Audacious Educators

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Abstract
Undaunted by accountability measures and standardization, select teachers continue to enact culturally relevant, process-oriented, authentic instruction while mentoring teachers-in-training. Drawing from English teaching candidate's reflections on fieldwork, the authors illustrate significant contributions to the field made by non- conforming educators who open their doors to the next generation of teachers.

Introduction

Identifying classroom teachers who will open their doors to pre-service teachers is critical to the work of university-based teacher educators. We arrive at this understanding from our current perspective as professors of secondary English education, but also retrospectively from the time we spent as middle and high school teachers in the large, urban public school system served by our school of education. While supervising pre-service candidates in the field, conducting research in schools, or recalling our own teacher preparation and first years in the classroom, we are continually reminded that it is vital for those entering the field to observe and teach alongside of experienced, accomplished practitioners in authentic instructional settings.

Whether working in schools on a daily basis through their culminating semester of student teaching, or during a pre-

student teaching fieldwork experience requiring participation in the classroom once or twice a week, pre-service teachers (herein referred to as teacher candidates) need strong mentorship from bold field based educators. We have seen our candidates thrive when they see first-hand how theory informs practice and vice versa, obtain multiple opportunities to enact strategies they study and rehearse in their university courses, and begin to see themselves as teachers. Importantly, particularly in reference to this paper, many work with teachers who model culturally relevant curriculum, support learning as a process, and utilize authentic performances – often in defiance of the pressures of the accountability era that overemphasizes standardized test preparation.

The values and dispositions modeled by these teachers are reflected in our own scholarship and pedagogy of teacher preparation. In our scholarship, we create vehicles for English teachers to compose YA literature that captures the minds and imaginations of diverse, urban students and integrate such texts into classroom instruction (Ratner, 2010), and we highlight the potential to address pressing social problems through the curriculum (Epstein, 2014). We embed these ideas in our university-based teaching by assigning readings that illustrate how teachers enact culturally relevant and civically-oriented instruction, we model teaching in these ways, and we invite candidates to do so as well in their clinical placements.

Through our work as teacher educators, we hope to cultivate in candidates the ability to engage in what we herein refer to as "audacious teaching." Audacious teaching involves a willingness to eschew convention so as to honor students' authentic interests and learning processes. First, audacious teachers incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy, which by Ladson-Billing's definition "not only addresses student

achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (1995, p. 469). Second, at a time when competing priorities such as test-preparation are severely limiting instructional time given to process-oriented writing (Applebee and Langer, 2011), audacious teachers remain committed to facilitating student's gradual distillation of important ideas through brainstorming, drafting, revision, and collaboration with peers. Finally, audacious teachers view part of their role as positioning youth as civically-engaged individuals who read, write, and speak for social action (Epstein, 2014; Bomer & Bomer, 2001). We introduce methods of audacious teaching in our university-based classes but we lean on cooperating teachers to show our candidates how to enact such methods in authentic middle and high school classrooms.

In the pages that follow, we will present three vignettes that capture what happened when teacher candidates in our English education program conducted fieldwork and wrote reflections on their experiences in the classrooms of audacious educators. Before turning to the vignettes, we next provide some background information about the status quo of the clinical experience in teacher education. This background highlights why it is particularly vital for the development of new teachers, and the well-being of the teaching profession, that classroom teachers who resist standardizing trends in education open their doors to those entering the field.

Background

Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014) report that the role of "the cooperating teacher has always been regarded as important within teacher education**"** (p. 7). Student teachers cite clinical experience as the most important component of

their teacher education programs and cooperating teachers as critical to their preparation for the profession (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). Our experiences with hundreds of teacher candidates are consistent with these findings.

Despite the importance of this work, many potential cooperating teachers avoid working with teacher candidates and wish to teach with their doors closed. Their avoidance often reflects the ferocious stringencies and forms of accountability that they face. We regularly encounter teachers and administrators who under intense pressure to meet mandated standards and expectations are too busy, stressed or fearful of low test scores to mentor student teachers and provide them with opportunities to develop their craft.

Others who are willing to host student teachers and fieldworkers still face the impact of these accountability standards. They have a genuine interest in modeling good teaching and guiding novice teachers' development in planning, instruction and assessment; however, by choice or decree they find themselves tied to scripted curricula targeting narrow bands of skills and knowledge assessed on state standardized tests. Spring semester can be particularly disheartening when it is not uncommon for a candidate to be placed with a cooperating teacher who suspends an exciting curricular unit for a month of test preparation for state assessments in late April.

Ironically, the current emphasis on teacher accountability – which can limit teachers' interest in working with pre-service teacher candidates -- has coincided with a surge of interest in schools of education improving the quality of and quantity of pre-service fieldwork experiences. There is mounting pressure on teacher preparation programs to "integrate academic and clinical instruction from the earliest days of the program" (Levine, 2011). Responding to an

historical pattern of loosely planned, poorly monitored and disconnected field experiences in United States teacher education (Blue Ribbon Panel, 2010), university-based teacher educators are seeking to "bring practitioner and academic knowledge together in less hierarchical ways to create new learning opportunities for prospective teachers" (Zeichner, 2010, p. 486). In short, at a time when there is increasing urgency for schools of education to provide future teachers with sustained and substantive field-based learning opportunities, the current demands made upon schools and teachers, particularly in large urban public systems, has increased the challenges of enlisting those willing and able to provide them.

Of course our goal is not to simply find field placements for our candidates but placements that will challenge and expand their notions of how teachers can impact the intellectual and personal development of students. Through fieldwork and student teaching we hope that candidates become more adept at basic practices of instruction like pacing, providing directions, and establishing classroom routines, but it is equally important to us that they witness and have the opportunity to put into practice pedagogy that prioritizes student's intellectual curiosity, civic mindedness, and critical literacy.

Recent reviews of literature on mentoring new teachers and teaching candidates suggest that such opportunities are rare and indicate widespread limitations in the approach and execution of cooperating teachers. Problems cited include feedback to mentees that "tends to be technical, emphasizing the *what* and *how* rather than the *why* of practice" (Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen, 2014, p. 19) and "the promotion and reproduction of conventional norms and practices (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson, 2009 p. 211). This

reinforcement of convention compounds the way new teachers are inherently inclined to imitate or intuitively reenact the classroom instruction they observed in their own childhood (Lortie, 1975). According to Hobson, et al., the familiar practices that candidates perpetuate are less likely to involve "progressive and learner-centered approaches, and less likely to challenge the inherent conservatism in teaching or to advance social reform and social justice agendas" (p. 211). Torrez & Krebs (2012) report that when cooperating teachers are asked to identify the main contributions they make to quality student teaching environments, the list reveals "a glaring absence of equity, diversity, and cultural relevance: the very underpinnings and focus of our teacher education program" (p. 496).

This discord, and challenge it presents to teacher educators, is familiar with us from our own experiences as course instructors and field supervisors. We are heartened, therefore, by the many English teachers we work with who share our commitment to justice and inclusivity, and who seek to develop in youth skills, knowledge and dispositions that are consistent with these aims. It is when our candidates spend time in the classrooms of these teachers that their preparation for the profession is most potent. At this point, we turn our attention to cooperating teachers who are disrupting standardized ways of operating, and the impact this has on teacher candidates at a critical moment in their formation of a teaching identity.

Tales of Teaching with Open Doors

In this section, we spotlight the work of teacher candidates and they worked with cooperating teachers to complete a clinical assignment prior to student teaching during a methods course for secondary English. During this course, candidates visit a middle or high school English class

approximately once a week, during the central weeks of the semester, for a total of 30 hours. They are required to teach, or co-teach, a minimum of three lessons that are designed with feedback from both the cooperating teacher as well as the university professor. We aim to place our candidates in pairs so that they can co-plan and co-teach but this is not always possible.

The assignment is framed as a service-learning project where teacher candidates ask their cooperating teachers about their upcoming plans and then volunteer to teach lessons and offer "instructional tools" that will actualize or enhance the teachers' goals. Furthermore, we ask the candidates to focus on specific aspects of English instruction (e.g. speaking/listening, reading, writing) so to organize their thinking and contribution to the classroom. By giving candidates clear assignments that are sensitive to and support what is happening in the classrooms, we hope to communicate to cooperating teachers that we take their work and time seriously. We believe that positioning the candidates as working *with* the cooperating teacher, rather than the cooperating teacher working *for* the candidate, engenders a sense of allegiance from cooperating teachers that encourages them to open their doors to candidates semester after semester.

Following the enactment of the lessons, the candidates write reflection papers where they review how their planning, instruction, and assessment unfolded. We built the vignettes below from candidates' reflection papers that offered us insights into their cooperating teachers' boundary-breaking teaching and the ways that candidates extended it in their own teaching. We open each vignette with a quote from a candidate's reflection paper and then follow with further description and analysis of what happened in the classrooms.

Open-Mic: A Poetry Unit

> *The students have been working on the poetry unit since April. They have watched many spoken word performances as well as had time to write and revise their own poetry. The students have watched spoken word performers of young adults speaking on topics relating to the students…[and studied poetry] related to their hobbies and interests…When the cooperating teacher started the poetry unit, she asked students to create a list of all things associated with themselves and she often referenced the list to help students with writer's block."*
> *- Paloma, graduate student, English Education*[1]

This is how Paloma, a teacher candidate, described her cooperating teachers' classroom – a space where students' personal interests and assets were clearly prioritized. Her cooperating teacher, Ms. Narbonne, integrated poems addressing topics that were relevant to the students as well as performances of young adults, whom the students might more easily relate to in comparison to older individuals. This teaching is in opposition to forms of English education that prioritize canonical texts or the reading of excerpts from test-prep workbooks that are likely unrelated to the interests or viewpoints of the youth. Furthermore, Ms. Narbonne used a

[1] Pseudonyms are used for all candidates and teachers referenced in the article.

writing process that ensured that her students could draft and revise their own poems. Instead of timed, on-demand writing assignments, these process-oriented experiences support students as authentic learners who need time and counsel to learn genre-knowledge and perfect their writer's craft.

In this context, Paloma designed a series of lessons that further supported students' independent writing of poetry and included an Open Mic performance in which they shared their poetry to an audience of their peers. In preparation for the Open Mic, Paloma played a recording of "Please Don't Take My Air Jordans," a spoken word poem by reg. e. gaines depicting the complex conditions and psychology that would lead a youth to steal, or even kill, for a pair of sneakers. With its unvarnished depictions of seemingly wanton theft and senseless murder, the poem can tap into powerful emotions in youth and ask them to address the uncomfortable issue of urban street violence. Paloma is willing to utilize a poem that may unleash strong feelings in her students because it explores a topic that is deeply consequential to them, and because the narration – written in diction and words that are familiar to urban youth – speaks to their hearts and minds.

After playing "Please Don't Take My Air Jordans a second time, Paloma had her students evaluate the recorded performance of the poem using the criteria that would be used to assess their own performances. Once they became familiar with the criteria, Paloma created opportunities for the students, guided by these criteria, to practice and improve their oral readings, before the final performance. Finally, during the Open Mic, students were asked to display "audience behavior," which had been defined and rehearsed.

Paloma drew on the seeds her cooperating teacher had planted. Students wrote and performed poems that reflected their interests. Their skill development was carefully scaffolded

through the articulation of shared criteria and the use of a process to prepare them for the Open Mic. Finally, the performance task of the Open Mic was authentic – the students displayed their knowledge in a way that both they and their peers appreciated. With the guidance of a teacher who valued culturally relevant instruction and authentic student performance, Paloma was able to extend these values in her own ways.

Developing Claims: Argumentative Writing about Race

> *During each session, students have been working independently on their claims and then work with partners to help them solidify their claims and pull proper evidence. The constant group assessment of one another has been instrumental in students' 'claim success,' and they are more receptive and understanding of their peer not understanding a claim than if their teacher did not.*
> *- Sandra, undergraduate, English Education*

The students in this fieldwork placement were involved in an argumentative writing unit. The fieldwork candidate reported that based on a prior assessment of their writing skills the cooperating teacher, Mr. Martin, was concerned about how the students used evidence and drew from outside sources when defending their claims. In this context, Mr. Martin and Sandra designed a series of lessons focused on these skills. Sandra's contributions included the creation and presentation of an argumentative writing "checklist" and a think-pair-share

that supported students to focus on creating effective counter-claims.

Sandra was learning critical student-centered teaching skills. Her cooperating teacher modeled how to use assessment to inform instruction. She observed and also enacted instruction involving small group work and peer-to-peer mentoring. Finally, she participated in a unit that engaged students in a writing process that could support their authentic development as writers.

Additionally, Sandra learned how to address timely civic issues in the classroom, as the argumentative writing unit focused on current racial tensions in the United States. The cooperating teacher had created a packet of articles on a South Carolina school officer's hostile treatment of a young Black girl, the removal of the Confederate flag from federal buildings in South Carolina, and the terrorist shooting of nine Black church members in the same state. Many teachers are hesitant to enact instruction centered on questions of power and injustice, but in this classroom, the students engaged fully in them, creating claims and arguments related to topics like use of excessive police force. In turn, Sandra experienced how to center current social matters into a substantive writing project.

Using the Internet: A Civic Engagement Project

> *Ms. Zack informed us that her unit would be focusing on social justice. Each week her students would be learning about issues in the world that they could possibly help change. She informed us that she would like her students to write an informational letter to a government official about global warming. My*

> *partner and I decided to have the students do some web research in order to write informational letters about what can be done to stop or slow down the process of global warming.*
> *- Fara, undergraduate, English Education*

Over the course of the social justice unit, the students in this classroom would grapple with a range of issues affecting global citizens and the environment. They would learn about these issues through reading informational texts, listening to related audio texts, and writing in a range of genres. In being exposed to the overall vision of the unit, the teacher candidates – Fara and Shaniqua - had the opportunity to learn how academic skills can be developed in units that foster civic interest and engagement.

For this assignment, their particular charge from Ms. Zack, the cooperating teacher, was to design instruction related to the topic of global warming. They addressed this task in a number of ways. First, they created a graphic organizer for the students to use as they perused various websites about global warming. Then, they modeled the use of the organizer through a mini-lesson. They discussed how to find credible sources and compared a Wikipedia webpage that lacked credibility to a Natural Resource Defense Council webpage that they determined was credible. Finally, they assisted students in the research process. So to ensure that the research process was accessible, the candidates found cartoons on global warming that they felt would be engaging for all students and particularly useful for the struggling readers.

The social justice unit provided a context for the teacher candidates to enact skills-based instruction that

promoted the students' civic engagement. They utilized elements of effective instruction: modeling, the use of guided reading assignments (i.e., the completion of the graphic organizer), and the valuing of visual texts alongside print texts. And, they did all of this in regards to a pressing civic matter, positioning the students as civically engaged and giving them entry into conversations that are often reserved for adults.

Apprenticeships in Audacity

Three cooperating teachers, all resisting forms of standardization, opened the doors of their classrooms and powerful learning commenced. Teacher candidates learned that it is possible to teach in culturally relevant ways and support learning as a process. More critically, they enacted instruction that extended these assumptions and therefore practiced the teaching skills that position youth as vital and creative members of our society.

In *School Teacher: A Sociological Study* (1975), Dan Lortie coined the term "apprenticeship of observation" to describe the thousands of hours that future teachers have already spent in classrooms observing their own teachers before beginning formal preparation for the profession. Lortie and others (Kuriloff, 2016, Little, 1990) argue that this apprenticeship and the entrenched notions it engenders about what constitutes teaching practice, leads novices to teach in ways that they were taught. In many instances, this process results in new teachers eschewing "reform-minded" practices that provide opportunities for students to "think critically, solve problems, and learn things that matter to them and have meaning in the world outside of school" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1015).

If teacher candidates' own K-12 schooling serves as a first "apprenticeship of observation," fieldwork and student

teaching can be seen as opportunities for candidates to begin a second apprenticeship, one that disrupts rather than reifies conservative models of teaching. For this second apprenticeship to be markedly different than the first, however, the challenge before the education community is to enlist individuals who will not simply open their classrooms to novices but do so while teaching boldly and with their focus squarely on providing their students with meaningful learning experiences.

For this reason, we applaud the audacious cooperating teachers who welcomed our candidates into their classrooms. The vignettes illustrate their impact. Sitting in an English methods class, Sandra may understand the rationale her professor offers for having students write about pressing, authentic issues; however, when she observes and assists Mr. Martin having his diverse students read and respond to each other's argumentative essays on race-related issues, she is positioned to *believe* that it is in her power to one day facilitate these types of learning experiences. After conducting fieldwork in the classroom of Ms. Zack, a teacher who does not stop at teaching students about global warming but rather expects them to take constructive actions to mitigate it, Fara and Shaniqua know that social justice projects are not something that only exists in textbooks. Finally, when Paloma decides to extend Ms. Narbonne's spoken word writing workshop by organizing an Open Mic performance for students, it is an indication that she may have caught the itch to teach audaciously. She and the other student teachers we have highlighted have become apprentices in audacity, learning to teach beyond what they have known. They are resisting forces of compliance and conformity and are offering youth learning experiences that are relevant, rich, and authentic.

A Concluding Note to Teachers: Open Your Doors to Your Novice Colleagues

When teachers make their practice visible they are engaging "in the generative process of producing their own future" (Lave & Wegner, 1991, p. 57). Readers of this journal who see themselves in Ms. Narbonne, Mr. Martin, and Ms. Zack, we appeal to you to make your classrooms destinations for the larger educational community, and particularly future teachers, to witness and even participate in daring practice. If you currently serve as a cooperating teacher, we hope these vignettes inspire your thinking about how teacher candidates are apprenticed into the field.

Candidates are not the only ones who benefit when audacious educators serve as cooperating teachers. First, we as teacher educators benefit. The insights that we encounter while reading candidate's reflections on their work with these teachers improve our own practice and ensure that our teaching does not succumb to the forces of standardization. The cooperating teachers remind us of the many ways educational theories and teaching strategies can unfold in classrooms and they introduce us to new practices. Candidates' stories of their work with the cooperating teachers give us a continuously updating set of examples to use in our university-based teaching.

Second, cooperating teachers themselves profit in concrete ways when fieldwork is designed and facilitated thoughtfully. As noted earlier, we send candidates into the field ready to offer help in specific ways that are tied to the cooperating teachers' instruction and in turn cooperating teachers gain valued assistance. We also communicate regularly with the cooperating teachers, and frame this communication as a mutual opportunity to learn from each other through an open exchange of ideas (see Author 2 &

Author 1). In response to mounting calls for schools of education to increase the substance and duration of field-based learning opportunities, we align ourselves with teacher educators around the country taking similar concrete actions to ensure that teachers who mentor find the experience professionally rewarding.

Even with these efforts, however, we recognize that the most compelling motivation for audacious teachers to mentor novices is a sense of responsibility for ensuring that the next generation of teachers enters the profession with a vision of possibility. Our hope is that such educators have found in our candidates' words inspiration to continue teaching audaciously, and to invite newcomers into their classrooms so that they know it is still possible to teach in ways that spark students' imaginations, recognize their worth as individuals, and engage them in making a more just and equitable world.

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The Book
Craig Czury
Albright College

The Book

I don't know what this book is about
but I'm writing it with one eye on the page
and my ear to what my readers say the page says about them
I have to trust what they remember of their lives while reading
that they become its writer
my eye blurs
when they turn their page I turn my page and keep writing

I'm in 6th grade. I don't know what the instructions are, and I can't ask because I was just told. So I make up something that has to do with reading or looking as if I'm reading, and then look as if I'm writing, listening carefully to what everyone says they've been reading. And when it comes to my turn I just rearrange what everyone's been saying a little cock-eyed and I sound as if I've been thinking about what I've been reading as I'm writing it.

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Funeral in the Classroom: A Failed Teaching Practice?

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Abstract
The author introduces the idea of performative annotation as a powerful teaching tool to engage students in a shared experience of reading and understanding a piece of text. Orality and performance are shared constructs that provide opportunities for students to demarcate moments in a text that resonated with them. The nature of the activity is called into question because of the deeply emotional responses students have towards the experiential learning activity of recreating a funeral in the classroom. This article assesses what went wrong with the activity and offers suggestions on how to make space for performative annotation prior to the activity being done in class.

Funeral in the Classroom: A Failed Teaching Practice?

Teaching Pedro Pietri's "Puerto Rican Obituary" — publicly read in 1969, first published in 1973 - with its rich lyricism and deeply familiar characters, has always been a good exercise in contextualizing the political and social environment of 1960s New York. I have taught this poem for many years in an early college program (grades 9-12), as well as in first semester courses at an urban community college. One of the challenges is unpacking the rich details infused in each line of the poem's 25 stanzas. Its sheer length has been problematic, not because of reading level, but because the historical and social representations require time to decipher. Pietri engages a

complex economic and political discourse through the use of his characters, one that should be presented gradually, over several classes. A mere 90 minutes will not suffice.

When preparing to teach Pietri's poem once again, I experimented with a learning pedagogy that incorporates orality and performance into a shared experience of annotating text. I envisioned students applying annotation skills to a listening activity. In response to a part of the poem read aloud, students would make a gesture to indicate a line that resonated with them. Although not disruptive, this gesture would become part of a public and immediate demarcation of an idea. Through sharing their ideas nonverbally, students would enact and model some of the annotation strategies they had practiced in writing. Once in the public arena, any student's idea or response could get built upon by others participating in the expressed gesture. In other words, students would perform the obituary, integrating the oral reading of the text with the physical signs of mourning.

"Experiential learning involves student-centered activities that involve sensory, kinesthetic and affective practices," including role-playing and dramatic reading (C. King, email memorandum, November 24, 2015). According to the Association for Experiential Education (2007-2014), "experiences… carefully chosen for their learning potential (i.e. whether they provide opportunities for students to practice and deepen emergent skills, encounter novel and unpredictable situations that support new learning, or learn from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes)," contribute importantly to the process of acquiring, consolidating, and applying new knowledge.

- Throughout the experiential learning process, the *learner is actively engaged in* posing questions, investigating,

> experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and *constructing meaning*, and is challenged to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results.
>
> - *Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, and/or physically*, which produces a perception that the *learning task is authentic* (C. King, email memorandum, November 24, 2015, my emphasis).

I adapted these goals of experiential learning to typically static reading and annotation strategies. To understand the poem on a deeper level, to truly penetrate its layers, to actively participate as a member of its audience or its reader, students would be challenged to publicly, though nonverbally annotate each line. Through an interactive, shared, performative annotation experience, students would be encouraged to make connections between textual meaning, social and historic context, and their own lives — the type of best practices for such high-impact strategies (Kinzie 2012; Eyler 2009).

In the reading and writing sequence that preceded the "Puerto Rican Obituary" lesson I describe below, the class paid close attention to annotation as a critical skill, integral to meaning making. Students learned how to annotate text with a pen or pencil, underlining, using stars, exclamation marks, and invented symbols. They practiced making notes in the margins of texts, a skill many were never taught, or were discouraged from using because they were not permitted to write in the books issued by New York City public schools. They practiced using Post-It notepads of different sizes, where students jotted

down their notes, then stuck them on relevant pages for reference. They practiced using index cards, writing down one quote or idea, in preparation for composing "impact paragraphs" — a few sentences on the meaning of the quote or idea, training critical thinking skills. Students in the course were thus equipped with different techniques they could use across subject areas and courses and became quite accustomed to annotation as a way to enhance their reading proficiency and understanding.

Pedro Pietri's poem is literally a "Puerto Rican Obituary." The title is key - it identifies the poem as an ode to the dead. In the words of *Life* magazine writer Marilyn Johnson, herself an obituary author, a proper obituary ought "to communicate the significance of a person, a place, an era… capture[d] with economy and grace" (Welsh 216-217). Historically, obituaries have often been read, the public utterances of a life. This was the case during under Alexander "the Great," as with the ancient Greeks, who "composed funereal orations to honor the dead by recounting some of their deeds in life" (Bethke 62). In Britain and colonial New England, funeral elegies were printed as circulars and often attached to "the hearse carrying the deceased… [M]ourners sometimes threw these pieces into the grave" (Bethke 62). This genre's performative possibilities abound. I decided to apply annotation techniques to the "Puerto Rican Obituary," not as a written activity, but as a performed act.

I thought of the factors common to enacting obituaries, funerary rituals, and gestures of grief and mourning. I imagined the class forming a circle and one student beginning to read the poem, followed by the next, going around in a circular motion until the poem was completed. In the center of that circle would be a symbolic burial ground for the poem's main characters: Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga, and Manuel. For

each line that resonated with them, students would throw pre-crumpled balls of newspaper to represent flowers tossed in a grave. In this funerary performance, I wanted students not only to pay respect to the voiceless, but also to bear witness to and lament the characters' loss of hope and their ultimate spiral into despondency and death. The stories of Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga, and Manuel represent real people who have died oppressed by their economic and political reality.

Pietri writes,

They worked
They were always on time
They were never late
They never spoke back
when they were insulted
They worked
They never took days off
that were not on the calendar
[…]
They worked
ten days a week
and were only paid for five
They worked
They worked
They worked
and they died
They died broke
They died owing
They died never knowing
what the front entrance
of the first national city bank looks like (2015 Ll 1-8, 11-22).

The repetition of the line "They worked" (Ll. 1, 14-16) and the single "They died owing" (l. 19) caused many balls of newspaper to fall into the circle at once. Clearly, these lines resonated with the students. At a New York City community college where 50 to 60% of the students are Hispanic and more than 75% received federal financial aid (Guttman Community College 2015), the fates of Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga, and Manuel became deeply personal as they were read aloud. In reaching back to 1960s New York, I engaged the present day: in many of my students' communities, the inequalities Pietri's characters suffered remained virtually unchanged. Too often, students came from families living below the poverty line, in substandard housing and high-crime areas. In their neighborhoods, there were still more check-cashing places than national banks, while corner stores and fast-food establishments outnumbered fresh food markets (Neckerman et al., 2010; Freudenberg et al., 2016).

When the students read the following, crumpled papers fell in a chorus to the floor:

All died yesterday today
and will die again tomorrow
passing their bill collectors
on to the next of kin
All died
waiting for the garden of eden
to open up again
under a new management
All died
dreaming about America
waking them up in the middle of the night
screaming: Mira Mira
your name is on the winning lottery ticket
for one hundred thousand dollars

All died
hating the grocery stores
that sold them make-believe steak
and bullet-proof rice and beans (Ll. 28-45).

At this point, I began to realize that I had not made allowances for generations of broken dreams. After all, "Juan/ died waiting for his number to hit/ Miguel/ died waiting for the welfare check/ to come and go and come again/ […]/ Olga/ died waiting for a five dollar raise/ Manuel/ died waiting for his supervisor to drop dead (Pietri Ll. 63-67, 72-75). Perhaps students threw papers in the circle because they knew a Juan, a Miguel, a Milagros, an Olga, or a Manuel. Maybe what rang true for them was the tragic story of poverty and exclusion because of systematic racial, political, and socioeconomic disenfranchisement — a nation of people "born to weep/ and keep the morticians employed" (Pietri Ll. 143-144).

Were my students "born dead" to die dead, despite working toward advancement through a college education? *Could* Pietri's poem ring so true so long after the 1960s and 70s? *Could* it be treated only as a specific moment in Nuyorican history, or was it a parallel to some of my students' current realities? As Pietri calls the characters a racial slur, did they feel a sense of discomfort? As he rattles off an abysmal list of low-wage jobs to which these New Yorkers have been restricted then and now: lavaplatos, porters, messenger boys, factory workers, maids, stock clerks, shipping clerks, assistant mailroom assistants, assistant assistant to the assistant's assistant, assistant lavaplatos, and automatic smiling doormen (Ll. 216-224). Did the students hear the prospects for themselves and their own community members? Pietri treats each of his characters' deaths as a signpost of broader, cultural death — "loss of faith, disillusion, shame, resentment of

heritage, and destruction of self and community. In his most declarative tone, Pietri writes, "Here lies Juan/ Here lies Miguel/ Here lies Milagros/ Here lies Olga/ Here lies Manuel/ who died yesterday today/ and will die again tomorrow/ […]/ Never knowing/ that they are beautiful people" (Ll. 260-266, 269-270). At this moment, all of the remaining "flowers" were thrown onto the floor, resounding as if in agreement with the profound, continual loss in the very structure of the society Pietri described.

The paper thrown during impactful lines of the poem ruptured the quiet and stillness in the air as it was read. The performative annotation activity, a sort of experiential pedagogy, effectively gave students ways to engage in a shared experience of annotation. The result was intense: the links students made between the meaning and context of the poem and that of their own lives were rich and complex, just what I wanted, though not in such a fiercely personal way. In this sense, the lesson nearly accomplished "the main unifying element of all experiential education[:] that *intentional reflection* for meaning-making is coupled with the experience" (C. King, email memorandum, November 24, 2015, my emphasis). Without a doubt, experiential learning can powerfully engage students in reading and annotation. In this case, a reading experience involving orality and performance further intensified the strong emotions the poem's content evokes.

Herein lies the crux of this lesson's failure: my desire to create a performative and dramatic demarcation of the poem ignored the potential implications of standing graveside in a classroom. Eager to actualize this public lament, I had not anticipated that some students would feel uncomfortable standing and performing gestures that were funerary in nature. Had I foreseen the deeply personal impact of the lesson, I

would have provided time and opportunities for the students to work through these emotions. However, the performative piece left the class raw — as students recognized how closely the stories matched some within their own circles, wounds were ripped open. The lesson failed because the class needed time and spaces to process these wounds, which I had not allotted. Although my students were likely to be personally affected by poverty, death, and despair, I believe that their reactions to the activity are more attributable to the recreation a funerary scene than to their backgrounds and circumstances. I did not account for the possibility that students had experienced the loss of a loved one and that some were in the midst of processing such a loss. In fact, since the college opened in 2012, we have already lost two students to violence — young men slain in the streets of Harlem and the Bronx. I *re*created a funeral in the classroom without considering the heavy emotional weight of this rite and left very little space in the curriculum before or after the lesson to adequately digest and reflect with students on how the activity affected them.

The numerous times I have taught this poem have all been successful. This attempt failed specifically because standing in a circle around an imaginary burial ground, using symbolic flowers to pay homage to the dead, or a similarly poignant dramatization of loss, *required* a candid assessment of the climates of the classroom, the college, and the broader community. Because at least partial identification with the story or characters is expected of any reader, this should take place regardless of the demographics of the classroom where the activity is presented. At the very beginning, one of my students had remarked, "I can't do this." Another indicated, "I might cry." As a class, we spoke too briefly about funerary practices and their meanings, then forged ahead. In retrospect, this was insufficient. Experiential pedagogy leads students to

experience the relationship between the context of the poem and their lives in a more authentic or complete way. The oral performance I planned revealed both the power of experiential pedagogy and the necessity of ample time to prepare for and tackle the impact of such a classroom experience. Perhaps next time, I will include sharing cultural ideas about death, incorporating stories of individual losses, and through Pietri's heart-wrenching "Puerto Rican Obituary," the discussion of individual deaths as representing and warning against a larger, cultural death.

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Will Shakespeare Make Them Smarter? Cognitive Implications of Exposure to Nonliteral Language in Adolescents

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Abstract

Despite trends within the English language arts curriculum that favor the literal language of "informational texts," current brain-based research suggests that there are many cognitive benefits to reading and listening to nonliteral language, commonly found in Shakespeare's work and other forms of poetic verse. Exposure to such language is particularly beneficial to adolescents, whose brains are undergoing neural network development for higher-level thinking, including the ability to use language for more abstract thought. Such findings about the complex processes necessary to interpret nonliteral language have profound implications for ELA curriculum design by supporting the value of rich linguistic experiences and their impact on adolescent brain development.

Will Shakespeare Make Them Smarter? Cognitive Implications of Exposure to Nonliteral Language in Adolescents

In his 1902 preface to a collection of poems written by Spanish author Marcos Zapata, neuroscientist and artist Santiago Ramón y Cajal describes poetry's impact on the brain by explaining how such literature can stimulate neural faculties that may have otherwise been dormant. Cajal claims that, through the reading of poetry, "mental life can become integrated and full, and all brain systems can get their turn in the game" (as cited in Triarhou & Vivas, 2009, p. 83). In other words, he believes that the complexities of poetic language require a level of brain activity that both stirs and enriches the reader. However, despite this favorable evaluation, the benefits of teaching poetry to young adults is presently in doubt. With

the recent rise of curricular standards that emphasize the study of non-fiction texts, some believe that the current state of education simply cannot support the "raw, concrete esthetic experience, especially of the subjective happenings inside oneself" as is often found through the study of poetry (Leisman Mualem, & Mughrabi, 2015, p. 81). The problem with such views is that they risk overlooking the important and far-reaching cognitive benefits associated with mental processing of nonliteral language commonly found in poetry, including the kind of sentences written by William Shakespeare, who wrote specifically to "work against the laws of grammar" in order to create drama (Thierry, Martin, Gonzalez-Diaz, Rezaie, Roberts, & Davis, 2008, p. 923). Fortunately, thanks to recent advances in studies examining the neurological impacts of processing figurative language, advocates of teaching such texts to middle and high school students can now lean on scientific research that firmly supports the benefits of nonliteral language on brain development.

Defining Nonliteral Language

Sentences exist in a variety of forms, from simple to complex and from literal to nonliteral. At its most basic level, a sentence is considered "complex" if it "contains two clauses, one of which is structurally dependent on the other" (Gordon, Jacobs, Schuele, & McAuley, 2015, p. 20). Processing any form of language requires listeners and readers to predict meaning based on sentence structure, and complex sentences add further levels of meaning for the mind to consider. For example, in order to comprehend a complex sentence, the listener or reader must identify "speech sounds, recognize words and morphemes, and decode the syntactic structure of the sentence to recover its meaning" for one clause before considering subsequent clauses (Brusini, Brun, Brunet, &

Christophe, 2015, p. 1). Doing so requires the listener or reader to eliminate incorrect interpretations in order to make sense of the text. Even if two possible interpretations are "semantically related," the "comprehender must rapidly activate and develop one set of relevant meanings and inferences while ignoring or suppressing others" (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 281). This process happens quickly due to the syntactic assumptions the listener or reader has developed over time. These assumptions help individuals "construct strong expectations about the possible words they will be exposed to" when considering a sentence's meaning (Brusini et al., 2015, p. 1). This phenomenon has been demonstrated in studies by Brusini et al. (2015) involving subjects who, when shown the first half of a sentence, were able to predict subsequent words more quickly (p. 2). Results of these kinds of studies highlight the importance of context clues in language processing, as well as the need for listeners and readers to possess a rich background of linguistic experiences in order to make accurate predictions.

Through the use of figurative devices, including metaphor, pun and alliteration, poets challenge readers to go beyond literal interpretation to discover new meaning. This practice has existed throughout the history of language development. For example, during the Early Modern period when Shakespeare wrote, "a greater variety of syntactic patterns were allowed, often as a way to highlight the important constituents of the sentence and to create an element of surprise" (Thierry et al., 2008, p. 923). While the English language has evolved over time to contain fewer of these patterns, authors continue to test readers with figurative language as well as complex syntax. The study of metaphor, in particular, has demonstrated the complicated cognitive processes necessary on the part of the listener or reader for meaning to be achieved. This is because "[m]etaphor

comprehension involves forming an abstract connection between two concepts in semantic memory" (Benedek, Beaty, Jauk, Koschuting, Fink, Silvia ... & Neubauer, 2013, p. 99). As expected, compared to processing literal language, the listener's ability to process metaphors has been found to take a longer amount of time (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 268). This is due to the fact that "nonliteral meaning" must first be "extracted" in order for the true meaning to come forth (Benedek et. al, 2013, p. 100). Researchers have discovered that in this two step process, the brain prioritizes literal meaning. Metaphors, when first encountered, are "processed as a literal language and, only if that attempt fails, is a special figurative process activated that uses pragmatic principles to infer meaning" (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 268). According to Benedek et al. (2013), the combination of figurative language and complex syntactical structure requires even greater "involvement of executive functions" (p. 99). This synthesis may be best exemplified in Shakespearean verse, which utilizes "functional shift," or "word conversion, namely the process whereby one part of speech becomes another with different function" (Thierry et al., 2008, p. 923). This kind of wordplay forces audiences to consider two different, equally correct, meanings simultaneously and represents perhaps one of the most sophisticated forms of sentence construction using figurative language.

Nonliteral Language Processing

While at one time language processing had been thought to occur exclusively in one section of the brain, recent research suggests it takes place throughout several brain regions. When the brain first encounters language, it divides the language into "words and grammar," which are each "developed at different times and in different areas of the

brain" (Wasserman, 2007, p. 416). Each hemisphere of the brain performs different functions in order to construct meaning from a sentence. As tasks become "more challenging" due to "abstract language" or the need for further "inferencing [...] the more areas of the brain are needed" (Williams, 2010, p. 94). Additionally, studies of language processing have shown that the brain differentiates between the processing of word order and word meaning. The two functions are "partially independent, particularly in the late stages of neural integration," further demonstrating the role of the entire brain in language processing (Thierry et al., 2008, p. 928).

Two major areas of the brain involved in language development are located in the left hemisphere. The first area, known as Wernicke's area, is where linguistic comprehension takes place. The second, known as Broca's area, is where motor processes necessary for articulation are located (Williams, 2010, p. 94). The left hemisphere is also the primary location for metaphor production. In one study by Benedek et. al (2013), when subjects were asked to create their own unique metaphors, scans of their brains revealed "increased activation in primarily left-hemispheric regions" (p. 102). Furthermore, the more creative the metaphor, the greater the activation in the left hemisphere. Results of this study highlight the "important role" the left hemisphere "plays [...] in mental stimulation" (p. 100). In light of these findings, however, it would be erroneous to completely overlook the crucial role the right hemisphere plays in linguistic functioning.

When the areas of the left hemisphere are heavily taxed, sections of the right hemisphere step in to assist with additional language processing. This is because as tasks become more complex, "more areas of the brain are needed" in order to complete them (Williams, 2010, p. 94). For example, the right hemisphere has been shown to complement the left

hemisphere by handling many of the functions that would be necessary for success in a typical English language arts class, including "processing larger units of language [...], comprehending discourse, and identifying the central theme of a story" (Williams, 2010, p. 90). The right hemisphere has also been found to play a role in interpreting the tone of a text. The ability to decipher "humor [...] sarcasm or irony," which are critical in interpreting meaning, is believed to be a primarily right hemispheric function (Williams, 2010, p. 90).

Most importantly, interpretation of nonliteral language has been found to activate a variety of areas throughout the brain, both in the right and left hemispheres. For example, metaphors that are more familiar are processed in areas of the left hemisphere, while areas of the right hemisphere are "particularly involved in the processing of novel, non-salient figurative language" (Benedek et. al, 2013, p. 100). In addition to the right hemisphere's role, research has shown that metaphors activate areas "at the core of a richly interconnected language network reaching to frontal and parietal structures" of the brain, further demonstrating the wide reach language has within neural networks (Benedek et. al, 2013, p. 100). In addition, specific memory centers play a crucial role in language development. According to Gordon et al. (2015), for typically developing children, "working memory [...] may correlate with the comprehension of both complex sentences in both spoken and written language" (p. 20). With respect to metaphor production, the brain has been shown to demonstrate "stronger activation in [...] episodic memory retrieval" in order to create novel and unique comparisons (Benedek et. al, 2013, p. 104). However, it is important to note that despite the fact that many regions of the brain have been identified as dedicated areas for specific kinds of language processing, questions still remain. For instance, the particular area

responsible for interpreting the "functional shift" so often used in Shakespearean texts, remains a mystery to researchers. While they have been able to detect areas of activity associated with the processing of the technique itself, "the mechanism by which such rhetorical device affects activity in the human brain is unknown" (Thierry et al., 2008, p. 923). This research gap demonstrates the need for continued study of the specific processes responsible for interpreting nonliteral language.

Nonliteral Texts and Language Development

The window for language acquisition and development is also now accepted to be much wider than originally thought. From birth, humans have the capacity for language and interpretation of syntactical structures. We are born with an innate "[s]ensitivity to rhythmic cues in the speech stream, such as the temporal organization of stressed syllables," which is thought to be the basis of "a facilitative mechanism for language acquisition" (Gordon, Jacobs, Schuele, & McAuley, 2015, p. 17). Rich linguistic experiences in early childhood set the foundation for greater linguistic ability throughout childhood and adolescence. As a child ages, "[t]he brain structures and functions to support speech and language skills continue to mature" and "the experiences that children have during the process of learning appear to result in changes in brain structure and function" (Williams, 2010, p. 97). This development continues throughout early adulthood, until it "plateaus" around age 25 (Williams, 2010, p. 89). Such information supports the need for continued, sophisticated linguistic experiences on the secondary level. By the time a child has reached middle or high school, his or her brain has undergone "change with experience as [he or she] develop[s] strategies to interpret and produce nonliteral language" (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 282). This demonstrates the significant

impact exposure to nonliteral language can have on the brains of young adults. Because researchers speculate that "there are no genes specifying particular types of neuronal networks involved in higher cognitive function," a case can be made for using complex texts to help foster such intellectual growth during this time (Leisman et al., 2015, p. 82).

ERPs and Nonliteral Language

While human language development had once been studied primarily by observing individual behavior, several recent neuroscientific studies of language utilize ERPs, or event-related potentials, as measurement instruments. ERPs enable researchers to observe "electrical activity produced by the brain over the scalp in response to the presentation of written or spoken words" in order to determine how the brain functions during nonliteral language processing (Thierry et al., 2008, p. 923-924). Most crucially, data can be gathered at the moment brain activity peaks and is "time locked to a specific event or stimulus" (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 270). These flashes of electric activity inform researchers about when specific areas of the brain experience the greatest stimulation. For example, a study by Gordon, Jacobs, Schuele, & McAuley (2015) examined how the brain processes certain types of syntactical structures. The study revealed "a late positive event-related brain potential (ERP) component called the P600" when subjects were shown ambiguous and unexpected sentences, with the figure P600 representing a peak in brain activity (p. 17). Additionally, ERPs provide information about the steps involved in language processing. They present a description of "brain activation [...] from the point of stimulus presentation through processing and interpretation to response" (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 270). This provides a more complete picture of language's impact on the brain and has helped to

further demonstrate the role of the whole brain in language processing.

One study by Blasko and Kazmerski (2006) that examined how the brain processes specific types of figurative language utilized ERPs to compare the differences in brain behavior between linguistic "novices" (college students who have never written poetry) and "experts" (college students who reported writing poetry for at least 2 years). The purpose of the study was to understand whether brain function changes over time with prolonged exposure to nonliteral language, particularly "how the brain processes figurative language before and after such intensive training" (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 278). Each participant listened to a portion of spoken text and then was asked to determine whether what they heard could be considered poetry. The ERP results of the study revealed that the "experts" were able to rely less on working memory in order to identify figurative language, leading researchers to conclude that "expertise [had] developed the semantic leaps necessary to appreciate poetry" (Blasko & Kazmerski, 2006, p. 279). This study lends support to the cognitive benefits of regular creative writing activities in the English language arts curriculum, where students practice creating their own metaphors, as a way to bolster students' abilities to interpret and analyze literary texts.

Another study to employ ERPs is one in which Thierry et al. (2008) analyzed the brain activity of individuals listening to Shakespearean sentences that contained "functional shifts" in order to understand the how the brain processes the semantic and syntactic incongruity often found in Shakespeare's work. The researchers discovered that when the subjects listened to the functional shifts in Shakespearean sentences, their brains experienced peaks in activity, or P600 readings. This spike in activity was explained by "an early syntactic evaluation

process [...] and a delayed re-evaluation/repair process" (Thierry et al., 2008, p. 923). The researchers conclude that, despite the fact that "participants found word class conversions rather difficult," the increased level of brain activity among those listening to and reading Shakespeare's words is satisfying to audiences and may explain why his work has remained so popular for so long (Thierry et al., 2008, p. 927).

Nonliteral Texts in the Classroom

As several research studies have demonstrated, exposure to nonliteral texts does indicate cognitive changes in linguistic processing. Such changes resulting in "stronger brain activation" have numerous implications for learning and teaching (Benedek et. al, 2013, p. 102). Because "children's brains continue to mature and develop with both age and new experiences with language," it is especially important to expose students to linguistically stimulating texts throughout their academic careers (Williams, 2010, p. 102). This concept, that the brain is able to grow and change with learning, is known as "plasticity" (Leisman et al., 2015, p. 82). As the brain becomes more plastic, it increases the number of neuronal "connections, which increases the ability and speed of the cell to transmit signal" (Leisman et al., 2015, p. 82). By high school, students have the potential to develop more networks for higher-level thinking with increased learning. On the other hand, students may not be as challenged in the same way if they read the purely literal language commonly found in informational texts. This "lack of stimulation [...] would [...] be expected to have a disproportionate effect" during the adolescent years (Fuhrmann, Knoll, & Blakemore, 2015, p. 560).

As with most curriculum designs, variety is key. An exclusive diet of Shakespearean verse would sorely deprive students of other, equally important genres, just as over-

reliance upon straightforward non-fiction texts may fail to fully develop the "metacognitive and metalinguistic skills" that are burgeoning in early adulthood (Williams, 210, p. 101). The goal is for educators not to give up on teaching works of fiction that feature examples of nonliteral language and complex sentence structure simply because students may find them too difficult upon first inspection. When designing curriculum, educators should be aware of students' newly-developing "higher-order cognitive skills," which enable students to have the capacity to "use their language for abstract thinking" in rewarding ways (Williams, 2010, p. 101). An equally crucial point, however, is for teachers not to overload or overwhelm students. Analysis of a short poem or a scene from a play is often all that is necessary for students to gain experience and confidence with challenging material. One way to spark student interest is through group performance of a poem or Shakespearean soliloquy. Students can divide the text into speaking roles and stage the presentation in any way they choose, making choices about movement, costumes and props throughout the process. This kind of activity provides motivation for students to consider multiple interpretations of the text, including its tone and subtext, and offers a novel way to approach nonliteral language. Such an experience can both "stimulate" and "rewire" the brain for more advanced learning (Wasserman, 2007, p. 415).

Conclusion

While it may seem counterintuitive to incorporate neuroscientific findings to support humanities curriculum designs, these important discoveries about the cognitive impacts of nonliteral language make a strong case for the inclusion of Shakespeare and other forms of poetry in secondary education. Because language skills are not

exclusively formed in the childhood years, and because "adolescence is when more sophisticated forms of communication and language can develop," careful consideration of the types of texts students read during this time period is critical (Williams, 2010, p. 101). While it may be an oversimplification to claim that reading Shakespeare will make students "smarter," his work can stimulate their brains in ways that literal language simply cannot. To borrow a metaphor from Cajal, whose work embodied the unification of science and art, "[t]he plant usually grows according to the dimensions of the pot" (as cited in Triarhou & Vivas, 2009, p. 87). Exposure to nonliteral texts creates the space for students to grow significant cognitive networks, sprouting the seeds that otherwise may have never taken root.

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Inquiry: A Catalyst for Meaningful Academic Discourse

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Abstract
When teachers pose questions that lead to meaningful inquiry, a deeper understanding of subject matter emerges. Academic conversations resulting from such questions may spark learners' intrinsic inquiry, reinforce learning, further develop critical-thinking skills, and assist teachers when assessing understanding. However, as educators, we are often left wondering what types of questions we may ask students to inspire inquiry and make learning purposeful. It may be hypothesized that supportive academic discourse may lead to increased conceptual learning. Altering the nature of a traditional and hierarchical academic discourse pattern to one based upon democratic principles may encourage supportive trajectories of classroom dialogue.

Inquiry: A Catalyst for Meaningful Academic Discourse

When teachers pose questions that lead to meaningful inquiry and classroom dialogue, a deeper understanding of the topic or subject matter emerges. Academic conversations resulting from such questions may spark a learner's intrinsic inquiry, reinforce learning, further develop critical-thinking skills, and assist a teacher when assessing understanding. However, as teachers, we are often left wondering what types of questions we may ask students to inspire inquiry and make learning meaningful and purposeful in a student's life.

Using a social constructivist lens, learning occurs most effectively when children are supported within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). The teacher's role is to scaffold children's building of understanding by asking guiding questions that may provide opportunities for new experiences. ZPD was considered a progressive concept when developed as it refuted behaviorist theory that viewed imitation and learning as "purely mechanical processes" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). However, some may argue that ZPD is now actually quite mainstream. ZPD is a concept examined frequently in schools of education and referenced in a multitude of curricula materials. While ZPD emphasizes the importance of scaffolding student learning, teachers may question how they may offer appropriate instructional supports. Children learn optimally within their ZPD; however, creating this zone within classrooms may present challenges for educators when striving to establish learning environments receptive to collaboration of ideas. In an effort to offer supportive instructional interactions, let us consider the power of questioning through academic discourse.

Exploratory and Presentational Academic Talk Types

Exploratory and presentational talk are two talk types frequently evidenced within the classroom. Exploratory talk responds to academic questions or ideas and is used to construct new concepts by exploring perspectives through tentative talk. Exploratory discourse pertains to classroom talk that may suggest alternative perspectives and encourage students to build positively on the ideas and questions of others.

Cazden (2001) defined exploratory talk as speaking "without the answers fully intact" (p. 170). Mercer and

Littleton (2007) expanded Cazden's definition and present exploratory talk as dialogue that constructs new ideas and knowledge together through group discourse and constructive criticism of ideas. Since exploratory talk is open-ended and leaves room to investigate multiple perspectives, it may be argued that exploratory talk promotes a state of disequilibrium, which is essential for optimal learning (Willis, 2007).

When children are stimulated by curiosity, learners are inspired to seek new information for understanding and problem solving (Willis, 2007). Neurologist and classroom teacher, Willis (2007) is a proponent of brain-based education who offers instructional practices geared toward supporting learning based on scientific evidence. Willis (2007) presented the following example to explain the phenomenon of disequilibrium, which she maintains creates an ideal learning environment:

> It has been said that when we relieve students of their struggles, we rob them of opportunities to build self-confidence, along with knowledge. But when we value mistakes as learning opportunities and allow students to experience puzzlement, learning can increase. Imagine molecularly altering an orange by freezing it in liquid nitrogen. Now imagine dropping the orange on the floor and watching as it shatters into a dozen pieces. In a classroom, this demonstration would be beyond the realm of students' prior experience or understanding of the world. The phenomena like this one lead to a brain state of *disequilibrium,* and the curiosity it prompts can be a powerful motivator for learning. (p. 24)

Learning should be stimulated by curiosity; such curiosity inspires learners to seek information for understanding and problem solving (Willis, 2007). Disequilibrium stimulates the

amygdala which, in turn, creates its ability to "transmit data efficiently from the sensory response centers to the patterning and memory regions of the brain. The hippocampus is primed to bring 'online' any previously stored related information that may connect with the new data to....restore equilibrium" (Willis, 2007, pp. 24–25). Willis made a profound argument that teachers who are able to arouse a learner's disequilibrium-prompted curiosity will assist the student in achieving an optimal brain state for engagement and learning. Through inquiry, exploratory discourse has the ability to foster student-prompted curiosity necessary for inspiring a state of disequilibrium.

Presentational talk is quite the opposite of exploratory talk and may be defined as discourse used to make an explicit statement. Characteristics of this talk type include information presented as indisputable, textual reading, or teacher questions that generate a linear response. Barnes (1992) approached presentational talk from a teacher's viewpoint and contended that teachers' presentational talk is often used to test students' understanding of a concept or skill. It may be argued that a presentational talk sequence follows the traditional Initiate, Respond, and Evaluate (IRE) discussion pattern between teacher and student. IRE typically generates a linear, rather than analytical and curiosity driven, student response. Overall, Barnes (1992) posited that a teacher's presentational talk appears to be more concerned with the teacher's needs rather than those of the student.

To make a statement as such, we must consider why a teacher may be reluctant to offer questions that may promote exploratory discourse and open the floor to student-led discussion. Teachers are challenged by top down demands, and reforming hierarchical viewpoints and political positions is time consuming and uncertain. However, classroom instruction

and pedagogical practices lie at the heart of the educator. In order to understand why student talk within the classroom is typically limited, perhaps focus should highlight the teacher's position rather than student. Release of teacher talk time indicates an element of release of power. If teachers are pressured from administration and bureaucracy to produce high-test scores and implement stringent curriculum guidelines, then they may experience discomfort releasing lesson time for discussion. Authority is given to students when a learner is engaged in discussion. Since discussion has the ability to deviate from agendas and/or lesson plans, teachers may experience a sense of insecurity when giving the floor to learners. These reasons may offer preliminary insights as to why Barnes (2008) believes, "teachers move towards presentational talk too soon, when pupils are still at the stage of digesting new ideas" (p. 7). Barnes (2008) continued, "it is likely to be exploratory talking and writing that will contribute more to the interrelating of old ways of thinking and new possibilities: in other words, they will be more likely to enable learners to work on understanding" (p. 7). While teacher and student interactions may lead to exploratory discourse, for Barnes (2008), teacher talk is frequently presentational in nature, leaving room for mostly nonnegotiable student responses.

Michaels and O'Connor (2012) referred to conventional talk patterns in the classroom and stated:

> Teachers at all grade levels often fall back on the kinds of discussions we experienced in our own learning. These discussions were something more like recitation, where the teacher asks a question with a single right answer, calls on a student to respond, indicates whether the answer is correct, and moves onto another question. (p. 1)

Michaels and O'Connor (2012) maintained that while the IRE discussion pattern may be helpful for review and assessment of student recall, it neglects to "create a culture where students take each other seriously, take risks, and build complex arguments together" (p. 1). Perhaps educators may reconsider the common place IRE trajectory to one that may stimulate curiosity and learning through exploratory discourse. An alternate pattern may be one based upon democratic principles that follow a sequence of Inquire, Wait, Think, and Share (IWTS). Initiating discourse with thought provoking questions, allowing additional time to think and process ideas, and offering room for collaborative sharing of opinions may promote learning.

Encouraging a state of Disequilibrium through Questioning

In order to understand the power of questioning and implications of academic discourse, as educators we must understand the process in which learning occurs. A teacher's ability to inspire optimal learning outcomes for students has been an age-old discussion within the educational field. Jensen (1998), a researcher in the field of brain-compatible learning, broke down the process of learning into two steps. He maintained external input and internal processing are key components necessary to achieve learning. Taberski (2001) elaborated on this process:

> External input occurs when the learner receives information from an outside source, e.g., a book, a firsthand experience, a conversation. Internal processing is when the learner uses the external input to create new meaning. If either the external input or the time for internal processing is missing, learning cannot occur. Both must be present. (p. 93)

Moreover, Michael's and O'Connor (2012) provided evidence in support of a growing need for increased student wait time. Additional time is required to thoroughly think through and process responses to a question or an idea. Michaels and O'Connor (2012) presented evidence demonstrating that if a teacher allows wait time in response to a question by an increase of at least three seconds, significant changes occur within the quality of discourse. Research revealed:

1. Students say more. The length of student responses increases between 300% and 700%.
2. They expand and clarify and explain their thinking with evidence.
3. The number of questions asked by students increases dramatically.
4. Student-to-student talk increases (Michaels and O'Connor, 2012, p. 19)

Supportive academic discourse must permit time for learners to process a question or idea and then respond appropriately. By doing so, the trajectory of teacher and student discourse may foster learning.

Michaels and O'Connor (2012) approached their perspective of talk moves as tools for promoting academically productive discussion; they offered the following talk moves as questions that nurture supportive exploratory discourse:

1. Say more about that.
2. Who can repeat that in their own words?
3. Why do you think that?
4. Do you agree or disagree, and why? (Michaels and O'Connor, 2012, p. 19)

Such moves may promote a learning environment that "opens up the conversation to student thinking, explaining, and reasoning with evidence" (Michaels and O'Connor, 2012, p.

19). Every talk move is intended to foster analytical thinking and assist learners when "explaining and clarifying, citing evidence, and critiquing or evaluating the thinking of their peers" (Michaels & O'Connor, 2012, p. 19). These suggestions support exploratory talk.

Calkins (2001) offered questions that may also inspire exploratory academic discourse. Her inquiries were meant to help learners develop authentic ideas rather than merely report on them. Calkins' (2001) questions encourage students to engage in analytical text discussions and assist with teacher assessment. Teachers or peers may pose questions or inquiries to each other such as:

> Show me what you mean.
> What makes you say that?
> What were you reading when you thought of that?
> Will you find the part of the book that makes you say that?
> Is one example of what you are saying on page 93?
> Can we look at the book together and see what it says?
> I'm not sure I agree, because look on page 126?
> (Calkins, 2001, p. 245).

Such inquiries promote supportive exploratory discourse. Open-ended questions foster exploratory discourse and inquiry-based learning.

While Michaels and O'Connor (2012, in press) and Calkins (2001) provided suggestions for academic talk moves, Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison (2011) offered a powerful question for "facilitating and clarifying thinking" (p. 34). For purposes of investigating questioning within the classroom, exploratory discourse is defined as dialogue used to construct ideas by exploring perspectives through tentative talk. Ritchhart et al. (2011) offered the question, "What makes you say that?" as "one of the most fully integrated thinking routines

in the classroom of teachers" with whom they have worked (p. 34). This question allows room for thought and processing time that Jensen (1998) spoke of as a necessary quality to achieve learning. The language is open-ended and invites an individual to elaborate on his/her reasoning.

Questions of a similar accord, such as, "Tell me why?" or "Give me your reasons and evidence for that statement" serve the same purpose and encourage exploratory characteristics that assert alternative perspectives that may convey a speaker's disagreement (Ritchhart et al., 2011, p. 34). Facilitative questions, coupled with time to reflect and process, may stimulate and clarify a student's thinking. Through discussion, learners may reflect on their cognition and share responses to questions. Fostering original and analytical thought, Cazden (2001) believed such academic discourse encourages children to be active learners who possess ownership over learned material. As educators, posing such authentic questions to learners facilitates supportive academic discourse within a community of inquiry.

Children require exposure to open-ended questions, time to think about and process responses, and a supportive classroom culture to nurture tentative talk. Willis (2007) maintained, "We are learning to translate neuroimaging data into classroom strategies designed to stimulate parts of the brain that are metabolically activated during the stages of information, processing, memory, and recall" (p. 3). In order for learners to process and retain information as memory, content must "maximize personal relevance" (Willis, 2007, p. 23). Willis (2007) suggested students be provided with opportunities to learn from actual experiences and objects, the reading of stories in support of learning strengths, and exposure to narrative lessons with a specific purpose applicable to the student as meaningful instructional practices. "If students can't

relate to the new material, their neural networks will be less able to process it and retain it as memory, leading to frustration and discouraging classroom experiences" (Willis, 2007, p. 23). Children must be provided with opportunities to process learning in order for content to be made relevant. Posing meaningful questions help students build upon and activate their prior knowledge.

Rethinking Academic Talk Trajectories

Ritchhart and Church are principle investigators at Project Zero's Culture of Thinking project who may echo Willis's sentiments. Ritchhart and Church (2013) defined cultures of thinking as "places where a group's collective as well as individual thinking is valued, visible, and actively promoted as part of the regular, day-to-day experience of all group members" (para. 1). They developed thinking routines to foster a culture of thinkers. While engaged in routines, teachers look for opportunities for student thoughtfulness, model and make their own thinking visible, and set expectations about the value of thinking in learning (Ritchhart & Church, 2013).

Thinking routines are instructional tools that may help children become inquisitive about their world, assist them when defining problems, and be intrinsically motivated to solve abstract problems (Ritchhart et al., 2011). As we become a global world, children must have the ability to consider situations from different perspectives and ultimately direct one's own inquiry and thinking (Ritchhart, 2014). Thinking routines urge children to build relationships collaboratively with others and reflect internally. Through group work, learners engage in exploratory talk and reason through alternate perspectives.

It may be hypothesized that classrooms in which exploratory talk is prompted may lead to increased conceptual

learning. Teachers may look to cultivate a classroom culture of inquiry that encourages an academic talk sequence initiated by questioning. Based upon democratic principles of learning and student-centered lessons, the suggested talk move sequence of Inquire, Wait, Think, and Share may offer authentic learning opportunities for increased conceptual understandings.

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Teaching Writing Hope for a Just Writing Society

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Abstract
Teaching hope in writing education has the power to transform the landscape of literacy communities into more just and empowered school systems and societies. This manuscript explores ways that "writing hope," a recently established cognitive-motivational strength, creates a socially just, student-centered framework of writing education. First, this paper positions writing hope as a key factor in the social justice goals of literacy education and then shares research-based methods for classroom implementation. Equipped with instructional strategies that build writing hope and writing competencies in students, secondary school ELA teachers can be powerful change agents in leveling structural inequalities in educational systems.

Teaching Writing Hope for a Just Writing Society

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Conference on English Education (CEE) position statement on "Beliefs about Social Justice in English Education" asks the questions: *"What other fields of study do we need to continue to draw from to help inform a theory for social justice in English education?"* and *"How can a theory for social justice stay committed to being translated into direct classroom practice?"* The field of positive psychology, especially within the domain of hope theory, has much to contribute to the conversation on social justice in English education and thus in secondary English language arts classrooms. Grounded in strengths-based approaches to education, positive psychology

can inform the ways in which we create equitable learning opportunities for our students in English language arts education.

Based on research over the past six years on "writing hope" (Sieben, 2013) in both secondary and postsecondary institutions, I have found writing hope to have a significant influence on students' development as writers (Sieben, 2013, 2014, 2015). Through a research initiative sponsored by the NCTE Conference on English Education (CEE), I have had the opportunity over the past two years to work with high school and middle school ELA teachers in four states in different geographic regions of the country on their development as teachers of writing in order to augment their students' development as writers. In my study titled, "Teaching Writing Hope: A Matter of Social Justice in English Education," I learned from secondary students and teachers the ways in which having a hopefulness about writing can make a difference in creating equitable ELA classroom practices.

This CEE Research Initiative study has revealed the benefits of numerous effective writing hope-building strategies that can inform the practice of teaching writing at the secondary level, a few of which I will describe in detail below. At the 2015 New York State English Council 65th Annual Conference, I was given the opportunity to present these research-based strategies in a session titled, "Pathways to 'Writing Hope'" where I learned about the pathways that experienced and novice teachers use in their own writing and teaching practices. During this session, secondary and postsecondary writing teachers shared with me their own personal challenges as writing teachers and articulated they found support in the writing hope strategies I shared with them. With this knowledge, I see the effects of how our work in English education as writing teacher educators continues to

make contributions to social justice praxis and puts hope into action in educational contexts. Because writing fluency is an academic currency that could disrupt and level current systems of inequality that are presently harmful to many school systems and groups in society, it is essential to consider student-centered ways of increasing students' hope levels about their writing.

What follows is a brief description of the constructs of hope and writing hope, which are the building-blocks for the strengths-based Writing Hope Framework (Sieben, 2015) that secondary ELA teachers in this study integrated into their classrooms with social justice rationales for doing so. Then, I provide an explanation of how the field of positive psychology supports our social justice beliefs as English educators with an emphasis on building equitable experiences in writing education. Finally, I share classroom-tested writing hope agency and pathways strategies used in secondary ELA classrooms. From surveys conducted with all participating students at the end of the 2014-2015 school year and interviews conducted with students and teachers throughout the year, I have learned that students believe their personal writing growth was nurtured by their engagement with these (and other) strategies.

Hope and Writing Hope Defined

Hope

Hope, as defined in the field of positive psychology, is a cognitive-motivational strength that contributes to successful student outcomes (Snyder, 2002). C. R. Snyder, the founder of hope theory, and his colleagues (2002) define hope as the will and the ways to accomplish set goals; they write, "Whether it is happening in the theaters of students' minds or in the

[classroom environment]… hope may be a lesson worth learning" (p. 824). In past studies, hope has been able to reliably predict academic and athletic achievement, scholastic competence, cumulative and semester GPAs, college graduation status, academic satisfaction, and problem solving skills (Lopez et al., 2004; Snyder et al., 2002). Conversely, hope has been found to treat feelings of anxiety, depression, and hopelessness (Lopez et al., 2004; Seligman, 1998; Snyder, 2002). In accordance with these findings, teaching hope is a worthwhile endeavor because it supports desirable academic outcomes. Hope-enhancing strategies include activities that help students to "conceptualize reasonable goals more clearly, produce numerous pathways to attainment, summon the energy to maintain pursuit, and reframe insurmountable obstacles as challenges to be overcome" (Lopez et al., 2004, p. 390). These strategies can all be applied to teaching students to be more hopeful about writing.

Writing Hope

Put simply, "writing hope" is a domain-specific, cognitive-motivational construct that is defined as the will (agency) and the ways (pathways) to accomplish worthwhile writing goals (Sieben, 2013). While building general hope in students can improve overall academic achievement, building "writing hope" can help students navigate the complexities of academic writing and can lead to increased motivations for personal writing as well (Sieben, 2013). In recent studies, writing hope has been found to reliably predict writing ability in college and secondary school students and was related to general academic achievement (Sieben, 2012, 2013, 2015). Due to the cooperation of the interactive components [i.e., affective (will) and strategic (ways)] of the writing hope paradigm, teaching writing through various writing hope

strategies has proven to be a comprehensive, equitable approach to developing successful writers. Further, it does so in a way that is socially just because of the student-centered nature of these strategies.

Writing hope prepares all students to utilize multiple, diverse strategies towards accomplishing individual (not standardized) writing goals so that if one strategy presents obstacles, other pathways can be utilized. Knowledge of multiple strategies may also make writing hope a buffer against writing anxiety, which can be paralyzing to some student writers (Daly, 1978). Since writing is a complex cognitive process (Bereiter & Scardemalia, 1987; Brent, 2012; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Kellogg, 1989; Rowley & Meyer, 2003) that requires the effective transfer of knowledge across contexts (Beaufort, 2007; Butler, Godbole, & Marsh, 2013), teaching students hope in writing could also be a key factor in creating smoother transitions from middle school to high school and from high school to college, thus providing students with "writing hope capital" (Sieben, 2013).

Writing hope capital, theorized within the Writing Hope Framework to be the wealth of will and ways knowledge associated with pursuing writing goals (Sieben, 2013), emphasizes the benefits experienced by those who possess high writing hope levels. Students who possess high writing hope components are likely to feel agentic about their roles in society, and thus, may feel more motivated to write for a purpose, expressing their ideas for a greater individual or collective good. As the NCTE CEE position statement denotes, a social justice framework includes *participation*, which "teaches how action, agency, and empowerment can be used to transform ideas, contexts, and may even lead to systemic change" (CEE, 2009). The goal of teaching writing within a Writing Hope Framework, which is embedded in social justice

theory, is to ensure that all students feel empowered to use their unique voices for change. Using writing hope agency (will) and writing hope pathways (ways) strategies, we can encourage students to write for social change in their local and global communities.

Positive Psychology Supports Our English Education Social Justice Framework

Research reveals the field of positive psychology emphasizes a strengths-based approach to education, and certain strengths (i.e., hope) have been found to have positive impacts on education at the systemic level in order to achieve more equitable educational experiences for all individuals (Snyder et al., 2011). In this strengths-based approach, students' unique abilities are used as foundational building blocks for future skill development and academic success. The NCTE "Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education" calls for "a democratic [educational] system that is more comprehensive and balanced around student needs" (NCTE, 2011). Certain student-centered strategies for teaching and learning writing grounded in positive psychology support social justice values of equity and fairness by focusing on the development of students' strengths (rather than on fixing student deficits).

Because a social justice framework positions equity as the goal of education, it may be important to distinguish between equity and equality (CEE, 2009). Equitable opportunities provide diverse opportunities for different groups of students depending on various needs, while equal opportunities simply provide the same opportunities for all students regardless of varying needs. Thus, equal opportunities may create inequitable educational systems in which certain students are prepared to succeed, and others are not. A writing

hope approach to teaching English language arts provides a flexible framework within which teachers and students can work together to build writing strategies into curricula that work for teaching writers of all abilities rather than using one-size-fits all writing strategies that only work for some, and not all, students in the class. This approach allows for equitable opportunities for success, instead of equal opportunities that invariably cause some students to fail.

Exploring Writing Hope Strategies that Build Writing Competencies for Equity

The Writing Hope Framework grounded in social justice pedagogies and positive psychology theories contains three main instructional components: (a) setting worthwhile writing goals, (b) building writing hope agency (will), and (c) teaching writing hope pathways (strategies) for writing success. Within this framework, teachers work to (a) help students set intentional, authentic writing goals, (b) build meaningful purposes into writing experiences for students, and (c) provide multiple writing strategies for students so that when one strategy presents challenges, others can be utilized.

A student who develops high writing hope levels has the ability to (1) stay motivated in working towards writing goals, (2) find and identify many purposes and strategies to accomplishing writing goals, (3) choose the best routes for each specific writing situation, (4) monitor progress over time throughout the writing process, and (5) choose different or revised routes to goal attainment when obstacles present along the way. Specifically, writing hope can be developed in students using a variety of teaching strategies, and what follows is a description of strategies that secondary ELA students (and teachers) from the "Teaching Writing Hope" CEE Research Initiative study have reported as the most

helpful in informing their development as writers over the course of one school year.

Beginning with the Goal in Mind: Strategies for Establishing Worthwhile Writing Goals

In order to assist students in setting worthwhile writing goals for the year, teachers can help students to identify and write personal writing goals. During the first week of the school year, ELA instructors in my study asked secondary students to identify and write five specific writing goals—two short-term goals (that could be accomplished within one or two quarters), two long-term goals (that could be accomplished by the end of the year), and one reach goal (that may not seem probable but may be possible—e.g., publishing a poem in a book or online journal). As students wrote their personal goals, teachers circulated around the classroom and provided feedback and encouragement on goals written. Once most students had articulated their goals, the teachers facilitated a student-led discussion about setting productive writing goals. Students who felt comfortable shared their writing goals during class discussions, and as a class these ideas were analyzed and evaluated. Several teachers in the study reported that students often asked for examples of the different types of goals they could write, so I provided a list of example writing goals for secondary students to emulate or use as a guide.

The teachers in the study reported that this type of guided goal setting led students to create beneficial writing goals, which was more constructive than having students set arbitrary goals that may not help in their development as writers. As te Riele (2010) states, not all goals are worthwhile of pursuit (e.g., completing an assignment to write the required number of pages without concern for quality of writing on the pages), and this class activity with teacher guidance and peer

workshopping provided students with the necessary support to establish worthwhile writing goals.

Making Writing Matter to Students: Strategies for Building Writing Hope Agency

Since hope is "built from the goals that matter most to us" (Lopez, 2013, p. 24), as ELA teachers we are faced with the charge of making writing matter to students. While some students may have an affinity for writing, we know that not all students do (Gallagher, 2006; Kirby et al., 2004; Lavelle, 2009; Smagorinsky, 2009). Therefore, it is essential for us to create positive writing purposes and motivations for students to thrive within (Freire, 1970, 2004; Kirby et al., 2004; Smagorinsky, 2009; Souto-Manning & Smagorinsky, 2010) so that students can be more agentic about their writing. In creating experiences that make writing matter to students, we are essentially helping students build their writing hope agency. By introducing students to the idea of writing as an act of identity formation and as a tool of empowerment, ELA teachers can inspire secondary school writers to engage in the process of writing for social change.

Writing as an Act of Identity Formation

Positive self-beliefs, particularly with respect to writing, can lead to positive identity development (Lavelle, 2009; Smagorinsky, 2012), which will allow each student to feel agentic about the influence of his/her/per voice as an important player in society. As "Belief 4: A Pedagogy" denotes in the CEE position statement, "Social Justice Pedagogy presupposes that all students are worthy of human dignity, that all are worthy of the same opportunities in an education, [and] that the contract they enter into in schools must honor their sociocultural advantages and disadvantages... in order to help

them meet and obtain a [determined] basic threshold that is mutually beneficial to each party who enters into the school space" (CEE, 2009). Thus, teaching writing hope agency is a matter of social justice for equity as all students regardless of perceived privilege, or lack thereof, must know their voices are valued and their histories are respected and recognized in educational spaces.

Since writings are artifacts of identity formation, as ELA teachers we need to encourage our students to write their own histories and their futures, so that no one else attempts to write these narratives for them. One of the goals of literacy education is "to liberate and empower students… to question power relationships embedded in texts…and rewrite their worlds for a more just society" (Wallowitz, 2008, p. 4). Through a social justice approach to literacy education, writing teachers are charged with the task of unpacking "truths that challenge master narratives" with their students (Miller & Kirkland, 2010, p. 3). Students who feel agentic about their identity formation through writing may also develop perceptions of control in other aspects of their lives and may thus disrupt systems of inequality.

Writing as a Tool of Empowerment

If as ELA teachers we incorporate the teaching of writing within the context of social justice goals, students may begin to see the utility of developing writing competencies in order to improve their perceived and actual positions in society. The development of positive self-beliefs like hope and writing hope enable students to see themselves as instrumental in conversations that influence perception, theory, policy, and practice. Since critical literacy includes the deconstruction of dominant narratives and the reconstruction of diverse narratives that establish a more just, equitable society (Miller & Kirkland,

2010; Morrell, 2002; Wallowitz, 2008), students can be taught to see writing as a tool of empowerment that could break down systems of power and privilege present in schools and other communities. An important finding of the "Teaching Writing Hope" CEE study revealed that students in the study who described feeling disenfranchised by their educational systems reported feeling encouraged to use writing as a tool for emancipation from oppressive perspectives and practices when their teachers emphasized empowerment and liberation (and not compliance) as a goal of writing (Sieben, 2015).

Providing Avenues to Success: Strategies for Building Writing Hope Pathways

Through use of a variety of instructional strategies, students report feeling hopeful about their writing processes (Sieben, 2015); however, the key to making sure these pathways strategies are effective is ensuring the strategies are student-centered (Durst, 2006; Smagorinsky, 2009). The following suggestions for classroom activities to teach writing hope pathways are inspired by the work of Lopez (2013), Cole (2013), and Beaufort (2007), and are further informed by the 244 secondary students who elected to participate in my CEE study. Two classroom activities are described below. Students ranked these two as among the most helpful strategies in their writing development over the course of the year because both of these strategies encouraged them to be intentional about the ways in which they pursued their writing goals and engaged in the writing process.

Guided Writing Goals Journaling

One writing hope pathways strategy that students found most helpful in developing their writing skills – guided journaling— accompanies the guided goal-setting activity in

the writing goals section (pp.85-86) above. Once students decided on their five main writing goals to start the year, ELA teachers required students to keep a "Writing Goals Journal" in which they periodically reflected on their progress towards goal achievement over the course of the year. The journal was kept in a notebook or in an online blog (or another medium of each student's choosing), and each student writer decided the format and design for his/her/per journal. Initially, I had recommended that each week students be required to complete one or two journal entries in which they detail their writing experiences for the week and analyze which methods they chose to utilize towards writing goal pursuit during writing activities. However, throughout the year of the study, ELA teachers communicated to me that weekly journaling for this purpose was not possible given the other requirements of their ELA courses. Thus, ELA teachers adjusted the frequency of the assignment based on their schedules and classroom needs for the rest of the year; most teachers reported having students journal about their writing goals and processes about four or five times throughout a quarter. To prompt students' journal responses, ELA teachers provided students with a list of several guiding questions, which I provided to them at the start of the year, that use the strengths-based language of writing hope theory. Students were told they could choose one or more of these questions to respond to for 20 minutes in each journal entry while analyzing the strategies they have used towards goal pursuit. Some sample questions include:

- What writing strategies did you find most useful this week? Why did you find those strategies to be useful?
- Did you meet any obstacles/ challenges while utilizing any writing strategies? If so, how did you address those challenges?

- What writing strategies caused you the most struggle this week? Why do you suppose these strategies presented you with obstacles during the writing process? Moving forward, how do you think you could adjust this writing strategy to make it work better for you in the future?
- What have you learned this week during your writing activities that you will use in future writing endeavors?
- What progress, if any, have you made towards your set writing goals this week?

These and other questions provide students with a framework in which to free write about their writing experiences. Upon analyzing their writing processes routinely in the context of goal pursuit, students create more purposeful, relevant writing experiences for themselves.

An important component of this "Writing Goals Journal" is the role of teacher involvement. In order to provide students with feedback and encouragement on goal progress and pathways development, writing teachers checked journals every other week (if students were writing weekly) or periodically for more infrequent journal writing by students. In these journals, teachers responded in affective ways to students' ideas and not to their writing structure or grammar in order to show care for student process and not product (Kirby et al., 2004). With this type of low-stakes writing interaction, students and teachers reported developing a trusting relationship as writing mentor and mentee or writing coach and writer. Throughout this process, students and teachers committed to working together to enhance students' writing hope levels, thus increasing their general hope levels and writing competencies as well.

Through this strategy, students were able to track their writing goal progress throughout the year by journaling, which often led to increases in students' writing motivation (agency) too as they developed their knowledge of multiple writing strategies. By the end of the year, students communicated feelings of progress towards their goal attainment and realized they had reached other proximal goals on their paths to reaching originally set goals. They also learned along the way that some goals needed to be adjusted based on newly developed skills and circumstances. This tangible journal of writing growth encourages students to review, examine, and realize the ways of writing that work specifically for them, thus creating equitable writing experiences for all students.

Writing Hope Pathways Mapping

Another student-prioritized strategy for teaching writing hope included pathways mapping. Pathways mapping, a derivative of concept mapping, creates a cognitive visualization for students that can aid in their understanding and internalization of writing pathways and skills for success (Villalon & Calvo, 2011). This mapping strategy of making thinking visible to students is a frequently used literacy strategy because it organizes students' mental schemas into a graphic model of domain knowledge (Villalon & Calvo, 2011). Since graphic representations of concepts can act as scaffolding devises for building knowledge, creating a writing hope pathways map as a class and then individually could provide students with deeper understandings about various ways to approach the writing process.

To use writing pathways mapping in the ELA classroom, is to allow student-centered creation of writing tools. As a class, ELA teachers and students can brainstorm a writing process concept map that can be unique in structure but

exhaustive in strategies. There are many ways to approach this writing hope strategy, but what follows is a refinement of my originally proposed strategy based on feedback from ELA teachers and students who have engaged with this strategy over the course of the year.

First, students found it most helpful when teachers facilitated a class discussion about various steps that could be taken during a writing process. Some teachers gave students five minutes of independent brainstorming time to think about their own processes when writing and create a list of all the strategies they use. Then as a class, all ideas were discussed and listed on the board (to serve as a type of word bank for students who felt they needed it). Next, one possible shape for a writing process map was drawn on the board by the teacher to provide a model of a map for students. Together, the teacher and students discussed how to place a variety of the strategies from their list on the model map in order to move students from the start of a writing task to the successful completion of a writing task. Teachers also shared that sometimes they needed to provide a number of strategies that students had not thought of in addition to the student-generated strategies in order to provide students with an abundance of writing pathways options. Students then were given time to draw their own pictorial representations of their specific writing processes. While students were creating their own individual writing process maps, the ELA teachers emphasized the fact that everyone's process maps might look different as individuals approach writing tasks from different angles. The only stipulation that each ELA teacher requested was that each map have a starting point and a finishing point so that students could articulate how they might begin to write and when they might consider work on a piece of writing "complete" for publication.

Through pathways mapping, students showed they write in a variety of ways: a center out approach, a bottom to top approach, a multi-directional approach, a linear approach, and many other student-designed approaches. Since each person's brain organizes information in diverse ways, the shapes created by students in the class were frequently unique from one another. Students were encouraged to choose their own shapes and structures in order to maintain authenticity of their own writing processes. Students could add the strategies discussed in class to their own pathways concept maps in whatever way made the most sense to them, or they could add steps that were not on the board. In this way, each student created an original writing process map that contained multiple pathways for achieving writing goals.

The objective of this instructional strategy is to provide students with a variety of avenues to writing success so that when obstacles arise, they know other routes to follow while working towards accomplishing writing goals. Each pathways map in essence becomes a strategies bank the students can draw from when challenges arise during their writing processes. Many teachers also chose to display these maps in the classroom as a reinforcement of the idea that everyone's writing processes are unique. This also allowed students to garner ideas from one another about ways to approach writing tasks, ways that perhaps they might not have thought of on their own.

Additional Writing Hope Pathways Strategies

Other writing hope pathways strategies include, but are not limited to (a) verbalizing writing, (b) scenario/role-playing, (c) engaging with digital literacies, (d) pathways problem-solving, and (e) analyzing social injustices through writing. In addition to the aforementioned strategies, these five additional

writing hope strategies are described in more detail in a forthcoming book, *Writing Hope Strategies for Writing Success in Secondary Schools: A Strengths-Based Approach to Teaching Writing* (Sieben).

Social Justice Implications of Writing Hope

These classroom-tested writing process activities can be taught within a Writing Hope Framework in teaching writing to secondary school students because they not only serve to increase students' writing proficiencies, but they also communicate the important message of uniqueness of process and identity within writing education. This idea of being truly valued for unique strengths is a matter of social justice. Examining these strategies for teaching writing in secondary schools allows us to begin to answer the question "*How do we foster a commitment to social justice?*" as the NCTE CEE position statement calls on us to do (CEE, 2009). If we commit ourselves to allowing students the space to determine what pathways work best for their cognitive-motivational strengths, then we are showing our commitment to them and to changing the systems that can oppress some and privilege others. The CEE position statement affirms, "Social justice pedagogy strives for equity for all students, supports the affective, corporeal, and emotional growth of individuals in relation to a descriptive and fluid definition of social justice, can become an embodied identity (through coursework), has efficacy in multiple contexts, and recognizes that students bring inequitable histories. And, in spite of inequitable histories, a social justice pedagogy strives to bring each student up to their capability threshold" (CEE, 2009). This is what working within a Writing Hope Framework allows us to do. It allows us to acknowledge and validate inequitable histories in writing education and gives us methods for "bringing each student up

to their capability threshold" in ways that are authentic to their own experiences and ways of learning (CEE, 2009).

As the CEE position statement suggests, a social justice process "recognizes that while students have inequitable and/or privileged histories, a classroom process committed to social justice, seeks to create equity within the class context that can have efficacy in the out-of-school context of students' lives" (CEE, 2009). In order to be engaged in social justice issues in ELA education, students need writing hope so they can feel empowered to write their own histories and futures. Since writing skills are necessary for communicating ideas effectively in various ways across contexts, students who are not taught a variety of motivations and strategies for writing success are at a disadvantage to those students who already have writing hope capital (Sieben, 2013). The inclusion of writing hope in secondary school curricula could aid in breaking the cycle of writing for a test or one specific assignment and could instead provide students with authentic purposes (agency) for writing for social change. While writing hope is not the only factor in leveling systems of inequality in education, research across multiple studies suggests it may be a key factor in doing so (Sieben, 2013, 2014, 2015).

When students believe what they have to say matters to their teachers and to society, when they have multiple strategies to implement while writing, when they have personal and purposeful writing goals, and when they have collegial relationships with the people reading their writing, only then will they flourish as academic writers with hope for the future. With social justice in mind, it is important to note the utility of teaching writing hope as a collective goal in English language arts to interrupt and change the cycle of structural inequalities that is ever present in our educational systems.

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Revamping a Development English Program: Making Big Changes

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Abstract
After more than twenty-five years of teaching in the same "Remedial" or Developmental English program at my college, a small liberal arts institution in the New York metropolitan area, I felt it was time to revisit the program and work on updating it to be more aligned with current research and current trends. I was afforded that opportunity when I was granted a sabbatical in 2013, so I used the time to do some Action Research in an attempt to make some changes and update our old and, arguably, ineffective program. This auto ethnography details how I went about revamping the program. Additionally, it concludes with the proposal that I implemented as well as some preliminary results and a vision for the future.

Revamping a College's Developmental English Program Making Big Changes

As an educator for more than thirty years, I recognize there is nothing more important than self-reflection, looking inward and contemplating the daily experiences in the classroom as well as the overall experiences at my institution, a small liberal arts college in the New York metropolitan area. Throughout most of my career, I have worked with underprepared college students, and my area of expertise for my doctorate degree is also in that field. I have seen many seen changes throughout the years, but none at my institution. Three years ago I set out to make some changes in my college's antiquated Developmental English program and what follows accounts how I went about that endeavor. I have

chronicled this auto ethnographic piece to recount how I approached the revamping of my college's developmental program.

Rationale

As a member of my college's community for over twenty-seven years, I have seen enormous changes in many areas. One area, however, that has remained constant has been the Developmental or "remedial" program for our students. This important area needed to be re-evaluated and updated, so that is what I did on my Fall 2013 sabbatical. As part of the College's mission, it readily accepts students with academic potential but perhaps not as prepared for college work as many would like. In a matter of years, with the assistance of our faculty, some of these very students often succeed well beyond their expectations; many, however, do not.

When I began working as an adjunct in 1987, I taught EN 107, Basic Developmental Reading; a few years later I taught EN 111, Basic Developmental Writing. However, since then, these courses had essentially remained the same. Twenty-seven years later, the College's enrollment had increased and consequently so had the enrollment in these basic courses. Over the past ten years, approximately four EN 107 and six EN111 courses ran each fall semester. For the past four years an average of 96 incoming freshmen placed into EN 111 and an average of 50 placed into EN 107. That means that approximately one-third of our incoming freshmen class was in a Developmental class. Furthermore, based on student and faculty interviews and evaluations of our present EN 111 class, it was evident that many students and many instructors were not satisfied with it. Some faculty felt that EN 111 was too easy; others were uncomfortable with the class's mandated six visits for tutoring sessions. As for the students' comments,

most of them did not like the mandated visits and blamed that requirement on their poor grades. Moreover, looking at the data from the past three years, close to 30% of those EN 111 students did not pass, and often simply because they did not attend those sessions. Over 90% of the students, however, did pass the EN 107 reading course which had an untimed standardized exam as its gate-keeping final exam and only 20% of final grade devoted to tutoring visits. This seemed to be a troubling statistic.

Offering separate courses in reading and writing implies that these are two distinct skills when, in fact, they are so clearly related that it is hard to distinguish them. At the onset of college remediation, there seemed to be a tendency to look at reading and writing as distinct and separate processes, with reading being considered the more elementary of the two (McCormick, 1994; Nelson and Calfee, 1998). But the trend has been shifting and many institutions are now consolidating the two skills into one course. Goen and Gillette-Tropp (2002) point out the "theoretical and practical" necessity of integrating reading and writing. And from my vantage point as a teacher of both reading and writing, it seemed commonsensical. Clearly, those skill are intrinsically related; it is almost impossible to separate them. Something needed to change.

Additionally, many of our students who place directly into our college level writing class, seemed to struggle with it. The success rate over the past four years was poor (roughly 20% failed each fall semester with 25% achieving C- or below.) As a result of those troubling numbers, the English department had been examining means to enable students to perform better in these English writing classes. Since the trend of our students placing into these "remedial" courses did not appear to be changing, it seemed apt that our antiquated Developmental program be examined more closely and

updated based on more current research. My sabbatical afforded me the opportunity to research current trends of remediation and to visit peer institutions to see how they deal with their remediation issues.

Research

In undertaking this project, I utilized Action Research, defined by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2016) as "… inquiry or research in the context of focused efforts to improve the quality of an organization and its performance." Action research is typically used by practitioners to improve their own practice. Rather than focusing on theory, action research gives researcher the opportunity to address concerns of their own institutions. I wanted to improve my college's developmental program and this research seemed the most appropriate for my endeavor.

My first course of action was to get some feedback from faculty and students about these current classes. I emailed faculty and asked for their opinions about the current Developmental Reading and Developmental Writing classes. I also got their permission to review their student evaluations of the classes. The responses indicated that while most faculty and students were satisfied with the classes, they also presented some suggestions for improvement. Not surprisingly, most students noted their own deficiencies with their reading, writing and especially vocabularies and noted that they needed to work on those skills. Some faculty pointed out that there was a substantial gap between the Developmental Writing class and the next course, Freshman Composition, suggesting that our current Developmental writing class may not be challenging enough for many students. Mandatory attendance for tutoring sessions in our support lab was required for both the reading

and writing classes, and almost all the students and most of the faculty were not happy with that. They felt it was punitive and not helpful at all. This preliminary investigation substantiated my view that something needed to change.

The next step of the process was to research the current trends in remediation. Rose (2011), notes that many states are questioning whether we can afford to educate everyone. The cost is staggering. Furthermore, remediation is coming under fire from many as to its success. Many states are at risk of losing their money for remedial work, so many institutions are looking for ways to expedite the process and embed support in credit bearing courses rather than isolate remedial work. Many institutions report that current means of remediation are not successful, so many colleges are looking for new and accelerated means of remediation At the Community College of Denver students can "FastStart: and take two semesters of remediation in one along with extra support. Overall, evidence suggests that, for some students, the longer they are in developmental education, the more likely it is that they will fail to complete their certificate or degree (Koski and Levin 1998; Edgecombe, 2013). This seems true for our college as many of the EN 111 students did not continue until graduation. Placing in EN 111 automatically delayed students from taking the second semester writing course in their second semester, preventing them from taking General Education courses, thus slowing down their academic progress. Another trend was the use of Learning Communities. Kingsborough Community College, in New York creates Learning Communities for those students by having them take remedial courses along with credit bearing classes. Those communities offer a comradery for students to work together. Yet another innovation was at The Community College of Baltimore, forerunners in an Accelerated Learning Project (ALP). Students who are close to

the remediation cutoff are simply placed into college-level English and get extra support that has them enroll in an additional course that serves as a study hour for the English class. Both courses are taught by the same professor. The key is that these students have support while they are in these courses. Students who traditionally balk at remedial placement are typically more content with such placement as it potentially will not slow down their academic progress (Bautsch 2013).

In addition to adding support for credit bearing courses, many colleges have found success with new and accelerated means of remediation. The California Acceleration Project (CAP) has been instrumental in advocating for such change. Director of this project, Katie Hern, a pioneer in this field, has been using this accelerated approach in her integrated reading and writing classes for 20 years at Chabot College with great success. Kern and Snell (2013) note that students are challenged in their accelerated reading and writing classes and even tackle complicated texts such of those of Paolo Freire. Rather than lowering expectations for developmental students, she raises those expectations and has been successful. Also, Columbia University's Teachers College's Community College Research Center (CCRC) published a study comparing the one semester of Chabot College's Accelerated Course with the traditional two semester courses over a five year period. They found that there was a positive association of those in the accelerated courses with regard to college English completion, credit accumulation, grade point average and college completion (Edgecombe, Jaggars, Xu and, Barrigan, 2015). The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) has a similar program, Accelerated Learning Project (ALP) and has also had success. Results of yet another study by Teachers College's (CCRC) indicated that students using the ALP

approach doubled the success rate in less time than those who took the conventional courses (2012).

For the remainder of my sabbatical semester, I visited nine neighboring institutions, meeting with the writing directors, support staff, and English chairs to see what they were doing in terms of administering to the needs of their underprepared students. Out of the nine institutions, only one other had separate courses for reading and writing; most had consolidated the two skills into one course over ten years ago. Moreover, many of them were also reworking their programs due to the need to move the underprepared students into credit bearing courses as quickly as possible. Two of the colleges were modeling their programs after the Community College of Baltimore's Accelerated Learning Project. These meetings provided me with ideas and insights into how I would go about reworking my institution's program. I was impressed with the integration of reading and writing at most institutions and even more impressed with the accelerated programs.

Proposal

Based on my research, visits, discussions, and interviews, I proposed a revision to our current separate Reading and Writing Developmental courses. Those two separate classes were combined into *one* four-credit class, EN108—Fundamentals of College Reading and Writing. Instead of the six credits of remediation required of the most underprepared students, this course would be only four credits and would combine both the reading and writing skills. EN 108 would integrate both the reading and writing skills and students would benefit more fully, as they could see the interconnectedness of reading and writing, essential for success in college. EN 108 would meet for two days in the classroom with the instructor. The added lab hour, another day, would

afford students the opportunity to receive additional assistance and would utilize the instructor as well as two to three student tutors, those who would normally be tutoring in the writing lab. The mandated visits tutoring sessions would no longer be a component as the writing tutors would come into the classrooms and work one to one with students during the one hour lab.

In addition to that major change, I also proposed that our present course, Freshman College writing class, EN 112, add an added hour lab, EN 110—Writing Lab (one credit) for those students who need additional reading or writing help based on their placement scores, eliminating the delay in taking regular college classes. EN112 with the EN 110 lab class would cover the same material as the traditional EN 112 but the added once credit lab would provide additional support and assistance for the students who need it. That hour lab would also have the instructor and two writing tutors. Consequently, I had to reevaluate how the students placed into these new courses. I determined that those students who placed into BOTH remedial reading and writing classes would take EN 108, the new Fundamentals of Reading and Writing. Students who placed into EITHER remedial reading or remedial writing would be placed into EN 112 with an added EN 110 writing support lab.

Outcome

In the Fall 2015, our college launched my new program and the faculty embraced the new changes. While it is certainly too early to determine its efficiency, reports from students and faculty are positive. Most of the students who normally would be in remedial classes were placed in the regular freshman composition, EN 112, with the added lab, EN 110. This was the same course with simply an added hour of support with the

instructor and the tutors. The most successful aspect has been the use of tutors in the classroom. Those tutors in the classroom provided the students with assistance without having them go to a separate place for tutoring. Furthermore, many students had good relationships with the tutors and sought them out at the writing lab for individual scheduled tutoring. Another positive aspect was that many of the students felt that their academic progress was not impeded as most were eligible for their general education classes in the spring semester. This made for a happier student body. The faculty reported a greater interaction with the tutors and at least for this year, the success rate of EN 112 has been better than in earlier years. Some faculty for the EN 112/110 lab reported that the students enjoyed the challenges of the class and many were up to rising to their higher expectations. Of course, there were some problems. Some instructors felt that the material was too difficult and students did not seem to grasp the readings and assignments, making marginal progress even though they passed the class. Other instructors were uncertain as to how to utilize the in-class student tutors and felt that they needed to keep them busy.

Action Plan

The English department is still in the process of tweaking the new classes as a result of the feedback from faculty and students. This coming Fall 2016 semester will be the second year of the new program, so it will give us some time to evaluate it further. For one thing, I have met individually with each faculty member who is teaching the new class to let them know some simple guidelines. These guidelines were sent to each instructor and posted on the English Department's Blackboard site. Additionally, the added lab hour will be in the Academic Success Center (ASC) instead

of a classroom as it was the first year. This will enable students to be familiar with the location and hopefully use the tutoring services with their classroom tutor, scheduling an appointment in the ASC. Furthermore, I have worked with another instructor to formulate a framework of concrete assignments for the EN 110 lab to offer more specific assignments for those faculty who were unsure of how to utilize the tutors. Hopefully, this will encourage the students in the lab classes to seek their services outside of the classroom. So far the college community seems pleased with the new program, and I feel positive about the changes.

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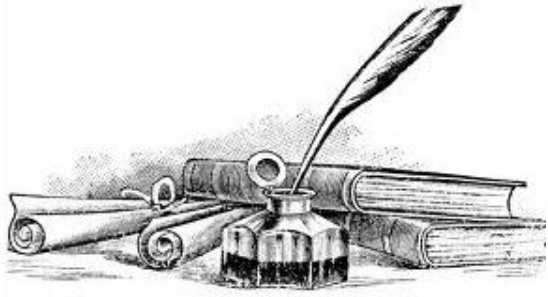
The English Record Article of the Year



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 66 winner is
Michelle Bulla
Monroe-Woodbury High School

Writing to Engage: The Importance of Teaching Voice in the Age of Communication

Michael Sherry
Allegany Limestone High School

Abstract
English teachers invest significant time and resources in teaching students to write correctly. Yet are we doing enough to help them write engagingly, in their own vivid and unique styles? The 21st Century is an age of information and communication where those who can speak and write in lively and distinctive ways are better situated to succeed and advance. This article argues for the importance of teaching *voice*, and describes a mini-unit that includes both analyzing and emulating published authors.

Writing to Engage: The Importance of Teaching Voice in the Age of Communication

A college professor in my Master's English program began a nonfiction-writing course by distributing a list that forbade the use of certain words and phrases in class essays. I scanned the paper in frustration as many of my favorite copy-and-paste expressions appeared sprinkled throughout his black list. *Essentially*. *In summation. As it were*. My heart sunk. I certainly could not afford to lose *as it were*. Did it not make me sound more intellectual?

The answer of course was not really, no. Certain words and phrases can be symptomatic of writing that rocks about as hard as your average Nature Sounds album, and I think my professor had grown weary of the babbling brook. In fact, English teachers at every level share a common complaint: the papers all sound the same. Yet many students, including naturally talented writers, continue to produce essays with all

the voice of a running refrigerator while teachers look up from grading and say things like, "Ah, William used the term *antithesis*, A+!" Though professional and academic tone is important and should remain fundamental in how we teach writing, it is also only a single example of voice and too often treated as the finish line itself. In other words, we look to see that papers are using words correctly, adding supporting detail, no comma splices, and then we move on to the next one. Yet in so many other ways we are determined to send our best and brightest young people out into the world ready to tear the face off everything they encounter: *wear a $700 suit, look 'em in the eye, and squeeze the blood right out of their hand when you shake it!* So why does that not extend to written and spoken expression, especially in the 21st Century, the age of information and communication, where those who can write and speak in engaging ways are uniquely prepared to advance and succeed?

When it comes to writing and speaking skills we should not be content with a mechanically sound thesis statement, a handful of transition phrases, and a smattering of in-text citations. Just as music teachers stress the emotion and soul beyond the correct notes, and just as coaches stress the passion and nuances beyond the rulebook, English teachers should stress the power and potential beyond the correct words. We should spend time on the art of voice, challenging students to do more than merely say something in a mechanically sound way, but rather strive to say it in a lively and engaging way that sparks interest in the reader, and perhaps makes the writing process more appealing for the writers themselves. Our goal should be to equip students with the ability to do more than write bland-but-spellchecked cover letters or tedious-but-coherent business presentations; we should be helping students stand out, get noticed, and succeed in a fast-moving world

where words and information are pervasive and strong communication skills are no longer a bonus, they are essential.

What is Voice and Why Does It Matter?

As a young teacher determined to teach my students to enjoy their writing and express themselves in unique and lively ways, I made the mistake of thinking it was enough to simply explain to them what the "voice" meant. If my students knew that writing with "voice" meant adding a bit of style and personality to their arguments and supporting detail, like it said on my dry-erase board, then I would have a hundred little Hunter S. Thompson's firing off smart gonzo essays like some wildly brilliant writing assembly line.

That was the theory. What it produced in practice, however, was bland writing turned creepy by sudden jarring insertions aimed directly at the reader: "*Without immediate and reasonable regulations implemented on a global scale, climate change will continue to threaten our planet. And I don't think that's a good thing. Do you? No, of course not, I didn't think so."* In some extreme cases it even seemed to encourage the intimidating appearance of unexplained capital letters and explanation points: "*The tobacco industry relies on PROPAGANDA to fool young people into continuing to use their products even though it could KILL THEM!!!!!!."*

This is not "voice." I feared that in my desire to help good writers become great writers, I was turning them into confused and crazy writers. It was because I was not providing them proper guidance. I had to lead them there, not just tell them to do it. Before a student can write with strong and compelling voice, a student must understand a) what it means in the first place, b) why it matters, and c) how it works. This is actually an extensive process, but important nevertheless because going through it allows young writers to gain a fuller

understanding of how to approach making their own writing stronger and more appealing.

As a means of introducing this concept to students, I feel it is important to address it directly, and do so by spending several class periods on a mini-unit designed specifically for this important skill. In order to help students grasp what I mean by voice, I begin the unit by posing a question such as the following and spending a few minutes discussing it. First I select a random topic, and on the projector I will display three quotes related to it, and separately I will list the authors. For example:

Topic: Life is hard
Quote #1: Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his house upon the stage and then is heard no more.
Quote #2: Life is waiting for you, so messed up but we're alive. Life is waiting for you, so messed up but we'll survive.
Quote #3: We're all taught to believe in happy fairytale endings. But there's only blackness. Dark, depressing loneliness that eats at your soul."
The authors (in no particular order): Our Lady Peace (an alternative rock band), the Goth Kids (from Comedy Central's South Park), *William Shakespeare (the greatest English playwright in history).*

The question I pose is "can you match the authors with the quotes?" Each year nearly 100% of students do it successfully regardless of whether they recognize the quotes (for the record, teachers, here is your answer key: quote one is Shakespeare, quote two is OLP, and quote three is The Goth Kids). That brings the class to the second part of the conversation, in which I ask students to explain *how* they were able to match the

authors and quotes. Their explanations are usually reasonably close to a literary voice analysis, even if they do not realize it. For example, they will say things like, "Well, the first one was obviously Shakespeare because he was using fancy language like 'struts and frets' and making comparisons like life is a walking shadow." Or, "The second was obviously the band because it was repeating a theme, and it had short rhyming statements." Or, "The third was obviously the Goth Kids because they are using very dark language and describing things that are depressing and scary." As they share thoughts such as these it is helpful to point out to students what they have actually just observed and analyzed, which in this case is *diction*, *figurative language*, *repetition*, *text structure*, and *imagery*. It is also helpful to point out what all of this boils down to: how do you match the authors and quotes? Well, put simply, you can tell by their *voice*. And those voices certainly include many contributing factors like *style* (Shakespeare), *structure* (song lyrics) or *personality* (Goth Kids) in addition to literary devices such as metaphor or imagery, but distinctive voice is the common result.

It is worth beginning with this activity because, having discussed in a very cursory way how to observe voice and what it consists of, students are better prepared to consider and understand *why* it is important at all. Go ahead and ask them. At this point, you are likely to get responses that are surprisingly accurate in their simplicity. For example, they might say something like, "Shakespeare's plays wouldn't be so great if he just said 'life is meaningless and then you die.'" In other words, it is not merely what is being said, nor whether the words are technically correct, nor even whether the words are sophisticated, but it is also *how* the words are chosen and put together. To be blunt, a "tale told by an idiot" is far more impactful than a "pointless story."

"But Mr. Sherry, I'm not trying to be William Shakespeare after I graduate!" Fine. It still matters, and research supports this. For example, in 2013 an NBC news article titled "Why Johnny can't write, and why employers are mad," shares some findings that certainly come as no surprise to English teachers or employers. It mentions a recent survey of over 300 employers, 80% of which believe schools should be putting a higher focus on written and oral communication. It also observes how in 2012, the Department of Education found that "just 24 percent of eighth and 12th graders were proficient in writing." Finally, a survey of corporate recruiters in 2011 showed that 86% believed "strong communication skills were a priority—well ahead of the next skill" (Holland, 2013). In other words, employers say they want to hire people who can express themselves well, and teachers and students alike should take this seriously because the ones who do the hiring are not exactly making it a big secret.

Voice, then, is as essential to communication as substance. How we say something is as important as what we are saying. This is true in fiction, in political speeches, in the courtroom, in advertisement, business, customer relations, job interviews, and indeed in practically all corners of the "real world," and that is why both teachers and students should understand and practice its importance in the classroom.

Teaching Voice through Analysis and Practice

Students should have at least a general understanding now of what you mean when you say the word *voice*. They have matched quotes with authors because they recognized the stylistic tendencies of playwrights vs. rock bands vs. character clichés, or whatever quotes and authors you chose. More importantly, they have discussed why it matters. So now begins the real work of teaching and practicing the concept.

Here we will spend multiple class periods presenting students with authors who write in distinct styles and asking them to analyze the characteristics that contribute to their voice. Later on we will see if students can identify the authors they have analyzed when given blind excerpts, and finally we will ask students to practice the concept by rewriting some of their own work in the voice of an author of their choosing. This mini-unit is all about preparation for the real end goal, which will be to ask students to consider their own voice and develop it in an extended piece of original writing.

Step 1: Analyzing Voice

As we often do, I begin by offering students a few minutes of teacher modeling, walking them through work I have already done in order to prepare them for what they will be doing next. I ask them to read a short passage by an author I admire named Nick Tosches, a former rock journalist turned biographer and novelist. He is a writer who I feel has a particularly distinct voice, though anyone who writes with a strong style should work equally as well, so choose someone you enjoy.

> *…and now, wordlessly, we understand each other perfectly in the eloquence of a silence that not only contains all that has ever been and all that ever will be said, but also drosses the vast babel of it, leaving only the ethereal purity of that wordless poetry that only the greatest of poets have glimpsed in epiphany. Their epiphanies seem to be borne for me to read in the cigarette smoke that swirls above me. Shakespeare – 'O learn to read what silent love hath writ' – entwined with Pound's great and final testament: 'I have tried to write Paradise / Do not move / Let the wind speak / that is paradise.*

> *To learn to read what silent love hath writ, to bow to the power of the wind. This is to live. This is to know that what one can say or write is as nothing before that silence and that power. … All that in the swirling smoke of a Marlboro Light (Tosches, 2000, pp. 49-50).*

I usually give my students a few minutes to discuss this question: *How would you describe this writer's voice?* And, as time allows, I may take a few responses. However, as the most important thing is to model the exercise for students, I move quickly on to explaining the exercise. I am going to ask them to identify words and phrases that seem representative of the author's writing, describe the writer's style or personality including tendencies to use rhetorical or literary devices, determine what content seems of interest to the writer, and finally to sum up their analysis in a sentence or two describing the author's "overall style." While modeling, I display the following chart, and explain my thought process for each step.

During this step, it is important to literally "think out loud" in front of the students, not merely show them the work you have already done. So, for example, while discussing "Style/Personality" I will say something like, "I noticed the writer seemed to be really thinking his way through a heavy topic, and all the writing was focused on his interior thoughts, so I jotted down the words *meditative* and *introspective*. I also kind of felt like some of his language was really poetic and abstract, so I wrote down the word *dreamlike*." And so on. Let students see how you approached and analyzed each characteristic and arrived at your conclusions.

Key Words Phrases	Style Personality	Content	Overall Style
Wordlessly Eloquence of a silence Ethereal purity Wordless Poetry Glimpsed in epiphany Cigarette smoke That silence and that power	Meditative Introspective Dreamlike Sophisticated Literary allusions Punctuated by "cool" or "tough" imagery	The struggle to write truth or reflect reality Words cannot express reality Great writers like Shakespeare and Pound expressed similar thoughts	Tosches' style is one that is very interior-focused, expressing his philosophical contemplations in dreamlike, almost poetic language, while situated against his "cool guy" setting which seems like a smoky bar or something similar.

Then it is their turn. Provide students with passages from four more writers who have a strong voice. Again, nearly any writers will do, so long as their style is distinctive, but you should also try to find writers of varying personalities and voices to diversify the exercise and further challenge students. In the past I have used Hunter S. Thompson (biting gonzo journalism), David Foster Wallace (sophisticated cultural observation), Tim O'Brien (gritty war memoir), as well as irreverent and witty nonfiction writers Mary Roach and David Sedaris. You can be as creative as you like here, perhaps using scenes from stylistically different movies with a common theme or setting (*Star Wars'* Darth Vader vs. *Space Balls'* Dark

Helmet); or perhaps song lyrics by stylistically different musical artists (the social-political lyrics of Lupe Fiasco's modern hip hop vs. Bob Dylan's early protest folk); or even newspaper editorialists, whose careers are built around their ability to build a readership with their voice (say, a local sports columnist vs. a *New York Times* political editorialist). Choose wisely, giving the students something that will interest them, is suitable for their learning level, and will challenge them to think carefully in analyzing the characteristics that determine each author's voice. Give them, depending on the passages, several class periods to work independently, with a partner or in small groups, and spend your time circulating, monitoring and listening, and offering some guidance when necessary. And finally, whether you do it one at a time, or all at once, make sure you reconvene as a class and discuss – not simply asking students to share their conclusions, but also how they arrived at them. Push them to explain their thought process.

I will close this section with a final example of an excerpt I have given students in the past, and the kind of responses students tend to offer. The following is from the opening chapter of Mary Roach's hilarious book *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*, which, yes, is about exactly what it sounds like it is about.

> *The heads have been put in roasting pans – which are of the disposable aluminum variety – for the same reason chickens are put in roasting pans: to catch the drippings. Surgery, even surgery upon the dead, is a tidy, orderly affair. Forty folding utility tables have been draped in lavender plastic cloths, and a roasting pan is centered on each. Skin hooks and retractors are set out with the pleasing precision of restaurant cutlery. The whole thing has the look of a catered*

reception. I mention to the young woman whose job it was to set up the seminar this morning that the lavender gives the room a cheery sort of Easter-party feeling. Her name is Theresa. She replies that lavender was chosen because it's a soothing color.

It surprises me to hear that men and women who spend their days pruning eyelids and vacuuming fat would require anything in the way of soothing, but severed heads can be upsetting even to professionals. Especially fresh ones ("fresh" here meaning unembalmed). The forty heads are from people who have died in the past few days and, as such, still look very much the way they looked while those people were alive (Roach, 2003, pp. 19-20).

Key Words Phrases	**Style Personality**	**Content**	**Overall Style**
Roasting pans/Catch the drippings Tidy, orderly affair Catered reception Cheery sort of Easter-party feeling Vacuuming fat Severed heads	Ironic Observational Conversational Humorous Frequent contrast of grim with pleasant	Observing the study of human cadavers Speaking with people she encounters Helping reader to visualize Entertain reader	Roach's style is both ironic and humorous, detailing vividly what she observes, and contrasting the creepy and grim (skin hooks, severed heads) with mundane and pleasant (Easter-party, restaurant cutlery) to entertaining effect.

Step 2 and Step 3: Identifying and Practicing Voice

After spending several days analyzing and discussing the voices of the authors you select, students should be feeling on near-personal terms with them. Step 2, Identifying Voice, is a fast and fun exercise in which you can also gauge how well students are grasping the concept. I provide students with brand new passages from each of the writers we have discussed, only this time I leave off the author's names. Again, you can allow students to work independently, with a partner or in small groups, but what you are asking them to do is to study each of the blind passages and decide which writer wrote it, justifying it by identifying characteristics of the author's unique voice. For example, one of the writers whose voice we analyzed in Step 1 in my class was Hunter S. Thompson. We looked at a passage from his book *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, and in Step 2 one of the blind passages they receive from me is from this same book:

> *The only other group I've ever dealt with who struck me as being essentially meaner than politicians are tight ends in pro football.*
>
> *There is not much difference in basic temperament between a good tight end and a successful politician. They will both go down in the pit and do whatever has to be done – then come up smiling and occasionally licking blood off their teeth (Thompson, 1973, p. 84).*

In Step 1, my students and I described Thompson's style as being 1st-person political journalism of a biting and sardonic, though also humorous, nature. In Step 2, students should be able to identify those characteristics in the above passage, even without the author's name being provided. What I require of

them is a) the author and b) more importantly, a justification: *This passage is Hunter S. Thompson. The passage is derisive, unfavorably comparing politicians to tight ends, while also using humorous overstatement ("licking blood off their teeth"). Furthermore, it is written in 1st-person and deals with political coverage.* Of course, as always, it is crucial to conclude Step 2 by reconvening as a class to discuss each passage and students' responses.

Which brings us at last to the final step in this mini-unit, Practicing Voice. Here students are asked to consider all of the writers we have studied over the past several class periods, or any other writer we have studied throughout the school year, and try to emulate the author's voice by rewriting a passage from their own class work. Depending on where you introduce this mini-unit, you may ask students to write something fresh from a prompt, or an older essay. In my class we do these activities about halfway through our "Personal Narrative" unit, so students already have most of a 1st draft completed relating a personal experience or memory. I ask students to select a passage from their draft, open a new document and do three things: 1) copy and paste the original passage, 2) rewrite the passage in the style of their chosen author, and most importantly 3) justify their work and stylistic choices.

As always, I model this process, using Nick Tosches, the author I analyzed in Step 1. As we worked on our Personal Narratives, I had been modeling certain aspects by writing about one of my own experiences – a memory of my final Varsity hockey game. So I begin by selecting a passage from my draft and revisiting it with students:

My original

I remember thinking how it all made sense now. I can't recall how my junior season ended, but as a senior? I *do* remember that game. And most importantly, I remember thinking that this was it. There would *not* be other games. There would *not* be other seasons. We had grown up together, played with and against each other our whole lives, and I guess maybe we always knew in some abstract way that everything would have to change some day. But what did it really mean to "move on"? What did it actually *feel like* when something that had been part of your experience and personal identity for so many years really did end? We had always listened to the old timers joke about "hanging up the skates", but it wasn't until we walked off the ice that last time and sat down in the locker room that we knew what it *meant*.

Everyone has to go through it, but for me, that was the one of the first times when I had to stand face to face with the reality that life will change suddenly and dramatically, and that some things you took for granted will fade into your past and become a fond memory. I wanted to go back one year and tell my 16-year-old self … *that* is why the seniors cried.

After re-reading my original passage, I then show students my Nick Tosches style rewrite:

My "Nick Tosches Style" Re-Write

The game was over, the tolling of the horn marking our last defeat. I bore that final step from the ice, an echo of desperate loneliness and despair; that first step onto a rubber mat and a dark corridor to the locker room where we sat now as older and wiser men, where tears were not a badge of our conquest but proof of discernment that identity is fleeting and age transforms us. In our minds a thousand ghosts uttered their

loss when the inevitable and undying tolling horn called for their skates to be hung on a thousand basement walls, and we hurried irrevocably to join them. That is the undying way of things, and we perceived now why last year's seniors hung towels to hide their tears, and we saw as well that same sense of impermanence that beats the tempo of our lives.

And finally my justification. A good justification should include the following: a) the author's style, and b) the specific choices you make to emulate that style:

My Justification

Nick Tosches is an author whose style is very introspective and meditative, reflective of complicated concepts such as what is "real", and how can words hope to capture "reality". His language is at once sophisticated, poetic and dreamlike ("ethereal purity," etc.), and he weaves in occasional images of cigarettes and swirling smoke to give the impression that he is perhaps in a bar or other smoky hangout. In my attempt to rewrite my passage in this style, I tried to capture my own introspective thoughts about the symbolism of this particular game ("proof of discernment that identity is fleeting," etc.) while using sophisticated and dreamlike language such as "undying tolling horn" and "sense of impermanence that beats the tempo". Lastly, I situated my ruminations against a grimy setting, which in this case was the ice rink where the game was played ("rubber mat and a dark corridor").

Provide students with a class period (or more) to select their own passage and author and attempt their own rewrite. Explain to them that you will be asking them to identify and develop their own voices soon, and that the purpose of this exercise is to become stronger at voice by paying very close

attention to all the little choices that go into creating it. In other words, if I want to be witty and irreverent like David Sedaris, how does *he* do that, and how can *I* do the same? If I want to be biting and sardonic like Hunter S. Thompson, how does *he* do that, and how can *I* do the same? There are also opportunities to expand or diversify the exercise. For example, how can I take a biting passage by Thompson and rewrite it in the more scholarly and introspective style of Wallace? By answering these kinds of questions, paying attention to word choices, rhetorical and literary devices, tone, structure, and so on, students should gain a deeper understanding of what it means to not simply say something correctly, but to deliver it with eloquence and impact, a skill that will serve them well and constantly as they advance into what we call "the real world." Many students enjoy this part of the exercise as it allows them to have some fun being creative. When rewrites are finished, I let volunteers read theirs allowed and see if the class is able to guess which author they are emulating.

What Comes Next?

This mini-unit, of course, is merely an introduction; a what, why and how primer for a skill that must be encouraged, practice and reinforced throughout the school year. In my class, once concluded, we move immediately back into our "Personal Narrative" writing unit, only this time we are beginning the revision and rewriting process. I provide students with clear instructions: you will conference with me in the coming days on your second draft, and at that time I am going to ask you to tell me in a few words the kind of voice you are striving for, and what you are doing to achieve it. I am also going to read it for myself and determine as your reader if I think it is coming across effectively. You will do the same for each other when we begin the Peer Feedback process.

Lastly, the same thing we say for projects and visual presentations applies to this essay: professional and creative presentation matters and is part of the grade. In this case, we are talking about your paper's voice. Why does it matter? Because it matters in the real world. Students do not just have to take our word for it either. William Ellet, for example, a former writing professor at Harvard Business School, attests that "Recruiters and companies are saying, 'Send us a writing sample, and if you don't meet our standards for communication, we are not hiring you,'" (Holland, 2013). Ellet is one example among many professionals that believe communication is a profoundly important skill in the 21st Century "real world." And as we have seen, voice is an essential part of the communication process.

There are a few truths that most writing teachers will always agree upon. One is that when we approach stacks of papers with our fearsome red pens, we already know that we are going to read virtually identical bland papers more than once. The other is that we live in a world of rapid information and communication that is gaining traction and taking root increasingly each year, and that those who can communicate most effectively in both writing and speech are uniquely situated to advance and succeed in this modern world. If we recognize both of these to be true, then we must also recognize the need for helping students become stronger and better communicators. We must help them to see that saying something *sufficiently* is not the same thing as saying it *effectively*, and that employers, colleagues, customers, clients, and everyone else knows the difference. And in order to spark the self-motivation to consider their words and delivery carefully, we must help them understand what voice is, how it works, and why it matters. Throughout the course of this mini-lesson, students have been introduced in a cursory way to the

concept, and they have then gone on to analyze professional writers whose careers have been built upon their distinct voices, carefully considering all the elements that contribute to their unique styles. More importantly, they have reinforced the concept by emulating a writer of their choosing, where they had to make careful decisions about each individual aspect of the text and how it adds up to the whole. Moving ahead, they will be asked to continue thinking about and developing their own voice as they continue to write for your class. We do not necessarily seek to create future bestsellers and literary celebrities (though if we do, bonus!), but we do seek to ensure that our students are not *only* shaking hands firmly and making eye contact aggressively when they graduate to the world of grownups – we are providing them with the ability to speak up, assert themselves confidently in a world of ideas and creativity, and know that they will be noticed and taken seriously.

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Book Review
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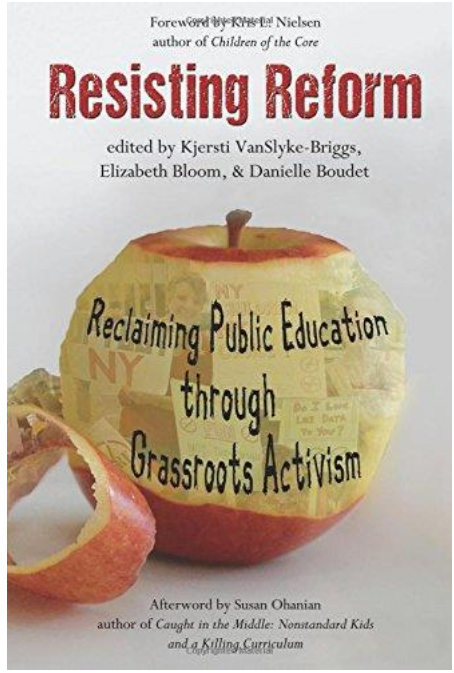

Resisting Reform: Reclaiming Public Education through Grassroots Activism by Kjersti VanSlyke-Briggs, Elizabeth Bloom & Danielle Boudet (2015). 317 pages.
ISBN: 978-1-68123-081-8

Resisting Reform: Reclaiming Public Education through Grassroots Activism could not have come at a more critical moment. Our nation's current education reform efforts

are guided by corporate interests and an economically driven mindset in which the ultimate purpose of education is preparation for college and a job. As the title clearly indicates, this book is a clarion call to action for all who are deeply concerned about public education and the trajectory it has taken, and are seeking pragmatic, effective ways to fight back against the forces that are attempting a free-market takeover of what should remain in the public sphere. The key thesis is that individuals can truly make a difference when pushing back against today's education reform.

Co-editors VanSlyke-Briggs, Bloom and Boudet have compiled a powerful selection of narratives by concerned citizens who share their journeys on why and how they became education activists. Among them are the voices of K-12 classroom teachers, college professors, parents and a school administrator. Public education advocate Julie Cavanagh describes her role in co-creating the film *The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLmXV4-CBOQ) and high school graduate-turned-education activist Ankur Singh reflects on his production of his film called *Listen* (https://vimeo.com/88905708). Another compelling voice is that of a recent college graduate who shares his experiences with the new teacher certification assessment (the edTPA) as well as his use of the Common Core scripted modules during student teaching and its effects on his students.

The book focuses primarily on New York State as this is where the majority of the contributors reside. That said, what is happening in New York State regarding current education reform is happening nationwide, and the experiences of the contributors, as well as the strategies for resisting reform and making changes, is not place-bound.

High stakes standardized testing is one of the many issues the contributors address in the book. They discuss its deleterious effects on students (Wottawa's narrative is a prime example), how test scores are being used to evaluate teacher effectiveness (see Zahedi's narrative), and the impact of test scores on school districts. Sider provides insight into the ways in which mandated testing with its focus on raising student test scores is de-professionalizing teachers and forcing them to teach to the test.

Another issue addressed at great length by several of the authors is the Common Core State Standards, which started with good intentions but, as explained by Everard, have increasingly turned into a "test-centered curriculum" (p. 66). Also reiterated throughout the book is the impact of poverty as an underlying issue that affects children and is too often ignored by policy makers. For example, Gorlewski discusses the "devastating effects" of Race to the Top regulations on impoverished communities (p. 199).

The importance of networking with like-minded individuals to enact change is another focus in the book. One prime example provided is the importance of social media. This is discussed in great detail by VanSlyke-Briggs, with numerous examples provided of networking advocacy groups and how to create one's own. Yet another important topic addressed concerns the high-stakes teacher certification test called the edTPA (educative teacher performance assessment) required of teacher candidates in many states and the increasing pushback against its use.

Resisting Reform is well-organized based on the contributors' perspectives regarding advocacy and effecting change in relationship to the topics addressed, starting with the individual, then extending to local levels and beyond. The book is divided into four overarching sections. Section I focuses on

several contributors' experiences in the classroom and steps taken to resist current reform efforts. Section II addresses the various experiences and pathways that led each contributor in this section to grassroots community activism. Section III moves into the larger arena of advocacy, from the community to state level. And section IV addresses ways to enact change at the national level, such as involvement in test Opt-Out movements (see www.unitedoptout.com and www.fairtest.org), and the use of social media. At the end of each section are Points for Discussion for the reader. Some of the many examples include questions related to scripted curriculum, modules and federal and state mandates; the importance of the support of local teacher unions when speaking out against reform; charter schools; the use of social media for activism; and the impact of education reform on school culture and teacher morale.

From the contributors' narratives, two overarching themes emerge: while those who recognize the need for change may feel isolated, they are not alone, and by building a supportive network of like-minded individuals with the same deep-seated concerns, passion, and commitment to action, change is achievable. In my view, what is most powerful about *Resisting Reform* is the wealth of strategies the contributors provide for those who are seeking ways to become education advocates, whether at the local level or at the state and national levels, and the numerous resources including websites, articles, and links to advocacy organizations that are provided at the end of each chapter.

Although I understand the book's core focus through the contributors' narratives is, as Bloom states in the introduction, to "inform and inspire" (p. 12), I would have preferred for the editors to have included the perspectives from concerned legislators regarding our nation's current market-

based education reform and its ramifications. That said, *Resisting Reform* provides a critically needed resource for concerned citizens who want to understand more fully the current educational reform movement and its myriad effects, what can be done to take action and, as the title says, reclaim our public education.

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