Excelsior

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Calls for Manuscripts

Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning provides a forum to explore issues related to teaching and learning at public and independent colleges and universities with programs in teacher preparation.

Excelsior solicits original, thought-provoking manuscripts of various formats, including papers presenting research on issues and practices important to teacher education and in-depth discussions of perspectives on issues and practices that contribute to the preparation and professional development of educators. A third format—Nota Bene—should contain brief, focused articles; book reviews; or website or technology recommendations.

Deadlines for submission:
June 1 for the fall/winter edition
December 1 for the spring/summer edition

Manuscript Preparation and Submission

To submit a manuscript to be considered for review

- Send an electronic file compatible with Microsoft Word as an e-mail attachment to the editor, Cynthia Lassonde, at lassonc@oneonta.edu.
- Manuscripts must follow APA style as outlined in the most recent edition of the APA style manual.
- Research and Perspectives manuscripts should not exceed 25 pages, including references. Nota Bene manuscripts should not exceed 5 pages, including references.
- Include a 100-word abstract for Research and Perspectives manuscripts.
- The cover page should consist of the title of the manuscript, a suggested running head, as well as the authors' names, affiliations, addresses, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers.
- Omit headers and footers except for page numbers.
- Omit all identifiers of the authors and affiliations from the manuscript. Be sure computer software does not reveal author's identity as well.
- Secure all permissions to quote copyrighted text or use graphics and/or figures of other non-original material. Include permissions with manuscript.
- Data-based manuscripts involving human subjects should be submitted with a statement or verification from the author that an Institutional Review Board certificate or letter approving the research and guaranteeing protection of human subjects has been obtained from the researcher's institution.

Manuscripts will go through a blind review by peer reviewers and the editor. The review process will take approximately three months from time of submission. All manuscripts will be judged on their scholarship, contribution to the knowledge base, timeliness of topic, creative/thoughtful approach, clarity and cohesiveness, appropriateness to category, and adherence to preparation guidelines. Selections may also be affected by editorial decisions regarding the overall content of a particular edition.

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Message from the Presidents

It is with great pleasure that we introduce to you our new and revised journal from the New York State Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NYACTE). The current officers of the board have spent a great deal of time and energy in working with the current editor, Dr. Cynthia Lassonde, to develop this scholarly journal. We express our gratitude to all those individuals who, in the past, have established the foundation for our current efforts.

In the spring of 1985 the New York State Association of Colleges for Teacher Education published the first issue of its journal named *The Journal of AACTE/NYS,* later changed to *The Journal of NYACTE*. Helene Napolitano wrote her President's Message in the initial volume noting that the publication project was first introduced by Tony Baratta during a previous executive board meeting. Tony Baratta served as journal editor from 1985 into the early 2000's. During its many years of publication, the journal has included contributions from teacher educators throughout the state tapping, as Baratta has noted, "the richness of the environs of higher education institutional resources" and offering both novice
and veteran writers opportunities to contribute to the profession through scholarly publication.

From 2003 to 2005, the journal has continued to grow, not only with published volumes but also with reflective planning, discussion, and reorganization by the members of the NYACTE Executive Board. The board's intention was to broaden the journal's mission, focus, and readership by taking it nationwide beyond the borders of New York State. A journal with such rich education resources should be refereed by a more varied review committee and have as wide a readership as possible. Accordingly, the name of the journal also should reflect this expansion but still reflect its source of publication. Fittingly, the Executive Board has entitled this transformed journal, *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning*.

The motto of New York State, *Excelsior—Ever Upward*, offers to us the challenge to strive for excellence in publishing and to you the contributors and readers the same challenge—to strive for excellence in your pursuit of the knowledge that will make you superior teacher educators.

Margaret Egan, Past President, NYACTE
College of Mount Saint Vincent

Robert J. Michael, President, NYACTE
State University of New York, New Paltz

Beginning the Conversation: Notes from the Editor

In this, our first issue of *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning,* we hope to begin a conversation among our readers. In this issue a common theme has emerged from the manuscripts that were submitted by authors and groomed by the reviewers. As you read, you may note, as I did, that each article expresses the importance of opening conversations and the value of fostering dialogue among instructors, students, peers, and other stakeholders.

The conversation begins with Robert Nistler's article on peer mentoring. Nistler created a partnership between junior- and senior-level undergraduate teacher candidates. The mentor/mentee relationships flourished and promoted growth because dialogues were cultivated among peers through oral and written reflections and feedback.

Next, Althier Lazar, Cathy Pinto, and Natalie Warren write about teachers' views of children's cultures and ways they described how their views influenced their instructional decision. Specifically, they analyzed the language teachers used to describe their perceptions. Documented interviews unlock a dialogue to prompt readers to reflect on their culture, cultural perceptions, and cultural sensitivities.

Wen Ma's thoughts about Nystrand's dialogic approach to instruction promote understanding of authentic question and uptake as well as related theoretical and pedagogical issues. He proposes that Nystrand's approach leads to dynamic classroom discussions that engage learners in inquisitive dialogues about issues.

Additionally, Joanne Dowdy examines how graduate students in a Literacy Stories/ Video Writing class participated in dialogue journals and video journals to make personal connections with the content they were learning. Graduates learned not only through their reading and reflections but also through their discussions about content that occurred in this video environment.

Finally, this issue's Nota Bene section written by Abigail McNamee and Mia Mercurio is a Book Corner that provides resources for teacher educators to use with and make available to candidates regarding extending conversations about coping with world-event trauma. In particular, the resources listed in this disquieting, yet discerning, piece relate to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The articles in this issue, in their own ways, encourage those of us in teacher education to open dialogues in diverse ways and for varied purposes. *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning* seeks to do the same. We invite our readers to continue the conversation these authors have begun. Lend your voices to the dialogue by sending us papers on issues, practices, and resources or book reviews in teacher education that are important to you.

Editing *Excelsior* so far has allowed me to spur dialogues with many new colleagues and some old acquaintances. I would like to acknowledge the help of several people and groups who have supported the journal's progress along the way. They are the members of NYACTE's Executive Board; the National Editorial Board; the Editorial Review Board; my colleagues from SUNY College at Oneonta, especially Joanne Curran and Connie Feldt-Golden; NYACTE members for helping to spread the word about our calls; John Harmon, Editor of the New York State English Council's *Monograph;* Kathleen O'Mara, Editor, and Nancy Sacco of *Phoebe: Gender and Cultural Critiques*. And, finally, my husband Mark and daughters Ann, Jill, and Kelly for sharing my excitement and anxieties about putting out this first issue.

Cynthia A. Lassonde
Editor

Reports of Research

Peer Mentoring: Promoting Preservice Teachers' Professional Development

Robert J. Nistler

Abstract

Senior-level undergraduates who had successfully completed their professional coursework and student teaching served as mentors for junior-level practicum students during an undergraduate literacy methods block of coursework. This study describes benefits and difficulties encountered when two senior-level cohorts of undergraduates mentored junior-level undergraduates during their semester-long field experience. Findings address how mentors developed collegial relationships with peers, those they supervised, and other professionals in their field and how they developed coaching techniques. Findings in this study demonstrate that undergraduate mentors benefit personally and professionally from mentoring experiences.

Mentoring, as a means of induction into the teaching profession and as a method for improving instruction, has been and continues to be effectively applied and documented in the field of education (Harris, 1998). Primarily, such research has focused on practicing teachers working with less-knowledgeable peers, often new teachers. Although common in tutoring programs such as Watters & Ginns's (1997) peer-assisted study program, mentoring relationships established in preservice education programs rarely pair undergraduates with fellow undergraduates.

The program described in this study includes two cohorts of senior and junior undergraduates. The junior undergraduates were enrolled in a combination literacy course and field experience practicum. This study explored the affects of senior undergraduates mentoring junior undergraduates during a semester-long field experience. The major questions for this study included: 1) What is the nature of the mentor/mentee relationship and that of mentor with other professionals; and 2) To what degree are mentors able to learn, develop, and effectively apply coaching techniques to support their mentees? The impact of the program on mentors was the focus of study during the first two semesters of the extended three-semester study of this mentoring program. This article describes how the initial two cohorts of mentors built collegial relationships with each other, those they supervised, and other professionals in their field and how they developed supervisory techniques from a coaching perspective. Impact on those mentored was the focus of the third semester of the program. Those findings are not addressed within the scope of this article.

Harris (1998) in a discussion of the multiple interpretations applied to the term *mentoring* notes that the mentoring role lacks clarity as a conceptual model. By extension, it follows that definitions of mentoring are ambiguous and may not offer much guidance in defining and knowing the work of a mentor. Mentor, as applied here, describes a trusted guide, coach, informed, and more-experienced peer, a continuing active learner. Most importantly, a mentor is an individual genuinely concerned about teaching and the professional development of those being mentored. As one mentee wrote in her journal,

> Usually I think of having a mentor as a privilege. Someone saying to me, 'You are special, so I will devote extra time to training you so you will be more qualified.' A mentor is usually someone you look up to and respect.

This stance of mentor toward mentee was a critical prerequisite for all mentors applying for this program.

Background

Literacy Block and Field Experience

In this program, junior-level undergraduates enrolled in the literacy block of courses were paired and assigned classrooms for a semester-long field experience at one of two selected urban elementary schools. Both schools were diverse settings in terms of student ethnicity and could be described socioeconomically by 95% or more of their populations qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Mentees worked in selected classrooms one morning per week for 13 weeks.

As part of the field experience, these students planned, taught, and analyzed at least four literacy-related lessons over the course of the semester. The analysis, report, and videotape sequence of each lesson was shared in pre- and post-teaching conferences with the course instructor. The structure of the mentoring process resembled cognitive coaching techniques (Costa & Garmston, 1994) in that each instructional cycle required students to meet with the course instructor to discuss the lesson design prior to their teaching of the lesson. Guided by instructor input, the lesson was revised, taught, and videotaped. Students viewed their tapes and identified those aspects of instruction that contributed to children's learning as well as those areas that warranted improvement. A post-instruction conference was held with the instructor to discuss the lesson and jointly view critical incidents on the videotapes. In addition, students reflected upon and documented their learning through reflective journals and written reports of lesson analyses.

Mentors

The first cohort of five mentors was advised into the program when they set up their education coursework plan that included student teaching during the Fall semester of their senior year. This enabled mentors to complete remaining coursework and to serve as mentors during their final Spring semester. In subsequent years, students wishing to be considered for mentoring set up their programs similarly. Mentor candidates had completed their student-teaching experiences and had participated in the literacy field experience as students when completing their methods coursework. In addition, mentors' performance in education courses and student teaching demonstrated high levels of content and pedagogical knowledge, commitment to teaching, strong interpersonal skills, and an ability to effectively manage a heavy workload. In essence, mentors were very successful students and teachers to this point in their academic and professional careers. During the second semester across the two semesters of this study, a total of nine senior-level undergraduates served as mentors for junior-level undergraduate practicum students.

Why Mentor?

Upon completion of their student-teaching semester, a growing number of preservice teachers expressed frustrations regarding the realities of teaching versus their preconceived views of teaching. Preservice teachers reported discrepancies between what they learned about teaching in content methods courses and what they experienced in student teaching. Frequently, students who had flourished in the open environments of their reading/language arts practicum found themselves placed in relatively more constrictive student-teaching placements in which they were unable to implement fully the more progressive methods learned in their coursework. One preservice teacher shared her frustrations regarding these disparities in the following journal excerpt.

> I completed my student-teaching experience in December and headed home for the holidays feeling angered, hurt, emotionally drained, and philosophically confused. Much of what I was expected to do for classroom management went against everything I believed. I thought it was ridiculous to keep a child in for recess to have him/her copy down a pre-written essay entitled "What I Did Wrong," and I will never forget watching my teacher draw the name of one student, hide that kid's name in the Reubenesque fold of her fist and go on to draw the name

of a student she liked better to receive a special prize. I was anxious to distance myself from that toxic semester.

The mentoring program described herein was an elective experience open only to students who completed student teaching during the Fall semester. Too often, students who graduate and enter the workplace immediately after student teaching do not have formal opportunities to reflect and reconceptualize their understanding of what it means to teach. Exposure to various classroom environments and teaching philosophies during their education program and subsequent student-teaching assignment can leave students confused about their beliefs if not given further opportunities to reexamine them. Teacher education faculty observed that in the absence of such reflective opportunities, a number of promising teacher candidates were opting for nonteaching careers following what they considered less fulfilling student-teaching experiences.

In general, mentors offered several reasons for wishing to participate in this project. Mentors wished to challenge themselves by experiencing learning in a grade level in which they were less familiar. They hoped to share knowledge about content, teaching, and pedagogy they had developed since their field experience with less-experienced undergraduates. They expected to broaden and deepen their understanding of teaching and learning. Finally, they desired an opportunity to step back from the professional classroom and return to the academic classroom to clarify their professional directions.

Support for Mentoring

Research on mentoring documents its effectiveness in providing valuable professional development for both new and veteran teachers (Holloway, 2001). Wong (2002) identifies the critical role effective mentoring relationships can play in successful teacher-induction programs. Holloway (2002) cites statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics of 2001 indicating a growth in mentoring programs for beginning teachers and the benefit in improved instruction that teachers report from involvement in such programs. Rowley (1999) acknowledges the growth of mentoring programs and emphasizes the importance of careful selection and preparation for mentors. Rowley identifies six qualities of a good mentor. The good mentor is committed to the role of mentoring, is accepting of the beginning teacher, is skilled at providing instructional support, is effective in different interpersonal contexts, models continuous learning, and communicates hope and optimism.

Literature on mentoring also shows that various education groups have differing understandings of mentoring functions (Franke & Dahlgren, 1996) and that there are many approaches to the mentoring process (Williams, 1993). While mentoring is thoroughly explored for beginning teachers, there appears to be limited research on educational applications of mentoring in which undergraduates mentor fellow undergraduates during preservice development. Instead, studies generally describe experienced teachers who serve in the mentoring role (Holloway, 2001; Silva, 2000; Wong, 2002). Over several years, the author's observations of professional interactions among undergraduate preservice teachers paired during their field experiences indicated potential for the benefits of a more formal mentoring process. Consequently, this mentoring program developed whereby preservice teachers formally mentored other preservice teachers as a means for both to develop more fully as professionals.

The Mentoring Program

During the mentoring semester, mentors were enrolled in a three- to six-credit graduate course devoted to the mentoring experience. Flexibility in credit assignment allowed mentors to best fit mentoring coursework into their credit load for the semester. In their prior role as students in the literacy field experience, mentors had experienced and become familiar with the four-lesson teaching cycle. Mentor responsibilities included the following:

1. Lesson plan review in which mentors discussed mentee lesson design accounting for content, objectives, management, learner special needs, and assessment.

2. Review/critique of videotaped lessons during which mentees shared with mentors segments of their videotaped lesson that they felt represented critical incidents in their learning about teaching. Mentees and mentor used each film session to collaboratively identify areas of strength and continued work.

3. Observations of mentees in the professional setting during their half-day field experience each week. Mentors focused on the interactions of mentees with cooperative teachers and elementary students.

4. Written dialogue and reflection regarding all aspects of the learning experiences for both mentors and mentees. Mentors also maintained a similar journal with the course instructor.

5. Attend weekly two-hour mentor seminars in which issues regarding effective mentoring were discussed.

Mentors worked with the course instructor to jointly complete one instructional cycle for each of their mentees prior to working with mentees on their own. During each weekly two-hour mentoring seminar, instructor and mentors discussed issues related to communications with mentees and strategies for providing effective feedback; explored literature related to supervisory/instructional coaching, assessment, and classroom management; and shared ideas for resolving conflicts encountered in mentoring relationships

Methodology

Education Program

At the time of this study, education students at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, the site of this study, were required to complete methods coursework in science (3 credits), math (3 credits), literacy (6 credits), and social studies (3 credits). Generally, these courses were taken during a student's junior and senior years with student teaching typically completed during the final semester of coursework. Literacy and math were taken concurrently during one semester while science and social studies were paired for another semester. The program's most extensive field experiences occurred during the literacy block. This mentoring program grew out of that field experience.

Participants

Across two semesters, nine senior-level undergraduates (all female) served as mentors to thirty-two junior-level undergraduates enrolled in a literacy block of coursework. All nine mentors enrolled in a graduate course that explored issues regarding mentoring and that had been designed for this program. Three mentors in the first cohort enrolled for six credits in the course while the remaining six mentors took the course for three credits. The three mentors with a heavier credit load in cohort one each mentored four students while the remaining two mentors worked with two mentees each. The course instructor worked with the remaining ten students. In cohort two, each mentor worked with four mentees and the course instructor worked with twelve students. One mentor, from cohort two had been a mentee during cohort one of this study, and six of the nine mentors had completed their undergraduate field experience at one of the sites at which they mentored.

Mentors attended two-hour weekly seminars to explore issues of mentoring in general and to discuss specific concerns related to their mentoring experiences. They were required to read Ayers (1993) *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* prior to the beginning of the first weekly seminar.

Data Sources and Analysis

Mentors kept a journal documenting their interactions with mentees and others in the field experience and reflected on all they experienced. Weekly seminars were audiotaped and a different mentor served as participant-observer collecting written field notes of each seminar. Analysis based upon qualitative methods included review of mentors' reflective journals documenting experiences for this project, field notes of the weekly mentor/professor seminars, mentee journals, and transcriptions of audiotapes of the weekly mentor seminars.

Qualitatively, and with a focus on the research questions, analysis of data sources by mentors and professor sought to induce, derive, compare, and enrich themes, categories, and conclusions from the data through the use of grounded theory, constant comparative method, and analytical induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Collectively, each cohort of mentors and the professor reviewed data collected for a given semester of the program. Collaboratively, findings were categorized as they responded to the research questions.

What Was Learned?

Over the course of two semesters, this undergraduate mentoring project demonstrated that undergraduates who had already completed the literacy practicum and student teaching could effectively mentor fellow undergraduates. More importantly, for purposes of this article, it clearly illustrated that mentors grew in their understanding of the nature of collegial relationships and the role of coaching.

Benefits

Mentors displayed a commitment to personal and professional growth throughout each semester. Experiences with mentees helped mentors reflect on their educational beliefs and understandings. One mentor shared her thoughts on this development.

> This [mentoring] is really helping me further define my own educational philosophy [regarding] classroom management, student/teacher relationships and interactions, the importance of reading and writing across the curriculum. My mentees ask me questions, too, that make me think and make me look at and talk about my beliefs and how I got to where I am.

Active engagement in mentoring provided an authentic setting for mentors to develop their supervisory techniques from a coaching perspective. Often, mentors' prior experiences in the field came to bear on how they approached mentees. Mentors were sensitive to issues such as being nervous when observed while teaching. "I went to see Laura first and I knew she was sort of nervous so I decided to stand at the door for a minute to get a general feeling of what was going on in the room." In addition, mentors learned that professional relationships gradually developed given requisite time and expertise. Toward the end of the semester, one mentor who struggled to develop a positive relationship with her mentees, acknowledged the evolving nature of building professional relationships.

> I have had several occasions to plan and view [lessons] and I am feeling more comfortable with them and with asking questions. I think the more I do it, the better I will feel because we are developing a tie with each other.

In addition to their work with mentees, interactions with other mentors during seminars provided opportunities for mentors to address those issues most pressing to their work with mentees. As one mentor noted, the relevancy of these discussions was appreciated.

> I felt like we went in a hundred different directions today [during mentor seminar]! It seemed as though we all had a bunch of things on our minds! I am really enjoying this time because we are discussing REAL issues. . . .

Increasingly, seminar discussions further challenged mentors to reflect on what they were learning regarding content and pedagogy as noted in the following mentor's comment.

> The first thing that came to mind when I began to think what was useful for me was how everything is related. I had thought about it before during the Reading/Language Arts class last year, but it finally made sense now, in and outside of the classroom. What really made it click was each seminar. We would start talking about each of our experiences and the different issues that arise and they all seemed to fit together. We all shared some experiences, but each of our mentees gave us new issues to think about. I found it amazing how connected all of the experiences we were having [were] as well as how our research fit into our discussion of our mentees. By the end of the semester, I found that it came very easy to find connections between things.

Over the course of the semester, mentors' knowledge and expertise were recognized by the university instructor, the classroom teachers, and in most cases, their mentees.

Most notably, mentors developed professional relationships with their professor and the host classroom teachers. These relationships were more collegial than the traditional professor or teacher/undergraduate student relationship. As one mentor noted:

> I really enjoy going to class [first-grade classroom] on Wednesday and talking with Sue [teacher]. She is very encouraging and loves to share ideas with me. It is almost as if she considers me to be a colleague of hers.

Several mentors also began to analyze the course professor's interactions with mentees in terms of their evolving beliefs regarding supervision. Their observations became more critical and informed. Journal reflections such as the following indicate one way mentors developed expertise as they assumed greater responsibility for mentees.

> We talked about the social skill [for a cooperative learning lesson] and I was trying to question her [mentee] about somehow showing the kids what she expected of them and her making some kind of chart while brainstorming about how they were going to work in a group. It was so hard not to just say. . . "YOU NEED TO DO THIS!!" although he [professor] was giving some of those directions. I remember talking about how if it is our idea then they [mentees] won't own or they won't really know why they are doing it—aside from the fact that you want them to. She [mentee] said "OK" quite a bit, but she didn't really get excited about what the professor was telling her to do. He told her she needed to assign the roles and she accepted this, but did not embrace the idea. I was really frustrated because I knew that if this student were given the time and the "right" questions, she could have come to those conclusions on her own.

All mentors believed their participation during the mentoring semester was instrumental to their growth as individuals and that it strengthened their convictions about who they thought they were as future teachers. Although mentors were at times frustrated and concerned about this new, seemingly different and difficult role, they felt the mentoring experience helped them further solidify their understanding of teaching, researching, and working in collegial relationships. Concluding thoughts from two mentors represent the thoughts shared by all mentors regarding the value of the mentoring experience.

> Looking back, it becomes difficult to express all that I have learned and what I am going to bring with me into my first job. I know that the issue of professionalism will forever remain ingrained in my brain. I have seen how actions and behaviors can influence the way that others perceive you. The realization that I can be a researcher is one thing that I never would have dreamed about when I came to this university four years ago. I have gone through the process and I am not afraid of it or the terms that are used about learning new things.
>
> A continuation of what I took away with me from student teaching was how valuable a support system can be when made up of colleagues in a safe environment.

> I hope that I will be able to maintain the support I have now [as well as] into and throughout my first teaching years.
>
> One of the most important things that I had taken with me from when I was in this Reading/Language Arts class is the importance of being a life-long learner. I have tried to illustrate this to my mentees, but when they realize it for themselves, they will better understand what I was suggesting. This mentoring has been an exceptionally rewarding and learning time for me. I would not have replaced it for anything. It far surpassed my expectations, and I can only hope that I will pass on what I have learned.

> This has been a very valuable experience for me, and I'm not sure if I can do [it] justice by putting it into words. The mentoring itself was insightful in that I was not the teacher or the student. I was merely an observer, but what I observed was very powerful. I was able to re-learn what student teaching had undone for me. Mentoring refreshed my memory of what a child-centered classroom is, how cooperative learning works, and what it takes to be an effec tive teacher. I have remembered how important it is to take risks, to be a life-long learner, and that teachers are, indeed, researchers. Though student teaching erased most of what I learned in the classroom and from my textbooks, I doubt that anything—short of amnesia—could ever erase what I have discovered about teaching this past semester.

In retrospect, all mentors reported that the mentoring experience helped them during interviews for teaching positions. They attributed this success to their perceived ability to "talk differently" than did other candidates in the interview process. One student reported that after the principal asked her about the mentoring semester, they talked of little else during their time together. All agreed that discussion about the mentoring semester was powerful during their interviews.

Mentors' abilities to reflect upon and share their learning went beyond their semester experience and subsequent job interviews. The first cohort of five mentors co-wrote an accepted proposal to speak at the annual meeting of the International Reading Association's (IRA) annual convention. In addition, they collaborated in writing a grant that was funded to support their travel to the IRA conference. Two members of the second cohort of four developed a manuscript describing their learning experiences and submitted that for publication. A third member of that cohort used the special interest research topic aspect of the seminar to develop an article on deaf education that was accepted for publication. Still another mentor served as a consultant for the development of a laboratory school in a nearby school district.

Challenges

At times, each mentor struggled with how to help mentees grow in their thinking about teaching. A number of mentors reported rereading their journals from their field experience in the literacy block. They concentrated on how their professors had responded to their entries. They wondered how to balance the amount of mentor feedback with mentee reflections and how to provide guidance in meaningful ways.

Mentors also looked at their videotapes from their field experiences so they might better "know what to expect" from their mentees. Mentors cautioned each other and themselves about "saying too much." They consciously worked at emulating the types of open-ended questioning used in addressing them when they were practica students. The following mentor's comment captures that sentiment.

> I just hope that I can offer support without inflicting my strong beliefs on the students that I work with! Of course, I want them to constantly question me and make me validate what I am saying, but I also feel like I want them to learn from me. I can tell them what I learned, but I hope to question them in ways that they make that discovery for themselves!

Time. During the seminars, all mentors collectively addressed individual and group issues related to their responsibilities. In general, mentors committed much time and energy in responding to mentees' needs. In the first half of each semester, nearly all mentors struggled with how to set limits on the amount of time they would spend helping mentees plan lessons. During seminars they discussed ways to develop management skills so they were working *with* and not solely *for* their mentees. Gradually, they learned to give their mentees a schedule of when they would be available to meet with them and then to be consistent with that schedule. In spite of such efforts, problems still arose. Lesson observations were often shifted as events in site classrooms dictated the pace of classroom activities. This created problems for mentors who were attempting to maximize observations during their site visits. The following incident represents the kinds of adjustments mentors often had to make.

> I thought I would visit T and C first, then zip up to see the ending of Annie's [lesson]. Instead, T and C had hardly been videotaped and I wanted to see some of what they were doing. Around 10:00, I made the decision to stay with T and and risk missing Annie's lesson. It seemed that T and C 'needed' my support... more than Annie needed me.

Other difficulties related to the time mentors scheduled to work with mentees were not related to the classroom environment but instead resulted from mentee's lack of planning. In time, mentors learned to hold their mentees accountable for their work and held fast to a reasonable time schedule for working with their mentees. The following example demonstrates how difficult it was for mentors to establish their authority regarding time.

> 10:37 p.m. Cornel just called. He wanted to know if I could "puhleeez" meet with him to go over his lesson for tomorrow….I said, "I'm really sorry I can't meet with you. You should've called sooner." All he said was, "Yeah, I know." In a way I was feeling like maybe I *should* have tried to accommodate him, but Marci [fellow mentor] brought up (I called her after my conversation w/Cornel) a good point that, who knows, next time he might call me at eleven thirty to go over his lesson. I just don't understand this. It's really hard not to feel responsible for him.

In addressing mentors' difficulties managing their time, fellow mentors supported their peers who were experiencing greater difficulties supervising their mentees. One mentor expressed her sense of empathy for another mentor.

> I sat and watched Sarah during the seminar and she was trying so hard to do what she thinks is right and trying to be a great mentor, but sometimes, it just blows up in her face. I want to reassure her, but things that I say don't seem to have the same effect as if her mentees were all up to par. This reminds me of what could happen when a teacher tries something new and all they are seeing is failure. I know that many things can be learned during that process, but it's very discouraging.

Commitment. Mentors were encouraged when noting potential and growth in their mentees. "She [mentee] has made so much progress in so many areas. I think she would make a wonderful mentor next year. She is very responsible, professional, and has the desire to learn." Mentors recognized the value of such qualities as they contributed to their mentoring effectiveness. Not all students, however, demonstrated an equal commitment to professional growth. Although, mentors showed concern for all of their mentees, they were occasionally frustrated by mentees who seemed less willing to fully commit to their teaching experiences. As one mentor wrote in her journal, "I have learned that it takes more than the knowledge and the process to be a good teacher. He [mentee] is not showing me that he is ready to be a professional."

Mentors varied in their abilities to balance their continued learning with a shared responsibility for their assigned mentees. Four mentors, in particular, were highly challenged throughout their mentoring semesters in their interactions with at least two of their mentees. These mentors struggled to find a reason why their mentees were not doing well. Reasons given included "low self-esteem," being "nervous," or not able to "take risks." Many times mentors were unsure whether to "abandon" their charges to their self-defeating behaviors or work even harder to try to reach them. As one mentor lamented, "They [mentees] are so far behind and there is no way they could catch up in one night. This is a process, a learning process. Why can't they see that?" It was in this area of professional relationships that mentors seemed to learn the most.

Trust and Credibility. Establishing and sustaining a working level of trust between and among mentors and mentees proved challenging yet was critical for success. The mentor and mentee roles distinguished students by expertise although all participants were undergraduates and, in other respects, peers. During early interactions, mentors had to overcome some mentees' feelings of being "abandoned" by their university instructor. Since the instructor was working with a number of students in class who were not assigned to mentors, other students could be expected to perceive this as unfair. One mentor shared her perceptions of this sentiment in the following journal entry.

> I've heard through the grapevine that people are not pleased with having to meet with a mentor for a variety of reasons. The most common of reasons seems to be that they doubt our experience in the classroom has been adequate enough to

help them….This seemed like a logical expectation for any student to have and thus I could appreciate where these students were coming from. Then I got a little angry at being doubted. In all honesty, I did have more experience in the field than these students. I think that it will just take time for everyone to relax and begin to see that the mentor/mentee relationship can be very beneficial to both parties.

Those mentors who tended to devote considerably more time to their mentees seemed to address this issue more successfully than did others. By mid semester of each of the two semesters of this study, one mentee began contacting the university professor to plan her lessons and/or review the videotape because she felt she was getting insufficient guidance and feedback from her mentor. Two mentors (one each semester) had difficulty consistently attending the field setting while their mentees were teaching. Relative to the other mentors, these two were also available less often for lesson planning sessions and for reviewing and reflecting on videotapes of their mentees' lessons. When confronted with these issues, these mentors cited lack of time or the fact that the mentees "do not trust me in the mentoring role."

Mentors were under pressure in a variety of contexts to demonstrate expertise in pedagogy, content, and the classroom environment. As they helped mentees plan lessons, they had to draw on their knowledge base in literacy instruction, and on their related experiences. It was not uncommon for mentors to think back to what they may have been like at similar points in their education. Reflecting on a lesson review session with two mentees, one mentor demonstrated such efforts.

I think I asked the "right" questions. I saw their minds churning and in their eyes, a reflection or image of [me] just last spring. They hadn't heard about PROCESSING!! I briefly explained it. When did I learn about processing? Did I not know it then either?

Conclusions and Implications

Providing undergraduate education students with quality opportunities to experience the workings of actual classrooms through field experiences can greatly benefit preservice teachers in their professional development. Such experiences, however, require a great deal of support and supervision. A mentoring program such as described in this study offers a level of support for students in field experiences that may not be possible when one instructor is responsible for an entire class of students. For example, the teaching cycles and supervision required of students in the Literacy Methods field experience for this study required a minimum of eight hours per student for their lesson cycles and four hours per week on site for classroom observations. Adding qualified mentors to assume a measure of those supervisory responsibilities added to the feasibility and effectiveness of field experiences. Five mentors and one course instructor on site each week provided a much greater level of supervision for each field experience student.

Results of this project informed work at Drake University's School of Education. The field work associated with the undergraduate literacy methods coursework incorporated the mentoring component in its design, and students interested in being mentors were able to plan their programs to include the mentoring course load. The findings of this mentoring program indicate the potential such programs may have for enriching teacher-education experiences at other institutions.

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Perceptions of Children's Culture in an Urban School

Althier Lazar, Cathy Pinto, and Natalie Warren

Abstract

This article addresses teachers' views about children's culture in one urban elementary school that serves African-American students. Teachers described their culture, their students' culture, and how they integrated understandings about culture into their instructional practices. Deficit views of children's culture were evident in teachers' descriptions, especially among European-American teachers who did not live in the city. Almost all teachers described children's language abilities as deviant. Our findings reveal the need for cultural sensitivity education for teachers and more comprehensive research in the area of teachers' attitudes and understandings about culture.

About half of the children served by urban school districts, many of which are children of color, do not graduate from high school (Orfield, 2004). This problem is multifaceted and one that is shaped by a range of economic, political, social, and educational factors. In this article we focus on one factor: teachers. This is not because we see teachers as the primary problem, but because the research suggests that teachers' cultural sensitivity has been linked to school success (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Presently, however, not enough is being done to help teachers and administrators acquire understandings about children and their cultural communities that would help them serve these children successfully.

Cultural sensitivity is the ability to understand the history, values, perceptions, and behaviors of members of particular groups of people, without judging these to be better or worse than those of any other group (Lazar, 2004). Cultural sensitivity is a defining characteristic of successful teachers of children of color (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2001). It is manifested when teachers respect students and their families, maintain high expectations of students, understand and validate children's heritage and culture, and weave these cultural understandings into their teaching.
Issues of cultural sensitivity have taken a backseat to concerns about preparing children for standardized tests in recent years. The No Child Left Behind Act, with its focus on universal achievement in reading and mathematics by the year 2014, has driven the professional development agenda toward raising standardized test scores. In Philadelphia, for instance, professional development sessions during the 2003-2004 academic year focused primarily on test preparation and instructional practices in reading and mathematics. An emphasis on testing eclipses other areas of teacher education, such as building teachers' cultural sensitivity. While knowledge of reading and mathematics instruction are critical areas for teacher development, the ways in which teachers perceive students and relate to them is also important. The present environment leaves little room for teacher education in this area.

The No Child Left Behind Act is not the only factor that marginalizes professional development in the area of cultural sensitivity. University programs that educate teachers are also complicit in the problem. During the 1990s, concerns about the low achievement rates of children of color in high-poverty communities led to an emphasis on helping teachers become more culturally sensitive. This was an attempt to address the generally recognized problem of a cultural disconnect between the largely mainstream population of teachers and a growing population of children of color in high-poverty communities (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Unfortunately, teacher preparation programs are varied in their delivery of cultural diversity curricula, leaving some graduates with very few insights about what it means to be a culturally sensitive teacher (Lazar, 2004).

In such a climate, we wondered about the sensitivities and understandings of teachers who serve children in our lowest-performing schools. How do they view children's culture and, particularly, children's language? To what extent do they integrate understandings about culture into their instructional practices? How do teachers' own cultural frames of reference influence their ways of perceiving children's culture? In this study, we explore some of the perspectives teachers have about the cultural lives of the children they teach in one urban school and how these views may be shaped by teachers' own cultural orientations.

Deficit Perspectives of Children

Deficit views of African-American children who live in high-poverty communities have continued to affect the ways they are seen and treated in the classroom. Only a generation ago, research on Black children's achievement focused on the deficits of their homes and communities (Baratz & Baratz, 1970), especially as it impacts children's language development. This research suggested that children raised in these environments lacked the verbal stimulation needed for language development and abstract thinking. These theories have been replaced by new understandings that children's home language is rule-bound, complex, and capable of expressing abstract thought (Labov, 1972; Perry & Delpit, 1998).

Deficit views have shaped schooling practices for these children. Lowered standards and expectations are often held for these students because some teachers believe it is impossible for them to learn or be taught due to the social ills inherent in their home and community lives (Olmedo, 1997). Olmedo asserts that teachers who hold this view feel the need to "repair the differences in [the] child to make [them]selves feel comfortable, [thus leaving] no regard for the student." (p. 254). Lower expectations are also predominantly held for students who speak Black Dialect rather than Standard English, which consequently leads to lower student achievement (Cecil, 1988).

Research also finds that many teachers do not fully appreciate the cultural significance of the distinctive language patterns of those who affiliate as African-Americans (Perry & Delpit, 1998). "African orality" is the "dominant feature of Afro-American culture [which] fosters [the] skills of performance, listening, and remembering" (King, 1994). For many African-American children, "Ebonics" (often known as African-American Vernacular English or Black English Vernacular) is language they first encounter in their homes and neighborhoods. It is the language children associate with love, family, and community (Delpit & Dowdy, 2003). Suggesting that a child's native language is unacceptable is a condemnation of the child and those who are closest to him.

Over the last two decades, research in the areas of multiculturalism and cultural diversity has attempted to address these preconceptions. This research stressed the importance of validating the cultural knowledge children bring to school, including their ways of using language and the importance of understanding and celebrating children's cultural heritage (Au, 1998;3, 2002; Perry & Delpit, 1998). Successful teachers of African-American children tend to be connected with their students' communities, possess insider knowledge of children's cultural worlds, and use this information to help children construct new knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Five of the teachers in Ladson-Billing's study were African-American and maintained a Black *culture of reference*. This is the cultural group with whom teachers most closely affiliated. Three teachers were European-American, yet one maintained a Black culture of reference, another considered herself bicultural, and only one assumed a White culture of reference. Seven out of eight of the teachers identified with their students' culture on a personal level; and all of the teachers, at the very least, validated their students' culture.

Even teachers who share a cultural heritage with their students may not be culturally sensitive. Teachers of color can hold negative views towards Black

children's language and literacy abilities as a consequence of absorbing the racial stereotypes of the dominant culture (Philipsen, 2003). These teachers may not perceive children of color as inherently capable, nor would they automatically see these students' culture as valid and worthy of celebration in the classroom.

We wondered how teachers perceived African-American children who attend highly distressed urban public schools. To what extent do they possess the cultural sensitivity needed to serve these children well? How do teachers' cultural orientations shape their perceptions of children's language and culture? Further, how is children's culture reflected in these urban classrooms? In this study, we explored these questions by looking at the responses of a group of urban elementary school teachers who were enrolled in a teaching methods course sponsored by a local university. Their responses indicated a need to strengthen cultural sensitivity programs for teachers at both the school district and university levels.

Method

The teachers who participated in the study taught at a public elementary school in Philadelphia that served approximately 900 children in kindergarten through sixth grade. The children who attended the school were predominantly African-American and were eligible for the free-lunch program. These teachers were enrolled in a graduate course in literacy offered at the school.

On the first day of the course, teachers were invited to complete a survey that solicited information about their culture, the type of community in which they resided (urban, suburban, rural), their knowledge of students' cultures, the extent to which they incorporated knowledge about children's culture into lesson planning, descriptions of their students' oral and written language, and how they helped students acquire Standard English. Teachers were told that their participation in the study was optional and that it would not affect their grade for the course. The entire group of 25 teachers completed the survey, which required they respond to questions using short answers or phrases. Seven of the surveys were declared invalid due to either incomplete responses or a failure to identify with an ethnic group, resulting in a final total of 18 surveys.

Based on teachers' descriptions of their cultural affiliations and the communities where teachers lived (urban, suburban, rural), we categorized the teachers into the following five groups. The numerals following the categories indicate the assigned number of the teachers' survey.

Group 1: African-American, urban (3, 6, 7, 8, 9)
Group 2: African-American, suburban (1, 4)
Group 3: West Indian-American, urban (2); Multi-Ethnic, urban (5)
Group 4: European-American, urban (10, 12, 16)
Group 5: European-American, suburban (11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18)

Teachers of color are represented in the first three groups. The majority of these teachers, 78%, lived in Philadelphia. One-third of the European-American teachers lived in the city; the majority lived in suburban communities surrounding the city. The teachers in Group 1 lived in the same types of communities as their students and shared a cultural heritage that was most similar to their students.

Next, we looked for similarities and differences in the ways teachers across the different groups responded to the survey questions. Two primary themes surfaced in the writing: 1) value judgments about culture (negative, positive, neutral) and 2) specific categories of descriptions about culture (economic, racial, religious, behaviors, values, etc). We then looked to see if particular types of descriptions tended to occur within the particular cultural groups. We also noted atypical responses within each cultural group.

Eight of the teachers we surveyed agreed to be interviewed. We asked teachers to describe their culture and their students' culture (including students' language). We also invited teachers to talk about the ways their teaching was informed by their understandings of children's culture. The interviews allowed us to explore teachers' reasons for describing children in specific ways. We also asked teachers to tell us about whether they felt they had been effective with students during the past year. Of those we interviewed, three were African-American women, four were European-American (one man and three women), and one teacher described herself as West Indian-American.

All but one of the European-Americans had less than three years of teaching experience, and each of these teachers said they had a difficult time managing their classrooms and teaching effectively. Among this group was a first-year teacher who had a very difficult time adjusting to the school and almost quit three months into the job. In the fall, she had taken a graduate course that stressed anti-racist pedagogy and the value of understanding children's culture. This teacher recently decided to remain at the school for another year, attributing her improved attitude to a variety of factors, including getting one of her most disruptive students placed in an emotional support classroom, deciding to handle all of the disciplinary issues herself rather than relying on the school to dispense detentions and call parents, and organizing informal lunches with some of her students. Among those we interviewed, she was the only European-American teacher who lived in the city.

All three of the African-American teachers who were interviewed lived in the city and had taught in the school for an average of seven years. They reported they enjoyed teaching, but there were several challenges they had to deal with to be successful. The teacher who affiliated as a West Indian-American had taken several graduate courses in the area of literacy instruction and said she would attain her reading specialist certification within the year. She said she had become very confident in teaching children to read and write over the last few years.

We compared the interview statements with the survey statements, looking for consistencies and discrepancies between these data sets. Overall, there was a high degree of overlap between survey and interview data; but the interviews yielded additional information about teachers' interpretations of children's culture that were not captured in the surveys. From this analysis, we generated several assertions about teachers' perceptions of how they see children's culture and what they do with this information.

Findings

Describing Children's Culture

Teachers' descriptions of children's culture aligned with either a "deficit" emphasis or a "descriptive" emphasis. Teachers who affiliated with particular cultural groups tended to describe children's culture in similar ways. Most of the teachers in Group 5 (European-American, suburban) and Group 3 (West Indian-American/Mixed Ethnic) framed their descriptions of children's culture around what the youngsters lacked with respect to the dominant culture. These teachers emphasized poverty and non-traditional family structures as factors that played a significant role in children's out-of-school lives. Examples include:

> Poor, lower socioeconomic, lack of stability and structure, little quality time with parents.

> Urban, rough neighborhood, priorities not there fully for jobs/education, close families, lack of responsibility for some.

> African-American, lower socioeconomic tier, many single-parent families.

One European-American teacher, a twenty-five year veteran of the school, described children's culture as being oppositional to school success primarily because parents' behaviors signaled they did not prioritize school.

> There's a total lack of parent support with these kids. I can't believe that some report cards still sit in the mailboxes because they don't bother to pick them up. School is a low priority for them. How do you explain that they have all the latest clothing and sneakers and video games, but they don't make kids do their homework? School is more of a babysitting service to these parents. It's not really about learning.

Other deficit-oriented descriptions focused on the social behaviors that they perceived as deviant. Children's inability to get along well with their peers was seen as a defining characteristic of these children's culture.

> How would I describe kids' culture? They're aggressive, and they have a hard time expressing themselves or relating to each other. They don't have appropriate ways of solving problems.

> These kids are antisocial, combative, and aggressive. They don't get along with each other and are constantly nit picking. All of their coping skills are the same. When they don't like something they cry, they whine, they complain, and they fight each other. This doesn't happen with the Korean child or the Latino child who [is] also in my class.

The European-American teachers who lived in the city tended to emphasize "differences" between themselves and their students but did not claim that children's

culture was inferior to theirs. For instance, the teacher who had taken a graduate course in cultural studies emphasized how children's culture was shaped by their immediate neighborhood. Note how she uses the word *different* to describe children's culture:

> It's a neighborhood culture. Everything that they do and talk about is related to this neighborhood. The thing is, they fight (with each other) one day and then they make friends the next day. They are so quick to judge each other and they react instantly. It's such a different way of relating to people than what I'm used to.

The African-American teachers (Groups 1 and 2) and some of the European-American uniformly emphasized a descriptive view of culture that included specific language about some of the divergent beliefs, practices, and relationships among different families in the context of their social communities. Generally, African-American teachers recognized sub-cultures within the category "African-American," whereas the European-American teachers did not. The following comment was typical: "The kids are mostly African-American and Christian, with a few Hispanics, Africans, and Muslims mixed in." Similarly, the European-American teachers living in the city discussed religious diversity within the community, such as the following: "(There is a) variety among African-American religions (Muslim, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christians)."

Most of the African-American teachers felt music was a key component of their students' culture. The following comments were typical of this group of teachers:

> I would describe their culture as urban, Hip Hop. They are into the latest fads including music. They love to socialize.

> I am aware of my students' clothing, music, religion, foods, and speech. They're into Hip Hop.

Three of these teachers in Groups 1 and 2 included the phrase "Hip Hop," to describe children's culture. This descriptor applied to more than just a musical style; it referred to aspects of dress and language use. One teacher indicated that part of the Hip Hop culture is to be seen, and she described her sixth-graders as loving the spotlight. African-American teachers also tended to emphasize children's sociability as a positive characteristic.

While African-American teachers did not describe children from the perspective of social or economic pathology, some judged children's situations as being unfortunate or undesirable.

> There's a mixture of families and extended families, but some kids are raising themselves. It's sad.

> Many eat fast food because their parents work so they don't have time to make dinner. I think that's horrible.

One teacher used the term *tragic* to describe situations in which caregivers are not able to do things that would promote children's success in school (providing

consistent supervision after school, helping children with homework, providing healthy meals). Finally, one of the African-American teachers described her students' culture in terms of students' ability to take risks. She noted: "They are willing to try new things, but many need a push. They need structure but with flexibility."

These findings show that teachers' descriptions of children's culture were discrepant. European-American, suburban teachers tended to judge children's culture in deficit terms focusing primarily on their high-poverty status, their dysfunctional family structures, and their confrontational social behavior. African-American teachers tended to emphasize children's ethnic/religious, their music and dress preferences, and their penchant for socializing. This division in ways of seeing children's culture did not clearly align with teachers' cultural orientations, as a few European-American teachers who lived in the city described children in ways similar to the African-American teachers. Their descriptions, however, were limited and addressed only racial/ethnic/religious diversity of their students. The other exception was the West Indian-American teacher whose deficit-oriented views of children's culture aligned more with those of the European-Americans.

Using Information about Students' Lives and Culture in Teaching

Most teachers stated they used information about their students' lifestyles and culture in their lesson planning to some capacity. African-American teachers stated they incorporated cultural content into their lessons. Three wrote about the specific ways in which they do this:

> We sing songs and talk about their family. They tell me about their homes and experiences.
>
> In Social Studies if a student is from the West Indies, we'll discuss that, and have a parent make a dish from that culture, find it on a map, (discuss) clothes, dressing, etc.
>
> When I have students of different cultures in my classroom, I try to find curriculum that addresses a particular culture in order to expose other students to each other's culture as well as help them become more familiar with their own.

Other African-American teachers agreed they integrated cultural knowledge into lessons although they were somewhat vague about how they did this. One teacher stated, "(I find) ways to connect lessons to real-life experiences, meaningful examples to gain (children's) interest."

One of the teachers in Group 3 who described her cultural affiliation as multi-ethnic and one European-American (suburban) stated they did not integrate cultural understandings into their lessons at all. The European-American teacher stated she did not use information about children's culture in her lessons because she felt there was no room in the structured curriculum to integrate this material.

Among the remaining European-American teachers, four reported they encouraged children to relate their lives to concepts learned in school but were vague about how they did this. Three of the European-American (suburban) teachers indicated they focused on children's culture during Black History Month.

Descriptions of Children's Oral and Written Language

Teachers' responses to this question suggest that many teachers, regardless of their cultural orientation, viewed children's language from a deficit perspective. Four of the 18 responders did not describe children's oral and written language, so these responses were considered invalid. Twelve of the remaining 14 teachers described their students' oral and written language using words such as slang, profane, incorrect, improper, broken English. Below are examples from both African-American (Teachers 4 and 5) and European-American teachers (Teachers 14 and 15):

> Written and oral language is slang. (Teacher 4)
>
> A lot of our students speak slang and not a lot of Standard English. (Teacher 5)
>
> Not all language is proper. (Teacher 14)
>
> Inner city Black lingo. (Teacher 15)

Survey data indicated that most of the teachers, across the groups, framed children's language as deficient. Three of the teachers who were interviewed, however—one European-American and two African-Americans—described children's language using neutral terms. One of the teachers in the latter group described children's language as what it is *not*—standard; yet, she described its structural consistencies and noted that teachers need to understand children's ways of expressing themselves and to guide children in their use of language:

> Their language is less formal. It doesn't conform to standard language, but it does have a norm of its own. There are guidelines (about using language) that we need to know. They are liberal with their language. Certain words that are acceptable at home or in their neighborhoods are not acceptable in school, and they need to learn that.

The European-American teacher who had taken the cultural diversity course commented that her students' written language improves as the year progresses. Overall, though, these data reveal the tendency to frame children's language negatively, most pointing out the ways in which it diverges from Standard English.

Ways of Helping Children Acquire Standard English

Responses to this final question suggest that teachers had very distinct teaching styles in the area of helping children acquire Standard English. Based on the surveys, six of the nine European-American teachers indicated they taught Standard English using print: "(I use) literature, practice and corrections, word walls, 'sentence of the day' grammar work." Most of the African-American teachers, however,

indicated they modeled Standard English and corrected students in conversational situations. The following examples typify the approach used by these teachers:

> Sometimes I correct them when they speak or ask a question.
>
> Speaking Standard English (modeling); exposing them to various examples of Standard English being spoken.
>
> I help my students by modeling and making them feel comfortable.

The results indicate that African-American teachers tended to help children acquire Standard English through spontaneous, informal, and verbal interactions. What is not revealed in these data (and beyond the scope of this article) is the diversity of approaches teachers used to do this and how children react to these approaches. For example, there could be major differences between the approaches used by these teachers. Having one's speech corrected by a teacher might be humiliating or welcoming, depending on the relationship the teacher has established with the child, the type of learning community that has been established in the classroom, and how private the interaction is. Actual observations in the classroom would more clearly reveal the impact of various approaches toward helping children acquire Standard English.

Discussion and Implications

The goal of the study was to determine teachers' perceptions about children's culture—specifically their language—and to explore links between these views and the teachers' own cultural backgrounds. The distinctions between the different teacher groups are noteworthy. Teachers who shared a cultural heritage with their students and the few who did not share a common ancestral heritage, but who lived in the city, tended to view children's culture in terms of varied experiences. These teachers tended to describe children in terms of their religious affiliation (Islam, Christian, Jehovah's Witnesses), their style preferences (Hip Hop, style of dress), and their fondness for socializing. In contrast, many European-American teachers viewed children's culture as pathology: Children came from families that lacked money, education, and stability. The comments made by the West Indian-American teacher and the teacher who described herself as "multi-ethnic" also aligned with a deficit emphasis.

Nearly all teachers across the cultural groups viewed children's language as substandard, although African-American teachers tended to focus more on children's difficulties writing in Standard English. While most teachers judged children's language according to its deviation from Standard English, we found differences between these groups of teachers in how they helped children acquire Standard English. African-American teachers tended to teach Standard English through oral communication, while the European-American teachers tended to utilize print as a teaching tool to help children acquire Standard English.

In this discussion, we focus on how these findings are relevant to the work of teaching in this community and how they can be used to inform teaching and teacher

education. First, we deal with the issue of deficit-oriented perspectives of children's culture. This stance toward children has been linked to children's disengagement from school (Delpit & Dowdy, 2003). This way of describing children's culture was clearly present in the language of some teachers, especially those who presented themselves as cultural outsiders with respect to their students.

We cannot make assertions about teachers' effectiveness in relation to their descriptions of children's cultural sensitivity. Data on teachers' practices and children's achievement would need to be collected and analyzed to make any claims concerning teacher effectiveness. Some of our findings, however, raise questions about the relationship between cultural sensitivity and teaching effectiveness. For instance, the three African-American teachers we interviewed considered themselves to be highly effective teachers who described children's culture in positive or neutral ways, but who nonetheless cast elements of their students' culture as "unfortunate" and even "horrible." These comments may have had little bearing on how teachers actually related to children. Similarly, the West Indian-American teacher who described children's culture in deficit ways considered herself to be a highly effective literacy teacher. One possibility is that she shared deficit-oriented views with us, but maintained a very different stance with her students. Also, we do not make any claims about whether or not these teachers believed in their students' inherent capacities to achieve in school; our aim was limited to finding out how teachers perceived children's culture. It is entirely possible that they held high expectations for their students' academic potential.

What we can assert with confidence is that deficit-oriented perceptions about the culture of African-American children in one urban school continue to exist and could potentially be a source of conflict between teachers and their students. At issue here is the notion of culture as a primary dimension of one's personhood. One obvious implication is the need to confront deficit-oriented perceptions of children's culture and language, and challenge the stereotypes that underlie these perceptions. Professional development programs that challenge stereotypes of children and their communities need to be critical, inquiry-based, and continuous (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Studying cultural diversity, including issues of identity development, the nature of racism and prejudice, and the history, values, and perceptions of diverse groups of people, has helped preservice teachers become more culturally sensitive. However, this is a long-term process (Lazar, 2004).

There is also a need to enhance teachers' understandings about what constitutes culture. The teachers in this study interpreted culture as ethnicity or racial affiliation, religious affiliation, preferences in music/dress, and ways of relating to others. More recently, culture has been described in more complex terms, with a focus on the dynamic and shifting nature of culture and the ways different people cross ethnic and language borders constantly and then are transformed by these experiences (Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2000). Understanding the changing and transformative nature of culture is important for teachers if they are to build curriculum and instruction that is reflective of children's experiences.

There are several avenues of inquiry that can help teachers interrogate the shifting and complex nature of culture and that particular cultures are not inherently better or worse than others. A good place to start is exploring one's culture and how elements of culture can either subordinate or privilege us depending on the values of

the dominant society (Nieto, 1999). For instance, one can be a wealthy Irish-American female, Democrat, lover of opera, atheist, and lesbian. That person may be privileged by virtue of her whiteness and affluence, but she may be simultaneously subordinated in terms of her gender, religious views, and sexual orientation. Through such an exploration, teachers can broaden their views about the fluidity and complexity of culture. This is a necessary starting point from which to explore the perspectives, values, and lifestyles of others.

As part of an examination of one's culture, it is important to include an investigation of one's linguistic heritage. Many of European-American teachers we interviewed talked about their parents and grandparents learning English during the immigration wave of the early twentieth century. They have difficulty understanding why many African-Americans in high-poverty communities resist using Standard English, especially if it is considered the admission ticket to better-paying jobs. What is needed is an investigation of the factors that are particular to African-Americans who have shaped their orientation toward the dominant culture (Ogbu, 1987), including the sociohistorical factors of marginalization, social isolation, educational inequality, and resistance that have shaped how many African-Americans perceive and use language. Another important area of study is the history of African-American vernacular (everyday spoken language) and its European and West-African influences. Studies of the language reveal it is essentially grammatical. Its structure is consistent across its speakers and is key to understanding and validating the language (Delpit & Dowdy, 2003 Labov;1972).

Teachers also need to scrutinize their beliefs about English as pure and inherently superior. Asa Hilliard (2002) discusses the evolution of English as a language that grew out of centuries of conquests. Hilliard states its complexity is clear when examining the Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, and Romance influences of the language. The point is that the English language is still evolving, prompting questions about what constitutes the *standard* in Standard English.

In the classroom, teachers need to invite students' out-of-school lives into the classroom. Avenues for inquiry include studying children's popular culture (Dyson, 2003), using literature that mirrors the experiences of children, inviting children to write about their lives outside of school, and helping children relate other content (history, mathematics, science) to real issues and problems that define their local community.

The extant research supports making cultural sensitivity education a priority for educators (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999), but the current emphasis is on helping children prepare for standardized tests—an emphasis that is in direct response to the No Child Left Behind Act. Educators at university and school district levels need to work more closely to prioritize cultural-sensitivity education for teachers. Research that further justifies cultural-sensitivity education needs to correlate enhancements in educators' cultural sensitivity with student achievement. This requires studies that explore several factors, including teachers' and administrators' perceptions of children's culture, observations of teachers and students in classrooms, students' feelings about school, and students' rates of academic achievement.

Conclusion

Deficit perspectives of children's culture persist even though it has been recognized for more than a decade that cultural sensitivity is a key attribute of successful teachers of children of color. In the current political and educational climate, issues of cultural diversity have been marginalized. Professional development programs need to focus on building teachers' understandings about culture and language, but this will not happen unless educators, policymakers, and the public-at-large are convinced that cultural sensitivity matters in school achievement.

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Sharing Perspectives and Practices

Open Discussion: Revisiting Nystrand's Dialogic Approach

Wen Ma

Abstract

In this essay Nystrand's dialogic approach for teaching and learning English language and literature is revisited. This approach emphasizes the use of authentic question and uptake for the students to make substantive discussion and for developing their literate thinking. Then, some theoretical and pedagogical implications of this approach are discussed in light of a sociocultural view of learning.

In recent years numerous discussion-based programs (e.g., Daniels, 2001; Langer, 1995; McMahon & Raphael, 1997) have been developed to tap the dialogic potential for learning literacy and English literature across K-12 grades. Although there are different instructional emphases among these programs, each maintains that dialogic interactions among students enhance their learning and critical thinking by providing opportunities for them to respond to literary texts with personally invested meanings and to be exposed to multiple interpretations and voices of others.

Among the varied classroom discussion models, Nystrand (1997) conducted important research on classroom discourse and advocated a dialogic approach for learning English language and literature at middle and high schools. In his roles as a former director of the National Center of English Learning and Achievement and president of the National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy, this approach also receives wide recognition and has influenced various research studies and classroom practices (e.g., Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Caughlan, 2002; Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser & Long, 2003).

In the following, I attempt to analyze the important components of this dialogic approach based on Nystand's (1997) seminal work on classroom discourse. Then, I discuss its theoretical and pedagogical implication, focusing on some instructional considerations in implementing this model.

Authentic Question and Uptake

Why is student-centered discussion educationally so valuable? How is discussion used as an instructional tool for extending the students' literate thinking and understanding? Let us begin by taking a look at how Nystrand arrived at the dialogic model. His Colleagues and he examined classroom discourse in over one hundred classrooms in a variety of middle and high school settings, the largest study to date of secondary classroom discourse and its effects on literature achievements in the history of the United States. Based on their findings, Nystrand (1997) concluded that there was mostly monolog and little genuine dialogue going on in the English classes. As a result of such a discourse pattern, the students were observed to be mostly engaged in recitation rather than inquiry-oriented learning. The teaching and learning of English literature were neither motivating nor effective.

In contrast to the sociocultural view of learning described by Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, and Miller (2003) and Lee and Smagorinsky (2000), the monologic model that Nystrand (1997) found to dominate classrooms embraces the knowledge-transmission practices of teaching and learning. It stresses discrete skills and separate items of knowledge over the learner's experiential understanding or intellectual engagement. In a monologic, "fake discussion" context, there is no sequential and semantic spontaneity and connectedness across different participants' utterances, and understanding cannot be built up organismically through the learners' inquisitive moves.

Nystrand (1997) thus called for student-centered dialogue for teaching and learning literature, the central concept of which is the use of authentic questions and uptake for making substantive dialogue in the classroom. The authenticity of the questions for discussion is the preliminary concern of this approach. "Almost all

teachers' questions," Nystrand maintained, "required students to recall what someone else thought, not to articulate, examine, elaborate, or revise what they thought" (p. 3). As a result, the predominant classroom discourse sounded like recitation and echoed the Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) pattern (Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1979). In comparison, authentic questions from the teacher, or possibly other fellow students participating in the discussion, invite them to contribute new ideas with no prescribed answers, are open-ended, and can only be arrived at through inquisitive engagement with the literary texts and original thinking.

A second construct in this model, uptake, originated from the work of Collins (1982). Collins used this term to refer to the phenomenon that, when in a conversational context, one participant repeats what another discussant has just said and, in so doing, embeds the question(s) partly in the previous person's utterances. Nystrand (1997, p. 39) provided the following example of uptake:

> Teacher: What do they have to do to Polyphemus?
> A Student: Blind him.
> Teacher: How come the plan is for blinding Cyclops?

Here the teacher picked up *blind* in the student's response in the follow-up question. Such questioning, on one hand, continues the conversation topically and semantically and, on the other hand, significantly deepens or broadens the aspects related to the same topic. When more of this kind of uptake is done in a discussion, the participants' utterances were woven into each other's, thus extending the conversation coherently for more substantive dialogic exchanges.

A Sociocultural View of Learning

Nystrand drew on Bakhtin (1981), Vygotsky (1978), and a number of other scholars to develop the theoretical foundation for his dialogic approach. He suggested an emergent framework about how dialogic interaction, centering around the two key concepts authentic question and uptake, facilitates the student's learning and thinking through dynamic and engaging discussions in the classroom. Specifically, this framework makes a number of important theoretical assumptions about dialogic interactions for learning literacy and literature.

First, dialogic interaction in the classroom provides the needed context for one to engage with the literary text. Furthermore, the dialogic interaction draws the participants' attention to the specific content or issues the perception, formulation, and articulation that extends and advances their thinking and understanding. In addition, dialogic interactions provide optimal opportunities for individuals to "talk it out." In this process, the individual's thinking is further expanded by hearing the alternative views of others. Perspectives become clear through expressing his or her ideas and discussing options with others. When given appropriate opportunities to engage in collaborative conversation, learners are facilitated to make meaning out of the texts they read and, through dialogic interaction, develop their thinking about the text and beyond (Britton, 1990, 1993).

Nevertheless, just as discussion-oriented research and theory have illuminated that discussions can spur one's thinking about the text, reflective reading and writing as well require one's intellectual engagement

with the text, as research and theory about reading-writing relationships have clearly shown (e.g., Olson, 1994). Martin, D'Arcy, Newton, and Parker's (1976) work further suggested strong connections between adolescents' talking and writing and the possibility of using writing, as well as talking, to learn. Wolcott (2001), a qualitative researcher who writes about research methods, even makes it clear that writing is analyzing, thinking, and learning. More recently, Wells (2002) underscored the need "to give adequate recognition to all the modes of making and representing meaning through which the activities of learning and teaching are enacted" (p. 1).

Consistent with findings from other research studies on classroom discussions (cf. Lewis, 2001; Miller, 1992; Morita, 2004), discussion seems not to be a neutral medium with all learners, nor does it necessarily seem to have universal value in all educational contexts. For these reasons, the findings underscore the importance to create a learning community that experiments with a variety of learning and response styles. It is imperative that classroom teachers and teacher educators recognize the different emphases among both mainstream and culturally diverse students to effectively engage and empower all learners with socially defined learning, whether it is literacy or literature.

Student Talk and Diversified Methods of Engagement

Focusing on employing dialogue as an instructional tool to engage students and to overcome their passivity in the learning process, Nystrand advocated the use of open-ended questions, genuine inquiry, and uptake for substantive engagement by the teacher and other fellow learners. These underpinnings have theoretical and pedagogical implications for research and practice to move from the IRE discourse pattern to more dynamic discussions. While recognizing the dialogic potential of Nystrand's dialogic approach, I raise a few instructional considerations, even pointing out potential risks, involved in adopting such a discussion approach with learners from diverse backgrounds.

First of all, it might be possible to have highly interactive conversation, even with authentic question and uptake, like chatting, that involves little intense literate thinking. As well, it may be possible for a more experienced learner to develop deep literate thought through explorative writing and reflective thinking. In other words, a learner may enhance his or her critical understanding of the text through face-to-face discussion with other peers. However, the learner may arrive at comparable levels of understanding through thoughtful reading and unvoiced conversation with the author and the text, and by connecting with his or her lived experiences. More specifically, while talking with others may spur one's thinking about the text, I am arguing that the character of a learner's contextualized active engagement with the text may mark the dialogical meeting of the learner and the learning. This text engagement ultimately may help to define a particular learner's fundamental literate experience.

In addition, the significance of direct verbal interaction as a means for the student's cognitive and social development may also change from learner to learner and from situation to situation. Although class discussions provide socially supported

opportunities for learners to develop language skills and oral strategies, the adolescents whom Nystrand studied could be significantly more adept at abstraction and reasoning than beginning literacy learners, yet less proficient than more advanced high school and college students. As a student grows and matures, and as reading materials become more complex, his or her reading method may change accordingly from principally oral reading to silent reading. At the same time, he or she may incrementally rely less on visible interaction and audible conversations and, depending on the individuals, more on alternative strategies for his or her thinking and understanding to develop.

Moreover, previous research indicated the importance of active listening to second-language learners (cf. Berne, 2004; Rubin, 1994). For example, comparative studies on Confucian-heritage educational practices (Biggs, 1996; Gu, 2003; Lee, 1996) suggest that a common method of learning often used by the students in a Confucian-cultural milieu is not free discussion by all members, but listening deeply to lectures, taking copious notes, and reflectively "grinding" the information into one's head. In this context, classroom activities may appear less interactive. This contrasts with Nystrand's dialogic approach through which the teacher scaffolds students to interact with the text and each other as competent and equal learners, and understanding may be collectively explored, negotiated, and constructed through participatory dialogues. To account for these seemingly non-constructive Eastern educational practices from a dialogic approach, it would be necessary for teachers to consider whether a student's active listening constitutes meaningful learning, as conversing with others does, even though there was no "external footprint of the internal thought" (V. John-Steiner, personal communication, April 2003).

Therefore, while a discussion-based approach may be useful for students to acquire language skills and to develop critical thinking abilities and interpretational strategies for learning literacy and literature, it remains equally important for classroom teachers to allow for a variety of response and learning styles among different students. In particular, to make truly open and substantive discussions a viable instructional tool for learning literacy and literature among diverse student populations, teachers need to consider the pervasive impact of the current print-based standardized assessment. To capitalize on the results of reading and understanding literature, school-based literacy and literature instruction needs to provide diversified and meaningful learning activities. These activities should include (but not be limited to) dialogues among the students, through which each learner can intellectually wrestle and grapple with viable voices of other fellow students and the teacher, dialogues with voices embedded in the text, and dialogues with overt or covert voices of the reader.

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Journaling in a Video Environment: What Teachers Have Learned from the Process

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Abstract

Graduate students in a literacy course were engaged in learning interview skills for video, writing an edit script, and editing their first video presentations. They also posted responses on a listserv, as members of a dialogue journal community, to three books that were required reading for the course. Their growth as teachers, writers, and video producers is presented in the ways they talked about writing and teaching.

Journaling as a form of learning and reflecting has been with us since the time of Julius Caesar, St. Augustine, and Samuel Pepys (Conhaim & Page, 2003). The journal is most commonly defined as writing that centers on personal thoughts and events as it allows the writer to focus his or her individual responses on experiences (Kandt, 1994). We now use many forms of journaling at the college level to coax students into the habitual cycle of (a) reading, (b) writing, (c) reflecting, (d) writing, and (e) reading. This writing process facilitates students' confidence in their ability to communicate through the written word (Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 2002). Journal writing operates as a window through which teachers observe students' learning (Stanton, 1988). In dialogue journal writing, for instance, a written conversation is carried on over time; each partner has equal, regular, and frequent opportunities to respond to the entries. Teachers have opportunities to see the strengths and needs of students' understandings of a topic under study (Stanton, Shuy, Kreeft, & Reed, 1982).

As early as 1985, Carole Cox wrote about the importance of the composing process that filmmaking facilitated. The production process of filmmaking is also documented as a means to assessing content knowledge, writing skills, and research skills (Doig & Sargent, 1996) and can, therefore, be seen as a way to enhance the language arts. In other contexts, like the filmmaking projects of the students who collaborated on youth videos (Dowdy, Reedus, Anderson-Thompkins, & Heim, 2004), participants also commented about the life skills they learned through the collaborations in which they participated during the film script writing and production process. Journaling with video technology consequently brought about a level of language facility that was enhanced by the images that the students created in their video interviews.

Encouraging writing habits in the classroom can be a difficult and sometimes overwhelming task when a teacher is also working to impart content material to students. Using any one of the arts, however, including painting, video production, music, and acting, helps to increase students' interest in the content being studied and expand students' knowledge of the many ways in which the message can be articulated (Atwell, 1998; Harste, 1994; Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Considering the importance of multiple literacies (Kist, 2002) for the development of students' best chance of success in our technologically savvy world, it makes sense to include video literacy in the list of subjects that we encourage them to study as communicators in a global village.

This article represents the experience of a group of teachers in a graduate program in the college of education at a northeast Ohio university. The course Literacy Stories/Video Writing was offered as a seminar to five doctoral students preparing to do their comprehensive examinations. A master's level student was invited to join the group because of her background in the English language arts and interest in video writing. The group was introduced to video interviewing (see Dowdy, 2005; Dowdy, Birney, & Reedus, 2004).

Experiential Learning

Dewey (1938) wrote that experience that elicits growth has real educational value. This "growing," as he understood it, should move toward a positive outcome. He also believed there must be an "organic connection between education and

personal experience" (p. 25) and, therefore, learning should be based on real-life experiences. Continuity, in theory, is the principle that differentiates authentic experiential learning practices and/or experiences from artificial procedures and/or occurrences. The authentic learning experience should lead to further growth, expansion, and deeper awareness for the learner. Boud, Cohen, and Walker (1993) also suggest that learning takes place within a social and cultural context to be progressive and transformative in nature.

With this framework of learning and experience in mind, the students in the class were directed to conduct interviews on video. Later they were directed to create a video edit script and edit a video presentation so they could have an authentic video production experience. They were also invited to discuss and reflect on their journey as learners in a community of writers and video producers. The intention behind this reflective piece was to encourage them to appreciate their learning in the class and to plan teaching strategies that would support their students when they took video production into their classrooms.

Two Forms of Journals

In a class for experienced teachers called Literacy Stories/Video Writing a culture of two kinds of journal writing was established throughout the spring semester of 2003. Students were asked to write dialogue journals and create video journals.

The dialogue journals allowed students to share their thoughts in writing over time, and each person had an equal opportunity to respond to the journal entries posted on a listserv. Dialogue journal writing, according to Stanton, Shuy, Kreeft, and Reed (1982), allows participants to carry on an extended conversation. This is one form of journal writing that is democratic: Both parties have an equal chance to participate in the conversation, and it lets the teacher observe students' progress.

The video journals, the collection of footage that each student made with a participant, encouraged students to have conversations on video with their participant so they could learn how to facilitate interviews that were not interrogations of their interviewees. Sharing transcripts of these interviews allowed others to experience their journey as interviewers and video producers. This form of writing also allows participants to have an equal say in the conversation over time. This interview protocol was created in the image of a formal interview, with a question-and-answer format. The video journal becomes public through sharing the tape in class so other listeners have a chance to reflect on the conversation between two people and learn from the process and product of the interview. The resulting dialogue that is based on the video interview, acting as a prompt for student reflection, works exactly like a written document that is posted on a listserv. Everyone can respond to the thoughts expressed in the video interviews in a class in which the video is shown. This encourages a democratic spirit of learning by treating each student as a learner who has something to share with the group.

The objective in asking graduate students to participate in these two forms of journaling was to have them transition from the known to a new form of communication (i.e., written reflections to video presentation). They were encouraged to explore the journey of learning a new form of representation (video), in the same

way many of their students would have to learn how to write formal essays and other academic writing as part of their acculturation into formal schooling. A workshop environment was created in which graduate students would put their skills to work in learning information and finding out how it enhanced their knowledge base as individuals and collaborators. This studio process, much like the art studio of a painter, actor, or musician, is based on improvisation. Experience proves that the best creative products come out of a setting in which people are free to make discoveries and learn from their thinking processes within the parameters of the journaling or interview protocol.

Journal Activities

Students were asked to write entries on a listserv in response to the chapters from the books; make transcripts of thee video interviews and post them to the listserv so they could be discussed in class, and bring in the footage with video interviews for review.

The first journal activity involved commenting each week on selected chapters in three books: *Lives on the Boundary* (Rose, 1990), Delpit and Dowdy's *The Skin that We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Learning in the Classroom* (2003), and *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy* (Purcell-Gates, 1995). The graduate students, one a student in a master's program and all the others in a doctoral program for literacy studies or educational foundations, were asked to post their journal entries on the listserv by a certain date before the class met. In this type of journal (Ross, 1998) students ask questions about the chapters they have read. The participants were allowed to share their personal stories when they identified with information that the writer was sharing about students, theory, or recommendations for facilitating literacy practices in classrooms. The journal activity allowed the students' voices and their unique perspectives on the readings to shape the content of the responses they shared with others through the listserv messages posted to the whole group. Through this public sharing on the listserv, the teachers were able to read each other's comments, respond to them before coming to class, and be ready to talk about the assigned chapters at each class meeting with this background knowledge informing their sharing.

The Listserv Exchanges

At the start of the semester students were inclined to review the assigned chapters in a formal tone, as if they were submitting their writing to an academic journal. I have indicated the date of the entry on the listserv at the end of each quote from the graduate students. The names used are pseudonyms.

> Tim's first journal entry states:
> Unlike *Hunger for Memory, Lives on the Boundary* deviates from the hackneyed model of the educational Horatio Algers story, where the subject's will to learn takes center stage. Rose never forgets how narrowly he missed the fate of his Voc Ed buddies, and the real heroes of the story are folks like Jack McFarland, Frank Carothers, and Ted Erlandson: educators who helped stimulate his mind while offering alternatives to the quiet despair of a working-class neighborhood. (2.03.03)

This writing style is in direct contrast to Judy's tone when she opens her response in Journal 4:

> *The Skin That We Speak* is one of the most powerful reads I've had the pleasure to experience, and the many connections to my past, present, and hopefully future work are equally powerful. I am so grateful to be taking this class and sharing these chapters and responses with all of you. I fight the linearity of "business as usual" thinking and writing, so I'll seek your indulgence up front as I organize this response in the ways I connected—to the time frames of past, present, and future. (4.07.03)

These two journal entries give an indication of the different approaches the students developed over the course of the semester. People moved from a formal tone to a friendlier, more collegial tone, by the end of the semester. The online discussions, in-class exchanges, and video interview reviews, all helped to promote a more intimate form of communication by the end of the semester. This could indicate that the students accepted each other as learners experiencing the journey as collaborators not competitors.

As time moved on, there were more anecdotes in the responses and the writers began to refer to each other's comments when they made a point in their journal entry. Lillian, one of two African-American women and the most experienced public school teacher, shared her experiences about teaching high school in Journal 3:

> The last ten years of my career I taught Advanced English 9 and General English 11 students, the latter group well known for being academically disin clined, troublemakers, and "life experienced." And, it was for those reasons I always requested, much to the surprise and relief of colleagues, my wonderful "junior generals." While I agree with Rose's position on the canon for the most part, I included *Othello* as part of their curriculum because it addresses so many issues (racism, parent-child relationships, rumors, love, xenophobia, jealousy, etc.) that are the "stuff" of their lives. Shocked and overwhelmed at first, once students began to work through the language, they felt honored and special that they had a chance to read Shakespeare. They loved picking it apart, connecting it to their experiences, and playing with the language. By the end of the unit, they were quoting The Bard and having fun substituting familiar taboo words with the likes of tupping and courtesan! (2.18.03)

This deliberate resistance to swallowing the ideas presented in the text by Rose is part of the process of unveiling Lillian's personal philosophy about teaching and the role of the African-American teacher among African-American and other disenfranchised youth. It represents a pattern of communication that later became available to more of the students as they found a space to unpack their lived experience in front of and behind the teacher's desk.

The Video Journals

The second level of journal entries required took the form of a three-part series of video and audio-taped interviews completed by each of the participants. The three

parts included a first interview that asked the interviewees to talk about their background and how they came to be in the job they presently held. The second interview was based on a question about what it was like to be in the position the interviewees held (i.e., a teacher, an engineer, or the director of a literacy initiative). The third part of the series was an interview with the interviewees asking them to talk about the meaning of their present position or accomplishment in the context of their whole life.

The adventure that the veteran teachers encountered along the way to creating an edited video presentation included, among other issues, the challenge of making and keeping appointments with their participants; getting permission from the college's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in a timely way; reviewing and editing their video footage into a ten-minute product that told a story; and writing as a class about the best "moves" or follow-up questions they used (i.e., questions they used as prompts for more detailed answers from the participants during each of the three interviews). The students were asked to look at these transcripts with the whole class so we could discuss the follow-up questions each person used in the interview assignment. We looked for video clips that had engaging opening questions, follow-up questions that helped the interviewee to extend his or her descriptions of important points, and clear examples of the interviewer having a comfortable rapport with the interviewee, such as not interrupting the interviewee unnecessarily but listening closely to the story.

According to the interviewers' understanding of the way in which the interviews proceeded to a successful conclusion, the "good questions" showed the interviewer (a) "creating rapport" at the beginning of an interview; (b) seeing the "potential in the emerging story and know[ing] how and what to ask in order to reach a deeper level," and (c) avoiding the "missed opportunity" in which "the interviewer failed to follow up on the participant's answer leaving what was implied but not extracted nor excavated" from the comment. These were descriptions the students included in the final edit script for their video presentation.

A "pitfall" in video interviewing skills, according to the students, would show the interviewer was not impartial to the person or information offered by the interviewee. The class decided, to avoid influencing the data, the qualitative interviewer should maintain an impartial stance during the interview process. Another technique the students agreed was useful in reaching this goal of the interview was named "broad brush-stroke" questions. In this form of questioning, the interviewer finds students often lead to uninterrupted, focused answers to an open-ended question. In another form of interaction with the participant that the students labeled "fill in the blanks," the interviewer could ask questions that allowed the participant to focus and complete the story that begins with a prompt about some aspect of their journey. For instance, the interview might ask the person to complete the statement "for six years..." and wait to hear the response. The students found there was also a form of question that allowed the interviewer to "sustain the story." This type of questioning encouraged the participant to reflect and elaborate upon their answer to a question.

The final step in the interview protocol involves closing the interview. The students found in their journey with the interview series that there are several ways to bring the interview to a close. These strategies include (a) restating information and seeking clarification at the end of the interview; (b) inviting the participant to provide new or additional information especially in areas that have not been discussed; and (c) offering the interviewer's thanks for the participant's time and asking permission to follow up with another interview if it is needed to clarify any information provided in the previous three interviews.

The Video Script

Video clips from several of the interviews that the teachers conducted were then selected to represent each kind of question, prompt, or follow-up strategy the interviewer used to elicit information from the participant. Negotiation about the language and form of the comments to be used in the voice-over on the video presentation of these selected video clips led the students to find ways to communicate effectively about what they needed to say and show on the television screen. This process, as we all experienced it, was a form of journaling that adapted itself well to the video composition environment. The teachers used their experience as viewers of television to make decisions about video images, script writing, and the creation of a writing community.

Discussion

In this class of experienced teachers, the process of creating interview protocols, video and tape recording interviews, writing an edit script as a group, and then editing the video interviews to create a final video presentation, led to an understanding of the way in which video recording can facilitate reflection and enhanced learning. Reading, writing, reflecting, writing, and reading became lived experiences that influenced the choices that the teachers made in the class.

As with the research reported by Banks-Wallace (1998), the graduate students also found that participants in an interview are more willing to tell stories about themselves if they felt comfortable with the interviewer. Because each of the students interviewed someone with whom they had a relationship from school, work, or their family circle, they could draw upon prior knowledge to create a comfortable atmosphere during the interviews. An example of the prior knowledge affecting the interview process was recognized in Tom's interview with his aunt, who is a nun. He was able to ask about her mother's response to her decision to join a religious order because it had been part of an ongoing conversation before the video interview took place.

The class chose a clip from Dee's video script as an example of an interviewer establishing "good rapport" based on a relationship with the interviewee depending on the use of prior knowledge. From the interview with a young writer who was being home schooled, we heard Dee coaxing the interviewee with her comments: "if you want to stop at any time, just tell me. Okay. How are you feeling?" To his response that he felt "a little bit" nervous, Dee responded, "Okay. That's all right. That's normal. Just forget the camera is up there, just that we would be having a discussion and talking about your life and your experiences because you have an important story to tell. Let's start from the beginning. You are in seventh grade right now?" Dee was able to make the participant comfortable in front of the video

camera and coax a natural response to her questions in spite of the young boy being anxious about the upcoming interview.

In the edit script for the video presentation, the students agreed on a script after reflecting on all their interview transcripts and discussing the steps involved in doing a successful video interview. The class decided to write about the kind of questions that would facilitate a smooth interview journey. The following is an excerpt from the video edit script the class produced:

> Voice-over: Like a work of art, the qualitative interview begins with an idea. And, like an artist, the qualitative researcher must be willing to trust the process as the work, the participant's story, unfolds. During this 10-minute film, the work of eight individuals will illustrate the qualitative interviewing process. The process is divided into three major steps:
>
> Step 1: Beginning the interview, which includes creating rapport, and grand tour questions.
>
> Step 2: Conducting the interview, which includes probing, two interviewing pitfalls, the missed opportunity, the journalistic style, sustaining the story, broad brush-strokes, and filling in the blanks.
>
> Step 3: Ending the interview, which includes restating information and seeking clarification; inviting the participant to provide new or additional infor mation; asking the participant's advice and counsel; and, finally, allowing the participant to evaluate the story experience.

Much like the cycle of meaning that Pierce and Gilles (1993) discussed in their work about creating writing in community, the teachers found that writing, discussing, collaborating on written and spoken communication symbols, and choosing representative visuals brought about a product that worked effectively within and beyond their immediate community.

Journal Entries in Response to the Books

As previously mentioned, listserv entries about the books we read represented students' willingness to let go of "academic language" and allow their personal experiences to affect the way they wrote about themselves and their responses to the readings in more intimate ways. The teachers gave themselves permission to cite their background knowledge and "common sense" as they made use of the readings and established connections with each other as fellow journal writers. Through this process, we learned and appreciated the role of journal keeping in our lives as readers, writers, and teachers. We learned to appreciate how the journals also helped to establish a comfortable environment in our classroom. Like the interviewers on the video projects who established a good rapport with their participants, graduate students found a safe space to tell their literacy story in the listserv as well.

Responses to Learning Video Writing

After three weeks of collaboration on the edit script and making decisions about which video clips should represent the journey of an interview on video, Pam volunteered to do the revision of the narrator's script. This was a remarkable turn of events since Pam had been very reserved in the class discussions until that point. The rest of us were visibly relieved and excited when she took over the process of polishing the script for the voice-over so there would be a unity of style in the writing. We also encouraged Pam to do the voice-over when the final video production was edited so we could enjoy her soothing voice during the presentation. Pam eventually made these revealing comments in her midterm evaluation of the course: "In addition to learning a lot about video writing and editing (something I expected), I'm learning a lot about how to facilitate peer interaction (something I didn't specifically expect to be learning). It's value-added." She also admitted: "I appreciate the room [the teacher] gives for self-determination of video content."

Pam struggled the most, to my eyes and ears, with the freedom the group was afforded on their video writing journey. She wanted rules and when they were not forthcoming, beyond those describing the interview protocol, she withdrew to a place that showed her discomfort through her silence. It was important that she eventually found a way to make the project work for her through the collaboration with the other students on the video scriptwriting and was able to see how the notion of freedom operated to inspire the students.

Another student, Hailey, complained about the technical difficulties she encountered during the semester: "I would have appreciated additional hours of availability of the Instructional Resource Center and its various labs during weekend hours. My work hours were not conducive to lab availability." Hailey worked as a full-time librarian in a public school and came to the university just before class started once a week. Her effort to get to the video lab on campus before it closed was deeply appreciated by the whole group. Fortunately, this teacher completed her video edit in time to share it with the class and celebrate her victory over the overwhelming anxiety she had experienced as a novice video producer.

Finally, Dee, a mom who home-schooled her young daughter and found our class to be an eye-opening experience about graduate school, wrote: "I learned more from [this class] and the other students than any other culturally/ethnically diverse experience I've had." About the class management, Dee also commented that it was "very effective with appropriate student input."

Despite the discomfort that the teachers expressed in their early efforts to be collaborators and active participants in learning about video technology, and their steps to master the art of storytelling that was being introduced to them, they found a way to make the journey their own. By talking through their reactions to transcripts, building a voice-over script for each part of the video presentation, and appointing a classmate as the editor rather than seeking outside help with the final video production, the class developed a way to work as a team. The evolution of this working unit into a successful video production crew that used journaling as a major part of their communication process was, in my observations as the course instructor, a product of the intimacy developed on the listserv and the in-class interaction that was experienced as the video production proceeded.

The work of the teachers in the video composing class, like those doing multigenre pieces, was to "get into the head" of the interviewee/character they were representing in the video frames. The process of video production involved careful research, minute analysis of the possible logic behind the interviewees' choices in life, a willingness to bring the personal into the public view as emotions were used to identify with and then reveal each interviewee's intimate life, and finally, to reveal joy in the discovery that we are all ultimately the same despite the differences in skin, personality, and cultural expressions. The reflections posted on the listserv provided another canvas on which the writers could express their inner lives. These were the successful moves or choices the students experienced in their processing of the journal exercises over ten weeks.

Lessons Learned

Journaling helps students connect their personal experiences to the content they are learning (Conhaim & Page, 2003). The learning that evolved from this class did not only take place through the readings and creation of a video presentation. Learning also occurred in the discussions about the readings and reflections on the video interviewing journey. The time students took to write about their feelings and reactions to the three books and video transcripts, download from the listserv, and view film footage allowed them to step back from their emotions and begin to analyze their understandings on the material they were learning. When we looked at video clips from the interviews done outside of class, we were, in essence, reviewing the journal entries of the interviewers and witnessing the learning process from each individual's perspective. The video interviews gave us a chance to learn of each other's research interests. Pam interviewed her friend who had surgery to help her lose weight; Lillian interviewed a colleague who was the director of a research unit that focused on General Educational Diploma graduates at the university; and Dee interviewed children in her neighborhood who were being home-schooled. The class learned to appreciate the styles each person represented as they developed relationships as interviewers with their interviewees. Val was quoted in a video edit on the final presentation as saying, "Talk a little bit about your experiences with education. Like take me from Christ the King, through Regina, through Perdue, and just talk a bit about those big things that stand out in your mind about your education." Also, the group took note and learned from the kinds of experiences that shaped the interviewers' responses to the information that was being shared by the interviewees. Val was quoted in the final edit script as asking, "Looking back, is there anything that you feel that you missed out on, or that you would want to do over or change about the choices you made, or the choices that were made for you? About your education?" We understood that she was basing this question on her friend's dissatisfaction with her life as an engineer.

In this process of creating and then reviewing journals we learned to listen closely to the writer's voice and develop our observation skills. The writer's voice reflected the personal style of communication that the individual thought was important to use with the class. In the excerpt used in this video edit that represents the technique we called "sustaining the story," we can hear Celia's personality. She uses two prompts to get her friend to talk about the different reactions.

> "What was your emotional response after surgery?"
> "During the 8 weeks that you were at home before you got back to work, what was your emotional response to what you were experiencing, the surgery?"
> "We had talked about [it] in our previous meeting about…your daughters' physical support of you after the surgery…how do you think they responded emotionally post surgery? I know that you said that they were very supportive pre-surgery." (1.20.03)

In this excerpt Celia and her friend have an intimate conversation on camera. In the very selection of words used to promote discussion of her friend's experience of the surgery, Celia lets us understand the nature of the relationship and the extent to which she can push the boundaries of privacy to discuss this delicate experience with this interviewee. It is the tone of Celia's voice that helps to communicate the personality this writer is skillfully applying to the video interview protocol.

Reading the listserv messages was as equally important as reading the images and voices on the television screen when we watched the interviews on video tape. Operating with many forms of communication systems facilitated our way of collaborating (Eisner, 1978). Through the multigenre representation of life and experience, we created an atmosphere of trust and acceptance among members of the class and thereby extended our thinking and understanding of how literacy works to build community (Baker, 2003; Macedo, 1994). The writing on email and creation of video footage became an expression of liberation that was celebrated for the depth of insight it facilitated as teachers brought their best thinking on writing and representation to the task of creating a final video production on interviewing skills. Pam and Janice shared their sense of relief as writers who found it was acceptable to express their experience in a personal voice when they wrote, rather than using the academic voice they had come to fear and resent. In Journal 4, Judy wrote about the "harsh pushing" of language issues in her response to Delpit's (2002) chapter by stating,

> I don't know where this comes from; maybe one of you can help me understand why so many are drawn to dichotomies—my way vs. your way—and not our way. What Delpit lays out in Chapter 3 is not an either/or but a "both." And that has promise. (2-25-03)

By sharing her experiences on the issues of race and language in this email posting, some of the class members were able to untangle some of their experiences as White professionals who were dealing with their role in promoting formal literacy. Judy's clarity about her stance on the issue encouraged other people in the group to get their thinking organized on the subject.

The video interviewing journey also gave the class a wide range of opportunities to show their expertise in an area in which the instructor was a facilitator. Letting them choose their topics of research, find their participants, control the recording of the interviews, and transcribe the tapes they created, permitted them to be in control of their creative process (Dowdy, Reedus, Anderson-Thompkins, & Heim, 2004). We had a workshop on video editing using Apple Imac software in one of the computer laboratories at school that was directed by one of the teachers in the class.

In this process of turning over the reigns of control to the students, they learned a ritual that was intended to be passed on to their students. In essence, my actions and choices showed a belief that students in our classrooms have a high level of expertise in film and video composition, and we would be wise to give them a space in which they could explore, develop, and celebrate these skills (Dowdy, 2005). Imitating Murata (1997), the classroom was designed to facilitate their experience of the joys and challenges of this kind of writing composition.

At least two teachers, Pam and Hailey, wanted to know "where we were going" for the first five weeks of the semester. In other words, they wanted to be told about a defined product and directions to get that "right" result and the "perfect" grade that went with it. My insistence that they do the journey and discover the product awaiting them at first made a few people irritable. However, when Dee brought in a rough edit of her video presentation it changed the atmosphere in the class for the rest of the semester. Since Dee got up the courage to experiment with the editing software on her own, outside of class, she was able to figure out the story she wanted to present at the end of the interview journey on the topic of home-schooling. Luckily, Dee had experience with video production from her earliest college days. She also had a husband who taught video technology at a high school before completing his dissertation on video composition. We were fortunate this teacher had the support system that made it possible for her to venture out into unknown territory as a video producer. Dee's video story was well-lit, the sound quality was good, and the participants were engaging. By the time Dee got feedback on the quality of the video production from the class, she admitted that she had experienced the kind of support for a writing assignment she had not enjoyed before that occasion. She subsequently went home and revised the video presentation to create a shorter version and then constructed an outline of a journal article that discussed the issue of home-schooling in the state where she was raising her daughter. Dee later presented her video and research at the 2003 National Reading Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Future Directions

The implications for future use of this journal approach in classrooms point in the direction of quality-site facilities for video production. Without the adequate support of technology available to teachers for taping, editing, and doing voice-overs, the production aspect of video composition will run on fallow ground. The idea of video composition will also continue to remain a myth rather than a fact in most of our schools if teachers are not willing to experiment with video cameras in the simplest settings, such as interviews.

Future research on the topic of teacher education in video production as a form of literacy would be worthwhile if it came from the teachers involved in the process of learning and using video technology. Their inside view of (a) the experience of becoming literate in this form of communication and (b) identifying the point of view of basic level students of formal literacy would help to expand our knowledge base about teaching in literacy classrooms.

Finally, from a technical aspect, making transcripts, posting the scripts online via the listserv, and then reading all those documents posted by others in the class was burdensome. The hectic pace of production is one of the issues with which students had to grapple. It forced them to learn better time management in the midst of their duties as family members, teachers, students, writers, and video producers. They felt they needed to learn to contend with this challenge during their training in the program, rather than later when they were implementing innovative programs in their classrooms.

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Nota Bene: Book Corner

World-Event Trauma Enters the Classroom: Can Teachers Support Students When Madmen Are Running the World?

Abigail McNamee and Mia Mercurio

The way we think about life and our own safety changed after September 11, 2001. Although the attacks occurred five years ago, the incidents of terrorism that have followed allow for no possibility of returning to an earlier illusion of safety. The events of September 11 and the post-September 11 world have heightened fears in all of us: children, adolescents, college students, and teacher educators. They have heightened our sense of vulnerability as we see and imagine details of the current war on terror and recognize the potential for future acts of violence. These events should have affected how we educate teachers.

Teachers, and the students we teach, need help as we try to make sense of, and function in, a world that seems to be run by madmen: a world where "the sky can fall, thousands die, war is proclaimed, and our sense of safety and security disappears in a day" (Greenman, 2001, p. 6). Unfortunately, we cannot create environments in which safety is guaranteed. What we can do is create environments that are physically and psychologically as safe as we can make them. Children and adolescents need the illusion that they are safe—they need to feel safe—so they can develop in a healthy way (McNamee & Mercurio, in press). But it is an "illusion" because in reality safety is never guaranteed for anyone. Traumatic events are often experienced vicariously in students' lives, but they are also sometimes experienced first-hand. Teachers need help in coping with each type of event.

Janoff-Buhlman (1992) describes the "shattering of illusions"—one of them being the illusion of safety—that takes place when we experience trauma. Mudlaff (2000) writes that when children experience violence their belief system is called into question:

> Such children's sense of security and safety has been threatened, which cannot help but change their view of the world. This is a very real loss for a child and should be viewed as an experience that causes grief, much like the death of someone they love. (p. 30)

When children and adolescents become vicariously aware of war, large-scale violence, and terrorism, their illusion of safety may become bruised. When they experience these events first-hand, their illusion of safety may be much more seriously damaged. The bruising may take the form of worrying about whether the adults in their life, whom they have assumed to be powerful enough to guarantee their safety, may not be able to keep them safe; more serious damage may take the form of fear of loss, or actual loss, of family members, friends. When either happens, the illusion of safety needs to be re-established. Teachers need to be able to respond when students experience vicarious traumatic events. As on September 11, they sometimes experience the traumatic event first-hand themselves while being the first-responders for their students.

We cannot avoid integrating, into our teacher-education programs, help for teachers in creating or recreating an illusion of safety. Such help does exist in the form of literature focused on trauma produced before and after 2001 and written for adult- and child-readers. Texts focused on trauma existed previously for professionals; children's books also existed, focusing primarily on war. What follows, however, is a small sampling of what has become available after the traumatic attacks of September 11, 2001. These resources offer specific information on how children, adolescents, and adults react to traumatic events and information on what is needed. Some resources offer a model that can be adapted to new traumatic events of how teachers and others responded.

For Teachers

What Happened to the World? Helping Children Cope in Turbulent Times
Written by Jim Greenman
BrightHorizons.com (2001)
Available as a download at no charge at
http://www.brighthorizons.com/talk to children/docs/whathapp.pdf

Written soon after September 11, this small book begins:

> Children's lives have always been marked by change. Each day brings new revelations that life is filled with storms as well as sunshine. No child ultimately escapes from the experience of fear, loss, grief, and trauma. But extraordinary events that shatter the sense of security of everyone they know and love put a particular pressure on the adult in their lives to be at their best as parents and caregivers (p. 6).

Greenman beautifully organizes the information contained in this book addressing how we feel when children need our help, common emotional reactions to trauma, common changes in behavior, taking care of

yourself while understanding and supporting children...and these topics are just the beginning, a preparation for what teachers need to be effective. The balance of the book is divided by the particular needs of children according to age: children under three, preschool children, elementary school-age children, and junior and high-school children. It concludes with changes we can implement to help children cope with stress, how to answer children's questions, issues of military service and respect for others, tips for teachers, and websites on children and stress.

Forever After: New York City Teachers on 9/11
Anthology Collected by Teachers College Press
Forward by Michelle Fine and Maxine Greene
NY: Teachers College Press (2006)

This collection of essays, just released in July, is written by teachers in the New York City public schools. It documents the experiences many teachers in New York City faced in caring for their students on September 11, 2001, and for many days, months, and years after.

For Students

September 12th: We Knew Everything Would Be All Right
Written by students of Masterson Elementary School in Kennett, Missouri
New York: Scholastic (2002)
Recommended for ages 5 and up

With the help of their teacher, the 18 children in Robertson's first-grade class tell the story of September 11 and 12 in their words. They also created all the artwork presented in the story. The book begins with a description of the events of September 11. The following pages, however, concentrate on the next day: "September 12 was a new day. We knew everything would be all right, because…the sun came up and the birds started to sing again." The book ends with the sun coming up yet again, one day later. The last page is a strong reminder of the book's message: "NOT the end."

The first-graders are candid with the reader not only in their words but in their drawings. The vocabulary is uniquely a first-grader's lexicon. The child-authors are the narrators, and readers learn about their feelings through the children's words and drawings. A child-reader could easily identify with the children who wrote this story knowing that other children experienced what they experienced and felt as they did. Many children experienced September 11 in much the same way as did the authors themselves.

This book does a remarkable job of helping the child-reader understand it is acceptable to feel frightened, because writers—their peers—have expressed the same feeling. The refrain "everything would be all right" is repeated throughout the book. Common experiences, such as going back to school, seeing a teacher's smiling face, reading stories, and singing the National Anthem, have helped children across America feel safe again.

On That Day
Written by Andrea Patel
NY: Star Root Press (2001)
Recommended for ages 3 and up

On That Day responds to the violent events of September 11. The book's message suggests that even though bad things happen in the world, individual people always have a choice to do good things. The author uses language young children can understand, explaining that "sometimes bad things happen because people act in mean ways and hurt each other on purpose." Although there are no specific characters in this book, the author draws the child-reader into a shared experience. She writes, "Whether you're three years old, or thirteen years old, or thirty years old, or one-hundred and three years old, you can help." The book goes on to list all the things a child-reader can do, such as sharing, playing, laughing, and being kind to others. The story reassures the child that "when bad things happen, only a small piece of the world breaks. Not the whole world." The author takes the position that ultimately the goodness of people will win over badness.

Children are encouraged to feel they are not alone, that many people felt fearful, sad, or angry when the United States was attacked on September 11. The book attempts to reassure readers and help them feel it is appropriate for them to experience fear, sadness, anger, and anxiety about violent events.

Additional Titles

Here are other books teachers and their students may find helpful:

Understanding September 11th: The Right Questions about the Attacks on America
Written by Mitch Frank
NY: Viking Juvenile (2002)
Recommended for ages 8 and up

Written by a *Time* magazine reporter, this book is organized in the format of questions that young people may ask about the events. Frank answers the questions in an honest and easy-to-understand fashion.

The Day That Was Different: September 11, 2001: When Terrorists Attacked America (It's Happening to U.S.)
Written by Carole Marsh
Chicago, IL: Gallopade International Press (2001)
Recommended for ages 4 through 8

This is a factual, yet sensitive, book that provides information for children to understand in an easy-to-read manner. Topics include:

- Other Days That Were Different
- The Government in Charge: What Happens When America Suffers an Attack?

- The Geography of Terrorism (map activity of pertinent locations)
- What Is the World Trade Center?
- What Is the Pentagon? Why Did the Terrorists Pick on It?
- What Is Islam? Who Are Muslims?
- What Is Terrorism? Why Does it Exist? Is it New in History?
- Land of the Free: How a Democratic Country Is Different
- Home of the Brave: They Came to Help—Firefighters, Police, the Military, Civilian Volunteers
- I Want to Help!: What Kids, Families, and Schools Can Do to Help
- What Good Can Come From this Experience?
- Tolerance and Your Role as a Student
- Dear Diary: A Page to Record Your Feelings
- Dear Friend: A Letter to Write
- My Questions for Further Discussion (Marsh, 2001)

***The New York Times*: A Nation Challenged, Young Reader's Edition**
Written by the staff of The New York Times
NY: Scholastic (2002)
Recommended for ages 9 through 14

Created on the first anniversary of September 11, the editors and staff of *The New York Times* published pictures and text that had run originally in *The Times* over the previous year. They succeeded in finding age-appropriate material for the recommended age group.

With Their Eyes: September 11th—The View from a High School at Ground Zero
Written by Annie Thomas
NY: Harper Tempest (2002)
Recommended for ages 12 and up

This book was written by an English teacher at Stuyvesant High School, which was located four blocks from the World Trade Center. The collection of ten student interviews allows the reader to understand a unique perspective of that day from a group of unlikely observers.

Dog Heroes of September 11th: A Tribute to America's Search-and-Rescue Dogs
Written by Nona Kilgore Bauer
Allenhurst, NJ: Kennel Club Books (2006)
Recommended for ages 10 and up

Although it took five years after September 11 for this book to be written, it was worth the wait. This book tells the courageous stories of many search-and-rescue dogs and their handlers at Ground Zero, the Pentagon, and the Fresh Kills Landfill. Readers will learn about the heroic efforts of man and animals alike.

Final Thoughts

The title of this Book Corner is taken from Charles Simic's (2006) poem entitled "Madmen Are Running the World" that recently appeared in *The New Yorker.* While the poem itself is somewhat oblique and probably meant to be a metaphor of a world gone mad, run by mad…well, persons, the title captures the time in which we live and teach. Our world, now, is not only difficult to understand but dangerous. Our illusion of safety is vulnerable as we experience vicariously and first-hand a world that has seemingly gone mad. Teachers and their students are left coping with this new reality. We believe these resources may help.

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