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MISSION STATEMENT

Thinking Classroom serves as an international forum of exchange among teachers, teacher educators, and others interested in promoting democratic teaching practices. The publication encourages professional development, research, and reflection. *Thinking Classroom* features articles that foster learner-centered teaching strategies including critical and creative thinking, active and cooperative learning, and problem solving. The journal also publishes articles about the institutional structures that support these practices.

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A Journal of Reading, Writing and Critical Reflection

Departments

Letter from the Editor 3
Daiva Penkauskiene

Look Who's Talking 4
How Do Urban and Rural Schools Differ? Answers from Albania, Lithuania, Romania, Ukraine, and the United States

Strategic Moves 38
Gaining and Holding Students' Attention
William G. Brozo

Website Review 40
Elearningeuropa: Designing Tomorrow's Education
Debra J. Coffey

In Response 42
How Can Teachers Support and Encourage Shy Students?
Susan A. Carmody

Features

Thinking About Teaching: A Case Study of Change 6
Ros Fisher

Help, Substitute Teacher Needed! 16
Yelena Makarova

Refining Through Reflection: Using the Teaching Journal as a Catalyst for Change 21
Wendy J. Glenn

Reflecting on Your Reflections: Detecting the Need for Change 27
Sharon K. Miller

Shifting the Gaze in South African Classrooms: New Pedagogies, New Publics, New Democracies 28
Pippa Stein and Denise Newfield

Letter from the Editor

Lately I often find myself thinking about concepts that are very simple and yet very complicated, about everyday paradoxes. These thoughts have come to me not while I was sitting on a bench observing people or reading philosophical tracts—like all working women, I have no time for such luxuries. Instead these are reflections from my usual environment, educational institutions and conferences.

During a recent conference here, a school principal from a small city near the Baltic Sea presented an interesting comparative study concerning state exams and the educational situation in his region. For a long time this region has been known for its outstanding teachers of [Lithuanian] native language and literature. Most of them hold the rank of "expert teacher" or at least "senior teacher." But the state exam scores of students taught by those outstanding teachers are among the lowest in the country. In contrast, the scores on the same exam in another small city, with only a small number of "expert" teachers, are much higher. So the question "What does it mean to be an expert teacher?"—a question we have addressed in our journal—is still open.

In countries like Lithuania, especially those preparing to join the EU, economic life is rapidly changing: on the one hand offering new jobs and new possibilities; on the other hand bringing new challenges. Many teachers now find themselves in a complicated situation. All the current talk of a "knowledge society" puts pressure on them to adjust to the requirements of the new market economy, above all to its pervasive sense of competition. Those who formerly understood that their mission was to serve as educators of each individual soul, concentrating on the classroom interaction between teacher and students, now feel very much alone, surrounded by teachers-as-managers and teachers-as-businessmen. To be honest, I can't say which of the above are most successful or better accepted by children. I know one beloved principal in a rural school who does not teach at all, but who manages his school with admirable efficiency. I also know a brilliant teacher of literature, whose every lesson is a work of art, whose students do not even listen to her during class. Certainly the question of whether teachers should adjust to changes in the socio-economic environment—and if so, how—is one that needs further discussion.

My last reflection concerns literacy. In many countries this concept has been expanded to encompass a wide variety of knowledge and skills. But we educators are confronted with some interesting phenomena: University students are illiterate in very basic ways. They know how to use spelling and grammar checking software on the computer, but they make errors in basic grammar when writing in longhand. They know how to write a letter of introduction to a potential employer, but they do not know how to write creatively. They can read books, but they compose school reports by copying from their friends' notes or from Internet pages. Is this the so-called "knowledge society"? The new market economy? Or is it something else as yet undefined?

I raise these questions for several reasons. First, I myself think about them frequently. Second, as a reader I am always looking for more controversial articles, articles that invite discussion. And finally, as an editor, I invite you to reflect, to argue, to debate these and other important issues of our time in the pages of our journal.

With best regards,

Daiva Penkauskiene

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Look Who's Talking

THE QUESTION:

How do urban and rural schools differ in your country?

Ariana-Stanka Vacaretu

Math Teacher, Emil Racovita High School
Cluj-Napoka, Romania

The Romanian economic situation has caused a lot of problems for the schools. While in the towns there is finally some possibility for improvement, in the villages—"places where nothing is happening"—it is very hard to change things. In the villages there is no money to invest in schools, because, usually, there is no industry. Many rural school buildings are very old and in poor condition, equipment for rural schools is the exception to the rule, few teachers want to teach in the rural schools, students in rural areas do not go to school because they have to help their parents at work…. An analysis by the Minister of Education in 1996 found that 11,800 Romanian schools (most of which were rural schools) had no proper plumbing, lighting systems, sewerage, or sanitation, and the school buildings were built before the Second World War.

So how can I answer the question: Why should anyone go to teach in a rural school? The building is old and cold, there are no computers, there are no books, there are no teaching materials, the students are not interested in learning. Any parents who are interested in their children's education send the children to schools in the nearest large town, because the rural schools have so many unqualified teachers. Even if it is hard for parents and children to be separated when the children are only 7 years old, the parents want the best situation for their child.

Why teach in a rural school? In a rural area a teacher will be far from any kind of information: no libraries, no new books, no computers, no training, no self-development, no professional development, no universities, not many teachers nearby with whom to share teaching experiences, no theatres, no concerts….

Why teach in a rural school? Maybe because of the children. They are the ones who are acutely affected by the differences between living in a town and living in a village. The children who have the right to an education; the children who are capable of winning national academic prizes if somebody cares about them; the children who want to continue studying. Or maybe because a good teacher can manage to teach his or her students even in the face of so many financial and material difficulties. Maybe because it is a challenge for the right teacher.

I have met one such teacher. I hope she's not the only one.

Valery Shtorlin

Foreign literature teacher
"Kiev-Mogilyansky Collegium" gymnasium
Ukraine

As an RWCT trainer for the "Intellect" Scientific-Methodical Center for Critical Thinking Development, I often travel around the country. And I feel like a kind of Gulliver—I am standing in my own city high school with one foot, and reaching lots of far-off rural schools with the other.

The city teachers have much greater access to information such as libraries, Internet access, and publications on teaching methods, and also have more opportunity to share their teaching experience with colleagues. However, the rural teachers—despite the understandable traditionalism of their current classroom methods—are very enthusiastic about the new methods we offer, and they are very conscientious in preparing their lesson plans. Unfortunately, the economic situation of both city and village teachers, while demonstrating their ability to endure hardship, also demonstrates a lack of support on the part of the Ukrainian Parliament.

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Look Who's Talking

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While most major cities in the U.S. have pockets of affluence, the pattern for about fifty years has been for the well-off to live in "suburbia," tracts of upscale homes, stores, and schools adjacent to the cities. The result is that urban (inner city) schools often serve lower income residents living in relatively miserable conditions. And in economically depressed areas, urban and rural children experience education in quite similar ways.

In schools with mostly poor or working class students, instruction tends to be lowest common denominator, teacher-directed, textbook based, and test driven. Creativity and critical thinking are implicitly discouraged, and there is an expectation of passivity and compliance on the part of the student (and increasingly of the teacher). Increasing defiance of authority results from the intersections of difficult lives with boring curriculum and disrespect.

As our children become more connected to each other through media (television, music, corporation advertising, and the Internet) the differences between geographic areas diminish. But class differences remain. Children in middle class and more affluent schools experience a world view that is more optimistic, and have more hope for future success. But in economically depressed areas, urban and rural children suffer from many similar problems: poor nutrition, lack of medical care, under-prepared teachers, and outdated or non-existent instructional materials. We are thankful for the exceptions to these grim generalizations, the classrooms where loving, caring, and exceptional teachers create thriving environments and nurture exceptional learning.

Hasime Koci

Seconday School History Teacher
Durresi, Albania

In Albania the urban schools have higher numbers of pupils because of the constant population movement to the cities, especially during the last 10 years. This migration is mainly caused by the better infrastructure people find in the urban areas. In the rural areas, students often must travel a long distance to attend school, which leads to absenteeism and sometimes even causes students to drop out.

Teachers in urban schools are permitted flexibility in their teaching methodology. Rural schoolteachers, on the other hand, are less motivated and also less well qualified, which automatically leads to less motivated pupils who lack commitment to the educational process.

Pupils studying in an urban school have easy access to resources such as libraries and Internet technology. In urban areas you can feel there is a more supportive climate for educational change. Such support is much less likely in rural areas.

Donatas Pranckenas

Student
Moletai gymnasium, Lithuania

We are students in a rural area and are very happy with our school. Sometimes, when we meet friends or relatives from our capital city or other big towns, and share our experiences, we feel glad to be in a rural school. The main reason is the good relationships among students, and between students and teachers. The atmosphere in our school is friendlier than in the city schools. We do not have to deal with problems such as alcohol or drugs, or issues of social inequality. We feel that we are all part of a community, sharing our problems, successes, and everyday joys.

A question for the next issue:

How do you promote active citizenship among your students?

Readers are invited to respond to this question by April 1, 2004. The editors will select items for printing. Please e-mail your answers, and suggestions for future questions, to bmichaels@reading.org

Ros Fisher

Thinking About Teaching: A Case Study of Change

Introduction

Teachers in England have been living through a period of great change in how they are expected to teach reading and writing. In 1998, a new initiative called the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was introduced with the intention of changing how literacy was taught. For many teachers this prescribed framework for literacy instruction meant considerable change from their previous approach in which they would work with individual children in reading and writing and much of the English curriculum was covered during lessons in other subjects.

This article focuses on one particular teacher who was part of a research project that took place during the first few years of the NLS. It draws on evidence from interviews and classroom observations from 1998 to 2002. During this time the teacher changed fundamentally in the way she planned and taught literacy. Indeed, she found it hard to remember how she had taught before the adoption of the NLS Literacy Hour. After initial concern about how she would be able to teach within the new system, she became a committed enthusiast for the NLS. Her children's scores in the national assessments for English improved each year. She was one of the few teachers from a sample of 20 who changed the way she taught and planned without losing sight of her main concern: the individual children in her class. Her case is described here to illustrate the concerns and pressures experienced by teachers trying to reconcile their beliefs about teaching with external pressure to change.

The National Literacy Strategy

The National Literacy Strategy was introduced in order to bring about three main changes to the teaching of literacy. Although the NLS is not statutory, considerable pressure was exerted on schools to ensure compliance through training, the imposition of targets, and the inspection system.

1. A clearer focus on literacy teaching. Previously much teaching of reading and writing had taken place within the context of other subjects. For example, the skill of scanning text would be taught in a history lesson using a history text. While this helped children see the purpose of the skill, either little history was learned during this time or the teaching of the reading skill was not consistent with a developmental program that ensured teaching built on previous learning. The NLS requires a daily *Literacy Hour,* that is, at least an hour of focused literacy teaching each day.
2. An objectives-led curriculum. Previous practice in primary (4–11 years) schools had been based on the perceived needs of the class. The National Curriculum (introduced in 1989, revised in 1995 and 2000) had given a broad outline of what should be covered at each stage (5–7, 7–11 years) with broad-based levels of attainment for end-of-year assessment (the National Curriculum for English, 2000, can be seen at http://www.nc.uk.net/nc/contents/En-1-1-POS.html). Teachers planned their own schemes of work within this framework, choosing the order and

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focus of work. The NLS provides an extensive list of objectives at word, sentence, and text level to be taught in each term of the school year. The Framework of Objectives and other documents can be viewed at http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/teaching_resources/?nls=ed. The NLS has a particular focus on phonics with the coverage in the original Framework supplemented by the program *Progression in Phonics*, which prescribes more activities and an accelerated progression (Department for Education and Employment, 1999, see http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/publications/word/63305).

3. A change to the management of literacy teaching in the classroom. For many years concern had been expressed about the extent to which primary school teachers tried to teach literacy individually. Particularly with younger children (4–7 years) teachers would spend large amounts of time working with individual children. In this time they would be either listening to children reading or working with individuals on their writing. Although this could be an effective way of teaching with a few children, with class sizes of 30 or more the children had little individual contact with their teacher over the period of a week. The NLS involves an hour of literacy teaching daily, of which 40 minutes is whole-class instruction.

A typical Literacy Hour involves a 15-minute whole-class session in which the teacher reads a book or an extract from an enlarged text. Children follow the text while the teacher reads. The teacher draws attention to particular features as specified by objectives from the text-level section of the Framework of Objectives (Department for Education and Employment, 1998). The aspects of text selected are taken from the list of objectives for the year group in that term, for example, to identify the point of view from which a story is told and how this affects the reader's response. Alternatively, the teacher may model some aspect of text composition in a shared writing activity. In the second 15 minutes of the whole-class time the teacher works with the students on word (phonics, spelling, or vocabulary) or sentence (grammar and punctuation) objectives again as given in the Framework. Usually, although not always, these aspects of literacy are taken from the text used in the first part of the hour. The 20 minutes that follow are spent by the teacher working with a group or groups of children on a specific aspect of literacy in a differentiated group of six to eight children. They may be either working on some aspect of written composition or reading from group sets of a text. Meanwhile the rest of the class work independently: practising skills covered earlier, continuing investigations into literacy, or working on their own reading or writing. The whole class comes together at the end of the hour for about 10 minutes to review what they have learned. All students are expected to be included in the Literacy Hour instruction regardless of ability, and it is only in the guided and independent work (20 minutes) that teaching is differentiated.

Although most teachers welcomed an initiative that gave increased prominence to literacy teaching, some were concerned about how they could reconcile their beliefs in a curriculum matched to the needs of the individual child with a program that mapped out teaching objectives for all children of a particular age. After four years, despite considerable improvement in reading achievement and some improvement in achievement in writing, teachers' views are still mixed. Most feel that there have been considerable improvements to the range and level of teaching, but many are still concerned that the curriculum is too restrictive and controlling.

The research project

This article draws on data from a larger project (see Fisher, Lewis, & Davis, 2000, and for a full analysis of the changes in teaching observed in the teachers who formed part of the project, see Fisher, 2002). The research consisted of case studies of teachers in the first three years of implementation of the

National Literacy Strategy. The project focussed on investigating the impact of the Literacy Hour in rural schools with mixed-age classrooms. Whilst the data are from such schools, the findings are similar to those of the larger scale, international evaluation of the NLS (Earl, Levin, Leithwood, Fullan, & Watson, 2001).

A sample of 10 schools was selected. Within each school a Key Stage 1 (age 5–7) class and a Key Stage 2 (age 7–11) class were selected (*n* = 20). These schools were identified as already having reasonable levels of literacy teaching and attainment in that the school scores on previous national English tests showed 65–75% of students scoring the expected standard for their age.

Various forms of data were collected. Teachers took part in audiotaped interviews concerning their literacy practices at the beginning and end of the first year. All the teachers undertook a Teachers' Beliefs About Literacy Questionnaire (TBALQ) (Westwood, Knight, & Redden, 1997) at the beginning of the first year. All students were tested using standardised reading tests at the beginning and end of the first year. One Literacy Hour lesson per classroom was observed once a month throughout the 1998–1999 school year. This represents eight observations per classroom and 160 potential observations in total. The observation data include details of the lesson focus, room layout and resources used, timed observations of the teacher at intervals during each section of the Literacy Hour, and observations of target children in each of the four sections of the hour. Written work samples from target children (one from each year group in the class) were collected on each visit, when possible. One year later, 12 of the original teachers were revisited for one Literacy Hour, which was audiotaped as well as observed by the same research assistant. The teachers were given a short questionnaire and interviewed to ascertain their views 12 months later. The same procedure was adopted the following year with the seven remaining teachers.

The study described here draws on this data and reports on one particular teacher who had been involved at each stage of the main project. This teacher was selected because she was one who, when she first learned about the NLS, was very distressed to think she would have to change the way she had taught throughout her career. Indeed, the results of the TBALQ showed her to be the most child centred of the 20 teachers and therefore potentially least able to adapt her teaching to the objectives-led approach of the NLS. She is a teacher who, before the NLS, had been identified by the Local Education Authority as being a good teacher. She was also one of the teachers in the first year of the project whose children had shown the most gain in reading scores and good progress in writing. She was not chosen for this project because of her typicality but because she seemed an interesting case by which to examine the impact of an imposed curriculum on a teacher with strongly held views.

Mrs. Harman

Mrs. Harman is an experienced teacher. At the time of the project she had been teaching at the school for eight years. Before the introduction of the NLS, like many teachers, she had planned her work around topics and texts. She would often follow a text for more than a week and base much of her literacy work on this text. She kept careful records of what children had done and preferred this approach to an objectives-led approach in which outcomes were formulated ahead of the lesson. She was concerned about how she would be able to plan her work according to objectives as required by the NLS.

> *Last year and up to now, I hadn't done the foward planning in the way I was expected to do. It's been retrospective planning, "What have I done and what have I got to…?" I think I like doing it in that way because you get a book and the book itself [tells you what to teach].* (Interview, July 1998)

She described her approach to the teaching of reading as "guided free choice" and used a published reading

Photo: BrandXPictures

program for core books, but allowed children choice of other texts. Children were encouraged to take books home when they wanted and could choose any book they liked. She also had a quiet reading time in the afternoon when children were allowed to browse through books. She taught phonics regularly (but perhaps reluctantly), particularly to help with spelling, but admitted it was mostly with the younger children for "initial sounds and blends."

She explained that her teaching of writing had developed in the year prior to the adoption of the NLS as she became aware of the need to encourage children to write in different genres. However, she remained keen to give children the choice of what they wrote so that, whereas she might model one form of writing, children could choose what they wanted to write. She explained,

> *Well, we've always had this sort of traditional Monday, that they do their own writing about whatever they want, or something that's happened at the weekend, and I start off by modelling mine on the white board. So we do it together and then I might pick out and talk about sentences or capital letters or I might miss a word and they know what's going to come next and we talk about that…and all sorts of things that come up.* (Interview, July 1998)

On the whole Mrs. Harman's attitude to the NLS was mainly positive, but she worried about the work being separated from other curriculum areas. She was unsure how she could reconcile her very responsive, child-centred approach with the structure and planning requirements of the NLS. Over the first year of the NLS, in which we monitored children's progress closely, her class reading scores increased significantly. In writing, the monthly samples from Mrs. Harman's class showed children not only continuing to recount events in their own lives, but also beginning to write about their personal feelings, compose original narratives, and write responses to a class text. Most children's phonically regular spelling improved, and they began to use simple punctuation correctly.

Change in literacy teaching

With all the teachers observed as part of the project, and others I worked with in other capacities during the first year of implementation of the NLS, there were greater or lesser degrees of tension between their previous practice and what they perceived the NLS required them to do. Mrs. Harman was one teacher who managed to steer a course between fulfilling the requirements of the NLS and retaining aspects of her practice that she had developed over the years of her experience. Indeed, "to steer a course" implies that this was a difficult process—it might be more accurate to describe the process as one of assimilation.

Despite her initial concerns, at the end of the first year she was enthusiastic about the literacy strategy. After two years she again expressed this enthusiasm and said she could not remember how she taught before. She said that she felt her teaching was more varied, in that she covered more aspects of language. She also felt she was more focused. She mentioned particularly the teaching of phonics; she felt she had changed to teaching how to apply the skills rather than just knowledge of letters. A caveat to this was that she felt the phonics instruction could inhibit the youngest children in their emergent writing, as they had become so good at working out plausible spellings. She was considering ways of redressing the balance in the following year. By 2002 she no longer felt this was a problem and thought children's improved spelling gave them more confidence to attempt words.

Over the first year of the NLS, Mrs. Harman became much more focused in her teaching. Before the NLS, she followed the possibilities offered by the texts she used and the response of the class to decide what to teach and when. She said, "I used to spend much longer doing one thing, say story writing and we would all start off and all write a story. It might take all morning because they get into it" (interview, July 1998). Clearly, teaching literacy in a structured Literacy Hour could cut across her previous practice of following the needs of the children as she perceived them, rather than following a prescribed framework. However, she managed to retain responsiveness to her class even within a far more structured program than she had used previously.

Her lessons always seemed to have a sense of purpose. In April 1999, the observer wrote,

> *There is no sense of urgency in this teacher's lessons; however, I do feel she's effective in pushing the children's thinking forward because she recognises their thinking and the importance of it by listening well, by responding with thought and consideration, by giving them time to think, by enlisting their help, by valuing their thoughts and remembering what they've said. Her interactions with children are respectful and supportive. Through these each child seems to experience a quality relationship.* (Field notes, April 1999)

This sense of purpose in her lessons is evident. In the observation reported below she is looking at story settings and characters.

> *Teacher asks, "How do you know the witch isn't nasty? Which words tell you?" The children begin to make up answers, but teacher pulls them back to the text—they find "nice," "cuddly," "friendly," "comfy" and talk about each one. Teacher elaborates. Children want to read on in the story but teacher firm!* (Field notes, December 1998)

Mrs. Harman, despite being a teacher whose philosophy was mainly child centred and who had initial misgivings about the Literacy Hour, was successful in her teaching in terms of both observable progress and the engagement of the children in her class. She managed to retain her responsiveness to and interest in individual children while introducing more structure to her planning of lessons.

Four years on

I visited Mrs. Harman's classroom again in summer 2002, four years after the adoption of the National Literacy Strategy. Little had changed from what it looked like five years earlier. The class

had been working on books by the author Mairie Hedderwick, and there was a letter from her on the wall. There was also a map of Great Britain with the Isle of Struay and the village where the school is situated marked on it. The children had also made their own map of the island. On this Tuesday morning the class was working on information books. Typically for a small village school, there were children from 5 to 7 years of age. The lesson started with shared reading of an information text. After this Mrs. Harman explained that children would be making their own information books later in the week on a topic of their own choosing, and that the older children would be starting to plan these in independent work by thinking up questions they would want their book to answer. In preparation for this they then played a game from *Progression in Phonics* (Department for Education and Employment, 1999), in which the teacher holds up cards on which simple decodable questions are written and children hold up a card with "yes" or "no" in response. For this activity younger children were paired with an older child. Following this, half the class went to write their questions, a few went to play a sentence-making game with a teaching assistant, and the youngest children went outside to play with a very large lump of clay Mrs. Harman had found in her garden the day before.

Beliefs about literacy

This glimpse of a morning's teaching showed that Mrs. Harman had retained some of her previous practice and still retained some spontaneity in her teaching. I wanted to explore with her how her views on literacy teaching might have changed over the four years. All 20 teachers in the original study responded to the TBALQ (Westwood et al., 1998), which rates teachers' beliefs about teaching literacy on a scale from child-centred to structured teaching. Her answers to the questions had made her the most child centred of all the teachers with the highest score of 94 (within a possible range of 24–120). The next two most child-centred teachers scored 73, and the lowest score of our sample (indicating belief in more structured teaching) was 35.

On my visit in July 2002 I asked Mrs. Harman to go through the TBALQ again, and I taped her comments as she went through it. It was apparent from the beginning that she was expecting her answers to be different. Indeed they were. Her answers had shifted considerably toward a more structured view of teaching. However, with a score in 2002 of 72 she would still have been one of the most child centred from our small sample. Her responses are revealing because they show how her thinking had changed and how aware she was of this, and because of the uncertainty she expressed on recognition of the changes.

The tape recording of her commentary while she completed the questionnaire again four years on shows surprise, and at times almost incredulity, as she responded and recognised the changes that had taken place in her thinking. The questionnaire requires the respondent to read a statement about literacy teaching and to rate his or her response from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The examples below show this sense of surprise as Mrs. Harman acknowledges the change that has taken place in her thinking.

Q3 Devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable since this practice decontextualises a component skill of language. (1998 – Strongly Agree 2002 – Disagree)	*Mrs. Harman: I know I would have [agreed]… yes! And there's part of me that still agrees with that but I do still – I think I disagree. There's part of me that could agree and part disagree.*
Q7 Beginning readers should be taught phonic skills. (1998 – Strongly Disagree 2002 – Uncertain)	[Laughs] *I think I agree with that now. I'm sure I put … I think* [pauses] *I do think doing a lot more phonics has helped writing more than reading in the literacy.*

Within the surprise there is also a sense of uncertainty. In some cases this uncertainty seemed to come from a clash between what she thought the NLS said she should be doing and what she believed she should do. This showed, in particular, when talking about teaching spelling. She had said in 1998, and reiterated in 2002, that she felt that phonics helped children's spelling and she felt that the increase in phonics teaching since the introduction of the NLS had helped improve her children's spelling. Two items from the questionnaire addressed the question of spelling lists and tests. In 1998 she had disagreed both with teachers giving lists of words to children to learn and the giving of spelling tests.

Q14 Teachers should choose the words children need to learn to spell. (1998 – Disagree 2002 – Uncertain)	*I do [choose the words] because I go by the Appendix list—we're dictated to now, aren't we? Before I think I would have said…I think I'll put uncertain… I actually do it every week—I didn't realise. I give them a list every week for homework (Incredulity in voice) It depends on what we're doing—"'sh" I give them a lot of "'sh" words or the double consonant…*
Q15 Teachers should regularly test spelling. (1998 – Disagree 2002 – Uncertain)	*Well, I do it every week and I am "Uncertain."*

Change in practice

As described earlier, Mrs. Harman felt she had made considerable changes to how she taught and, most particularly, how she went about planning for her teaching. My earliest memory of talking with her about the impending NLS was of her in some distress, worrying about how she would be able to work from a list of objectives. Below, she describes in September 1998 how she used to follow the opportunities offered by a particular text. Commenting on this in July 2002, she explains that she thinks the current way is better but that she still finds it hard. This is particularly important now as she works part time, sharing the class with another teacher.

> Mrs. Harman (September 1998): *I think the whole planning is just a nightmare. I've been doing…last year and up to now, I hadn't done the forward planning in the way that I was expected to do. It's been retrospective planning, "What have I done, and what have I got to do?" I think I like doing it in that way because you get a book and the book itself, if it's a good text like* When the Door Bell Rang, *and you get so much out of it that it just comes to you and you haven't chosen that book because you want to do this, that, or the other. I just don't work that way. I get inspired by what's happening in there [in the book].*
>
> *We actually, after a few days and they were reading it, and I was being the narrator, and I said, "You read all the bits that are in speech marks…" and so we read like that as a play and then with my year two's we thought, "We could make this into a play." It's just there and lends itself to it. So we got some play books out and looked at how they were arranged in the shared writing and the group work. I wrote a list of characters, picked out all the writing that was in speech marks. They said, "Well you don't need speech marks in a play…." So there's the characters and there's the speech and we wrote it all out as a play and I would never have planned that.*

> Mrs. Harman (Commenting on the previous passage, July 2002): *Well, I am that sort of a person—I'm kind of intuitive like that. I do see things and go off….*
>
> I: *Do you still do that?*
>
> T: *Um—no, it's all planned really now.*
>
> I: *So have you lost anything?*
>
> T: *There's still a bit of me that would work like that. That would see things in the book. Generally you work to objectives and you're looking at playscripts. So you might look for a book that has got a lot of speech in it and use it as a play….*
>
> I: *Do you think that is working better?*
>
> T: *I think perhaps overall because you cover everything and you know you've*

covered everything, whereas the other way there were things that you would have missed out because you have gone down different avenues.

We're all conscientious as teachers, and we try to do what we are meant to do. There is a lot of good in the Literacy Hour. I do think that. I do find planning long term ahead difficult because ideas do come to me as I'm working along.

[When I was working full time] I planned a lot daily—I mean I plan overall. I do my objectives for the week, but then I wouldn't know on Sunday what I was going to do on Wednesday. Sometimes they want longer at things—it's much more flexible when you're the sole person in charge.

These comments reflect well the views of many teachers in England today, who, while regretting the loss of spontaneity in their teaching, recognise the advantages of more structured planning.

As well as reflecting about how her teaching had changed, when looking back at how she had described her teaching in 1998 Mrs. Harman was surprised at how similar many aspects were then to how they are now (in 2002). In particular, in 2001, after seeing some NLS training videos about shared writing (in which the teacher models writing in front of the children), she said that she found shared writing very hard but was going to try to do more of it. The extract below shows that shared writing used to be an aspect of her practice pre-1998. She appeared to have forgotten this until she reread her response four years later:

We've always had this sort of traditional Monday, that they do their own writing about whatever they want, or something that's happened at the weekend, and I start off by modelling mine on the white board. So we do it together, and then I might pick out and talk about sentences or capital letters or I might miss a word and they know what's going to come next and we talk about that. "How did you know I was going to write that next?" and all sorts of things like that might come up. (September, 1998)

I agree with this modelling. I'd forgotten I did that. I've forgotten I used to do that [with surprise in voice]. *I used to do that—every time they did their own writing they used to do that. I dropped it, you see, and then it all came back. It still is part of the Literacy Hour, all those three aspects—modelling writing, reading and sharing reading. But it was always [when we were writing] news and now I would do it for other [genres]… When we're doing some of this nonfiction writing I'm going to be modelling some of that—I still do the same thing…* (July, 2002)

Anxiety

A worrying aspect to the way Mrs. Harman talked about her teaching was evident in 2001 when she expressed concern about how she was feeling. She was anxious that what she was doing was not good enough and that however hard she tried she could not live up to what was expected of her. Reflecting on this in 2002, she explained that she had always had periods of anxiety about the difficulties of the job.

Mrs. Harman (September, 2001)*: I always wish I could teach better, and wish I could do it like this. These [training] videos give such a false picture and they leave you so jittery.*
I: *What do you mean jittery? Do you mean nervous?*
T: *Yes, it makes you feel you're not doing it right. I feel like that when I read the English advice notes. I was reading those at the weekend. You should be doing this, this, and this, and I was reading through them on Sunday morning and I felt so jittery afterwards that I was glad to go out and try and forget about it. Every teacher wants to do well, but it's like all the time you're made to feel that you're not really doing it well enough!*

In July 2002, when Mrs. Harman read the transcript of this part of the 2001 interview she said,

I do get like that. I do feel inadequate. I know what I was feeling about then—the videos. I think I must have been watching the writing one where they're building up to writing, all the planning that leads up to writing. It's year six—do you remember that one?—it's so wonderful and everything is so slick, [but] it doesn't work like that…half my class I think are switched off some of the time….

I've always had moments like that one. We are expected to be perfect all the time, and it's not fireworks all the time, is it? Sometimes it's very mundane and things don't work and things that you've planned really well don't work. Sometimes things that you do go off at a tangent that you haven't planned, and work very well so…. It doesn't always follow. Teaching is like working with any people/person job, things don't always work.

It's much more a performance job now. It's all written down every second of the day, and there's learning objectives there for everything. There's learning objectives for history and learning objectives for swimming and you're much more accountable, aren't you?

Discussion

Thus it seems we have a teacher who at the introduction of the NLS was considered by her local education authority to be a good teacher. She clearly counted herself as child centred, and the children in her class performed adequately in literacy tests while being enthusiastic readers and writers. After four years of the NLS, her beliefs as evidenced by the TBALQ and what she said in interview are less child centred, and she has made some changes to her teaching and considerable change to how she plans for her teaching. In particular, she feels that her teaching is more focused and that she now covers a wider range of text types and language knowledge. She feels children's spelling has improved, and the national assessments bear this out. She has now been teaching an hour of literacy each day for over four years, using shared reading and writing, phonics games, guided reading and writing, and a concluding plenary.

Observation in her class reveals a teacher who seems to be able to motivate her class and to pass on her own enthusiasm for literacy. A significant feature of the lesson I observed in July of 2002 was the amount of time she gave each individual child to answer. She was able to do this without losing the sense of purpose in the lesson, and without losing the attention of the other children. Her questioning was focused on the objectives of the lesson, but she regularly used open questions for which children had genuine opportunities to give their own answers. To my mind, Mrs. Harman is a teacher who puts the child at the centre of her teaching and at the same time "delivers" the NLS effectively.

The evidence presented here provides an insight into the mind of a teacher in England four years into the implementation of a large-scale initiative to change how literacy is taught. We also have, perhaps, insight into the way many good teachers think about their teaching and the concern they feel both to do what is best for the children they teach and at the same time to satisfy those ever increasing external demands. There seem to be three related themes here: change, conflict, and confidence.

In the face of change Mrs. Harman was concerned how she would change the way she worked without losing what she perceived as important in her teaching. The large amount of freedom that English teachers have traditionally held has made the imposition of a prescribed curriculum particularly difficult for many experienced teachers. Despite this, it is clear that Mrs. Harman did change the way she taught literacy, and changed to such a degree that she appeared to have forgotten how she taught before.

Nevertheless, as evidenced by her response when reminded of her previous comments, this teacher is aware of a conflict between her current practice and her previous beliefs. She expressed the belief that her teaching had changed for the better but showed a degree of uncertainty in that her new practice seemed to challenge long-held principles of teaching.

It is possible that this conflict contributed to her lack of confidence. Not only did she express uncertainty about her performance, she also attributed to the new strategy teaching practice that she had previously used herself. Although she acknowledged she had always been a teacher who worried about her practice, her anxiety shifted from worrying about how to do the best for the children in the class to how to live up to external expectations. It must be recognised here that this anxiety is caused not only by the NLS but also by other external

pressures brought about by increased accountability.

Mrs. Harman provides an example of a teacher who holds the needs of children in the forefront of her mind and who is able to respond to change in a positive way. She has adopted a new way of working, and her case shows perhaps the best of previous practice merged with the best of the NLS. The question that arises is whether, in the face of external pressure to perform in certain ways to achieve higher standards, her confidence will allow her to continue to develop as a teacher with child-centred views in a curriculum-led culture.

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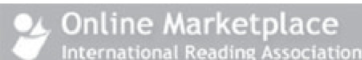

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Yelena Makarova

Help, Substitute Teacher Needed!

Every Russian school librarian is familiar with substitute lessons, always unexpected and not particularly welcome. Ideally the principal lets you know a little ahead of time, or the regular teacher has left a lesson plan. But more likely, the assistant principal simply rushes into the library exclaiming, *Help! Everyone is sick*.

So I, the poor librarian, am asked to be a jack-of-all-trades, to teach any subject from drawing to geography. By this time I have already used up all my planned library classes. What should I do? These days I have something new up my sleeve, and I feel much more confident in these situations. I am eager to try out the active learning methods promoted by the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project here in Moscow. I have had the good fortune to be acquainted with these techniques through a workshop offered by the *Library at School* newspaper ("September 1" Publishing House).

One morning last January I arrived at school intending to spend the whole day in the library. But third quarter is typically the flu season, and the epidemic had wiped out both students and teachers. I soon learned that our biology teacher had fallen ill, and the students of section "7B" were on their own for a double class period. Dashing off to the class, I realized that with my scant knowledge of biology I would never be able to keep 30 teenagers occupied for an hour and a half without…without what? The essence of the RWCT teaching methods is to trust the students and let them construct their own meaning, making use of their own potential and the background knowledge they already have. From this perspective, my only task was to create a favorable learning environment.

We soon found ourselves face to face, a somewhat flustered librarian and the bright, active "7B" students. They obviously had their own plans in mind for the next two hours—it was the first class of the term (so they had no homework) and their teacher was sick. However, I had plans of my own.

Right away I found out that one of the students had prepared a paper on some very serious botanical subject, so I invited her to present it to the class. The presentation proved to be extremely boring for everyone present: for me because I couldn't understand a word of it; and for the class, well, just because…. So I called a halt to the reading and asked the pairs of students sitting at each desk to pose questions to the presenter. The class, being a strong one, switched to cooperative work without much effort. I saw, as we say here, a "forest" of raised hands. In fact, the students were delighted to be asking questions that they themselves were not expected to answer. They not only questioned the presenter, but also critiqued her answers and worked out criteria for assessment. Everyone was happy.

We had taken the first step, but most of the two hours still lay ahead. How many more steps would I be able to make? Quickly, so that they would have no time to regroup, I asked the students to move their desks together, and I divided the class into teams. Each team was given a question, with the answers

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to all their questions designed to constitute a review of the material from the first semester. I had made up the questions from their textbook myself while the class was torturing the presenter. I set out the rules for the upcoming work: (1) They would have 10 minutes for preparation of their answers, using any materials at hand, including textbooks and notebooks; (2) The teams would choose one person to be their spokesperson; and (3) He/she was expected to speak for no more than a minute and a half. Nothing said after that time would be counted. I knew that if we didn't stick to this rule we would need more than two hours!

While they prepared their answers I was busy, too. I outlined questions based on the new material they were supposed to be covering with their teacher. I planned that, after the review, they would move on to reading the new chapter in their textbooks. The chapter was not an easy one, but I was pretty sure that these students would rise to the challenge. They could figure things out for themselves, and even teach me something.

So that's how we worked that day. In fact, the students taught themselves, independently reviewing the material they had learned before, and then independently learning the new subject matter and helping one another understand it. By the end of the two hours these students—the school's most active seventh-graders—had certainly earned good marks for their work in class.

But that session was not the end of my biology-teaching career, as the next day I was called upon to teach eighth grade. This time I had learned about my assignment in advance, but the students had not. Knowing that their teacher was sick, they had cheerfully left their textbooks at home. Fortunately, my library was at our disposal. I located all the biology reference books I had on the shelves, so that we would have enough for the whole class to work.

I need to mention that our 8th graders are really tough to manage. You can't let your guard down for an instant. You have to put them to work the minute they come in. I divided them into teams, announced the assignment, and set the timeframe. This time there was an additional task: to document the research done to obtain their answers.

After they presented the results of their teamwork I offered a minilesson on how to use reference books and showed them a formula for searching reference sources. Even if some of them already knew this technique, it was useful to review.

The active, student-centered methods I used in these two biology classes enabled the students themselves to search for new information by applying their existing knowledge, working cooperatively, and making use of all their skills. When their regular teacher returned to school and learned of my biology improvisations, she was not at all upset. Quite the contrary—she is now eager to find out more about these methods herself.

As could be expected, by February 23, the *Day of the Homeland Defender*, the flu epidemic was not yet over. This time I was prepared. I intended to use the holiday to find out what the "next generation" thought about their so-called *patriotic education*. Our school usually celebrates this holiday by inviting in some World War II veterans, giving a concert, and making posters. However, the older students are generally quite skeptical of these festivities. So I (like you, I imagine) suspected that they actually did not think about patriotic education at all.

As it turns out, I was wrong. These kids are quite willing to consider serious matters, patriotism included. They are also eager to hear one another's opinions. And they have a lot to say; the problem is, we never ask them. We adults believe that such things are far outside the sphere of the teenagers' interests.

While getting ready for this class I decided that I would let the students do the talking. I would not comment on what they had to say, but just listen, and of course thank them for expressing their thoughts.

At the beginning of the lesson I explained to the class that I needed them to help me prepare for a teachers' event. I

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A poster from the time of the Russian Civil War (1918-1921) calls for volunteers to enlist in the military. The contemporary young Russian "patriot" responds to the invitation with obscene gesture.

warned them that they would be asked a number of questions that had no right or wrong answers. I just hoped they would be open and frank, and offer their own opinions. Then I described the format for the task: they would divide into groups of four and develop their answers together. They would take turns being spokesperson for the team. They would have a minute and a half to come up with an answer, and one minute to present it. They were not permitted to criticize other groups' presentations. Everyone who wanted to would have the opportunity to express an opinion.

As you know, it is quite difficult for a teacher to conduct such a lesson, because teenagers generally have trouble keeping quiet, not giggling or making sarcastic remarks. But I so much wanted to maintain a conversational atmosphere. At times it was hard, and I had to intervene to guide the discussion back on track. But overall the students genuinely enjoyed the discussion, even if the topic took them by surprise.

Question 1. *What does the phrase "I am a patriot" mean to you?*

The students were slightly dumbfounded by this question and by the unexpected turn of the lesson. Their answers included the following: a patriot is a person who loves his or her motherland, treasures it, appreciates it, is devoted to it, is aware of its social environment, sincerely respects it (I have tried to provide the exact wording of the students' responses).

Question 2. *In the USA people fly the national flag above their homes at the slightest pretext, on every national holiday or even every day. Why do they do it?*

My students believed that people in the United States want to show their loyalty to their country, to demonstrate their personal patriotism, and to show the superiority of their country and their pride in its achievements.

Question 3. *In your opinion, is "patriotic education" different from "military-patriotic education"?* [Editor's note: In Soviet times this second notion was the only accepted approach to the idea of patriotism.]

Here the ninth graders were unanimous: These are totally different things. *Patriotic education* is aimed at developing love for one's native land, for its traditions and history. The purpose of *military-patriotic education* was to develop in young people the will and ability to defend their country, and to teach them about its military history.

Question 4. (This was, in my opinion, the trickiest one.) *If we do not work to develop patriotism, will it emerge in a person over the course of time, as he or she matures?*

Five out of six groups initially answered: "Yes, it will develop on its own." But kids will be kids—they immediately started contradicting themselves. It soon became apparent that they thought a person would develop into a patriot independently but only under certain conditions—social, educational, family—that

would allow “a baby in the cradle to absorb love of country naturally, the same way it learns to love its mother” (this was how the notion was expressed by one of the girls in the class, one who is not usually this outspoken). After discussing all the various groups’ statements, the class came to the conclusion: No, the feeling of patriotism will not grow by itself without certain preconditions, that is, without special education.

In the course of this class the teenagers had not only presented, but also debated, their views.

Question 5. *In your opinion, what (if anything) can school contribute to your patriotic education?*

Almost in unison, the youngsters answered, “Nothing.” But this answer simply revealed the bias inherent in the question, because as we discussed the matter we realized that actually the school can contribute a lot. For example, it educates future citizens, and acquaints them with the history of their country through field trips, meetings with veterans, memorial lessons, historical marathons and games, the study of national traditions, and more. I was inwardly pleased by our mutual readiness to understand one another. And the students were adamant that the school should definitely consult them on this crucial topic.

Question 6. *What can a school library do to promote the patriotic education of young people?*

In response to this question I instantly got an order: Give us good, interesting books about war and history. However, the students did realize that if a person does not want to learn anything new, the library is powerless. It can only provide information. The student either makes use of the information or doesn’t.

We were finished with the questions I had prepared. Three more minutes remained till the end of our class. So I asked the teams of ninth graders to fill out a short questionnaire, anonymously.

Photo: PhotoDisc, Inc.

Photo: Nicolae Susanu

1. What did you think of today’s discussion: did you like/dislike it, were you surprised by it, did you find it interesting?
2. What did you find interesting? not interesting?
3. Did this lesson have any connection with your own concept of patriotic education?

I could not wait to find out their opinions. As they left the class the children said a polite goodbye and thanked me. That was a good sign. But what would I find on those questionnaires? What was their verdict?

Here are some quotes:

This lesson/conversation surprised us, since we were not expecting a discussion about patriotism at all. It is directly relevant to us.

We liked it and were surprised that we had a chance to discuss different problems in class. We realized that patriotism still exists and will continue to exist.

We liked it because everyone should be aware of his own attitude to his native land…

We liked it because we had an opportunity to express our attitudes toward the Russian Federation. It helped us realize that we are patriots.

This class…has left a deep impression on our souls.

Certainly, it was pleasant to receive such positive responses. They indicated that I had found a way to the children's hearts and minds. Of the 24 participants, only one did not want to speak out, and even he took part in the team discussions and helped develop their joint statements. Some students revealed a completely unexpected side of themselves. It is a pity that I was the only one to observe how "the quiet ones" started to speak, and how some usually weak (and consequently, silent) students tried to assert their opinions. These ninth graders proved to be reflective people. And I, as the teacher, had merely helped them open up.

Under the circumstances, we had far too little time. A 45-minute lesson is not enough for this kind of conversation. Ideally, I would have finished by reviewing the important literature on the topic, or at least distributing a list of the books available in our library. Still, I believe the theme was challenging and engaging for the students. They had a productive exchange of opinions within their teams and developed collaborative responses. Nobody refused to work in the assigned teams. I did not give the students any grades, did not correct mistakes, did not instruct, and did not explain anything. I only listened attentively (and with great interest) and thanked students for their answers. I sometimes stepped in to calm down the inevitable hot disputes, but I tried not to reveal my own attitudes toward whatever was being said.

I had no way of knowing in advance what the outcome of such a lesson might be. For me the most important part of this lesson was the children and their opinions. Right then and there, in my presence, the ninth graders had decided that they were patriots. And this decision was theirs alone.

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Professional development in Kosovo

In the summer of 2003 a Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) course was offered at Prishtina Summer University (PSU) for the second time. Students in the course came mainly from countries where RWCT has been implemented (Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan), and also from several other European countries (Spain and the Netherlands).

Since the program began in 2000, RWCT training offered by the Kosova Education Center and supported by various donors (KFOS, KEDP, UNICEF, etc.) has reached approximately 1,500 (5%) of Kosovo's 23,000 practicing teachers. In the 1990s Kosovo was isolated from new approaches to education, so RWCT teacher training has had a significant impact on schools. (For research on the impact of RWCT on classroom learning environments in Kosovar schools see http://www.see-educoop.net/portal/id_kosovo.htm).

Wendy J. Glenn

Refining Through Reflection:

Using the Teaching Journal as a Catalyst for Change

Stories possess a certain power. I speak not only of those stories that have been passed down from generation to generation within any given culture, but also of personal stories, those that describe our lives as we lead them. If we trust in the truth of these stories, even those that at first seem simple, arcane, or inconsequential, we can find within ourselves the potential to create change in our lives and our world. If we, as teachers, record these stories and reflect upon our experiences in the classroom, we can more effectively guide and shape our future. These reflections might best find a home in the teaching journal, a tool in which we can record our thoughts, observations, concerns, and plans. Taking time to reflect on our practice, critically questioning the choices we make as educators, encourages positive change and growth within ourselves, our classroom communities, and, perhaps, our society at large.

The critical and theoretical foundation: Why create a teaching journal?

Fostering personal growth

> Today Jennie asked to talk with me after class. She told me that she has just learned that she is pregnant and wanted to know if we could meet later to talk about her options and discuss any advice I had for her. Wow! Of course I agreed to meet, but now I am debating what to say when the time comes. Here is this talented student, only seventeen years old, facing a decision that, either way, will influence her life forever. I am flattered that she trusts me and is willing to seek out my guidance, but I am afraid of the responsibility that accompanies this kind of information. I guess it comes down to whether or not I see myself as more than a conveyor of information and instead view my role as that of mentor, guide, even counselor. I genuinely care about Jennie and want to help her. I know some other teachers would refer her to the nurse or the guidance office instead of holding the meeting, but I feel an obligation to Jennie as a human being as well as a student. I cannot presume to know what she is feeling and am thus not in a position to tell her what to do. I can, however, listen to her concerns, encourage her to consider her choices, and support her in whatever she decides. My teacher training did not prepare me for this situation; perhaps I should seek out some type of professional development designed to help teachers deal with such issues. For this afternoon, however, I know that I must do the best that I can to help Jennie make an informed decision. I guess I am more than her English teacher. (teaching journal of Wendy Glenn, April 1995)

Gathering our thoughts on paper as they relate to our classroom experiences can encourage personal growth. As a process, writing "represents a unique mode of learning—not merely valuable, not merely special, but unique" (Emig, 1981, p. 21). As we put pen to paper and describe our joys, fears, breakthroughs, and frustrations, we are able to stop time, to hold for a moment a small piece of ourselves, our students, in the midst. We can look closely at a particular event without distractions and the ever-pressing urgency to move forward to the next task at hand. With this process of reflection comes increased confidence in our judgments. We look back upon pieces of our day, analyzing our work with our students and learning to really see what

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has taken place. Teaching is complex; "writing can be a kind of learning in itself, a way to get more control over our lives and experiences, grapple with our thoughts, and grow as humans (Tchudi & Mitchell, 1989, p. 195). This kind of reflective writing is "introspective and highly personal [and] focused on self-development" (Wellington & Austin, 1996, p. 311). Our stories can provide answers to questions that we otherwise might not be able to answer.

Encouraging professional growth

> I don't know what to do about Geoff. He attends every class meeting, meaningfully contributes to discussions, asks thoughtful questions, but refuses to turn in any assignment that requires work outside of class. I know that he is working at an auto shop after school and that his mother disapproves of this time spent away from home. I have talked with him on several occasions about the importance of completing his assignments. Each time, he nods his head and promises to get the work to me the next day. When I ask about it the next day, however, he apologizes once again for not having it done and swears it will come in the following day. Geoff is intelligent, without question, but he is also in danger of failing the class. He tells me he loves the class and is learning much. How can I take his passion for the material and use it to motivate him to complete the necessary work? Perhaps I should reconsider the assignments themselves. Maybe Geoff could design and complete a larger, independent project on a topic of his choice related to the course. Would this be fair to the remainder of students who do the regular assignments? Perhaps this could be made an option for all. Tomorrow, I will ask Geoff whether or not this alternative assignment idea appeals to him. (teaching journal of Wendy Glenn, April 1997)

In keeping journal reflections of ourselves as human beings and as practitioners, we are encouraged to consider ways in which we may improve the classroom experience for our students and ourselves. We become more aware of what works with a given student, what feels right to us, and what aspects of our methods need to change to meet our goals as educators. As professionals, our practices should be informed by "critical reflection" (McNamara, 1990, p. 147). We should ask, "How can I make learning meaningful and relevant to my students? What meanings are embedded in student behaviours? How can deeper communication with students enhance meaningful learning?" (Wellington & Austin, 1996, p. 310). Unless we take the time to reflect upon answers to these questions (and more) as they relate to our teaching, opportunities for growth pass by in the struggle to simply stay afloat. We must make

time to improve. Repetition promotes learning but only if we do not continue making the same mistakes over and over again. The journal can serve as

> an ear that will always listen; the more you write and reflect, the more you will listen to yourself, to your experiences, to your heart and intelligence. Through this re-vision process, in which you fine tune or change your "vision" of what you are doing, you arrive at sequentially better drafts of your class. (Burke, 1999, p. 278)

This reflective process is just that, a process. Reflective teachers recognize that they do not have all the answers. By continually working to improve themselves, they challenge their own practices and ways of thinking. In this process, teachers repeatedly undergo a cycle of reflecting, planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting once again. The best teachers I know are those who do not cling to their yellowed and weathered lesson plans recorded many years back. These teachers realize that change is essential; we must teach in ways that meet the needs of a changing population. Ultimately,

> reflection is essential to a fully lived professional life. Among teachers, the finest are those who consider their progress in the classroom, who ponder effective teaching strategies and devise creative classroom activities, who practice reflection to set personal and professional goals.... [Reflection] promotes a model of learning that views teaching as an ongoing process of knowledge building. (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2000, p. 68)

Eliciting societal change

> I overheard some very disturbing comments in second hour today. A group of boys was loudly cracking jokes about homosexual males. When I went over to the boys to address their comments and behavior, they were receptive to my request that they stop and did so, a bit embarrassed by my disapproval. I feel as though it is my responsibility to encourage them to be more willing to respect differing lifestyles and belief systems even if they do not agree with them. I don't propose to tell them what to believe, but I do think I need to expose them to ideas and values that differ from their own if only to show them that there is more than one way to live and think in this world. How would these students respond if I shared a poem or story written by or about a homosexual? Could this be done explicitly on my part, or would I need to be more discreet in conveying my goals for the use of such material? Would reading such a piece allow them to see the world through different eyes, especially if they could see the speaker as a human rather than a homosexual? Can literature change perceptions? Can my work in the classroom alter the perceptions of these boys? (teaching journal of Wendy Glenn, October 1997)

Writing, alone, is not enough. Action is as important as reflection. Although the process of writing down thoughts, ideas, and feelings is important, "the journal should lead to thoughtful conversations" (Boreen et al., 2000, p. 81). Ideally, these conversations will spur change within the schools, within the lives of our students, and within society as a whole. The issue of power is very much at stake here. Teachers need the autonomy and sense of control necessary to elicit meaningful change. If teachers can use their own reflections not only to paint a picture of life within their classrooms but also to show how reflective practice has shaped this classroom, they have the tools necessary to enter into the realm of policymaking. They have the power "to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by the consequences which will result from acting upon them,...to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation" (Dewey, 1963, pp. 63–64). Ultimately, the reflective approach "advocates political liberation" in that it "stresses empowerment and personal responsibility, and is contextually sensitive and responsive" (Wellington & Austin, 1996, pp. 310–311).

Teachers have valuable things to say, as evidenced by the increasing body of teacher research being published in journals in several content areas. What began as journal reflections has been transformed into documents that can influence how classrooms and schools function. Carly G. Crowell, a bilingual educator in Tucson, Arizona explored how current events affected her students' understanding of historical fiction (Crowell, 1993). Josephine Pirrone, a ninth-grade English teacher, wondered if the use of e-mail technology might result in increased literacy among students in her classroom (Pirrone, 1998). Barry Lane carefully observed, reflected upon, and

described the lessons he learned from Greg, a 16-year-old autistic student whose tantrums hindered learning (Lane, 1995). Researchers are recognizing the power of the knowledge acquired through teachers' experiences working with real students, day in and day out. Teacher research has the potential to

> alter profoundly the cultures of teaching—how teachers work with their students toward a more critical and democratic pedagogy, how they build intellectual communities of colleagues who are both educators and activists, and how they position themselves in relationship to school administrators, policymakers, and university-based experts as agents of systemic change. (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 470)

Living as a reflective practitioner requires honesty and a willingness to admit that sometimes, oftentimes, we do not have all of the answers. The journal serves as "the petri dish of the mind." Journal writing encourages us to write more, take risks, be honest, and record our thinking at any given moment in time (Burke, 1999). Critical reflection allows us to

> reframe our past understandings, rethink the assumptions underlying our understandings of a problematic situation, and consider the possible responses available to us.... Reflecting on our teaching is not easy, for it involves a degree of personal risk, can produce a great deal of doubt, and requires that we seriously question what we are doing. Such a questioning and systematic reflection, although difficult, is nonetheless important to our growth as teachers. (Evans, 1995, pp. 270–271)

The composition and sharing of our stories can make us feel less alone in a profession that tends to be isolating. In telling our stories, we see that we can contribute to the larger story of what it means to be a teacher. In the words of one of my mentors,

> Tell me a story—a small story, a true story (or as true as you can tell it)—a story from your heart, a story from your life. Tell me of a time when you were hurt—or afraid...or tell me about a small joy you had today. Tell me a story—and your telling it to me will change you—and your telling it to me will change me—and such stories will move us both a little closer to the light. (Nelson, 2000, p. 45)

Practical particulars: What does a teaching journal contain?

Different practitioners suggest differing approaches in the keeping of a teaching journal. Ruth Vinz identifies three levels of reflection: retrospection, or thinking back on a lesson, moment, unit, etc., to get a sense of what happened; introspection, or looking within to understand what happened, why it happened, and how we feel about what happened and why we feel that way; and prospection, or speculating about what might happen if the same material was taught in a different way. With this approach, the classroom is viewed as dynamic, and teachers give themselves permission to improve their teaching and subsequent student response (Vinz, 1996). Renee Campoy offers another model. Pseudo-reflection consists of a list, log, story, description, or narrative of an educational event, a reaction or retelling without thoughtful connection to other events. Micro-reflection involves a kind of writing that reflects self-awareness of the writer's own meaning-making processes but is limited to the immediate situation or event, lacking connections to a broader educational theory system or framework. Macro-reflection entails a search for relationships, connections, justifications, consequences, evaluation, and critical processes driven by a vision in the form of a personal, pedagogical, or social-conceptual and decision-making framework process (Campoy, 2000).

Obviously, reflection may take many forms. Regardless of what the journal contains, it should be personal and useful. It can be typed or scribbled, complete or in fragments, done daily or weekly. Teachers who believe in reflection develop a writing schedule that suits their lifestyle and time allowances. Dorothy Lambert offers a thoughtful way of thinking about the teaching journal. She describes the journal as

> a record, an entry-book, kept regularly, though not necessarily daily.... It is a record kept for oneself. As such, it is fragmentary, allusive, disjointed, uneven in quality. Nor should it be polished and

unified; then it would be a collection of essays.… Not only is it a record for oneself, but of oneself. Every memorable journal, any successful journal, is honest. Nothing sham, phony, false.… Finally, a journal is a place to fail. That is, a place to try, experiment, test one's wings. For the moment, judgment, criticism, evaluation are suspended. (in Macrorie, 1984, p. 158)

Activities to encourage journal reflection

The activities below are intended to jumpstart the reflective process and get us thinking about the kinds of issues that help or hinder us in the classroom. They are not to be used in any particular order and should serve to encourage deeper, more independent thought based on the unique classrooms and students we face each day.

Perceptions of self and school

Reflect on the student you were and why. Were you a student who loved school, a young person who refused to read the required texts but read voraciously on your own, or the student who enjoyed neither school nor reading? Are there students in your classes who are much like you were? How well do you relate to them? Are there students who are completely different from how you were? How do you relate to them? These reflections are important, as the past shapes our expectations and values as they relate to schooling (Burke, 1999, p. 276).

Images and metaphors

Envision the kind of teacher you believe yourself to be by generating a metaphor that embodies your beliefs and subsequent approaches to teaching. English Education students have envisioned themselves as bridge, train, artist, choreographer, animal trainer, octopus, and chef. Do any of these metaphors resonate with you?

Review the journal entries you have written over a course of time and look for repeated images of the young people in your care. Do you see students as clay to be molded, players on a team, travelers on a journey (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 71)? Are students willing learners, frustrated prisoners, or thorns in your side? How have these images influenced the ways in which you interact with students, the curriculum you plan for them, the methods you use to teach and manage them, etc.?

Consider the implications of various teacher metaphors. Teachers have been assigned labels of "educator," "disciplinarian," "manager," "stand-up comedian in small, loud cafe," "wine maker," "jumper cables," "pillow," "octopus," and "decathlon participant," among others (Marshall, 1990, pp. 129–130). How do these perceptions of ourselves as educators shape the decisions we make in the classroom? Do these perceptions help or limit us as teachers? For example, if teacher is perceived as "traffic cop," responsibility for student behavior resides with the teacher rather than the students. The teacher watches students carefully, assuming they plan to "break the classroom law." How does this mindset shape the classroom environment?

Teaching philosophy

Your personal and professional goals and values are reflected in what and how you teach. Your choices in the classroom, for example, result from how you believe students learn best, why you think they should learn in the first place, and how you can help them achieve their and your goals. Your statement of teaching philosophy defines and explains your views about teaching. Do you emphasize product or process? Do you encourage cooperative endeavors among students or independent learning? Do you hope to pass on a tradition of established knowledge (the canon) or design instruction around the diversity of your students? There should be a clear connection between what you believe about education and teaching and what goes on in your classroom; coherence is essential in helping students progress rather than simply jump from one unrelated activity to another.

To develop a statement of teaching philosophy, consider the following questions:

1. What motivated you to become a teacher?
2. What is it about your subject matter that is so appealing to you, and how might you convey this enthusiasm to your students?
3. What characteristics do you value in teachers and why? How do you demonstrate these qualities in your own teaching?
4. What does the teacher need to know about a subject in order to teach it effectively? (McNamara, 1990)
5. In what ways are learning particular aspects of your subject seen to be easy or difficult? (McNamara, 1990)
6. How can your teaching make a difference in the lives of others? What are your goals as an educator?
7. What values do you hope to impart to your students and why?
8. What kind of learning environment do you hope to create in your classroom? How would it feel to be a student in this classroom?
9. What kind of relationships do you hope to foster with your students?

Concluding thoughts

Writing and reflection encourage us to perceive more clearly and more deliberately what takes place in our classrooms, among our students, and within ourselves. As we undergo the reflective process, we allow our stories to make their way from our minds to the pages of our journals; we allow ourselves to witness the power of words to shape our thinking. As professionals, teachers deserve the right to determine the best practices for use in their own classrooms among the young people in their care. The reflective practitioner, by critically evaluating classroom events and performance, earns this right and advances the perception of teachers as leaders.

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Reflecting on Your Reflections: Detecting the Need for Change

Sharon K. Miller

Reflection is, indeed, an important practice for teachers. However, I believe that teachers benefit most from reflection when they revisit their journals and reflect again on what they find there. I suppose this could be called *meta-reflection*, reflecting on your reflections. It is not unusual for teachers to find ideas, events, and anecdotes recorded in their journals that reveal surprising and unexpected attitudes and beliefs.

Once when I was teaching a writing workshop with special education students who needed to pass a state-mandated writing test, I was informed by their special education teacher that this student or that student would not ever be able to pass the test. I was annoyed by her apparent commitment to the students' failure and vowed that I would believe in these students and we would succeed together. However, shortly into the school year, when I revisited my daily journal, I found two specific notations in which I had lamented a certain student's limitations and acknowledged his inability to write. What was most shocking was that I had several writing samples of his that demonstrated real growth. Suddenly, I realized that my practice with this student might be influenced by what his teacher had previously said, even though her attitude was precisely the opposite of my goals with him and of my publicly stated belief that these students could all be helped to write effectively enough for the state test. I had discovered a performance gap in my own teaching. The evidence was right there in my journal, written by my own hand.

The performance gap, according to Hopkins (1993), is a phenomenon that manifests itself in three distinct ways. First, there is the "incongruence between a teacher's publicly declared philosophy or beliefs about education and how he or she behaves in the classroom" (pp. 64–65). Then there is the "incongruence between the teacher's declared goals and objectives and the way…the lesson is actually taught" (p. 65). Finally, "there is often a discrepancy between a teacher's perceptions or account of a lesson and the perceptions or accounts of other[s] (pupils or observers) in the classroom" (p. 65). Ultimately, these incongruities are evidence of a conflict between a teacher's intentions and his or her behavior. What I wanted to do—that is, what I intended to do—with my special education students was to treat them much like my general education students, expecting them to perform with increasing skill as we worked our way through a number of writing assignments.

Because I suddenly understood how my practice might be deviating from my goals and my beliefs, I was able to make the adjustment and work harder to help this student, as well as the others, be successful. The real value of my journal was that, in revisiting it, I was able to find entries that gave me greater insight into my practice and into my students. A teacher's reflective journal can be a valuable tool for identifying the performance gap and other issues of concern that may emerge on the pages for a variety of reasons. Anecdotal information about students might help the teacher identify ways to better meet their needs or to recognize patterns of learning (or not learning) in the classroom. The teacher can then use this information to effect positive change in practice.

If teachers are alert for what the journal can reveal, they will be more ready to resolve the discrepancies or to re-examine their teaching philosophy or to revise their practice based on their reflections. It is critical for the teacher to constantly revisit the journal. Keeping such a journal goes far beyond the *process* of reflection. It results in a *product* that can inform our practice in a way that no other teaching tool or resource can.

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Pippa Stein and Denise Newfield

Shifting the Gaze in South African Classrooms:

New Pedagogies, New Publics, New Democracies

Introduction

In 1964, when Nelson Mandela was on trial for treason against the ruling apartheid state, he said in his famous speech from the dock:

> During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

He, along with numerous others, was sentenced to life imprisonment. Thirty years later, in 1994, after Mandela was elected president in the first democratic elections in a liberated South Africa, he wrote in the closing lines of his autobiography,

> When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor, both. Some say that has now been achieved. But I know that is not the case. The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning. (p. 617)

Now, as South Africans move out of the violence and isolation of the past, increasing attention is being paid to ways in which our young and fragile democracy can be nurtured and sustained. In spite of problems of unemployment, crime, and the HIV/AIDS catastrophe, the South African people are beginning to look outward.

We now live in a global context where the public sphere matters, where what others think of us and how they see us has become part of our consciousness. We have called this article, "Shifting the Gaze." At the macro level, this gaze, through Thabo Mbeki's controversial African Renaissance vision and the newly formed African Union/NEPAD initiatives, is positioning us firmly within the continent of Africa and then further beyond, as part of the global industrialized world. At the micro level, in which we work, we explore how teachers and students in different classrooms across the city of Johannesburg are shifting their gaze to create new pedagogies, new publics, and new forms of accountability.

The Wits Multiliteracies Project

The Wits Multiliteracies Project, which we describe here, has been engaged since 1996 in searching for pedagogical interventions that move teachers and learners out of the repression, violence, and passivity that characterized apartheid education into free and peaceful spaces that facilitate agency, a tolerance of difference, and the development of creativity (Newfield, Andrew, Stein, & Maungedzo, 2003; Newfield & Stein, 2000; Newfield et al., 2001; Stein & Newfield, 2002). We have been working with multiple semiotic modes (such as visual, verbal, and performative modes) drawing on learners' histories and identities. At the Literacy and Educational Research Network (LERN) Conference in Spetses, Greece in 2001, our work focused on the New London Group's

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multiliteracies themes of multimodality, creativity, and culture within contexts of diversity and the development of agency (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 1997, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). This year, our project has focused on ways in which literature, language, and visual arts education can be dynamically orientated toward developing a democratic culture where previously there was none. Using examples from actual classroom practices in early primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, with children from diverse languages and histories, we argue that pedagogies that actively work to "shift the gaze" of learners and teachers within a critical framework can create new publics and, in turn, create new forms of accountability and self-reflexivity. In the three contexts we discuss, teachers and learners have been casting off their chains, shifting their gaze outward to see and represent themselves in relation to the world, as well as gazing inward, and critically reflecting upon their own identities, histories, and geographical locations. We suggest that these different forms of multiperspectivity can contribute to nurturing democratic culture within the South African context.

Communicative Democracy

Our framework for thinking about how we might contribute to nurturing democratic culture within our language and literature classrooms comes from the work of political philosopher Iris Young (1996, 1997) and our colleagues, Penny Enslin, Shirley Pendlebury, and Mary Tjiattas, who explore concepts of deliberative democracy (Enslin, Pendlebury, & Tjiattas, 2001). Deliberative democracy "proposes models of participation" that are committed to "public deliberative processes" (Enslin et al., p. 116). These processes are vital to the rationality of collective decision making in diverse societies that are dealing with problems of the public good. In developing such deliberative processes, the role of talk, of deliberation through discussion, is critical in developing students' ability to make reasoned arguments, to cooperate with others, and to appreciate the perspectives and experiences of other points of view. However, as we know through the work of Jim Gee and others on the nature of discourses and power (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1996), Western forms of critical argument privilege those who have been inducted into these forms of discourse, who know the rules of this game, and exclude those who have not had access to such discursive practices. Moving into a broader range of communicative practices that are more inclusive, Young argues that positively valuing difference as a resource is an essential component in building democratic culture, because difference can encourage a wider range of interactions amongst participants. Her concept of *communicative democracy* extends beyond the use of critical argument to include the power of narrative to "provide access to social knowledge from the points of view of particular social positions" (Enslin et al., 2001, p. 126). Through different narratives, which show different perspectives on the social world, students can have their own worlds reflected back at them and see themselves relationally: They can evaluate how their own concepts of self and identity fit in relation to other positions. Thus narrative has the power to show situated knowledge from each perspective, and combinations of narratives produce a collective social wisdom not available from any one position. Young describes five aspects of situated knowledge offered by social group perspectives:

> i) an understanding of their position and how it stands in relation to other positions; ii) a social map of other salient positions, how they are defined and the relation in which they stand to their position; iii) a point of view on the history of the society; iv) an interpretation of how the relations and processes of the whole society operate, especially as they impact on their own position; and v) a position-specific experience and point of view on the natural and physical environment. (Young, 1997, pp. 394–395, quoted in Enslin et al., 2001, p. 128)

In the examples of work we present, we assume, along with Young and others, that talk is a key mode of communication in such a project. However, we argue that the focus on talk is a narrow conceptualization of communication, particularly within contexts of

multilingualism, and in contexts where discourses are policed, leading to suppression of content. We propose that the notion of communicative work be extended to incorporate multiple semiotic practices of representation, including visual forms of communication, the gestural, and action. We are also deeply interested in how working with narrative and identity across different forms of representation develops students' knowledge of multiple perspectives and can lead to new forms of deliberation, analysis, and communication.

Communicative democracy in the ghetto: From silence to Tebuwa

Our first story is about a teacher, Robert Maungedzo, and his Grade 10 and 11 students. Robert teaches English as a second language and literature to adolescents in a poorly equipped high school in Soweto, about 20 kilometers south of Johannesburg. Robert, like many other South African teachers, is faced with what is locally known as a "breakdown in the culture of learning." As one of his students told him, "We are wasting our time at school because people who are educated are unemployed and those who are driving posh cars are the criminals."

Teaching literature was frustrating for Robert. Students did not read the required books—most did not even have the books. Robert tried to help them to pass the final examinations by lecturing to them on the books' themes and characters. However, faced with student resistance, he began what he calls a "soul-searching." He decided to experiment with multimodal pedagogy. Though he was skeptical of it, he tried it out of desperation.

Robert has characterized his experiences as a journey, beginning with the Station of Reluctance, traveling to the Station of Uncertainty, and then arriving at the Station of Agency.

The book prescribed for Robert's students was *Maru,* a partly autobiographical novel by one of our most revered authors, Bessie Head. The novel is about a woman named Margaret who teaches in a village in Botswana. She is a woman of mixed race, disparagingly called "Bushman" by the locals. When Robert asked his learners to draw rather than discuss key scenes in the novel, the novel sprang to life for them. They responded with profound empathy to the scene where Margaret's mother, who has died in childbirth, lies unwashed on the hospital floor because the nurses refuse to wash someone of the Masarwa tribe.

According to Robert, one mode of semiotic production led to another. The students drew pictures, sang songs, and performed plays. They explained that in their culture songs are sung to ease the pain, and that acting is cathartic: "Sometimes we run out of words, but not out of body language," they said. A group of girls remodeled a giant Western-style doll as shown in Figure 1. "We will counter racism through our doll," they said. As you see, the girls painted half the doll black. They draped it in overlapping cloths worn by different ethnic groups in South Africa. What they made is a multicultural, universal doll, a Rainbow Nation doll—to conform to the key nation-building myth used by the ANC government to imagine a new South Africa.

Argentine was a boy who never said anything in class and had never passed a test in English. He produced the drawing in Figure 2. This drawing represents the

Figure 1

theme of *Maru* through the lens of an event reported in the media. We see a small truck pulling a plough, which is attached to the truck by a rope. But the plough is really a black farm worker who has angered his white employer and is dragged to his death. Over this scene Argentine has drawn an emphatic cross [X]. We are at a crossroads around race in South Africa, he is saying. He is also showing that this form of behavior is no longer tenable.

At the end of the year, in the final Matriculation examination, the results for Robert's students showed a dramatic improvement; out of 140 candidates, only one failed the English Second Language examination.

Robert now has his students read and write traditional and contemporary poems, in their home languages and in English. The poems speak powerfully of themselves and their place in the world. Here is one:

The Humble Soweto
by Themba Kula

Our township is a resurrection
We are still doing our correction
It will soon be a perfection
That will go along with a mission
We all have a bright vision
They think Soweto is guilty
But it's more like a city…
Let us sing the songs of peace.

Hamba, Soweto my love
Hamba Sthandwa
Mama of all the dark children

They ask Robert to take the poems to China, and they attach them to a large cloth made of old maize bags, on which they embroider maps of the new South Africa. (Figure 3) They call their cloth TEBUWA, which means *to speak*. They send it with this message:

> We made this cloth with love for the people of the world. We hope to hear from other children of the world. We have stitched our nation and we are trying to build bridges with other people. We speak through our ambassador, Tebuwa.

The complex and varied work that Robert has achieved with his class is a step out of the ghetto and into the world, toward a freedom and access only partially imagined.

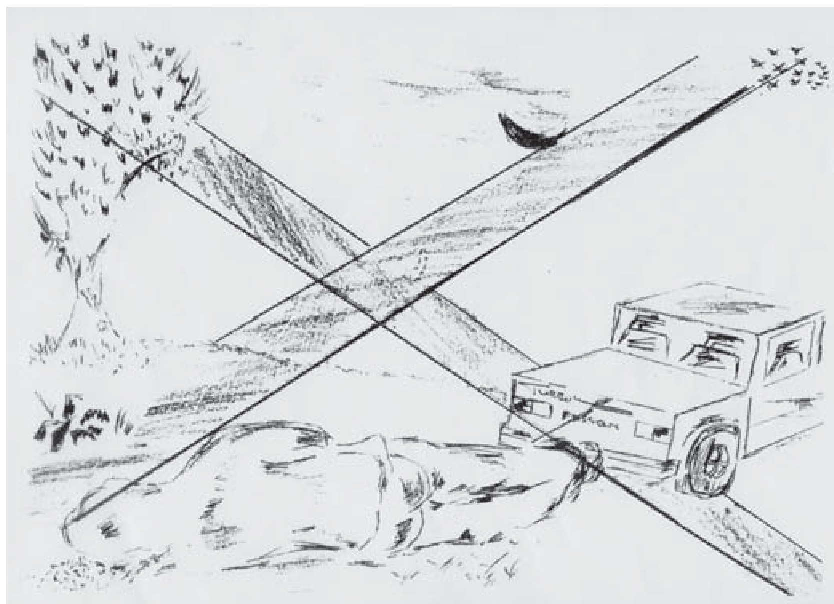

Figure 2

Figure 3

Stitching identities: From quilts to minceka cloths.

The second project we describe works with concepts of identity and representation within the African context. Joni Brenner and David Andrew work with first-year Foundation in English Language students who are completing a course in visual literacy at the University of the Witwatersrand. The course aims to improve students' academic writing and to produce critical and creative makers across the arts. They use multimodal pedagogies in highly

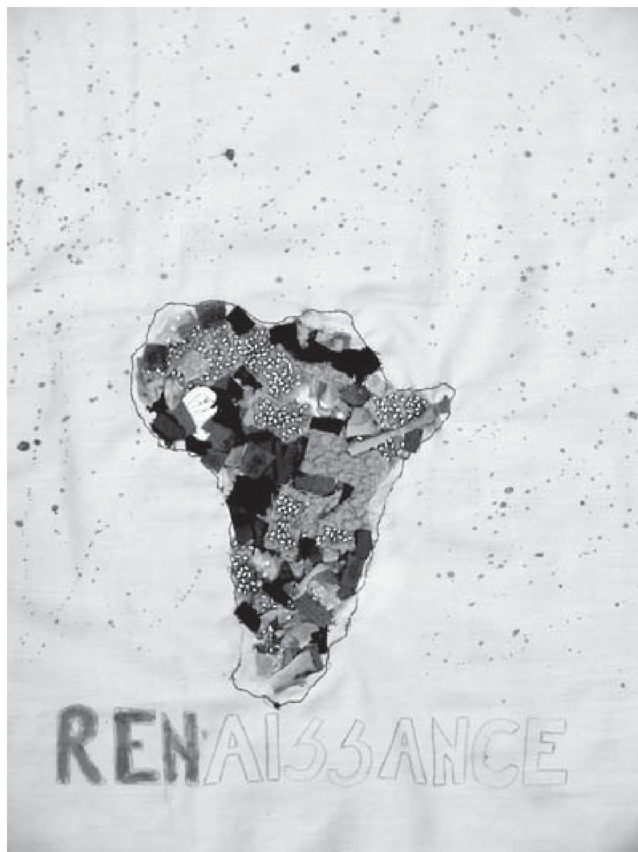

Figure 4 "African Renaissance" by Sefako Mohalanyane
Medium: cloth, thread, beads, paint, pencil, glue. Dimensions: 58 x 44 cm

creative ways, to explore core concepts in the visual arts, such as *representation, translation,* and *interpretation.* With an increasing focus on exploring student identity, last year they asked their students to make a visual representation of themselves for The Quilt Project, a project based on the American quilt-making tradition. Each student was asked to make an individual section of the quilt, and all the pieces were to be stitched together to create a complex visual identity map of the whole group. Significantly, very few of the African students had prior knowledge of what a quilt was. This year Joni and David made a small but significant change to the project. Spurred on by the national discourse around President Thabo Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance, and his challenge to look to the riches of our African heritage, they asked their students to represent their identities and histories through the making of a *minceka* cloth, a decorative, embroidered cloth of hybrid form, from the northern Limpopo Province in South Africa, worn by women as a form of cultural dress. The minceka has been used in local communities to depict narratives about local concerns such as how to vote and issues around HIV/AIDS. Joni and David renamed the project The Minceka Project, and students were encouraged to be as creative and flexible as they liked in interpreting it. A few days after this assignment was given to the class, one of Joni's students—who had missed the introduction to the project—came up to her looking extremely confused. He said, "I've looked up the word *minceka* in the English dictionary and it's not there. What does it mean?" And Joni replied, "But don't you come from Giyani in the Limpopo Province, where mincekas come from?" "Oh you mean that minceka? Of course I know what they are! My mother makes them!" And Joni said, "But you look so surprised!" and he replied, "I never thought I would hear my own language here at this university." The poignancy of this story lies in the fact that this student could not hear or recognize his own language because he had no frame of reference in which it might be possible for learning in a university to be linked to one's own life, language, culture, or history. The idea simply did not exist for him.

These redesigned quilts or cloths encouraged the students to represent their identities in a range of different ways, revealing different ideological perspectives. From the Pan African to the highly individuated, from strong desires for unity on the African continent to the highly personal expression on the loss of a mother, students used the opportunities for representations of self to affirm their roots, not to denigrate them.

A student named Sefako Mohalanyane created a minceka piece showing a proud continent beautifully woven and pieced together in a dense mass of color and texture, which refers to the people of Africa and their geography (Figure 4). This minceka, called "African Renaissance," is also a quiet testimony to the power of unity. Sefako wrote, "I spilled paints outside of the map to show that if colors are spread apart, they don't make a beautiful combination or unity as they

do when they are bonded." Students used these pedagogies and their own skills, what we call this *deep knowledge of making*, for the recovery of agency, for the recovery of selves that have been made invisible in the school system. Through this project students make their own individual narrative on cloth, constructed not in isolation but relationally—in relation to the narrative cloths of the other members of the class. Thus they are stitching a linked network of stories and meanings. This process of stitching narratives can be likened to the verbal process of storytelling from multiple perspectives, which illuminates different social perspectives and points of view on the world. The minceka cloths become a site of situated knowledge from each individual perspective as well as collective social wisdom from the combinations of narratives, combinations not available from any one position. Through the use of critical literacy (Fairclough, 1989; Janks, 1993) and such forms of mediation, we would suggest that projects such as these can be used by teachers to critically reflect on the positioning of students' social worlds, and thus contribute to enhancing democratic culture.

Olifantsvlei–Manhattan Country School Exchange Project

The third project examines what happens when children explore their identities and contexts through communication across geographic, class, and cultural differences. As Jim Cummins and others have demonstrated (Cummins & Sayers, 1995), such networks of communication across distance and culture can provide powerful, authentic contexts for student, teacher, and community empowerment.

In this particular project, Grade 1 and 2 teachers (Tshidi Mamabolo and Ntsoaki Senja) from Olifantsvlei Primary School, on the outskirts of the city of Johannesburg, collaborated with Grade 1 and 2 teachers in the Manhattan Country School, in New York, on the same task: a multimodal project on identity and physical location. The children who attend the school in Johannesburg come from contexts of poverty and live in informal settlements or shacks; the children from Manhattan come from middle income families. At each site, children were asked to make a mural of their neighborhoods and homes, draw self-portraits, take photographs of themselves, and write letters to one another across the oceans.

The project has been illuminating from a number of perspectives. First, the notion of exchange has produced new understandings for the children of *audience* and *publics*. Through having to address themselves to a distant but real audience living in another part of the world that is different to their own, both groups of children have had to represent who they are and where they live for a new public. With this has come a heightened sense of how the self is to be imagined in the other's gaze. In addressing this issue, they have participated in constructions of cultural identity that have projected them out of their local worlds, into a new space for enunciation and narratives of self. However, the gaze did not stop with the dispatch of the mural to each site; through the reflective activities centered around the different textual products, children in both sites were given a chance to examine how their gifts were received. In Olifantsvlei, parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members came to the school to see the gifts from Manhattan, performing ritual ceremonies around their reception. Thus the students could see how outsiders saw them, and how they responded to their communications. The classroom became a site for students to explore the multiple "gazes" that were being cast upon them, both in relation to one another, and in relation to the "other."

Second, the exchange has provided all the children with an authentic communicative context in which to ask questions and get answers from peers who extend beyond their local peers and teachers, and to express what they think, feel, and know, not only through written language but also through images, photographs, videos, and drawings of their neighborhoods. Each textual product is a cultural identity object, which speaks of each place,

materially and socially. Writing and drawing happen because information has to be communicated in a context that matters—in the sense that this is a new relationship to be negotiated. Chicco/Thandazani, a 13-year-old boy whose father is a priest, chose to make a hat for himself that resembles a bishop's hat and to be photographed wearing this hat as a young bishop (Figure 5). In his letter, he wrote, "My name means Pray," and in his drawing of his home, the most detailed building is the church structure attached to the back of his home. In New York, the children responded to Chicco's texts like this (from notes made by Janice Movson, the art teacher who managed the project in New York):

> Many students wanted to see the photograph of the funny boy, Chicco Thandanzani. You had sent three angles of him wearing his wonderful hat. They laughed at his great hat, but I think what most fascinated our children is that fact that he is thirteen years old. When I read the letters to our students and mentioned the ages the students often asked me to repeat an age when it was clearly out of their sense of the ordinary. They would go "ah" and looked quizzically at each other.

In a project like this, difference can be valued as a resource that moves children out of their sense of the ordinary, ruptures their assumptions about the normative, and opens up the space for reframing their understanding of their position in relation to other norms. Discussions around the fact that Chicco is 13 years old and has just started school can lead into deeper, more complex questions about global inequality and social injustices: Who gets access to education and why; the relationship between Africa and the world; the rich and the poor. And this discussion takes place not in an abstract way, with textbook examples on children's rights to education, but focused on a real, living child who is communicating his thoughts, feelings, and desires to a receptive and empathetic audience.

Concerning materiality, the children's texts express different relations and points of access to the representational resources available to them. The children in New York used brightly colored paper in a very stylized way to produce paper cutouts of their apartment blocks, streets, and neighborhoods. Many of their cut-outs had windows that opened, and in these openings the children

Figure 5

pasted photos of themselves and their families (Figure 6).

When the South African children opened up this mural and these windows into another world, they exclaimed "how colorful," "how bright," "how beautiful." By contrast, the Olifantsvlei children produced fine, detailed pencil drawings, with leaves, sand, and grass from their environment glued on to the paper (Figure 7).

These visual texts were absolutely critical in communicating narratives of self and context, and became sources of much needed information about how the other half lives. The Manhattan children used the drawings of houses and environments to read off information about the Olifantsvlei contexts, making comments like, "We thought they didn't have technology in Africa but their homes are full of TVs," or "There's nature in their pictures," and "Their toilets are all *outside*." The Olifantsvlei children, on reading their images and photos, said things like, "I see that you live in skyscrapers and I live in a shack," "Your families look happy," "I see that you speak English and I speak Zulu." What these observations and comments demonstrate is the extent to which social analysis begins with the comparative: looking outward to see what others do and have, and then looking inward to see oneself and one's community in relation to this. Through the use of multiple modes of representation of self, children from different language backgrounds are finding ways to communicate. We think that such processes, which take children beyond their immediate social and physical location, are ways of producing situated knowledge, showing them that the public sphere really matters. This is the beginning of developing a social group perspective, which can now lead into further, more critical inquiry in relation to global differences.

Figure 6

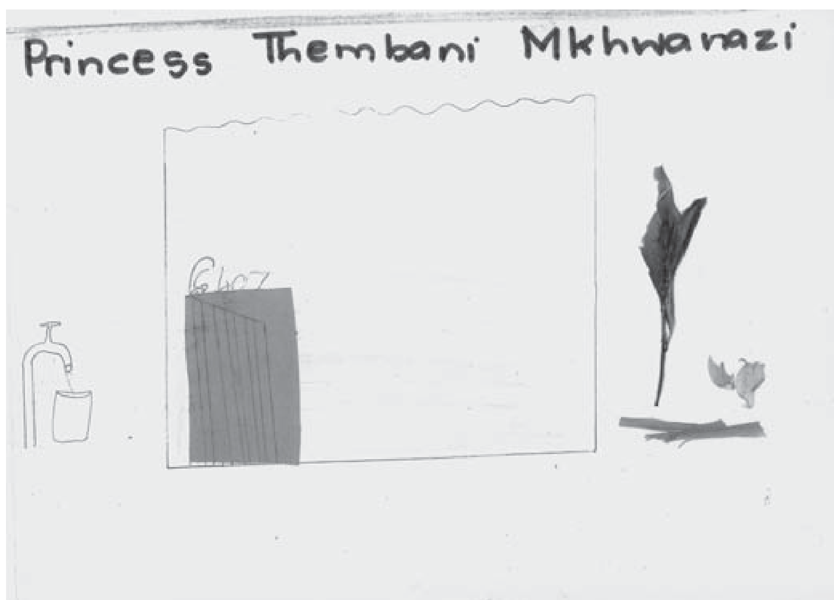

Figure 7

Conclusion

We have described how students and teachers across the city of Johannesburg have taken those first small steps on what Mandela calls the long and difficult road to freedom. These steps are real, they are palpable, they are stitched in cloth, they are sung in four-part harmonies, they are chanted in praise poems, and they are written down in the words of many African languages—Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, English, and Portuguese. They are the voices of the land resonating outward. But that is not enough. To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to begin to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. That is our major challenge: how to work with our students in a way that moves beyond racism, prejudice, and massive inequalities toward social justice for all. The true test of our devotion to freedom is only beginning.

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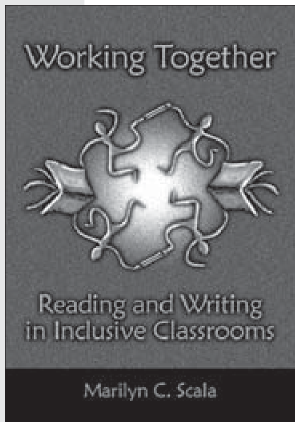

Working Together: Reading and Writing in Inclusive Classrooms

Marilyn C. Scala

Step into the pages of *Working Together: Reading and Writing in Inclusive Class-rooms* and learn how students with disabilities benefit from reading and writing in general education classrooms where literacy is a personal, academic, and social event. You'll read about children with disabilities who learn to listen, speak, read, and write across curriculum areas using fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. And you'll learn about teachers who work through continual reflection and problem solving as they design instructional strategies that lead to their students' success.

Drawing from her extensive background in both inclusive and "resource room" special education, Scala describes literacy learning activities in the inclusive classroom. She advocates using a balanced approach that structures these activities in a variety of formats to ensure that children are continually challenged and successful. The book is organized according to the four aspects of a balanced literacy approach to reading and writing: read-alouds, independent reading, shared reading, and guided reading and writing. You'll also find a helpful list of recommended reading resources in the appendix.

In a narrative style that is personal and engaging, Scala encourages educators at all levels—whether first-year novice or experienced special education professionals—to create inclusive class-rooms that incorporate the participation, friendship, and interaction of students with disabilities in a general education setting. You will discover that, although there is no one right way to imple-ment inclusion, the collaboration of students working in groups with general education teachers and specialists who coteach is key to success.

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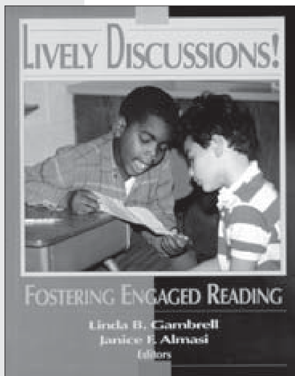

Lively Discussions! Fostering Engaged Reading

Editors: Linda B. Gambrell, Janice F. Almasi

Turn your classroom into an interactive environment where students are em-powered to share ideas and explore the wonderful world of literature. *Lively Discussions!* not only emphasizes why classroom discussion is important but also offers "how-to" advice on implementing specific strategies.

The authors in *Lively Discussions!* offer practical, classroom-based strategies teachers can use to promote literacy development by allowing their students to play a larger role in their own development as readers. You'll find excellent examples of children participating in discussion activities that emphasize collaborating with oth-ers, constructing meaning, and using a variety of texts to arrive at new understandings. These activities foster peer interactions and help children develop discussion skills and the confidence to discover new ideas within a supportive environment.

Lively Discussions! will appeal to all teachers working with developing readers in the elementary classroom. This book expands on the possibilities of classroom discussion to promote new interpretation and comprehension of text.

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Strategic Moves

Gaining and Holding Students' Attention

William G. Brozo

Have you ever had the feeling students weren't really listening to you, even though they were quiet and appeared to be attentive? Signs of attentiveness can be illusory. We know that students can look us right in the eye while we are talking to them, nod their heads, and even verbally express empathy and affirmation, even as they are dreaming about lunch or their upcoming holiday. If they feign attention skillfully, students can pretend to be in the flow of instruction, and the lecturer may never be the wiser. This behavior has been called *mock participation* (Bloome & Green, 1984), and it explains how one can give the impression of engagement while not being engaged at all. In the short term, mock participants may be able to go on daydreaming while keeping the teacher off their backs; but in the long term they may fail to gain any new information and wind up lacking the knowledge essential for further academic progress.

A friend of mine who writes children's books once said to me, "If you want students to be interested, you have to be interesting." By this he did not mean that we as teachers have to somehow transform ourselves into entertainers, but rather that the strategies we use, and the classroom experiences we support, should grab students' attention and keep them focused on the content and ideas of the course. Getting students interested is the key to gaining and keeping their attention.

> *If you want students to be interested, you have to be interesting*

Two strategies teachers have used to bring their students into the flow of instruction and keep their learning focused are *Student Questions for Purposeful Learning (SQPL)* and *Lesson Impressions*.

Student Questions for Purposeful Learning, SQPL

It's only a matter of time before the Earth will be hit by a large object from outer space.

Mr. Janeck wrote these words on the board for his fifth grade science class. He then asked his students to find a partner and think of three questions they would like answered about this statement. Mr. Janeck knew he had piqued their curiosity when even his most reluctant student began talking excitedly about the explosion such a calamitous event would cause. After a few minutes, he gathered questions from the class and wrote them on the board. He placed a star next to the ones that were similar in order to highlight common themes of interest among the class members. He called these *class-consensus questions*. For example, several pairs of students wanted to know what kind of object would strike the Earth; many others were interested in finding out what would happen as a result of such a collision; still others asked whether the object could be stopped. Once all the questions were collected the students were eager to find answers.

At this stage, the students were ready for the presentation of the information. Mr. Janeck told the class to read the section in their science books about asteroids, searching for answers to their own questions and recording them in their notebooks. (While Mr. Janeck used a printed text, *SQPL* is adaptable to virtually any information source, such as lecture, discussion, video, or the Internet.) Mr. Janeck stopped the class periodically to discuss answers to students' questions.

SQPL legitimizes students' own questions as vehicles for learning (Brozo & Simpson, 2003). Instead of being interrogated, they become interrogators, exploring information and ideas with purpose and with heightened attention.

Lesson Impressions

The students in Mrs. Verlaine's lower track literature class present a daily challenge. Many have a history of reading failure,

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Strategic Moves

are reluctant readers, and find it difficult to pay attention. To engage these learners, she weaves into her lessons numerous strategies designed to gain and sustain their attention. One that she has found to be especially helpful is *lesson impressions*.

Mrs. Verlaine begins by presenting her students with a list of words and phrases taken directly from the text they are about to read. For example, she wrote the following words on the board before the class began reading Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*:

Gregor
sleep
morning
insect
sister
fear

Next, she asked the students to write a story or description that included these words. The idea behind this strategy is that the selected words give just an impression of the plot of the story, leaving students to try to fill in the gaps with their hunches, guesses, and creative imaginings. Mrs. Verlaine allowed any student who had difficulty writing his or her own *impressions* story to team up with a classmate. When everyone was finished writing, several volunteers were asked to read their stories aloud, and the class then discussed the similarities and differences among them.

One student's story read:

> There once lived an unhappy man named **Gregor**. He was unhappy because every night while he would **sleep**, an **insect** would sting him. One **morning** he woke up and his **sister** saw that he had a big red sore from an insect bite. She was filled with **fear** and took him to the doctor right away.

A team of two students crafted the following piece:

> **Gregor** loved **insects**. He took long walks in the forest just to look at them. In his **sleep** he dreamt about them. One **morning** he left for the forest and didn't return by the end of the day. His **sister** called the police out of **fear** that something had happened to Gregor. The next day when the police found him they learned he had gotten lost following a beautiful butterfly.

After hearing a variety of *impressions*, the class was eager to discover which one was the most accurate. At this point, Mrs. Verlaine passed around paperback copies of the novella and read the opening of the *The Metamorphosis* aloud as students followed along in their books. She asked students to listen carefully to see how closely their impression stories matched the events of the actual story. Mrs. Verlaine has noticed that the lesson impression strategy helps her students become more engaged listeners and readers. As their attention to story content increases, their comprehension and retention improves, as well.

We can demand that students pay attention, but we cannot actually ensure that they are doing so, because it is so easy for them to create the illusion of attentiveness. Students are more likely to pay attention to the stories and lectures in your classroom when they are brought into the flow of instruction with engaging learning strategies. *SQPL* and *lesson impressions* represent just a couple of ways you might accomplished this. Teachers who strive to maximize student engagement and expand meaningful learning will find less mock participation and more genuine attentiveness.

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Website Review

Elearningeuropa: Designing Tomorrow's Education http://elearningeuropa.info

Debra J. Coffey

The website Elearningeuropa is an initiative of the European Commission that provides a wealth of information for teachers and curriculum planners who want to discover current opportunities and innovations in technology. According to the European Commission, "A major goal of the portal is to enhance co-operation and exchange among all players in the field by offering various services and resources." Although this website focuses on Europe, it is a valuable resource for a global audience. As navigating the information highway becomes essential worldwide, this website provides layers of information about technology with extensive application for educators, psychologists, and business professionals. It is a beneficial tool for technological research that describes various ways in which technology can enhance the education experience of diverse learners. Psychologists will find ideas for counseling, and business professionals will find applications such as marketing strategies.

This site guides viewers through a varied network of technological ideas that promote lifelong e-learning. The European Commission defines e-learning as "using new multimedia technologies and the Internet to improve the quality of learning." This site provides the opportunity for a quick, cursory review of ideas as well as access to more in-depth information for research. For instance, a viewer may read a short summary of an article and then download the entire article as a PDF (Portable Document Format) document.

The site is designed for ease of navigation. A pull-down menu at the top of each page allows users to view the headings and selected features in any of 11 different European languages. The home page has a four-column format with simplicity that makes it widely accessible. Selections on the home page give the viewer an opportunity to view a site map, read basic information about the site, and obtain contact information. The headings across the top of the home page coordinate with the color-coded headings on the page. They speed navigation through the site, enabling the viewer to go quickly to the topic of interest. Each entry under the headings includes a brief description and a representative graphic.

The headings divide this appealing website into seven sections. Four sections provide information about e-learning, various projects, the European Commission, and technological events. Three additional sections offer access to forums, a newsletter, and an e-learning directory. The sections show careful thought and organization.

The section about e-learning includes a plethora of clearly written articles with information about current e-learning initiatives. For example, one article captures the imagination with descriptions of ambient learning opportunities in buildings and public spaces that are "learning enabled." Another article describes media literacy in the context of six dimensions designed to optimize learning. Other articles focus on ways to reduce the digital divide and make e-learning more inclusive, to benefit diverse learners of all ages. Articles explore how e-learning can be used to meet the needs of the young and overcome the limitations of the aging process.

A search engine enables the viewer to quickly find articles on specific topics, and bold headings within articles indicate key points of interest. Significant quotes are highlighted beside articles. For instance, Dr. Richard Straub said, "The answer is to educate and train people with the skills and competencies required for the 21st century." Elearningeuropa helps to make that goal a reality.

This website, designed in 1995 and maintained by the European Commission, gives in-depth coverage of opportunities for e-learning, including locations for training conferences and extensive suggestions for using technology

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Website Review

in teaching. It demonstrates longevity, because the design allows opportunities for easy updates. While most of the technological features of the site work well, the reliability of some of the special features may vary. For instance, most of the articles about e-learning and projects of the European Commission offer links to secondary websites. These Web links generally work well, but some of the sites have segments that are either under construction or unreliable. The Web links that work well offer vivid images, information, and photography that capture the imagination and extend the opportunities provided by Elearningeuropa. For example, the 34 Web links that coordinate with an article about global projects provide remarkable pictures of people around the world and opportunities to bridge the digital divide. These opportunities include grant projects, pen pal programs, service-learning projects, and collaborative programs to meet the needs of a variety of learners and make a difference in the world.

A section of the site with information about the European Commission provides a list of PDF documents for viewers who are looking for more extensive information. These documents offer specific details of various studies and projects concerning e-learning policies and initiatives. They explore ways in which the European Commission is extending the concept of learning beyond the borders of traditional education and training systems to promote lifelong e-learning.

The webpage describing the E-learning Expo in Paris notes that "Face to face is still the most reliable form of marketing for new products, services, and technology." The webpages that describe current events available in e-learning offer many opportunities for "face to face" training and education. Calendars highlighting specific dates also assist the viewer in the planning process.

Signing up for an optional newsletter extends the opportunities for the site. By indicating their preferences for the newsletter, viewers also can personalize the site. On subsequent visits, when they login with their username and password, their preferences are indicated on the webpage to facilitate the research process. Viewers who choose to login can also network with users around the world by participating in forums. Forums and newsletters extend opportunities for viewers to stay on the leading edge by researching recent innovations in quality e-learning and exploring issues such as Internet usage in schools.

The e-learning directory provides a quick guide to technological programs, projects, and resources throughout Europe. An e-learning glossary also enhances this website. This site provides immediate access to current technological information, archival data, and future technological projections for the European continent. A user-friendly, comprehensive source of information, Elearningeuropa opens the technological innovations of Europe to the world and enhances global communication.

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European Schoolnet
The gateway to education in Europe

http://www.eun.org/events

For the latest information on education in Europe, visit the *European Schoolnet* website. *European Schoolnet* runs the largest European teacher portal, provides policy reports for European Ministries of Education and is heavily involved in standards and interoperability issues. Bookmark this page to know what is going on!

In Response

Susan A. Carmody writes in response to the "Look Who's Talking" question in *Thinking Classroom 4*(3), "How can teachers support and encourage shy students?"

As a teacher reflecting on the dilemma of how to reach the quiet ones in my class, I draw from personal experience. Over the years, I have quite nicely constructed my own identity in graduate school as a quiet one. I have found a sense of safety and security in being able to explore the viewpoints that surface around me without feeling the need to construct an articulate argument in defense. Until recently, my silence has been respected by my professors and rarely challenged. It seemed as though the silence spoke its own loud and clear message.

However, a short time ago I had a professor who challenged my feeling of anonymity. She earned my respect as she engaged me in discussion with such skill that I now try to emulate her in my interactions with my own students. First, my professor made clear her expectation that each and every student would participate in class in some manner. She accomplished this by structuring our class sessions so that each student was given an ample amount of time to respond to the material being taught. If too many students were present, we would divide into smaller groups and my professor would weave in and out of the groups. From the beginning we were made aware that there were no right or wrong responses. What each of us knew was just that, and nothing else. Whether it was wrong or right, it was undeniably what we knew at the moment and it was a starting point.

Second, my professor always listened with genuine interest to what each of us had to say, and then she led us tactfully to the next level of critical thinking by asking us to say more. Often, she responded with such phrases as "I am really curious about…" or "Explain what you mean when you say…." I found all of her questions to be nonthreatening because they worked with the knowledge I already had. This sense of comfort with my own knowledge and validation from my professor made me feel safe enough to speak out on, and to ask questions about, other issues in areas where I was less certain.

Third, my professor led our class discussions from the perspective of a teacher/researcher. This, in turn, gave me an added incentive to contribute for the sake of helping her learn. In fact, I believe that this was the most vital component to encouraging my participation. I knew my professor was learning from us at the same time we were learning from her, and because of this I wanted to teach her. She always expressed a real interest in understanding our thought processes and she never hesitated to make her interest known. I have come to believe that a sense of partnership between the teacher and student is an integral component of all effective instruction. The students and teacher need to be in it together.

Undoubtedly, there are many factors involved in encouraging the participation of a quiet student. And, because every individual is unique, there is not one clear-cut formula that can be applied successfully to all. In my own teaching, I feel particularly drawn to my quiet students. I survey the area they have constructed as their safe zone, and then I try to feel my way in. Once I have entered and feel a sense of collaboration and trust, I work with my student to extend this zone. I have the utmost respect for students' silence because it speaks so loudly. It is my job as a teacher to see what it is saying.

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Writing for **Thinking Classroom**

Thinking Classroom (also published in Russian as *Peremena*) serves as an international forum of exchange among teachers, teacher educators, and others interested in democratic teaching practices. It seeks to encourage professional development, research, and reflection. Authors are invited to submit articles that focus on active inquiry, student-centered learning, alternative assessment, and other aspects of educational change. Due to the international nature of the journal, articles should address issues that appeal to a wide audience, and terms or examples that are specific to a particular country or region should be explained in the text.

Thinking Classroom strives to maintain a balance of practical and theoretical information. The writing should take the form of a narrative, rather than a formal research report. Examples from classroom experience, quotations from colleagues or students, or examples of students' work can help communicate ideas to journal readers.

In addition to original submissions, *Thinking Classroom* will consider for publication articles that have appeared previously in national journals with limited circulation, to present these works to a wider international audience.

Format for Submissions

- Submissions are accepted in English or Russian.
- Articles should not exceed 4,000 words in length.
- Articles should be submitted electronically, preferably in .rtf format as an attachment to e-mail, to **bmichaels@reading.org.**
- The full name(s) of the author(s) should be included on a cover sheet, but this information should not appear in the body of the manuscript, as submissions are reviewed anonymously. The cover sheet should also include complete author contact information (**postal address and e-mail address**).
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- The editors rely on a system of anonymous peer review to help them select articles for publication.

  Letters to the Editor, **Reviews** of books or websites, and contributions to **Look Who's Talking** should also be sent to **bmichaels@reading.org.**

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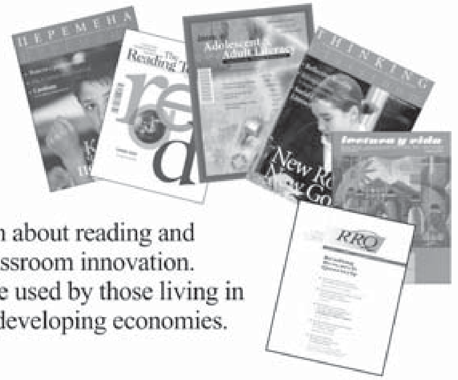

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