

Dialogue



A Publication of the San Diego Area Writing Project

Fall 2015

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“As an educator, I think the most important part of this story is that it started with not only a book, but asking myself, *What if? What if I email the author? What if she writes back? What if I share student work?*”

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“Wonderopolis.org is the site you’ve been dreaming about. Created in 2010, this educational resource explores and discovers questions about subjects that ignite our curiosity and is also purposefully connected to the Common Core

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Inside this issue, we invite you to explore the success teachers have experienced by utilizing technology in the classroom. Whether it be assisting Paralympians in using innovative Bluetooth beacon technology to navigate courses, promoting daily inquiry based learning, or forming long-lasting relationships with authors, the contributing authors offer a variety of resources and inspiration to guide you on your journey to using technology in the classroom.

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Are you interested in engaging in *Dialogue* with the San Diego Area Writing Project? We are committed to improving the teaching of writing by creating a professional space in which readers can learn from the knowledge of fellow educators while authors share and reflect upon their own classroom experiences. Submit your reflections, stories, and strategies for the upcoming *Dialogue* topics:

Participatory Professional Development

Submission Deadline:

December 16, 2015

Publication Date: Winter, 2016

Have you found success as a facilitator of professional development at your school site? How has this impacted your teaching and the morale of your staff? What have been your successes and obstacles as a teacher in a combined classroom? How has this experience prepared you as a teacher leader?

The Maker Movement: Tinkering, Play, and Writing in the Classroom

Submission Deadline: March 1, 2016

Publication Date: Spring, 2016

Have you created a classroom environment that fosters tinkering for makers of writing? In what ways does tinkering allow students to view the world through social, economic, and environmental lenses? How does the tinkering environment you’ve created support equity?

For more information, see page 11.

Championing *Leadership* and **Digital Skills** in a *High-Needs School*

Valentya Banner—SDAWP 2009

“No need for sight when you have a vision.” This is the motto that guides Lex Gillette through his Paralympic journey. In 2012, Gillette, who is legally blind, earned the silver medal in the long jump during the Paralympic Games held in London. Before that, in 2008, he received a silver medal and set a new American record in the long jump while competing in the Paralympic Games in Beijing. And in 2004, he earned the silver medal in the long jump during the Paralympic Games in Greece. Although he is currently busy training at the Chula Vista Olympic Training center for a spot on the podium at the 2016 Rio Games, he still finds time to mentor several classrooms of

students through Classroom Champions.

The goal of Classroom Champions is to teach leadership and digital literacy skills by connecting top performing athletes with students in high-needs schools. Gillette, who was selected as our mentor, created a monthly video lesson on such topics as goal setting, leadership, friendship, and community. I complimented each video lesson by incorporating the selected theme into my daily English-language arts, math, and art lessons. At the end of each month, the students and I shared our learning with Gillette through various digital media projects. After the completion of one unit, students wrote and filmed skits to show examples of fair play. They also created iMovies and Glogsters to share their research and work on the topics of leadership and healthy lifestyles.

In December, however, we were hit with an extra challenge: Gillette needed help independently navigating the Chula Vista Olympic Training Center. Our job was to strategically place Bluetooth beacons around the center that would wirelessly communicate with Gillette’s Google Glass, an innovative wearable technology with a head-mounted display that allows blind athletes to navigate a course by providing smartphone and application information in a hands-free and audio format. The students’ calculations would allow Gillette to explore the Training Center and utilize the grounds for training with ease.

In order to prepare for this task, stu-

dents collaborated with classrooms in Philadelphia and Indiana via Google Hangout. During the Hangouts, the students brainstormed the best way to share the workload, used Google Earth and Google Maps to plan beacon placements, and reflected on the process. Utilizing math and map reading skills, the students created a map of exactly where each Bluetooth would be placed in order to keep within the 50 meter maximum.



The students’ hard work and planning were tested on their field trip to the Chula Vista Olympic Training Center where they used their maps to guide the placement of the beacons. While placing the beacons, the students documented and shared the location with a software developer who would later sync the beacons to a downloadable application that would communicate with Gillette’s Google Glass. The technology is currently being tested at the Chula Vista Olympic Training Center with the hope that it will be useful at larger facilities and in other public places, such as airports.

To celebrate their accomplishments, the students spent the rest of the day with Gillette. He introduced them to his running guide, shared his medals, and talked to them about life at

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the Olympic Training Center.

During a final written reflection of the project, the following comments were collected:

On what he learned from Lex: "I think knowing Lex has changed me by giving me an example of a great leader and mentor for others. I think that Lex has shown me that, in the future, I can accomplish anything. When I work hard I know that I can achieve all of my goals I have set."

On how Lex has affected her: "I think knowing Lex has changed me because he inspired me to never give up on something you are trying to achieve. Also, I think my future is going to be hard, but I have to use perseverance and work hard to achieve my goals! I can work hard by trying to get good grades! I can use perseverance when I work hard!"

On changed perspectives: "I learned that blind people can do more than you imagine."

On self-worth: "Lex taught me to embrace myself and feel good about myself."

After participating in this project, Classroom Champions invited me to their annual planning meeting in Calgary, Canada. As a leadership team, we discussed the future of Classroom Champions and how we can increase the effectiveness of the program. Even more rewarding was the opportunity to work alongside 43 other Classroom Champions teachers from Canada and the United States.

Next year, I look forward to participating as a fourth year Classroom Champions teacher. I am excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. Classroom Champions has asked me to consider speaking at a character education conference hosted by Class Dojo in August, and I am currently working with Classroom Champions to submit a proposal for a leadership conference in Washington D.C.

To see a Classroom Champions created video about our Beacon Project, visit this link: <https://goo.gl/APDvIR>



Congratulations

SDAWP Fellows Summer 2015

Vivian Bangle

Chula Vista Hills Elementary
Chula Vista Elementary

David Berry

MLK, Jr. Middle
Oceanside Unified

Jennifer Boots

San Diego City College
SDCCD

Jaclyn Brown

San Diego Global Vision Academy
San Diego Unified

Patricia Copeland

Jamacha Elementary
Cajon Valley Union

Lauren Drew

San Diego Global Vision Academy
San Diego Unified

Joe Ferro

Lewis Middle
San Diego Unified

Alec Hopkins

O'Farrell Charter Elementary
San Diego Unified

Stefanie Johnson

Miramar Community College
SDCCD

Debora Kay

Stone Ranch Elementary
Poway Unified

Trina Larson

Cuyamaca Community College
SDCCD

Geri Little

Chula Vista Hills Elementary
Chula Vista Elementary

Sarah Martin

San Diego City College
SDCCD

Jennifer Pirazzini

Paul Ecke Central Elementary
Encinitas Union

Julian Rico

Sci-Tech High
San Diego Unified

Heather Turner

Coastal Academy (Elementary)
Oceanside Unified

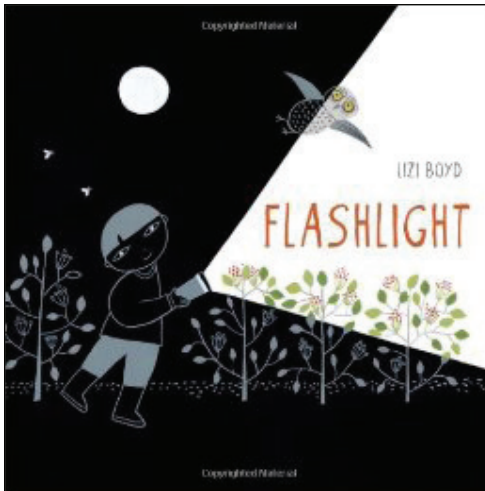


You Never Know Where a Book Will Take You

Margit Boyesen, SDAWP 2008

It all started with a book. A beautiful, wordless book to illuminate the imagination and let it roam. *Flashlight*, by Lizi Boyd, quickly became a class favorite.

We studied it as storytellers, artists, and scientists. The book's black and white pages depicting a flashlight beam flooding the dark forest with color were a wonderful fit for our science unit on the human eye. And using *Flashlight* was the perfect way to give students a chance to flex their narrative writing muscles as they created their own stories inspired by the wordless journey of a little boy in the woods with a flashlight. The



artist in each of us was curious to try Lizi Boyd's whimsical style as we used white colored pencils on black paper with white construction paper to create the shape of the light-beam. Each student chose what item(s) in the forest the beam would illuminate (animals, plants, rocks...) and used colored pencils to highlight this choice (see thinkingwritingcreating.wordpress.com for examples).

Writing the stories was a fun challenge. After studying the book a couple of times as readers, we studied it as writers. What stories were emerging for writers? Some students con-

nected the book to times they'd been camping, others borrowed from fairy tales and other stories they had encountered as readers, and many writers created stories from their imaginations that were blended with real life experiences.

As we marveled at how wonderful this learning journey had been, I was compelled to share a piece of it with the author. *Would this author care? Respond? You never know unless you try, right?* And so, I emailed examples of the art and writing in hopes of hearing back. Going out on a limb, I told the class that I'd emailed. Their little hearts had already fallen in love with Boyd's wonderful stories, and now they waited with bated breath, hoping to hear back. We waited...and waited...and waited for a response (time slows down when you're waiting for something as important as a response from an author!). Nothing. *Oh well, it was worth a try*, I thought. Then just as I'd given up hope, a cheery email reply appeared in my inbox.

"I LOVE where you took my book, *Flashlight!* I LOVE that you created your own stories. This is a very cool project! When I [created] this book and made it wordless what I wanted was for it to truly belong to the reader; their eyes, their interpretations, their stories. You've done that and gone even further than even I'd imagined." (Excerpt from the first email from the author, Lizi Boyd).

Not only did the author reply; it came with the promise of a box and a book in the mail! The author generously sent not only a brand new copy of her other lovely wordless book, *Inside Outside*, but also 44 beautiful little notebooks and bookmarks for the class. The author shares her fresh, whimsical style via her paper company as well as her books (<http://liziboyn.com/papers>).

"Keep drawing, writing and imagining," was the author's advice to our class. The kids were beyond excited! "I'll treasure this forever!" one of our 3rd graders exclaimed about her notebook. The timing couldn't have been better either. We'd just embarked on a "Gift of Words" project in our class before the holiday break. The idea was to collect words, phrases, and paragraphs that spoke to the students in some way. Each of the bookmarks Ms. Boyd sent us had a short quote on it, which sent shivers of excitement down our writers' and word-collectors' spines... Such joy!

Flashlight was the perfect way to give students a chance to flex their narrative writing muscles as they created their own stories inspired by the wordless journey of a little boy in the woods with a flashlight.

Showing gratitude in letter format is the perfect opportunity to write for an authentic purpose, and all 44 fans put their whole heart into it! Each writer had plenty of appreciation to share with our now-favorite author and many drew sweet pictures of

notebooks and flashlights. Then, carefully sealed in a large manila envelope, we sent off our thank you letters to chilly Vermont, knowing we had done the best we could to express our gratitude.

In an email from the author, we learned that two of our letters had been posted on Chronicle Books' Blog! As Lizi Boyd said in her email: "And please, it doesn't matter whose letters were posted because they loved them all and your projects with the books..." We're so excited to have been included on a publisher's blog: <http://www.chroniclebooks.com/blog/2015/02/18/dear-author-letters-from-young-readers/>

After months of emailing with "our" Lizi Boyd, I proposed the idea of a video chat with her. Our class was over-the-moon excited to "meet" the author and illustrator (and her dog, Ollie) via Skype! We were able to arrange the video chat on Digital Learning Day (March 13, 2015); there's really no better way of celebrating digital learning than video chatting with a favorite author! "Words...you have to hear them," began Ms. Boyd as she shared a glimpse into her journey as a writer. From explaining what an agent is to sharing that she likes making presents, we learned quite a bit in our 30 minutes of shared time with this vivacious lady!

As an educator, I think the most important part of this story is that it started with not only a book, but asking myself, *What if?*

In preparation for this event, we brainstormed questions as a class and selected our top six. Student interviewers were selected to ask Ms. Boyd questions on camera (and in the end, we did have time for lots of extra questions and answers). We learned a bit about her hobbies, her inspirations as a writer, her love of Paris, San Francisco and soup, and other books she's written. She gave us a little tour of her lovely studio and Ollie peeked into the frame. We found out that her wonderful, wordless books, *Inside Outside* and *Flashlight*, have been published in numerous other languages, including French, Chinese, and Korean.

Video chatting with "our" Lizi Boyd was such an amazing experience, and I am thrilled that she has offered to visit our classroom during the upcoming school year. I can only imagine the impact meeting the author of such influential books will have on the students and their writing. As an educator, I think the most important part of this story is that it started with not only a book, but asking myself, *What if? What if I email the author? What if she writes back? What if I share student work?* The Internet truly is connecting and shrinking the world, and authors really do want to connect with kids and classrooms. I took a chance by sending writing and artwork to Ms. Boyd, and why not? Building a relationship with an author is not a new concept, though revisiting this concept via video chat is certainly worth considering. Who's a favorite author in your classroom? Why not email, follow them on Twitter, or check if they have a Facebook page? Connect with them; they'd love to see what you're doing in your classroom and you never know where it might lead...

Books Cited: Boyd, Lizi. *Flashlight*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2014. Boyd, Lizi. *InsideOutside*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2013.



Project Notes

Kudos to SDAWP Fellows Margit Boyesen (2008), Janet Ilko (2008), Rob Meza-Ehlert (2009), and Makeba Jones (2002) for being featured in the recently published book, *Surviving & Thriving with Teacher Action Research: Reflections and Advice from the Field*, edited by Heather Lattimer (SDAWP 2005) and Stacey Callier.

Congratulations to Raquel Carr (SDAWP 2006), the new assistant principal at San Marcos High School in San Marcos Unified School District.

Way to go, Carol Schrammel for her contribution to the book, *NEXUS: Complicating Community & Centering the Self / A 20-Year Retrospective of a College-Based Community Center*. Carol's piece, "Community Partnership," appears in Section V - "Voices: Stories That Communities Tell." Carol was also honored for her work at the gala celebration in May at UC San Diego.

Bravo, Holly Bauer (SDAWP 1998), Co-Director of Warren Writing Program, for her recently published book, *Food Matters, A Bedford Spotlight Reader*, available at: <http://www.amazon.com/Food-Matters-Bedford-Spotlight-Reader/dp/14576>

Congrats to Stella Erkam (SDAWP 2007) on her new position at Solana Vista Elementary as a 3rd grade teacher.

Thank you, Laura Smart (SDAWP 2010), for all you've contributed to SDAWP. We wish you the very best at your new position in the Ontario-Montclair School District.

A round of applause for Margit Boyesen (SDAWP 2008) whose photography exhibit, "Faces of Mafi Tsati," was on display at UCSD's Art Space in the Price Center from July-August 8.

Props to Janis Jones (SDAWP 1994)! Her "On the Horizon" environmental photographs will be on exhibit at the Bay Model Visitor Center Gallery in Sausalito, CA from August 25 to October 3, 2015.

"Like us" on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SDAWP where links to writing resources and research articles are posted regularly, offering a wealth of ideas for curriculum design and implementation.

Follow @SDAWP_Fellow on Twitter and join the conversation as a different Fellow takes over each week to Tweet about teaching and life from a unique perspective.

Visit our blog, *SDAWP Voices*: A place for conversations about writing, teaching, and leadership. Subscribe and contribute to the conversation.

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Young
Writers'
Camp

The Road to Writing

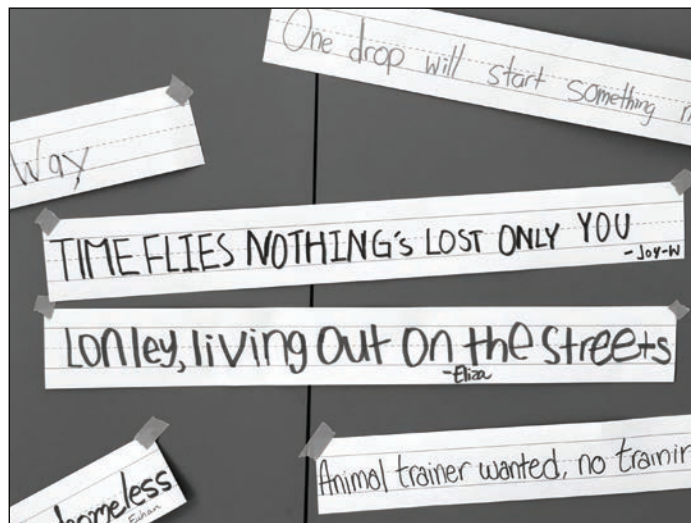
Nathan Park

Let your pencil go.
See it fly.
Journey to other worlds
filled with imagination.
Open the mysterious door
to amusing dreams.
Look at the pages
flipping past.
Dive into the everlasting
universe.
Smell the scent of freedom
in your words.
Zoom through your
limitless imagination.
Expand your mind,
from cities to galaxies.
Blossom your thoughts
on the pages.
Then, you will reach the end
But the beginning
to another world.

They're Not Just Words

Elisabeth Weimar

A sharpened pencil in hand
Clean pages
Ready to be used
Longing to be filled with words
But they're not just words
Every time a pencil touches paper
Everything comes alive
People, places, emotions
Can be expressed
In less than a sentence
Words can be more powerful
Than any emotion you ever felt
All the poets
Emily Dickenson, Robert Frost,
Now, their poems are special
Such perfection, such elegance
So, what I mean to say is that
They're not just words



Garden Inspection

Lauren Lakin

Where do I begin? The beauty of the flowers. Yellow marigolds. Oh, I wish you were there. The sun was shining on the marigolds, making them brighter than ever. They were so yellow, like pure gold with soft petals and a sweet musky odor. All swaying in the wind, bobbing and turning.

Every time you looked, new life would appear: a bee, a butterfly, a moth! "Could it be?" I asked. "Was it a fly or a beetle?" It was metallic blue as deep as the ocean waters. Bees flying around with pollen on their fragile little legs, like yellow-orange leg warmers.

Each flower was different, each with its own height like people. Some flowers dead or still waiting to bloom. Even the dead ones had a pleasant fruity smell. There were baby lizards and green-blue June bugs. Even little red dainty ladybugs, one of which landed on me.

Celebrate marigolds. Celebrate nature.

Garden

Daniela Soto

Inside my name is hidden a garden filled with exotic aromas. On your right, silver flowers glittering with dew drops creep across a silken marble bridge. Underneath a clear stream hops over smooth stones that glisten in the warm sunlight. A light breeze skips over a fruit garden to your left, inviting you in. You enter through a wide arc, on which hangs magnificent grapes. Shifting your eyes, you see row after row of juicy fruits. You dig in.



Tell Them

Melina Fernoñ

Tell them that I am an explorer,
finding and exploring
new things in the outside world.

Say that I smell of pineapple,
so sweet and juicy.

Write that I am a tiger,
patrolling and stalking the jungle,
wishing that no animal comes to harm.

Tell them that I love mac and cheese,
tasting so delicious, smelling so good.

Say that I am sad
when I lose something precious,
or explore all there is to explore.

Tell them I grew up as an explorer,
traveling from place to place.

Write that my brother, Theo, is my hero,
asking him questions.

When you write my story,
say that I am an animal lover.



Storm

Elliot Brown

A storm cloud rolls in
casting a shadow over the town.
A clap of thunder woke me
and rain poured
down the windows.
The wind howled along
with the dogs on the street.
My family wakes up
angry at the sky,
but I run outside
to greet the storm
like an old friend
and welcome it in.

Wonderopolis Works Wonders!

Margaret Epperson, SDAWP 2013

“How does a calculator work?” Wonder #1411—Hmmm, I've always wanted to know.

Are you looking for engaging, high interest nonfiction for your students? Well, look no further. Wonderopolis.org is the site you've been dreaming about. Created in 2010, this educational resource explores and discovers questions about subjects that ignite our curiosity and is also purposefully connected to the Common Core State Standards, STEM, and Bloom's Taxonomy. Students can think critically with each Wonder.

You know all those mini-lessons you teach your students to get them ready to write narratives, persuasive pieces, and expository text—point of view, figurative language, voice,

house have a secret passage?” Wonder #968. Wouldn't you want a bookcase that moves to reveal a secret room? I can see a Wonder like this inspiring wonderful creative writing!

For those students who enjoy videos—who doesn't—there is an added bonus to Wonderopolis. Each Wonder of the Day starts with a fantastic short video (one to four minutes in length) either introducing the topic or giving some detailed information about it.

For those teachers bound to rigor and standards in the classroom, there are topics that are completely relatable. Fifth grade teachers, complete your life science unit with the wonder: “If Blood Is Red, Why Are

I smile when I remember their own follow-up Wonders in this style: “What Were the Causes of the American Revolution?” and “Were Thomas Jefferson and John Adams Friends or Enemies?” Wonderopolis continues to inspire us each and every day.

complex sentences, etc.? They're all right here on this site, www.wonderopolis.org. Find a topic that interests you, your students, or one that goes along with your curriculum, and share it with your class. Bring up the article on your Promethean board or your docucam, and get ready to have fun reading nonfiction with your entire class! You will find an incredible mentor site to help your children with their writing and give them purposeful knowledge at the same time.

Who wouldn't want to know the answer to the question: “Does your

Veins Blue?” Wonder #519. Take this passage, analyze it, teach your students how to take notes on it, and then have them to do the same with a comparable section in their science textbook. Your students will now be able to write a creative informational essay, based on two sources. And wouldn't you know? You're also getting them ready for the Performance Based Assessment Tasks in the upcoming SBAC Common Core testing.

Sixth grade teachers, are you celebrating King Tut Day on November 4th to commemorate the day the tomb was discovered in 1922? Well,

have your students bring up Wonder of the Day #397: “Can You Unwrap a Mummy?” This article will no doubt make them want to learn more. You can have your students access this article on their individual devices or use it as a whole class activity. You will be engaging your students, especially if you use the one-minute introductory video of the discovery of a three-foot tall female mummy found in Egypt several years ago.

You can even inspire your students to write their own Wonders, using these as mentors. My fifth grade students enjoyed reading Wonder of the Day #274: “Who Made the American Flag?” during our American Revolution unit. I smile when I remember their own follow-up Wonders in this style: “What Were the Causes of the American Revolution?” and “Were Thomas Jefferson and John Adams Friends or Enemies?” Wonderopolis continues to inspire us each and every day.

For an added incentive when using Wonderopolis with your students, you can encourage them to post a comment or ask a follow-up question to the Wonder team. And yes, you will get a personalized response to your question within 24 hours. This truly does support purposeful communication while learning!

So no matter what grade level you're teaching, bookmark Wonderopolis.org and make it your best friend. I promise you, your students will be thanking you for days! And for what? Quality nonfiction. Ah, you fooled them.

From Wonderopolis®: *Wonderopolis® is “a place where natural curiosity and imagination lead to exploration and discovery in learners of all ages. Brought to life by the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), our Wonders of the Day® will help you find learning moments in everyday life—ones that fit in with dinner preparations, carpool responsibilities, a stolen moment between breakfast and the bus, or within school curriculum and education programs.”*



Community Counts in the Online Classroom

Heather Turner, SDAWP 2015

“You’ll see that most of these online kids don’t finish their classes. Just do the best you can,” explained my new principal.

This was eight years ago when I accepted my first real teaching position at a school featuring online curriculum. At the time, the program had only been open for a couple of years. As an independent study program, students were only mandated to attend a minimum of one hour, once per week. Absences were frequent, and it was common for students to stop in only once every couple of weeks. As such, there were many times when only a few students were present in the lab, and some days it sat entirely empty.

**It was technology
without humanity;
the curriculum
was provided,
but no community
or kinship in
learning existed.**

My first week of teaching was extremely difficult: the kids were already failing, and I was helpless to stop it. There seemed to be no way to change it, no way to turn the cold, impersonal, empty computer lab into a warm, thriving, student-centered learning classroom. It was technology without humanity; the curriculum was provided, but no community or kinship in learning existed.

Though the program itself wasn't educationally stimulating, the stu-

dents were inspiring. Despite being taught that they were on their own and that it didn't matter if they came to school, the students in the program continued to show effort and I was determined to transform their willingness into a desire to learn. When I learned the program had a graduation rate of approximately 26% (“Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2013-14”). I knew I had to act with urgency. For many of those students, the online program was likely their last attempt at school before dropping out, and I felt a responsibility to offer them something worth staying for.

In the Fall of 2010, I got radical. I'd quickly realized that teachers, administrators, students and their parents did not initially realize that online learning is considerably more difficult than classroom learning. For a student to be successful at online education from home, they must be extremely self-motivated, disciplined, and resourceful. They are often quickly disillusioned with online education and are plagued with a sense of isolation, further increasing the chances of dropping out.

It became clear that students needed more support, so, as students arrived at school for orientation, I told them that they would all be attending “class” from Monday-Thursday, 8:00-12:00. All they would have to do was work on their online classes in the computer lab. I told them they could earn their “Freedom Wings,” the privilege of choosing to come to school more frequently or to work from home, by staying on target in their class. After one month of on-target completion, they would be released down to three days in the lab. After two months of on-target completion, they could reduce attendance to two days in the lab. That would be the least they could attend.

There was backlash: parents complained, students complained, administration complained. Parents complained that I was violating the entire point of online learning; students complained that they chose an online program so they could work from home; administration complained that I would lose students. I persisted.

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I persisted.**

I began to bring students together, wherever I could. This was often tricky, because students were all working in different classes. I had to search for overlap. Were three of

them working in an online Biology class? How about they do a project instead of that quiz? Would they share their project with the other kids, even the ones who weren't currently enrolled in biology? It didn't matter what course a student was in, they all had writing components, so, how about cross-curricular workshops on writing? The students and I searched for places and situations that allowed for collaboration and teamwork. Field trips, organized and voted on by the students, became common activities that we could look forward to.

An annual trip to Mira Costa Community College was always a big hit, where the students were reminded, by current community college students, that they had struggled, too, and succeeded. Students applied to, and were offered internships in our school's office and in the neighboring elementary school.

Then, we moved out into the larger community and established internships with local businesses. We completed projects, played games, held competitions, had pot luck parties...we built a community. We created "The Breakfast Club" on Friday mornings. It was their day off and my planning day, but it quickly became a day of collaboration and learning.

Three years later, we created a CIF golf, basketball, and track team: The Bulldogs. The most astonishing and amazing part for me was the famous "Freedom Wings," because by the time they'd earned them, they didn't want them anymore. They had earned the freedom to choose, and they chose to come to school.

Over the next five years, my students and I discovered how to make our online learning community a success. In addition to frequently showcasing our routines for on-site staff, other local school teams toured our class to observe an example of a successful online program. The students were always eager to share their accomplishments and enjoyed talking with others about their classroom. The student commentary was consistently about the learning environment they helped to create, one filled with support and encouragement.

Unfortunately, reinventing an online learning community isn't always an option. Many teachers are struggling to provide online education that is on par with the learning environment provided in a traditional classroom, and many more will be in the not-so-distant future, as online curriculum becomes more and more pervasive in public schools. This is a critical issue because there is a much higher percentage of students failing to complete online courses versus traditionally-modeled courses. In fact, according to the National Educational Association, "Columbia University researchers found that students who took online courses were more likely to fail or drop out of the course than students who took the same course in person."

The most
astonishing and
amazing part for
me was the famous
"Freedom Wings,"
because by the time
they'd earned them,
they didn't want
them anymore. They
had earned the
freedom to choose,
and they chose to
come to school.

Sadly, while we are rapidly forging ahead with the implementation of more online classes, we are fully aware of their lack of success, when utilized as the sum of students' educational experience. When the crucial aspect of community is removed, students typically do not flourish, because learning is a social endeavor.

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian teacher and

psychologist, "...first stated that we learn through our interactions and communications with others. Vygotsky (1962) examined how our social environments influence the learning process. He suggested that learning takes place through the interactions students have with their peers, teachers, and other experts" ("Lev Vygotsky and Social Learning Theories").

Over the past eight years of transforming a failing online academic program into a thriving community of learners, it has become apparent that online learning, when separated from a social construct or community, isn't as effective as in-classroom learning.

It is clear that online learning should solely be the curriculum used—not the whole experience. As Bill Gates declared, "Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is most important" (Chakravarti).

My experience has shown that online curriculum simply cannot replace a teacher and collaborative learning environment. When a student signs up for online education, they are not looking for less than what they'd had in traditional. They are looking for *different* and quite possibly, *more*.

Works Cited

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Resources for Further Study

Digital Is (<http://digitalis.nwp.org>)

“The NWP Digital Is website is an emerging and open knowledge base created and curated by its community of members. We gather resources, collections, reflections, inquiries, and stories about what it means to learn and teach writing in our increasingly digital and interconnected world. With a particular focus on digital literacy and Connected Learning, NWP Digital Is invites all educators (in/out of school, across all levels and disciplines, modes and modalities!) to join and share work, reflections, and practices.”

Educator Innovator (<http://educatorinnovator.org>)

“Educator Innovator provides an online ‘meet-up’ for educators who are re-imagining learning. Educator Innovator is both a blog and a growing community of educators, partners, and supporters. If we want to educate a generation of young people to be innovators—to create, build, design, and use their talents to improve their world—we need to value the creative capacity in the mentors and teachers who support them. Educator Innovator gathers together like-minded colleagues and organizations who value open learning for educators and whose interests and spirits exemplify Connected Learning: an approach that sees learning as interest-driven, peer supported, and oriented toward powerful outcomes. Educator Innovator and its partners support learning opportunities for teachers, youth workers, mentors, librarians, and museum educators that are open, re-mixable, and typically free or low-cost.”

The National Council of Teachers of English (ncte.org)

Find a comprehensive list of resources to support technology in the classroom and online teaching strategies. Once you create a login, you are all set to peruse! “The National Council of Teachers of English is devoted to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education. Since 1911, NCTE has provided a forum for the profession, an array of opportunities for teachers to continue their professional growth throughout their careers, and a framework for cooperation to deal with issues that affect the teaching of English.”

Project Noah (projectnoah.org)

Calling all citizen scientists! Project Noah provides a space to observe and document nature. Students are encouraged to explore their communities and upload photographs of their discoveries. Be sure to check out the “Missions” section where your class can create their own citizen scientist mission or join the “Global Schoolyard Bioblitz,” sponsored by National Geographic Education, where students across the country collaborate to identify the species featured in their own schoolyards!

AudioBoom (audioboom.com)

This user friendly site streams podcasts covering current events, pop-culture, and allows students—and teachers—to upload their own audio recording.

Figment (figment.com)

An innovative online writing community offers students a platform to share and revise their writing. Educators have the option of creating private groups in which their students can respond to prompts, participate in class discussions, review and comment on their peers’ writing, as well as revise and publish their final pieces in the figment community. As an extra incentive, *Figment* offers book recommendations, author chats, and photo libraries where you can post your own #shelfie: a photo of your bookshelf!

Dialogue

**Call for Manuscripts
Winter 2015 Issue
Submission Deadline:
December 16, 2015**

Participatory Professional Development

Manuscripts should consider but not be limited to the following questions:

- Have you observed other teachers as part of your classroom-based professional learning? What observations have encouraged you to grow as an educator?
- As a teacher leader, how do you encourage/participate in professional development on your site?
- Have you found success as a facilitator of professional development at your school site? How has this impacted your teaching and the teaching of your colleagues?
- What have been your successes and obstacles as a co-teacher? How has this experience prepared you as a teacher leader?
- Share your experiences as an SDAWP teacher consultant or in-service participant.
- How have the texts and protocols in SDAWP’s Study Groups influenced your teaching?

We also welcome submissions for ongoing features:

The Review: We welcome book reviews that reflect current practices and issues in education.

Practices in the SDAWP Classroom: *Dialogue* invites you to submit a one paragraph synopsis that captures the essence of a writing practice that has been successful in your classroom.

Dialogue would love to receive reflective pieces written by educators and students. We encourage you to submit your stories, experiences, and strategies. Email all submissions to:

Callie Brimberry
callieryanbrim@gmail.com
Lisa Muñoz
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Calendar of Events

Fall Into Writing SDAWP's Fall Conference

September 26, 2015

8:00am -12:00pm

UC San Diego

Information and registration
available at

<http://sdawp.ucsd.edu/>

Register by Sept. 16

Study Groups SDAWP 2015-2016

October 17, 2015

November 14, 2015

December 5, 2015

January 23, 2016

9:00am - 12:00pm

UC San Diego

CA Association of Teachers of English

Inspiring Literate Lives Writing Contest

Award categories for

3rd grade - college

Submission deadline is

November 1, 2015

Promising Practices: Featuring Kelly Gallagher

October 24

8:00am - 12:00pm

PLNU Liberty Station

Conference Center

For CATE program information,
visit <http://www.cateweb.org>

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*For SDAWP applications, registration materials,
or additional information regarding our programs,
please email us at sdawp@ucsd.edu or visit <http://sdawp.ucsd.edu/>*