
The Power of Creativity in the Classroom

Dialogue



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Fall 2016

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Notes from the Editors

Within this issue of *Dialogue*, San Diego Area Writing Project Fellows navigate the ways in which creativity empowers students to be innovative thinkers, makers, and writers.

Educators in elementary, middle, high school, and college classrooms discuss the positive results in providing a creative space that not only allows students to interact with the arts, each other, and their own writing in unprecedented ways, but fosters a curriculum that intentionally encourages such interactions.

Our contributors share their challenges and successes in providing pedagogical tools and techniques that have increased student autonomy and agency in the classroom.

This issue also highlights the creative talents of campers who attended our Young Writers' Camp 2016 summer programs. Their poetry and prose will surprise and inspire you.

In addition, we have included the writing of some of SDAWP's teacher consultants who work with our young writers to ensure they have opportunities to write in a community environment designed to inspire creativity.

We invite you to take part in upcoming events, submit writing to *Dialogue*, and join us as we continue the conversation.

Rewriting the Rulebook: Encouraging Creativity in Secondary Writing Instruction

Dave Mattas, SDAWP 2013

“The most important thing is insight, that is ... curiosity to wonder, to mull, and to muse why it is that man does what he does. And if you have that, then I don't think the talent makes much difference, whether you've got that or not.”

—William Faulkner

I'm nearing the end of my tenth year as a teacher. This is almost impossible for me to believe, and the irony, of course, is that as I gain experience as a teacher, I realize that, in truth, I don't really know very much. If I've evolved as a teacher, it is not because I've found the right answers, but because I've learned to ask the

right questions.

In that spirit, I'd like to consider a question: How can writing instruction change so that we continue to encourage creativity in students as they grow?

I see the playfulness that young students bring to writing, and I worry that the importance of imagination is pushed to the margins as time goes on. As kids, we're encouraged to play in the sandbox or draw outside of the lines. As we get older, the same behaviors that made being a kid so much fun are drilled out of us in service to our “formal education.” This shift is attributed to any number of factors: standardized tests increase the need for content focus, academic rigor demands more formal writing, and college writing becomes the centerpiece of most classes as we feel a growing responsibility to prepare students for what comes next. While all of these are fundamentally true, they also presuppose that creativity and invention are somehow separate from more formal writing pursuits. I'd like to challenge the notion that as writing instruction becomes more formal there must be a corresponding drop in freedom, creativity, and innovation from our students. Instead, an increased focus on these aspects of writing will not only lead to a better result, but will better prepare students for the challenges they will face down the road.

I'm not suggesting we abandon scholarly work: close reading, research, formal speech, and an understanding of rhetoric all have an important place in learning to powerfully use language. But, I do believe that students should be given

more freedom to make choices as writers and to develop their own independent voices as they get older. This means shifting our understanding of what student writing should look like in upper grades and embracing the messiness of a more authentic process. It means reshaping assessment to reward students for taking chances rather than punishing them for not following a formula. It means being writers ourselves and being closely attuned to what it means to create a truly great piece of writing.

“Mr. Mattas, how many sentences should this paragraph have?”

As a young teacher, I was eager for my students to produce strong work because it was evidence that I was doing my job. I wanted every paper to be grammatically perfect, free of spelling errors, and written in a way that met my exacting specifications for the assignment. No surprises. This meant providing students with incredibly detailed prompts, outline templates, and paragraph worksheets that spelled out virtually every sentence for them. It was paint-by-numbers, and I felt great when every student turned in a paper that looked exactly like the model. When I graded papers, I knew what to look for: five paragraphs, topic sentences, two pieces of evidence in each paragraph, no “I” or “you,” etc. It was a formula, and if students submitted to the formula, they did well. If they broke the formula, they didn't. Grading was easy, and I felt pretty good about myself.

In truth, I was completely eliminating student choice and punishing students who wanted to approach the assignment differently. My assignments removed any hint of voice from my students' writing and turned the writing process into a lifeless, thoughtless, and meaningless pursuit. Compounding the issue was the fact that I was totally unaware. Not only did I not see this method as a problem, I felt assured that it was the right way to do things.

I am not alone in making this mis-
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take. In fact, I've seen countless teachers (both at my own site and during campus visits) who have subscribed to a similar student writing process. We have to question why so many of us resort to rigidly structured writing. While we may convince ourselves that it's rooted in a desire for all students to succeed, I suspect the truth is that it makes our jobs easier. Assessing an essay based on a formula is easy. Assessing work that allows space for student choice, creativity, originality, and voice is substantially more difficult. The greatest danger is that our formula becomes an irrefutable list that we consciously or unconsciously grow to see as inflexible and, as a result, punish students who approach assigned tasks in innovative or unexpected ways.

Abandoning formula does not mean abandoning clear assessment criteria for student writing, but it does mean reconsidering what those criteria are.

Abandoning formula does not mean abandoning clear assessment criteria for student writing, but it does mean reconsidering what those criteria are. Reintroducing creativity into our students' writing requires coming to terms with the fact that our own existing metrics for strong writing may be flawed. It means a softening of hard-edged, trait-based rubrics in exchange for more holistic assessment. At its core, it means ensuring that our students are being first and foremost assessed by the simple question: *Does this writing work?*

In my own instruction, shifting existing curriculum to allow for more creativity in student writing began with four subtle, but powerful,

changes:

1. A shift from formulaic prompts to open-ended prompts with real world audiences.

In our English Department, we have designed rubrics with fewer categories and with more holistic scoring systems. Rather than assigning points to every aspect of a piece, we began grading with more focus towards ideas, overall arrangement, command of language, and an awareness of audience. Our prompts are clear in what we expect students to accomplish in their writing while still allowing room for student choice. What was once a formulaic term paper has become an open letter to a school board; a simple shift that empowered students to consider how choices related to audience, tone, and arrangement can impact a reader. A typical classroom speech about success is now a commencement speech that allows students to choose the audience (high school graduates, Harvard graduates, kindergarten graduates, etc.) and tone (funny, solemn, reflective, etc.). We study personal narratives and discuss the traits of great narrative writing while simultaneously embracing the importance of voice and encouraging students to consciously make choices about the structure of their own stories.

Altering these assignments did not require overhauling our writing curriculum, but it did mean embracing a messier process. Without a formula to fall back on, students are forced to ask questions about their writing and determine how best to organize and structure their work. Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana describe how "the development of...questioning skills and behaviors empowers the learners to conceptualize and express their thinking without having to depend primarily on teacher questioning to provoke or promote their natural curiosities" (Elves). Allowing multiple approaches to a given task not only encourages better writing, it fosters critical thinking and instills a stronger sense of ownership in students.

2. An increased focus on process over product.

If we are to help students understand writing as a craft, we also need to validate the process. This means developing workshop protocols as an embedded part of our courses. In my classes, students work in groups of three or four on every piece of formal writing throughout all stages of the process. What begins as a question evolves into an outline before progressing through drafting and revision. This process is messy and takes time, but it provides space for student writing to evolve. Students are able to learn from each other, and their choices are informed by the feedback of those in their workshop groups.

Without a formula to fall back on, students are forced to ask questions about their writing and determine how best to organize and structure their work.

An important element of this process is the teacher's role as a mentor. Increasingly, I make time for individual writing conferences a part of my curriculum. Initially, I tried to meet with students during class time while my other students were independently working. More recently, I have begun to use technology as a platform for individual conferences. In the later stages of the writing process, I provide students with optional online office hours. Students may sign up for a block of time in the evening with the understanding that I will have their Google Doc open and will be available to answer questions. As an alternative to reading multiple student drafts, allowing time and space for students to dialogue about their work results in more focused and efficient feedback.

3. A shift from teacher-generated models to real world mentors.

Several years ago, a colleague and I made a simple agreement when planning the year's curriculum: All of the writing models we showed our students would be things that we ourselves considered strong writing. Too often, we approach writing instruction by asking students to compose pieces that would not be valued outside of school. The five paragraph essay, rote patterns, and paragraph limits lead to uniformity and eliminate creativity and choice. Structures and patterns are useful as remediation tools, but they should not be the primary approach to teaching writing. Instead, our writing assignments should reflect writing that exists in the real world, and we should be able to show students

Too often, we approach writing instruction by asking students to compose pieces that would not be valued outside of school.

what a strong real world example looks like. Outside of a classroom, formula tends to dissolve as authorial choices take over. Newspaper editorial writing, open letters, personal narrative writing, and argumentative speeches are all genres that exist in the real world and easily translate to classroom writing prompts. By providing students with writing prompts with real world writing tasks and specific audiences, it is possible to encourage authentic writing and to show students real world exemplars from gifted writers. Over the past five years, my existing in-class samples have been replaced with pieces by David Foster Wallace, George Saunders, Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie, and Scott Russell Sanders, among others.

If we hope to encourage our students to develop independent voices, we must provide them with a variety of worthy mentors. In my own development as a writer, I can clearly recall moments of discovery when I read the work of writers who seemed to already inhabit a voice I hadn't yet found. Jack Kerouak, Dave Eggers, Michael Chabon, Frederick Exley, and others shaped the way I wrote and taught me to have confidence in my own voice. We do not learn to write independently of what we read. Our classrooms should be language-rich environments where students can try on the voices of other writers to help refine their own.

In our 9th grade English classes, we do a weekly writing protocol that asks students to write in the style of numerous writers. On Monday of each week, we look at a short passage from a well-known work and discuss what we see the writer doing. On subsequent days, students are asked to write their own piece grounded in that week's model. Not only are students introduced to a variety of writers and styles, but they have an opportunity to experiment with different written voices.

4. Fostering intellectual curiosity and making space for wonder.

In an essay titled "The Writing Life," Dave Eggers describes his experience as a classroom teacher, saying, "Sometimes we read things that are okay. Sometimes we read things that we find important in some way—that we learn from, but that don't particularly get us all riled up. And sometimes we read something that just astounds and grabs and makes its way into the bones of everyone in the class." We all chose to be teachers for one reason or another, but in many cases it was because someone or something moved us. That may sound trite, but it is also true. We need to make space for students to have the same transcendent experiences with language that we all have had. This means not only providing them with numerous examples of strong writing, but also sharing our own intellectual curiosity and eager-

ness to learn with them.

I often hear English teachers say they don't have time to read or write outside of class. As teachers, our lives can feel long on responsibilities and short on time; however, I believe we have a professional obligation to maintain our role as subject area experts within our classrooms. We need to make time to read and write, if for no other reason than to ensure

Our classrooms should be language-rich environments where students can try on the voices of other writers to help refine their own.

that we never forget what writing looks and feels like. One simple way to become more active readers and writers is to consciously participate in the reading and writing we ask our students to do. In my classroom, I regularly free write with my students and often share my writing. I write and perform poetry with my seniors. I show them not only finished pieces, but also fragments of ideas that may ultimately be dead ends. This allows me to expose students to the messiness of my own writing process while encouraging discussion about the choices I make when starting something new. It also serves as a constant reminder to me of how difficult it can be to write original work, especially the kind of work that is compelling, insightful, and memorable.

Good writing is, and always will be, fundamentally an act of creation. This is just as true with a scholarly essay, scientific abstract, or legal briefing as it is with a poem, short story, or song. Embracing creativity as a more central component of writing instruction means revisiting the notion that creative writing and formal writing are distinct modes.

Do You See What I Did There?

Unlocking the True Power of Patterns of Development

Christy Ball, SDAWP 2014

Instead, we must recognize that the best creative writing demands the attention to detail and thoughtful planning typically associated with formal writing, while the best formal writing often borrows elements of narrative and invention from creative writing. Put simply: our formal writing needs to be more creative and our creative writing needs to be more formal. By accepting this notion, we can reframe writing instruction to develop more confident young writers who feel empowered not just in our classrooms, but in any situation where they are challenged to use their voices.

In considering the role of writing instructors, George Saunders said, “They have so much power. They could mock us, disregard us, use us to prop themselves up. But our teachers, if they are good, instead do something almost holy, which we never forget: they take us seriously.” We can provide supports, guidance, and model texts to help students understand what strong writing looks like, but ultimately our greatest challenge is to support them as they discover their own unique voices. Not all of our students will become writers, but it is imperative that we not limit those who might flourish if only they had the freedom to do so.

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Narration

“Students will be able to use at least three of the following modes to plan, organize, and develop essays: comparison/contrast, cause/effect, division/classification, exemplification, narration, description, and argumentation.” This is the student learning objective (SLO) for a developmental writing course one level below transfer at the community college where I teach. From the sample syllabi I have seen and conversations I have had with colleagues and students, it is clear that this SLO has been interpreted by many instructors as a demand for students to write cause and effect papers, compare and contrast papers, narrative papers, and so forth. In the first few years of my teaching, I could see why. This particular department has a limited list of textbooks for each level of English that teachers must choose from, and since these textbooks organize the modes into discrete chapters, we tend to teach the modes in isolation.

In fact, the main textbook for this writing course, *The Longman Writer*, is like so many other textbooks in the way it is organized: it begins with the reading process, goes to the writing process, and then it has an entire section where the patterns of development (description, narration, division/classification, process...) are explained in separate chapters. When I was a new teacher, I unknowingly used what is called “textbook-based design” as a means of creating my course calendar and of ensuring I met all of the SLOs on the course outline. This means the textbook—and not I, the living, breathing expert in the room—was at the helm of course pacing, assignments, and essay requirements.

Argumentation

In time, I realized I needed to hack the textbook, both the discrete sections and the language of modes. I could not allow them to dictate my teaching. For one, textbook-based design yields blandish, cookie-cutter writing that lacks flavor and innovation. It teaches students that good writing fits into one of few prescribed boxes. Not surprising, students often feel encumbered by the unnatural restriction—worried more about writing in just the one mode than thinking critically about their topic. Secondly, these modes do not exist in isolation outside of the textbook, so teaching them as such is problematic. More often there is interplay and blending that takes place in real writing. A good cause and effect paper might begin with a short narrative and end with a solid argument. A compare and contrast paper might begin with definition and then utilize exemplification in each body paragraph to develop the contrast analysis. Yes, writing may employ a dominant method of development, but rarely, if ever, does it employ just one. Finally, the word mode itself lacks any real power. What the heck is a mode? How does it help me as a writer?

Teaching the patterns of development as modes that we plug into an English classroom radically undercuts their true potential. Instead, the patterns of development should be introduced as oars that students can use to traverse the wide open sea of writing tasks. When done this way, the patterns guide students through the entire process of writing: they function as tools for learning more about a topic, tools for generating raw material and research questions, and tools for identifying and

evaluating the moves made by authors.

Cause and Effect

So, why reframe and reclaim the patterns as tools for thinking? Because this is how our brains are hardwired to make sense of the world. These patterns do not exist outside of us. We give life and word to them based on our lived experiences and understanding of critical thinking. In fact, we make most of our choices using cause and effect, compare and contrast, and process. Think about it. Everything from basic choices, like choosing your toothpaste and the best route to the grocery store, to more significant choices, like choosing your career path and life partner, are made through these patterns.

We understand the world through division and classification and learn about each other and ourselves through storytelling, or narration. These are not meaningless modes. These are tools—devices used to carry out particular functions—and we should teach students to use them as such.

Okay, okay, we get it. Why else?

A great deal of writing instruction scholarship has found that teaching students to write well is achieved best by teaching students to read like writers. This means teaching students to identify the moves authors make. One way to accomplish this is to teach students to identify and chart the patterns of development in quality mentor texts.

On the one hand, students summarize the moves the author makes with more clarity and precision:

“Ball (using myself here) begins her position paper with a story about...; She then argues that...; According to her, the reasons why we should do this are...; At the end of her paper, she discusses the steps...”

On the other hand, students can think about and evaluate the writer’s choices:

"Author X compares y and z because...; Author X begins her text with a brief narrative because...; In this reading, Author X claims that... because..."

As you can see in the second example above, once the reader identifies the patterns the writer uses, the pattern becomes a means for discussing and evaluating the writing itself. This enables students to move beyond simple summary to critical analysis, commenting on the effectiveness of rhetorical moves, making real conclusions about why an author chose to organize his or her text in this way, and whether or not the moves were effective. In this process, students come to realize that these patterns are used to create meaning, and they, too, can use them intentionally to produce meaning in their own texts.

We understand the world through division and classification and learn about each other and ourselves through storytelling, or narration.

Furthermore, unlike a concept map, which might yield helpful associations, or may result in a bunch of circles with disconnected words in them, or freewriting, which may be more tangential than quality thinking, students who apply the patterns as tools during the brainstorming stage generate specific questions that provide a clearer plan for learning more about their topic and/or developing their writing in a logical way. By fully understanding the kinds of thinking each pattern activates in our minds (See Figure 1, on-page 7), students find their pathway into new writing tasks much more successfully.

Process

How do we do this?

When using patterns as tools for generating raw material, we begin with the questions each pattern answers. Let’s say I am asked to investigate an environmental issue and I have chosen to write a paper on trash in the ocean. How do I use the patterns as tools for entering into this new writing task and/or investigating this topic?

- Narration answers: What happened? When did it happen? In what order did it happen? Knowing this, I might begin my essay with a short story told from the perspective of a fish or a fisherman.
- Classification answers: What kinds or types are there? So I might ask: What kinds or types of trash are in the ocean? What kinds or types of companies benefit from dumping in the ocean? What kinds of marine life are most affected?
- Process answers: How? In what steps or sequence? So I might ask: How does trash get from my dumpster to the ocean? What steps can consumers take to fix this problem? What steps can companies take to eliminate waste?

Regardless of my writing task or topic, when I use the patterns of development as tools for inquiry, I am able to begin my investigation or assignment more confidently. This approach ultimately results in a potential plan for investigation, organization, and development of ideas.

As tools for identifying and evaluating writerly moves, we can begin with transitions and context clues to help students chart the patterns in their readings. For example, whenever I see "likewise" or "similarly," I know that the writer is comparing two things. If I see "as a result" or "consequently," I know the writer is using cause and effect. Once I can

see this, I can talk and write about it. This leads naturally to analysis, as the next logical question becomes: Why? Why is the writer doing this? For what purpose? Which leads to more critical thinking in regards to audience and purpose: How does exemplifying her main argument help our writer achieve her purpose for this particular audience?

Do you see what I did there?

When I began this paper on the power of patterns of development as thinking and writing tools, I used them intentionally to get the ball going. I asked myself:

1. When and where did I realize that teaching modes in isolation was a problem? (Narration)
2. Why is it problematic? Why should we teach them as "ways of thinking" instead of "modes"? (Cause and Effect; Argument)
3. What is "textbook-based" design? Why did I use it? (Definition; Cause and Effect)
4. Why reclaim and reframe? What happens when we do this? (Cause and Effect; Argument) Why call them "tools," specifically? (Cause and Effect; Argument)
5. How do we do teach writers to use these tools? (Process)

Not only did these questions help me generate content, they helped me organize my thoughts on the page. So, I used them as tools for thinking and tools for organization. In addition, by now you have probably noticed that even though this position paper presents an argument, it is also organized as a problem and solution; and even though I gave the discrete sections headings, the patterns overlap and by no means stay confined. That is because isolation of these patterns does not happen in real writing. This all goes to show that these patterns are tools that we should put to work for us, both as thinkers and writers, and that interplay is the natural outcome of good thinking.



Figure 1: Patterns of Development:
(Notice the questions each pattern answers)

<p style="text-align: center;">Narration</p> <p>This pattern answers the question, "What happened?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It uses a story/narrative to communicate. • It uses chronological or time order. • "When did it happen?" • "In what order did it happen?" <p>Transitions/Clues: before, after, then, while, next, later</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Definition</p> <p>This pattern answers the question, "What is it?"</p> <p>In textbooks, key terms or concepts are often in bold type, and the definition is provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the body of the text • in the margin in a glossary • at the end of the text <p>Transitions/Clues: refers to, means, can be considered</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Process</p> <p>This pattern answers the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How?" • "In what sequence?" • "What are the steps?" <p>Transitions/Clues: how to, in the process of, the steps to follow, first, second, third...finally</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Classification</p> <p>This pattern answers the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What kinds or types are there?" • "How can we group items into classes or categories?" <p>Transitions/Clues: the first type, the second kind, another group</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Cause and Effect</p> <p>This pattern answers the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Why did something happen?" • "What were the results of a particular event?" <p>Transitions/Clues: the reason that, because, since, therefore, as a result, subsequently, consequently, so, and hence</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Exemplification</p> <p>This pattern answers the question, "What examples support the main idea?"</p> <p>Transitions/Clues: for example, for instance, in fact, in addition, furthermore</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Problem/Solution</p> <p>This pattern answers the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What is the nature of the problem?" • "How might the problem be solved?" <p>Transitions/Clues: (problem) problem, need, difficulty, dilemma, (solution) propose, suggest, indicate, solve, resolve, improve</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Compare and Contrast</p> <p>The comparison pattern answers the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How are two items similar?" <p>The contrast pattern answers the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How are two items different?" <p>Transitions/Clues: (comparison) similarly, likewise, (contrast) yet, in contrast, conversely</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Argument</p> <p>This pattern answers the question, "What should or must be done?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is intended to convince the reader to believe or act in a certain way. • It is based on logic. • It begins with strong thesis or main idea. • It provides supporting details to back up thesis. <p>Transitions/Clues: strongly recommend, in support of, therefore, thus, convince, persuade</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Description</p> <p>This pattern answers the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What does it look, feel, smell, taste, and/or sound like?" • Vivid details give the reader a mental picture. <p>Transitions/Clues: above, below, besides, between, next to, in front of, behind, inside, outside, opposite, within, nearby, over, under</p>		

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Young
Writers'
Camp

To Live in My Story
By Emma Hong

The pencil twirling in my hand
Dancing to the Sonatina playing in my head
Prancing from page to page
Infinitely

The words jumping off the page
Floating all around me
Real and fake words holding hands
Fizzlicious, Dynamite, Dippledong

The characters coming to life
Creatures of all kinds talking
A giraffe in a tutu that breathes fire
Having tea with Po the Pink Zebra

The adventure starts to fade
As I write The End
I close the book and let it go
Letting others live in my story

Writing About Writing

By Sara Escobedo

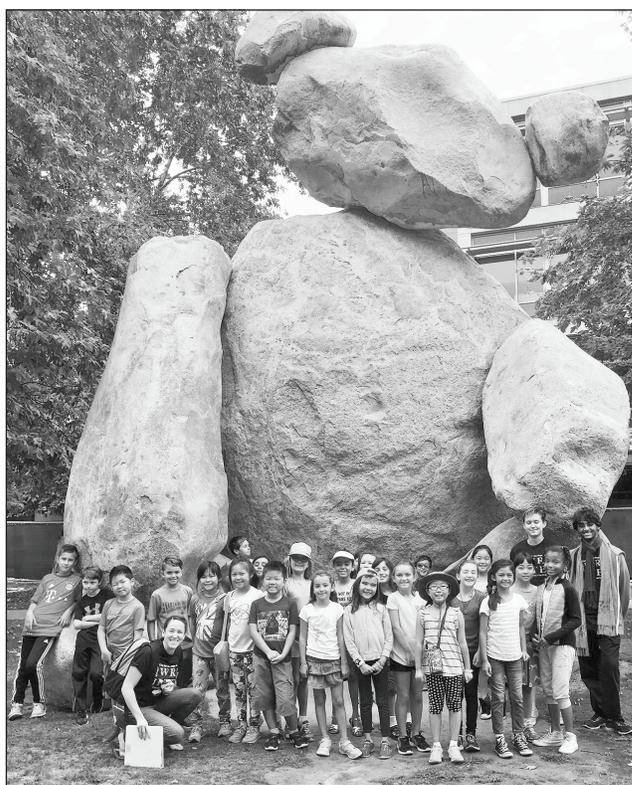
My imagination is in one hand
my pen is in the other

I'll let my imagination flow
through my pen onto paper

I'll create stories, novels, poems
each taking you somewhere new
somewhere Beyond

I haven't left my seat
but with my imagination
in one hand
and my pencil
in the other

I could take you anywhere
without ever leaving the ground





Earth's Whisper

By Elisabeth Weimar

**A field of darkness
 The tears of dark water
 What am I doing here?
 I am a gone girl,
 Frozen in time
 I wish for stars of fortune
 or a path to glory
 Roll of thunder, hear my cry
 A flash of lightening erupts from the
 mountain
 Perhaps a whisper to the living
 A secret that I will keep**

The Five Senses of Writing

By Aria Hajali

*Writing looks like a starry sky
 Silver dots in the endless open*

*Writing smells like flowers
 Uplifting and joyful*

*Writing sounds like giggles
 Friends laughing over stories*

*Writing tastes like chocolate
 Creamy and delicious*

*Writing feels like a winter snow
 Soft and gentle or hard and stormy*

An Excerpt

By Raphael Gregoire—YWC 2016 TA

Later, when they tortured him, he remembered a time when his father prayed at a crossroads beneath the shade of a tree. It was midday and they had been walking the road from the city to the country. His grandmother lived there. He had trotted along similar roads with his brother, who ran up ahead with a stick held high in imitation of a rifle or saber, many times. When they were older, they would walk along the same roads, and his brother would sing of the fragrance of the soul and the country so close to his soul. His brother had always been that way. His dream had always been to join the army and, in those days, young men were needed to fight in Lebanon.

...He had kept a picture of his brother. It was crumpled and faded with age, it's subject almost unrecognizable due to the folds over the years. In it he sat cross-legged on the floor and his children sat around him. Two daughters and a son. His son had green eyes and skin paler than his. A beautiful child. The picture was long gone, and its crumpled subject remained only a vague memory growing steadily more distant, a fading image of a fading image.

He remembered his brother in uniform. He walked beside him down city streets and cast sidelong glances in his direction. He learned to stride at the same pace and swing his arms in the same way past the monuments and posters illustrating a mythic past that seemed impossible in its majesty.

There were days when the world seemed filled with mystery. He remembered one time as children: they lay on the cold wood floor in opposing directions, looking through the open window at the tall spire as it sang out the call to prayer. The sky was white and snow fell silently, the transparent curtains blew inward with the wind and hung in space. A snowflake landed in his mouth and melted on his tongue. They lay silently.

Young Writers' Camp 2016

By SDAWP's Teaching Staff

When you write my story,
tell them I am a writer.
I have a story in my heart begging to be told.
Say that words float in my mind,
constantly waiting to be scrawled
across a page.

Mention that I hear words in everything.
That language speaks my truth.
In songs, in children playing, in moments
of quiet stillness.

When you write my story,
tell them I am music.
Songs take me home—
back to places I want to be.
3 years old, sitting in my grandma's lap,
the smell of her rocking chair forever
reminding me of feeling happy and safe.
7 years old, running through the backyard,
the smell of grass and summer evening
forever reminding me of childhood.
15 years old, the smell of spearmint gum
and men's cologne forever reminding me
of my first love, my first heartbreak
—and childhood forever gone.

Remember that lyrics have meaning
Beyond the words being sung.
They are memories, and moments etched
into our hearts and minds.

When you write my story,
remind them I am love.
I need love. I want love. I live for love.

Say that family is everything
and friends are everything else.
My soul is filled with the love
that surrounds me.
And I am full.
Tell them that love is love.

When you write my story,
tell them about my writing, my music,
and my love.

—Jamie Lynn Lanham, SDAWP 2010

My Words Upon the Page

Inspired by Frank Barone's Poem

Words Upon a Page

Let's put some words upon a page
the poet says
Remember to page through your mind,
the poet says,
"For those ideas and moments, you promised
you would write about
when you had more time"
Wait. Now which moments were those again?

Standing beneath the waterfall,
holding hands with Leyla, in Kauai,
trying to catch my breath
Six year old Nadia, spitting out her loose tooth
into my hand, in the middle of her soccer game
When David first stood up
on the wobbly surfboard.

Oh how those small moments
Almost slipped through the fingers of my mind
Had I not captured them in my journal
Had the poet not told me to remember
And, to put my words upon the page.

—Stella Erkam, SDAWP 2007

The Magic Box

When the teenaged twin sisters returned from a wild time of Mayan cave spelunking, they were shocked to find the transport room empty. Empty except for a bright pink, folded-paper box on a lone metal chair. Assuming it was a gift left for them by another pair of twin travelers, the sisters decided to take it. They playfully tossed the box back and forth, toggling between stumbling and giggling, on the precarious hike all the way down the canyon to the cabin. Over the next few weeks, unaware of any magic it contained, it tickled their fancies to don the box as a hat, wearing it for picnics and parties in the park. But before long, it was tossed onto the kitchen counter between the *molcajete* and the blender. A pink sculpture, quickly crafted at some enchanted and faraway summer camp.

—Linda Whiteside, SDAWP 1994

Sparking Success Through Arts Integration

Lauren Drew, SDAWP 2015

"What art offers is space—a certain breathing room for the spirit."

—John Updike

It's an afternoon like any other in our fourth grade classroom; we've settled in from recess and are kicking off the second half with a math warm up. I make my laps around the room, looking over shoulders, asking questions, offering encouragement—you know the drill. I hear the usual tappity-tapping feet and clickity-clacking pencils, and the occasional water bottle scrunching. I see small eyes staring into the far corners of their brains, willing their understanding to reveal itself.

I realized that
during our Friday
afternoon
art projects, John
would come alive.

I glance over at one student, John, who has his head down, staring at a blank page. He looks up at me, jaw clenched. Unfortunately, this isn't an unfamiliar sight, and unless changes are made quickly, his next steps are as follows: shutdown eye contact and verbal communication, find something within reach to shred, move next to scissors or anything sharp and start carving, and occasionally, run. I tell him, "Pick something off the list." He opens his pencil box, takes out a folded note, and then walks across the room to grab a blank piece of paper. He heads back to his desk, picks up his pencil, and starts drawing.

John and I had spent many afternoons talking through his actions and their causes. Sometimes it was due to academic frustrations, but most of the time there were deeper emotional issues at play. Together, we came up with a list of options that he would keep in his pencil box: walk a lap in the courtyard, get a drink of water, take out a graphic novel, and so on. Each activity was meant to last no more than five minutes. Sometimes, I could simply remind him to pick something off the list, and that quick change of gears would do the trick. Usually, though, he would end up in the office or sitting on a bench outside, submerged in complete shutdown.

It wasn't until halfway through the year that we added a new activity to the list: drawing. I realized that during our Friday afternoon art projects, John would come alive. Often, he would bring in drawings that he created over the weekend to share with me. I recognized that art could potentially be a healing tool in his life. John would choose this option off the list nearly every time, and his shutdown moments became less frequent. Aside from that, he had greater confidence in his artistic abilities, and had found a new passion.

While this story may lead some to believe that the purpose of my writing is to showcase the advantages of art as a behavioral intervention or emotional therapy, it is not. I agree that there are undeniable benefits in art therapy, but the purpose of this piece is to highlight some underlying gains and opportunities that arts education can afford students. Art can be a powerful tool beyond personal expression and initial en-

gagement, and can have a significant influence over the teaching of all content areas. John's experience taught me that integrating art in our classrooms can empower and offer a low-stakes, egalitarian entry point for all students.

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"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."
—Proverb

Art, by nature, is subjective—meaning an importance exists in the mind of the viewer or the creator. The personal connections and relevance that one individual discovers may be entirely different from the person's beside them—and both are correct. What a wonderful realization to share with our students! When this is made explicit, students are given a safe and personally relevant entry point. The art world becomes less intimidating since every individual's thoughts regarding a piece of art are validated. In turn, each student's original creations are given more value, as well. John taught me this first-hand when he would visit me in the morning to show me his

newest drawings or creations (he had a magnificent duct tape phase). His explanations of his process, and the meaning that each aspect of his pieces held, alluded to vast developmental and emotional benefits.

In this way,
making and viewing
art provides
authentic
opportunities to
learn vocabulary
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domains.

"Before a painting one must see something other than what one knows already. Associations and significances mingle together beyond the palette."

—Valerio Adami

Artistic interactions promote using descriptive and imaginative language to discuss specific details, as well as feelings that may be elicited. This encourages the ability to reflect and express one's own emotions and ideas. In this way, making and viewing art provides authentic opportunities to learn vocabulary that transfers across domains. While participating in art critique, students are able to work as a community: collaborating, debating, and reasoning in order to build understanding. In my class, students light up the room during critiques. They engage purposefully with one another and embrace that they don't have all of the answers, but they do have some of the answers. They point out details that nobody else has noticed. They make meaningful connections that blow our minds. They analyze and evaluate, then support their ideas by literally pointing to the evidence and clearly stating their reasoning. Then, they eagerly write about their new understanding. Aside from fostering the ability to articulate artistic intentions and comprehension, the arts also demand decision making,

critical thinking, and problem solving skills—all abilities that Common Core State Standards have identified as foundational pillars.

"Arts education doesn't take place in isolation. It has to take place as part of an overall school and education reform strategy."

—Rocco Landesman, Chairman,
National Endowment for the Arts

Many educators are comfortable acknowledging that there is worth and necessity for the arts in education. Districts and schools are in the process of reinvesting funds into arts education programming. However, most offer very few professional development opportunities in arts education, so the responsibility falls on the classroom teacher. Often, art in the classroom appears as activities that are separate from content or as final touches to a finished product (i.e. decorations on a poster or illustrations to go along with writing). Frequently, art instruction is dropped entirely due to the constant "so much to do, so little time" mantra that plagues teachers. I have also collaborated with many teachers who don't feel comfortable teaching art to their classes because they don't know "proper techniques" or haven't taken any art history courses. Unfortunately, it is common for some teachers to eliminate art instruction because they themselves lack experience or confidence in their own artistic abilities. A fellow elementary school teacher even admitted to me that the only time her students engage in an art project is whenever she has a substitute teacher. Luckily, there is a solution to these valid and warranted concerns, and that lies in integration.

With the Common Core State Standards, educators have been called upon to go deeper than before in order to prepare future generations for success in college, careers, and life in general. This means increasing rigor, setting higher expectations, exposing students to more complex texts and ideas, fostering critical thinking skills, and promoting effective problem-solving practices.

Throw in grade specific content knowledge, accurate assessments, and long-term student products, and it feels like a near impossible juggling act.

I consider my students, like John, who are working towards building academic resiliency. I worry that shutdown will occur before we even get started. As an educator, many times I have felt the heavy fog of fatigue in my classroom when I have failed to connect to my students' personal interests. Likewise, I have felt the fireworks of motivation and creativity when learners are truly engaged and find relevance in their experiences. This fuse has been lit by the arts many a time. Nearly everyone has one art form that they can enjoy and connect with. These connections can carve out a pathway to deeper meaning on the road to

...it is common for
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college and career readiness. Luckily, the National Core Arts Standards have many parallels to the Common Core State Standards, and lend themselves to an integrated learning approach. These Standards can be aligned with Common Core's Anchor Standards for ELA, as well as the Standards for Mathematical Practices. Content-specific alignment can also be achieved for social studies and science, depending on the needs of grade-specific requirements.

"Creativity comes from a conflict of ideas."

—Donatella Versace

The National Core Arts Standards are organized by grade-level standards and by a set of anchor standards that apply across art disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts). Additionally, there are eleven core anchor standards, divided into four processes (see Figure 1 below). As an option for an arts integration approach, students engage in a creative process which connects with other subject areas and meets goals and objectives in all content. A broad overview of potential alignments is outlined below.

Creating

“Learning is not a spectator sport.”
—Anonymous

The process of creating in art is similar to the writing process and inquiry-based learning in general. Additionally, many mathematical practices are easily married to the act of creating. For example, while students are planning to solve a problem, they are engaging in making sense of the task (conceptualizing). Then, students must organize a strategy. When they test their strategy to solve, they are frequently using visual models and making use of structure.

Often, students need to refine and

explain their solutions. The process of creating something demands that students build the ability to embrace initial confusion and uncertainty. It fosters perseverance, multiple approaches, and precision, as well as the ability to dedicate a sustained amount of time to process-based thinking.

Performing/Presenting/ Producing

“I passionately believe that it's not just what you say that counts, it's also how you say it—that the success of your argument critically depends on your manner of presenting it.”
—Alain de Botton

Creativity and innovation are necessary skills in today's multimedia driven society, and the Common Core State Standards place great emphasis on developing 21st century learners. Through using arts as communication, students are exposed to countless ways to share and inform with a variety of mediums: shared documents, video chat, social media accounts, blogs, online surveys, polls, infographics, video channels, podcasts, and so on.

These opportunities can be established in authentic contexts that allow for real-time interactions

through the use of digital media. Aside from this, students make strategic decisions throughout this process regarding how and what they will present, perform, or produce based on audience, purpose, task, and discipline.

Responding

“The soul, fortunately, has an interpreter—often an unconscious but still a faithful interpreter—in the eye.”
—Charlotte Brontë

The current educational emphasis on critical thinking goes hand in hand with responding to and evaluating how the arts convey meaning. Through art critique, just as in close reading, students must use evidence and reasoning to support their interpretations. This can be done by comparing themes across mediums, exploring visual representations of historical or cultural significance, assessing models to convey mathematical or scientific concepts, as well as relating illustrations or film to a text.

Connecting

“What does the artist do? He draws connections. He ties the invisible threads between things. He dives into history, be it the history of mankind,

Figure 1. NCAS Anchor Standards (www.nationalartstandards.org)

National Core Arts Standards: Anchor Standards			
Creating	Performing/Presenting/ Producing	Responding	Connecting
Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.	Performing: Realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation. Presenting: Interpreting and sharing artistic work. Producing: Realizing and presenting artistic ideas and work.	Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.	Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. 2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. 3. Refine and complete artistic work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation. 5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation. 6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. 8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. 9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. 11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

the geological history of the Earth or the beginning and end of the manifest cosmos."

—Anselm Kiefer

Relating artistic works and processes to outside contexts can strengthen understanding and solidify knowledge. Studying the social, political, cultural, and economic contexts in which specific art pieces were developed offers insight to other global perspectives. Identifying math principles in visual art deepens understanding of abstract concepts. Ultimately, students can use art as a vehicle to analyze and synthesize visual or auditory information to make meaningful global, personal, and interdisciplinary connections.

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."

—Maya Angelou

The benefits of arts education are vast and foster an appreciation for inquiry, creating, and lifelong learning. Aside from preparing students for success in college and careers, we also want our students to be well-rounded and capable individuals in other aspects of life. I believe that art has the power to help young people navigate social relationships and to nudge them towards developing problem-solving strategies, self-reflection, and emotional metacognition.

I saw this in John, as he continued to make progress towards controlling his emotional flights through artistic expression. His confidence grew, and he was able to better manage discouraging and challenging moments in the classroom.

At the heart of my pedagogy as an educator is the belief in the power of creative assertion. I have learned that if students are willing to courageously engage in artistic processes, they will be successful in transferring these practices to other content areas in school and to their own personal lives.



Congratulations

SDAWP Fellows Summer 2016

Ruby Baker

Silver Wing Elementary
Chula Vista Elementary School District

Gina Barnard

San Diego City College
San Diego Community College District

Tania Jabour

Cuyamaca Community College
Grossmont-Cuyamaca
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San Diego Community College District

Ericka Marsh

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San Diego Unified School District

Michalene Martucci

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Chula Vista Elementary School District

Corinne Rector

Ada Harris Elementary
Cardiff School District

Bonnie Reddick

San Diego State University
California State University

Nicole Rios

Mendoza Elementary
South Bay Union School District

Wendy Schramm

The Rhoads School
Private

Adrian Trayer

San Diego Global Vision Academies
San Diego Unified School District

Margaret Van Blaricom

Grossmont Community College
Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community
College District

The 2016 Spring Conference: Why Students Write

In March, 253 educators, from elementary to college level, enjoyed sessions ranging from round table conversations examining inequities in education, to Vivian Bangle's and Geri Little's exploration of science notebooks, and Evie Leano's use of reading strategies to create writing opportunities. Aja Booker demonstrated how to honor students' language with vocabulary instruction, and Heather Turner presented on the use of power words to enhance writing skills. Educators were able to take a hands-on approach in Jennifer Pirazzini's session on revision; participants created designs with blocks before engaging in reflective discussions in order to internalize the concept of revision.

While some participants opted to attend sessions on revision, others focused on argumentative writing. Sarah Martin highlighted the use of mentor texts in the form of argumentative templates to demonstrate the power of long-term revision, and Jaclyn Brown shared how she uses mentor texts to teach grammar and revision. David Barry bridged the gap between writing and mathematics in his presentation on writing arguments with numbers, and Marisa Chaniot discussed ways to avoid cookie-cutter writing by encouraging students to analyze illustrations and infographics as part of their research. Joe Ferro, on the other hand, demonstrated "layering": claim-based reasoning through exposure to different layers of reading and writing components, whereas Jamie Jackson motivated participants to explore the argumentative thinking process that impacts student writing.

The Power of Music

Vivian Bangle, SDAWP 2015

"Music is the universal language of mankind."

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

It's the Fourth of July and I watch families marvel in unison as bursts of color paint the night sky. Each explosion is a splash of stars, streaks, and flickering light punctuating strains of patriotic songs we all know so well: "America the Beautiful," "God Bless America," "The Star Spangled Banner," Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA," and of course, "Born in the U.S.A.," by Bruce Springsteen. The familiar music stirs our emotions as we enjoy celebrating our nation's independence together. I can see the fireworks reflected in the tear-filled eyes of those around me. It makes me realize how music connects and touches us the way nothing else can.

I am fortunate to have learned to play an instrument in elementary school. In recent years, however, many students haven't been as lucky. In schools across America, during tough economic times, music programs (along with the other arts) are the first to be cut. Since 2008, funds have been cut in more than 80 percent of school districts in the U.S. (Boyd). In California public schools, between 1999 and 2004, the number of students enrolled in a music class dropped by 50 percent ("Hearing the Music, Honing the Mind"). "This is a mistake, with schools losing not only an enjoyable subject, but also a subject that can enrich students' lives and education" ("20 Important Benefits of Music in Our Schools"). We do not hear about reading, math, or science classes getting cut or relegated to volunteer run before and after-school programs. Music classes

are often viewed as "non-academic" or "extra-curricular," yet music is so integral to our lives.

Fortunately, on July 16, 2015, the Senate passed the "Every Child Achieves Act" (S.1177), which redefines and recognizes the importance of "core academic subjects" to include the arts ("Federal Funding for Arts Education"). As the arts are integrated into everyday curriculum, it is imperative that educators and students understand how music education nurtures students' academic, creative, social, and emotional growth.

Music classes are often viewed as "non-academic" or "extra-curricular," yet music is so integral to our lives.

Academic Growth

Research abounds demonstrating that music improves students' learning. As an example, Sophie Bushwick reports in *Scientific American* that students who learned fractions through a rhythm-and-music-based curriculum scored better than students who did not. Since music is made up of measures of notes with certain values, it can be divided in various ways. For instance, a measure with four beats can be made up by a whole note held for four beats, or eight eighth notes held for half a

beat, and so forth. According to the article, "Sixty-seven students participated in the study. Half did math problems using the Academic Music system. And after six weeks, the students in the music program averaged 50 percent higher on tests than did the kids in regular math class" ("Rhythm and Music Help Math Students"). Relating fractions to music puts fractions in a real-world context and enables students to use sound and rhythm while making sense of their new learning. Imagine their excitement and engagement when they create their own combinations of notes and pitches while learning fractions. Using multiple modes of learning (visual, kinesthetic, and auditory) reinforces the learning experience and enables students to commit what they've learned into their long-term memory. This study clearly supports how music enhances students' performance in core academics, such as math.

In today's environment of high-stakes testing and accountability, I can understand why some teachers may feel there is no room in their daily schedule for music. But, we need to make room. Christopher Johnson, Professor of Music Education and Music Therapy at the University of Kansas, conducted a study on how music students performed on standardized tests. Results showed that students in strong music education programs scored higher in English by 22 percent and higher in math by 20 percent than students in schools with lesser quality music programs (Brown). On the SAT, students who had taken music lessons or music appreciation scored 65 percent higher on the verbal portion and 44 percent higher on the math portion.

Similarly, *The Midland Chemist* reported that of the past winners of the Siemens Westinghouse Competition in Math, Science, and Technology for high school students, almost all of them played one or more instruments (Hill 3). Numerous studies, such as these, have shown the disparity between students who are involved in music as opposed to students who are not. These examples illustrate the importance of making room in our curriculum for music.

Putting standardized tests and achievement in specific subjects aside for a moment, consider how music has also been shown to improve overall cognitive functioning. “There’s some good neuroscience research that children involved in music have larger growth of neural activity than people not in music training,” asserts Dr. Eric Rasmus-

The processing of language is an essential part of learning since verbal competence is required in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

sen, chair of the Early Childhood Music Department at the Peabody Preparatory of Johns Hopkins University (Brown). In fact, music can actually change the way the brain works and how we process and develop language. The processing of language is an essential part of learning since verbal competence is required in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Mary Luehrisen, executive director of the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation, asserts that music education can enhance the language abilities of children, especially between the ages of two through nine. Luehrisen told PBS, “Musical training physically develops the part of the left side
Dialogue, Fall 2016

of the brain known to be involved with processing language, and can actually wire the brain’s circuits in specific ways” (Brown). One such way learning music can impact our ability to process language is that it “sharpens our sensitivity to pitch, timing and timbre, and as a result our capacity to discern emotional intonation in speech” (Stevens). In short, music education strengthens students’ verbal competence.

Similarly, Nina Kraus, of Northwestern University, found a connection between rhythm and reading skills. In her study, she tested 124 teenagers for their ability to keep a beat. She used an electroencephalogram to monitor their brains whenever they heard the sound of the consonant “d”. The brains of the students who were able to keep a beat responded consistently, even when there was background noise or they were watching television. On the other hand, the brainwaves of the students who were not able to keep a beat were “all over the place” (Laidman 16). What does this have to do with reading? According to Kraus, because reading involves being able to hear phonemes, music trains the brain to pay more attention to sound. This finding is important not only for reading, but also for speech. Music and speech stimulate the same parts of the brain. Learning music helps the brain process pitch, timing, and timbre, which also helps students learn language: “Consonants and vowels become clearer, and the brain can make sense of them more quickly” (“This is Your Brain. This is Your Brain on Music.”). My own students take “brain breaks” throughout the day, which include dancing and stretching set to music from the website “Go Noodle” (www.gonoodle.com). We take two to five minutes to move with the music, get the oxygen flowing, and train our brains! Getting our students up out of their seats to stomp, clap, and dance to the beat of music for a few minutes a day is vital to their learning.

Additionally, students who study music have better memories and pattern

recognition. The *Scientific American* reports that music improves concentration and attentiveness (“Hearing the Music, Honing the Mind”). In our fast-paced world, where we are often forced to multi-task, being able to focus and function effectively is becoming exceedingly difficult. Musical training can change the brain and make these tasks easier to handle. Further, in her article, “The Benefits of Music Education,” Laura Lewis Brown maintains that there is a “causal link between music and spatial intelligence, which means that understanding music can help children visualize various elements that should go together, like they would in solving a math problem.” This is further evidence that music can help students learn academic subjects. Dr. Kyle Pruett, clinical professor of child psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine, observes in the same article, “We have some pretty good data that music instruction does reliably improve spatial-temporal skills in children over time” (Brown). Think of all of the careers that require strong spatial skills: ar-

Getting our students up out of their seats to stomp, clap, and dance to the beat of music for a few minutes a day is vital to their learning.

chitecture, engineering, mathematics, art (of all types), design, and technology. If we are, indeed, preparing students to be “college and career ready” as the Common Core State Standards state, music (as well as the other arts) should be an integral part of the equation.

The beauty of music is that it is universal and has a powerful academic impact on all students, including those who have been diagnosed

with learning disabilities. “[T]here is considerable evidence from music education, special education, and music therapies supporting linkages between musical experiences and communication development in children with autism, typically developing children, and children with other diagnoses” (Srinivasan 4). A few years ago, a student with autism, Michael, was enrolled in my third grade class. Michael’s parents started him in piano lessons at a young age. By the age of nine (when he was in my class), he played the piano very well. He was able to answer questions when called upon and contribute to classroom discussions. Michael is an example of how music can help students with disabilities experience success in the

Music bridges differences, enhances emotional well-being, and allows students to foster a sensitivity to the needs of others...

classroom. I believe Michael’s ability to read and fully participate in class is due, in part, to his musical training. Music bridges differences, enhances emotional well-being, and allows students to foster a sensitivity to the needs of others—a characteristic needed to function successfully in the classroom and beyond.

Tinkering & Creative Growth

Further studies show the link between music, the brain, and creativity. What exactly is going on in the brain during creative activities, such as playing a musical instrument? Using an MRI scanner, scientists found that when musicians improvised, the parts of the brain responsible for sensorimotor activity, language, and introspective thinking became highly active. At the same time, there was a decrease in the area of

the brain responsible for executive functions such as self-censoring and inhibition. “[T]he results of these and other studies of creative artists and thinkers suggest that reduced cognitive control is important for creativity” (Kirkwood). The “tinkering” with music during improvisation and “tinkering” involved in Maker Movement classrooms spark the same parts of the brain. At a time when leaders are calling for more creative thinking in students, music and other arts are the answer to that call. “We tend to look at education of creative aspects of children as something that happens incidentally and that is entertainment-based,” says Charles Limb, associate professor of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at John’s Hopkins University. “But that misses the connection between creativity and the idea generation necessary for strong problem solving skills” (Schwartz). Music, art, and making provide students opportunities to cultivate their creativity.

Tinkering, where the goal is not perfection, but the exploration of what if...is at the heart of creativity. Tinkering with musical improvisation, tinkering with words in the revision process, or tinkering in a maker activity necessitates a supportive environment. Ed Catmull, Walt Disney and Pixar Animation Studios President, spoke at a 2013 lecture series, “Dialogues Between Neuroscience and Society,” in which he set forth the qualities conducive to fostering a creative environment. According to Catmull, “By encouraging honesty, relinquishing control, acknowledging the unknown, and promoting a safe environment for making mistakes, creativity and excellence can flourish” (Kirkwood). Creativity doesn’t just happen and it can’t be forced. It happens as a process of “preparation, incubation, inspiration—a version of the eureka experience—and production. Many forms of creativity, from writing a novel to discovering the structure of DNA, require this kind of ongoing, iterative process” (Andreasen). Music, in particular, promotes this kind of process. Musicians must

master the basics in such a way that they become automatic (preparation and incubation), inspiration occurs when the self-monitoring part of the brain is deactivated while improvising (or tinkering), and production occurs when the music flows. While creativity cannot be forced, it can be nurtured. Tinkering, in its many forms, allows students to practice using their creativity.

Social/Emotional Growth

As an elementary school teacher, I can attest to the benefit of music for students who struggle academically or have behavioral problems. These students often become “stars” of the classroom during music time. One of my students, Willie, was two-years below grade level in reading, and he struggled in math. Often he talked to classmates when he should have been concentrating on classwork, or he asked to use the restroom in order to get out of completing his assignments. It was no secret to him, or to

Creativity doesn’t just happen and it can’t be forced. It happens as a process of “preparation, incubation, inspiration—a version of the eureka experience—and production.”

his classmates, that he was behind. As the academic demands grew during the first quarter of the school year, his behavior and self-esteem declined. When the class started learning multiplication, I introduced multiplication songs and raps. Willie lit up. Soon he was writing his own music and teaching songs to his classmates, winning a positive place in their eyes, and improving his self-esteem. He felt part of our classroom community because he had some-

thing to contribute. Unfortunately, in middle and high school, struggling students like Willie are often assigned to remedial classes with no electives. In that sort of environment, there is no room for musical experiences that build self-esteem, academic achievement, and motivation. These students get squeezed out of opportunities for success.

In that regard, beyond learning music for music's sake, it can offer a safe haven and sense of belonging for students. Middle school and high school can be daunting for students at a time when they are experiencing physical and emotional changes. Often, students feel isolated, and if there is social strife, attending school can be frightening. The middle school and high school I attended in the 1970s were both filled with racial tensions and gang fights. Walking to classes was an exercise in keeping a watchful eye out, yet not making direct eye contact with strangers. Were it not for knowing a safe place existed in the band room with fellow band members to see each day, I don't know what would have become of me.

Students today have the same, if not greater, issues of gang activity, bullying on campus, cyber-bullying, and isolation. This is not to imply that music will cure all of society's ills, but music classes can build a sense of community for students who might not fit in elsewhere.

Music is what connects us as human beings. Looking into the gleaming eyes of the strangers around me on the Fourth of July, we become one through the music that tugs at our hearts and draws us together. Music benefits us socially, emotionally, physiologically, and academically. Music education promotes improvement in math, reading, language, creativity, and overall cognitive functioning. It also provides a sense of belonging, builds community, and develops life skills. It is encouraging that the power of music is now recognized and is finally considered part of the "core curriculum."

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Project Notes

Congratulations to *Dialogue* editor Lisa Muñoz (SDAWP 2008) and husband, Alex, on welcoming their daughter Liliana Marie on July 21st!

Way to go, Cindy Jenson-Elliott (SI 2012)! Cindy's new book, *Antsy Ansel: Ansel Adams, A Life in Nature*, is available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Antsy-Ansel-Adams-Life-Nature/>.

Kudos to Frank Barone (SDAWP 1977)! Frank's recent collection of poems, *Poetry and Cappuccino*, is available on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Poetry-Cappuccino-Frank-Barone/>.

Wow! John Adams (SDAWP 1997) recently had his first play produced in New York. Directed by Alexander Harrington, John's play, "In the Shadow of a Dream," ran to sold out audiences during the 17th Midtown International Theatre Festival from July 18-23, 2016. John is currently working on his second play while teaching in St. Louis, Missouri.

"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.

Resources for Further Study

The Power of Creativity in the Classroom

Minds Made for Stories: How We Really Read and Write Informational and Persuasive Texts by Thomas Newkirk

“It is conventional to view narrative as a mode, a type of writing, often an easy one. We are told that on the job and in college, we do the hard stuff, we analyze and make logical arguments. We don’t tell stories. But we do. We can’t get away from it.”

The Journey Is Everything: Teaching Essays That Students Want to Write for People Who Want to Read Them by Katherine Bomer

“Katherine makes a powerful case for teaching the essay as a way to restore writing to think—that it is in fact necessary for students’ success in college and career. “Essay helps students write flexibly, fluently, and with emboldened voices,” she writes in *The Journey Is Everything*, “qualities they can translate into any assigned writing task in school or in life.”

“Reading and Writing with Writers in Mind” by Paul Thomas (<https://medium.com/@plthomasedd/reading-and-writing-with-writers-in-mind-13f5bf117e78#41fn8v6ax>)

“Below, I will examine how addressing traditional approaches to teaching writing (the writing process, audience, essay forms/genres, revision, etc.) can be enhanced by including in lessons writers writing and talking about writing as well as their lives as readers. The goal here is to augment using mentor texts with authentic writer voices about writing that provide provocative and critical entry points into the elements of writing.”

“Arts for Everyone” by David B. Cohen, *Education Week* (http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/capturing-the-spark-engage-ment-and-teaching/2016/08/arts_for_everyone.html?qs=Arts)

“It’s unfortunate that we’ve marginalized the arts in many contemporary American schools. In some schools, the arts are virtually absent, and in others, even if there is instruction in art or music, it exists as an extra, something less important, irrelevant to the real curriculum.”

“STEAM: Experts Make Case for Adding Arts to STEM” by Erik W. Robelen, *Education Week* (http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/12/01/13steam_ep.h51.html?_ga=1.63054447.152946844.1471308568)

“The acronym STEM—shorthand for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—has quickly taken hold in education policy circles, but some experts in the arts community and beyond suggest it may be missing another initial to make the combination more powerful. The idea? Move from STEM to STEAM, with an A for the arts.”

Resources for Youth Makerspaces, *MakerEd* (<http://makered.org/makerspaces/>)

“*The Youth Makerspace Playbook* is a resource providing context and support around planning spaces for youth to make. It offers practical suggestions on finding spaces to make, outfitting spaces with tools and materials, exploring the possible educational approaches within spaces, and sustaining spaces in the long-term.”

Dialogue

Call for Manuscripts
Spring 2017 Issue

Submission Deadline:
February 1, 2017

The Summer Institute: Laying the Foundation for Teacher Self-efficacy, Voice, and Leadership in the Classroom

We invite you to share your experiences as a participant in the San Diego Area Writing Project’s Summer Institute. Manuscripts may consider:

- How have discussions on race, poverty, religion, and language defined your role as an ally and advocate for your students?
- How have teacher demos impacted your teaching?
- In what ways have the SI protocols influenced your voice as an educator?
- How do the protocols you use allow students to interact with each other and texts?
- How did SI writing groups challenge you? Have your experiences translated into classroom practice?

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

Email all manuscript submissions, suggestions, letters to the editor, and/or Project Notes:

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Calendar of Events

SDAWP's Invitational Summer Insitute 2017

Applications will be
available
December 2016

SDAWP's Spring 2017 Conference

March 5, 2017
8:00am - 12:00pm
UC San Diego

Information and
registration will be
available at
<http://sdawp.ucsd.edu/>

San Diego CUE Tech Fair

November 5, 2017
8:30am - 2:30pm
La Costa Canyon HS
For information visit
SDCUE.org

California Association of Teachers of English CATE Convention

February 17 - 19, 2017
Santa Clara Hyatt Regency
and Convention Center

February 16, 2017
Pre-convention hosted by the
California Writing Project

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