

Dialogue



A Publication of the San Diego Area Writing Project

Fall 2014

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This issue of *Dialogue* weaves together essays, stories, poems, resources, and professional development demonstrations that speak to the challenges and growth opportunities of reaching our vulnerable students.

8,300 high school students drop out *each day* in the United States. Many of our students come into our classrooms with fears and insecurities about their skills and abilities. Many others come with serious traumas, issues, and challenges that they face in addition to being students. How do we best support them?

That has been our underlying question as we gathered these powerful voices together. Join us in the continued *Dialogue* on Facebook and Twitter and read on!

Checked Out or Checking In?

Empowering Students Through Presence, Engagement, and Vulnerability

Kevin M. Gossett—SDAWP 2014

At the end of each semester as I turn in grades, that last click of the submit button feels like throwing chicks out of a nest without looking to see if their wings are even working. What I perhaps never spend enough time dwelling on is what I had done to allow other students to fail or drop out at some point along the way—the casualties of the classroom. There are way too many variables when it comes to the reasons why students drop out or slip up to try to adequately quantify the role of teacher effectiveness in this area. And when the majority of my community college students come from low-income and working-class families, the myriad of obstacles they're up against don't exactly help sway the odds in their favor when it comes to succeeding in college. Many find themselves stuck

walking against an endless escalator of remedial classes, and when they see they are getting nowhere fast, they simply jump off to the more stable and familiar ground below.

I'm most concerned with the immediate reality of understanding what I can do to help these students who make that jump to safety. I need to be aware of the ways I can support a sense of belonging and mold a growth mindset about the ability of each of my students, not just the select few who come strong and stable enough to seek out help. I'm calling for a change in attitude and action—a rethinking of how invested we want to be in the lives of our students—the importance of the unseen, unquantifiable things that we do or don't do with them. In order to encourage engagement and investment from all students, we must purposefully practice presence and learn to approach our students with the same vulnerability and courage that we're attempting to enable in them. I'm only just now learning how to take my own advice.

Round Robin

I first met Robin when she took a writing class I was teaching that was part of a learning community. These collaborative co-enrollment courses are designed to help students who often need the extra support they provide. While student retention is a welcomed outcome of such courses, the goal of these learning communities, according to Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich of the National Resource Center for Learning Communities, is to offer “skills and knowledge relevant to living in a complex, messy, diverse world,” because, as they believe, “students persist in their studies if the learning they experience is meaningful, deeply engaging, and relevant to their lives.” With these needs in mind, I attempted to set up a safe learning environment for such important questioning

to take place.

Robin grew up in the foster care system in a low-income neighborhood of southeast San Diego. Determined to rise above the expectations placed on African American women in her position, she took AP English classes in high school and was admitted to a state university. There she took a college level English class but dropped out after only one semester. A year later she enrolled at a community college and wound up in my class.

In an early writing assessment, Robin reflected on this experience: “I struggled a lot during this class, would get paranoid every time it was time to write another paper and eventually I gave up. I just dropped the course instead of facing my fear. It was easier to just give up.” She goes on to explain why she dropped out, admitting, “Since I have difficulty expressing myself, I tend to run away and sometimes leave the things I should say unsaid.” Now that she has picked herself up to try again, Robin shows confidence in setting her goals “to finally attack my fear of writing” and “to articulate myself more. Organize my thoughts and learn how to verbalize them.” Much like with the other 148 students I started with last semester, my goal was to help Robin express her thoughts more clearly. More than that, I wanted to help enable her to take control of her education, to face her fears head on rather than running away. She had enrolled in the right class, and I promised to keep checking in with her.

Vulnerability vs. The Shame Game

By the time my students come to me, all it takes is one trigger to set off feelings of shame that they struggle to shake. Sometimes we don't recognize our shaming until it's too late. We see our “constructive-feedback”

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**Trauma, Risk
and Vulnerability
in the Classroom**

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on our students' essays as our way of benevolence and wonder why they struggle to fix it or don't ask us for help. But the message has already been made clear—their writing isn't good enough. Brené Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work, who has been an outspoken voice on issues of shame and vulnerability, has identified shame as our fear of disconnection. As she reveals in her popular TED Talk on vulnerability, "the one thing that keeps us out of connection is our fear that we're not worthy of connection." Seeing it this way, it should come as no surprise that the students who never show up to office hours or approach us with questions are those who, in some way or another, have been made to feel unworthy of that connection, unworthy of belonging in college or our class in particular.

Teaching with presence involves allowing students to remain mindful in their thinking and insisting that they have control over what happens in that shared time and space.

In a blog post written in defense of a comment she had made about the role of shame as a "classroom-management tool" in schools, Brown insists, "As long as people are hard-wired for connection, the fear of disconnection (aka shame) will always be a reality. I don't believe shame-free exists but I do believe shame-resilience exists and that there are teachers creating worthiness-validating, daring classrooms every single day." Once we recognize that shaming exists in our classrooms, we might be able to open up such dialogues.

This recognition doesn't need to involve a lesson on shame, but it should involve acknowledging when it happens. Whether in front of the class or with an individual student, we must be vulnerable enough to be seen. It could mean holding office hours in a less-intimidating place like the writing center or a public location in the communities in which our students live and work. It could mean setting time aside the night before a big assignment is due to do a live chat-room conference. It could be as simple as arriving to class early enough to update the students who have recently been absent, rather than showing frustration when they interrupt to ask what they missed (which I do all too much). In any case, our "mission to control and predict" our classrooms should remind us that "the way to live is with vulnerability and to stop controlling and predicting" (Brown "The Power of Vulnerability"). There is no sure way of knowing how to help each of the students we're handed each semester, and we can't be certain that our cherished methods and practices are going to work every time for every student in every class.

Teaching Toward Presence

One reason for checking in with our students is to help reduce this fear that so many students face when starting off in college. The surest way of doing so is by teaching with presence. This may sound obvious, but in order to convince students that they belong, we need to teach in such a way as to be there with them at every moment. Jerry Farber, a literature professor I had the opportunity to learn from at SDSU, describes presence, in his 2008 essay "Teaching and Presence," as an essential but elusive goal in teaching, but without it, "teachers are like guides in a theme park who tell the same joke a dozen times a day" (215). Contraction of this tour-guide syndrome is not limited to the older set, to those teachers with outmoded lectures and lesson plans; new teachers can catch it too, "coming into a class session so nervous, so insecure, clinging so desperately to the teaching plan that he or she was up late working on the night before that a sort of glass wall descends and the teacher and the students remain as remote from each other as

though they were in separate mediums" (216). Reading this in my pre-service days, I accepted presence as something I couldn't prepare for, but needed to work toward in order to remove these walls we see too often in scripted lessons, lectures, and slideshow presentations.

This condition of being absent—or, what I refer to as being checked out—involves reducing students "to the role of mere onlookers," or "objects to be manipulated," whereas presence involves recognizing the need to "blow the dust of habituations away and recognize the classroom for what it is: a place where individual worlds, individual universes converge in real time and real space" (216). If I am going to insist that students travel all the way to a specific campus during a one to three hour chunk of time on a set day (many of them taking public transport, and some crossing an international border to do so), I need to recognize the transformative potential of the convergence of worlds that can take place at every moment that we are there together.

This is why it is even more urgent that we avoid giving college students an excuse to stay home. Too many classes are still being taught as carbon-copy versions of the textbook, where the only motivation students have for sticking around is to take the quiz, which is only even given as a way of getting students to show up. Even something as intimate as a composition course can come across as being just as sterile. If the lessons and prompts are made available to them, and all work is expected to be done outside of class, it shouldn't be a surprise that students rarely show up. Students have been primed to be strategic and efficient, so that even note taking can be expedited with a few clicks of a camera phone in front of the board or projection screen, so as to save ink and paper for another day.

Teaching with presence involves allowing students to remain mindful in their thinking and insisting that they have control over what happens in that shared time and space. According to Farber, teaching toward presence involves recognizing that the classroom "carries with it a sense of immediacy, openness, and spon-

taneity, and therefore, even in lecture, draws presence from the other people in the room, whereas teaching that seems canned or scripted makes these people into nothing more than spectators” (217-18). The moment I teach to a script (or even worse, rely on borrowed lessons or prompts), my students sense that I’m checked out, and their attention goes elsewhere. Even the technology we incorporate can be redundant if used in such a way that our students can be doing the same thing at home in their pajamas.

I mess up a lot, and they laugh at my inconsistencies in spelling, but when they see my thinking scrawled out in front of them, they are more likely to try doing the same.

Doubtless, this presence requires more student-centered activities and discussions, but even these can fall short if not everyone in the room is mutually invested or if the interaction is limited to the few outgoing students. We must teach in such a way that leaves no room for chronic texting or intermittent napping. Everyone in the room must be accounted for at all times, including the teacher. In fact, one of the most essential things our students need in order for presence to foster engagement is for us to continually be checking in with ourselves. The only way they can know why what they are being taught should matter to them is to show how and why it matters to us.

Engagement: or Keepin’ It Real

Another way of checking in with our students and conveying to them the importance of belonging is to be engaged in the learning process with them. I believe I owe it to them to be

honest and open about my journey that brought me there, including its setbacks and failures. As bell hooks addresses in her 1994 book *Teaching to Transgress*, we need to “believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students” (13). This sharing need not be a form of self-degradation, but must act toward further humanization and self-actualization. Like Farber’s concept of presence, hooks believes we need to be “wholly present in mind, body, and spirit” (21). Our students need to know who we are, where we come from, and where we aim to go.

Effective engagement involves recognizing the power dynamic inherent in the classroom and letting go of any sense of power that continues to put students in opposition with ourselves. One way of breaking these walls and encouraging engagement is by allowing students to write narratives about their experiences. Hooks argues, “if we are going to stay connected (especially those of us whose familial backgrounds are poor and working-class), we must understand that the telling of one’s personal story provides a meaningful example, a way for folks to identify and connect” (“Keeping Close to Home” 63). To have students do so while confining them to a specific form, and without judging them before allowing them to revise is a sure way of getting them checked out of the process.

When asked to write about a passion, past or present, Robin struggled to come up with anything, but with enough coaxing, she decided to write about a time when she received a laptop and taught herself basic web design as way of presenting and expressing herself. Though she wrote about this time of creative exploration with enthusiasm, she certainly did not see much of a point in writing about it, and she ended her first draft with a statement about how she stopped doing any kind of web design. Like most of her classmates, I challenged her to focus on her topic sentences and development of details and even encouraged her to conclude her essay with a statement about how she wishes she had kept with it and might consider taking a class in graphic design, re-

gardless if this was the case.

Risky Writing for Relevancy

Another way I have attempted to reach my students is by modeling and sharing the type of writing that I’m asking my students to do and linking these narratives to the critical analyses we go on to produce. As hooks insists, “it is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material” (21). So I expose myself by sharing my experiences with them, often drafting ideas in front of them, with the goal of empowering my students by liberating myself from the role of the all-knowing, flawless professor. I mess up a lot, and they laugh at my inconsistencies in spelling, but when they see my thinking scrawled out in front of them, they are more likely to try doing the same.

Toward the end of the semester, I recognized that Robin and many of her classmates had yet to approach me with concerns about their research essays, so I checked in with them to see what I could find out about their status and struggles. I was pleased to discover that, after her one-on-one time spent with my learning community partner, Robin seemed motivated to write about inequalities faced by African American women in college and was set to use her story (and that of bell hooks) as a framing device. Still, she admits, “I guess I have more a fixed mindset approach when it comes to my writing because it is so easy for me to give up on it although I don’t want to. I want to get better it’s just me putting in the actual work sometimes being stuck in old ways.”

These “old ways” of thinking about her own intelligence and capabilities are part of what she already recognized as having caused her to drop out of college the first time around. I knew that if “to educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn” (13), as hooks insists, then I had to first believe that Robin could complete the essay. This meant finding out how to free her from this way of thinking that seemed so wrapped up with shame.

Robin Checks In

These methods didn't work as well as I was hoping last semester. In Robin's class, a third of the students enrolled at the end of the semester didn't submit the mandatory portfolio of their work to be considered for advancement to the next level. Robin was one of them. I went all weekend wondering what had happened to these students who I knew were so close to having everything they needed. The next week I caught Robin sitting outside taking a test, and must have said something to her, because later that day she sent me this email:

Hello Kevin, Sorry I didn't have a chance to stay after and talk to you but I did want you to know I do appreciate you none the less. You were an awesome amazing teacher and very flexible. I just ended up giving up all over the last paper. Instead of facing you I just didn't show up like a coward. I just felt defeated and wanted to give up! Writing really is a struggle for me. I should have got help but sometimes just reaching out is hard for me to do. I just wanted to apologize and let you know it has nothing to do with you at all. I'm sure your not blaming yourself but I did want to express myself so you wont have to assume. Sometimes it's easier for me to try and brush situations off but I feel compelled to let you know the actual truth of the situation. Thanks for always having your positive attitude. I was almost shocked to hear you say it was good to see me today but it felt good. It gave me a sense that you hadn't given up on me. I respect and appreciate you for that.

I thanked her and reminded her that it took great courage to say what she did. I even invited her to consider taking the class with me again, which she agreed she would “def check out” because “I know how important writing is and I really do want to get this down.” Still, I look back and blame myself for not helping her enough. I could have checked in more regularly, outlined her ideas more clearly, or any number of things to instill in her the confidence that she still seemed to lack. But I do believe what she said was true, that she understood the importance of writing, and that she could bounce back.

On the ground level of teaching, we can't predict who will or won't succeed. There is no cure-all for fixing achievement gaps or rising inequalities. There is no method or technique to ensure student success. But we have the ability to change the way we view the smallest things about our attitudes and practices that can affect our students in profound ways. If education is going to be the “practice of freedom,” we cannot rely on the old model of waiting for students to come to us for help. We need to be more aware of our presence in the classroom, listening more carefully, reading more generously, and allowing ourselves to be more vulnerable by checking in with students if we ever expect them to check in with us. Otherwise, we're just checked out.

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Many Thanks, a Warm Welcome, and *You!*

Kim Douillard—SDAWP 1992

Behind *Dialogue's* thoughtfully curated selection of writings and visually pleasing layout are some of the SDAWP's unsung heroes. Editors Jenny Moore and Stacey Goldblatt, along with layout designer and coeditor Janis Jones, have worked mostly unnoticed behind the scenes as they support writers working through revisions, solicit relevant and interesting topics that offer views of SDAWP Fellows at work in classrooms, and curate a collection of articles for each issue that come together to create a cohesive, interesting reading experience for all of us who read *Dialogue*.

After more than a decade, Jenny and Stacey have decided that it is time to step down from their positions as editors, passing the baton on to other talented SDAWP educators. Under their writerly eyes, *Dialogue* has thrived.

Every issue has been jam-packed with compelling and often provocative writing from our ranks, piquing interest in rethinking teaching practices, stimulating classroom research and innovative approaches to writing, and connecting our fellowship through the printed word.

Busy moms and active writers and educators, Jenny and Stacey made time in their lives and in their hearts to make the writing of SDAWP educators public and accessible. And while change is always a little bit scary...we know that it also offers opportunities for new ideas, new leadership, and new practices.

Jenny's busy schedule includes her role as principal of Coronado High School and the ever-important work of being present as mom to three beautiful girls.

Stacey is back to the classroom full-time this year, teaching English to middle schoolers at the San Diego Jewish Academy, continuing her writing (she's the author of middle grades titles *Stray* and *Girl to the Core*), and nurturing her own children's bodies, spirits, and love of learning.

Jenny and Stacey, thank you for all you have brought to *Dialogue*, including your dedication to the value of writing and to the teaching profession. And while we say good bye to you as *Dialogue* editors, we take comfort in knowing that you remain valued members of our professional community. We welcome your continued input and look forward to reading your writing in *Dialogue* one day soon!

We are fortunate to welcome a new team of editors to work with Janis on *Dialogue*, beginning with this issue in your hands. Welcome Callie Brimberry and Lisa Muñoz!

Callie, a high school English teacher with a passion for social justice and supporting students who don't always see themselves as "school worthy," is currently out of the classroom raising two energetic (and adorable!) little boys.

Lisa, who has a background in creative writing, is a full-time professor at Miramar College and enjoys co-advising the campus "creative expressions" club, Muses. She is also mom to a young son (another cutie!). We look forward to watching *Dialogue* evolve and thrive as Callie and Lisa support SDAWP's writers and teachers and readers.

So this is the perfect time for our readership to add their voices and play an active role in the evolution of *Dialogue* as we continue to work to make it relevant to your teaching and learning.

Our editors welcome contributions... and can't wait to offer their support to you, as writers, to bring your ideas and drafts to our local publication. After all... *Dialogue* belongs to all of us!



Veteran Sigh

Christy Ball—SDAWP 2014

I see you
Back row, third seat from the right
Eyes glued to a spot on the wall,
Out the window,
Behind, to the left, to the right
Anywhere but where I am.

The fatigues left in battle
The wounds faded from view
Making unseen to the naked eye
Cruel memories strong-arming
The very heart of you.

You will never forget their faces
Whoever could?
The damage, the debris, the dust
Of cultures clashing and babies wailing
For mothers crushed in rubble never to return.

Now you are expected to step
Right back into the spectator role
No trauma, no anger, no fears
Of searing sirens and relentless tears.

How can I read?
How can I write?
Where is the pen?
That heals blood splatters, broken bones, and burning skin?

How can I listen?
Why should I try?
When what has been seen
Can never be denied?

But I see you, dear warrior.
And the burdens you carry
Of comrades, lovers, and brethren now buried.

So I ask you to use this pen
Not as a reminder of where you have been
But as a weapon to slay the monsters
That follow you to bed.

This tool is unlike any other
It is here simply for you to Create
Peace of mind, beauty, the power is yours
Whatever you write down, only you can dictate.

Observe, Reflect, Question: Using Primary Sources in the Classroom

Janet Ilko —SDAWP 2008

This summer I was lucky enough to be part of the Summer Teacher Institute with the Library of Congress. For five days in late July, I was able to study with teachers, librarians and a few Writing Project Fellows from all over the country who came to together to learn how to integrate free materials from what I have now come to know as "The People's Library."

I teach seventh and eighth grade English learners reading and writing at Cajon Valley Middle School. The span of language experience feels at times daunting and finding curriculum that meets both their needs and interests is extremely challenging. In coming to this Institute, I set goals to incorporate primary sources into my curriculum and to find strategies and materials that foster access to more complex texts for my students.

I have spent this summer and early fall creating the first stages of a year-long unit, "We All Have a Story, Where I'm From," for my students where they will be asked to tell their stories of immigration. There are so many interesting stories from my students: their families, the sacrifices, the challenges, the joys, and the prejudice they face as they make their way here in the United States. Students walk into my classroom filled with their own histories and passions. How do we harness all those personal stories and use them to write expository pieces? How can I break down this process for students? Primary sources serve as great mentor texts to guide students into telling their own personal histories alongside historians of the past.

Some of the most powerful primary sources in the collections of the Library of Congress are visual images. This is a perfect entry point for all of my students. From photographs to prints, from political cartoons to advertisements, from posters to architectural drawings, these images seem to document every aspect of the human experience. By analyzing a visual image, students can discover more than just the image's content; they can also begin to explore its context. Analyzing images lets students discover new topics for exploration and build visual literacy skills that they can apply not only to primary sources but to anything they see.

We learned a protocol that I call "Observe, Reflect, and Question." The protocol, which can be used with any primary resource, is based on using a common graphic organizer that provides students structure when looking at a variety of sources. The purpose of the simple three-column organizer is to provide structure to the study of primary sources. The template remains the same—observe, reflect, and question—as students study primary sources such as photos or manuscripts with the eyes of historians.

For more information and to view the "Observe, Reflect, Question" graphic organizer, please see my presentation created for the SDAWP Fall 2014 Conference:

<http://www.slideshare.net/janetilko/observe-reflect-and-question-using-primary-sources-in-the-classroom>



SDAWP in Six-Words

By SDAWP Leadership

*Moving from "imposter-syndrome"
to intentional practitioner.*

—Henry Aronson

Invitation, new pedagogy, colleagues inspire me.

—Margit Boyesen

Connected. Bred. Mated. Gestation continues.

—Stacey Goldblatt

Word hard. Teach harder. Write hardest.

—Jamie Jackson

Writing to become a better teacher.

—Matt Jewell

*Whatever circumstances: community,
acceptance, challenge, reflection.*

—Elizabeth King

Finding my truth through self reflection.

—Casey Lange

*The "Ives": Innovative, supportive,
transformative, creative.*

—Mark Manasse

Learning and growing with my people.

—Barb Montfort

Making small blazes with my tribe.

—Abby Robles

Connect and grow with amazing colleagues.

—Divona Roy

*Special SDAWP Impact - longevity, widespread, trans-
formational.*

—Jacob Ruth

*Connections spark inspiration. Barriers become
surmountable.*

—Miriam Sikking

Inspired, supported, giving students a voice.

—Laura Smart

Intense forging of teachers and community.

—Christine Sphar

*Sharing, collaborating, invigorating with our
words.*

—Monique Lamphiere-Tamayoshi

Purposeful, invigorating —change begins with me.

—Amy Triba

Take care of that little fire.

—Emily Tsai

Eleven years of mindful teacher revisions.

—Wendy Weisel-Bosworth

Bold thinking, encouraging voices, shared purpose.

—Marla Williams

Speak, Memory: The Trauma Informed Classroom

Marie Alfonsi—SDAWP 2014

Write with your eyes like painters, with your ears like musicians, with your feet like dancers... Put your shit on paper.

—Gloria Anzaldua

On a typical day in my transfer-level class, I gathered my students into small groups to discuss the reading from the night before. As I was grouping them, one of my most dedicated students looked up at me with tears in her eyes and said, “I didn’t complete the reading, nor the homework questions. I couldn’t do

Their fears would be bigger, and their backgrounds would loom larger over their ability to succeed in my classroom.

it.” Due to her trembling voice and tears, I knew something was wrong. I pulled her aside and realized she was shaking. She told me that the subject matter of human trafficking and forced prostitution had triggered old wounds. My mind flooded with the images we had been reading about, and I felt the sting of regret. Regret for not foreseeing that this subject might be too painful for some of my students. In *my* mind, we were learning about the connections between globalism and human trafficking. For a survivor of sexual trauma, the first hand accounts of rape in Thai brothels had a different impact entirely.

Initially, I scolded myself for exposing this woman to a reading that forced her to recall painful memories, especially within a classroom environment that is intended to be a

safe place for reflection and learning. Yet, after thinking it through, I realized a truth: I would choose this same text again because we often have to grapple with really tough subjects in order to understand injustice and suffering. I didn’t want to shy away from issues that could be distressing or unpleasant for students, but I knew something had to change regarding my process for navigating my students through them. How could I introduce difficult topics, yet find ways to be mindful of those students who had been traumatized?

This is why, this past February, as I spent a few days in rain-soaked Seattle, attending a conference for writers and teachers of writing, my eyes were immediately drawn to a workshop that would get me thinking about the changes I could take in my approach. As I scanned the hundreds of possible conference panels that I could attend, one caught my eye: “‘Put your Shit on Paper’ Two Chicago-Based Writing Programs on Running Trauma-Informed High School Workshops.” I grabbed my colleague’s hand and urgently whispered, “We are going to this.”

Although the panel was speaking mostly to literacy advocates and educators for secondary education, I knew that these students would become mine at the community-college level. Their fears would be bigger, and their backgrounds would loom larger over their ability to succeed in my classroom. The panel was comprised of literacy advocates who were working on curriculum with local high schools as well as facilitating after-school literacy programs that were “informed” by the trauma of the participants. It encouraged me to question how I had altered my instruction to take trauma into account? How could I signal to my students that their histories mattered, yet allow them to control

certain circumstances for telling (or not) their stories? My methodologies had always been informed by issues of equity regarding race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality, so why had I let this slip by? Perhaps it was because so many of these issues had

Yet, after thinking it through, I realized a truth: I would choose this same text again because we often have to grapple with really tough subjects in order to understand injustice and suffering.

overlapped with trauma that I had overlooked it. As their instructor, I couldn’t pretend that their traumas didn’t exist. As I worked more and more with non-traditional populations, I realized that acknowledging their histories and being attentive to behaviors that might signify trauma informed the kind of instructor I wanted to be: attuned, compassionate, and responsive. More than that, I believe it is a professional obligation to be aware of how pedagogy and classroom practices can increase equity in learning and begin healing for my countless students whose lives have been affected by traumatic events.

My first lesson from that workshop was a reframing of the concept of trauma. I had imagined that trauma was experiencing extremely dangerous and harmful events such as war or rape, and indeed, these are included in the clinical definition

Dialogue, Fall 2014

for trauma. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, published by the APA, specifically defines a trauma as:

Direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior) (Criterion A2). (qtd. in Cogbill).

Some of my students at City College

Others discuss the fear and depression they feel at having been displaced from everything they knew and loved and the difficulty of adjusting to a culture that isn't always hospitable.

and Grossmont College have experienced war first-hand. And when I say first-hand, I mean several of them had been forced to fight in wars or have lost loved ones to brutal acts of violence as a result of conflict between nations or tribes. In the article, "Crossroads: The Psychology of Immigration in the New Century," the authors detail the enormous adjustment these refugees face:

Refugees leave their countries of origin involuntarily in the context of war and political upheaval and experience traumatic events in the process (APA, 2010c). They

experience loss of loved ones and of their native country without the possibility of return, a process referred to as "cultural bereavement" (Eisenbruch, 1988). A legacy of loss and exposure to trauma accompanies already complex acculturation and adjustment processes and is associated with psychological symptoms (Masuda, Lin, & Tazuma, 1980).

Unfortunately, it wasn't until we completed a personal narrative assignment in a basic skills class that I understood how sensitive and traumatic the topic could be. One student, who always seemed extremely upbeat, revealed his true emotions in his reflection: "Honestly, this assignment was very difficult for me to write. It brought back terrible memories that I had worked hard to forget. I have been depressed for the last few days and haven't been able to focus. I understand why you assigned it, but it was hard for me." This was an eye-opening moment for me because I did not want my choice of assignment topics to create an atmosphere that students found burdensome. My student's honest statement had shown me that I needed to be more thoughtful about the types of topics I assigned or encouraged. This isn't to say I wouldn't assign the same topic, but had I done more preliminary work, I would have felt more confident that he could handle developing this narrative.

Had I been more attuned to my most vulnerable students, I may have encouraged this student to tackle a different topic or been more proactive during the brainstorming and drafting phases. It seemed clear that checking in with this student earlier in the process would have enabled him the time to reflect on whether he was ready to tell this particular, painful story. Step-by-step I was building a consciousness of my students' needs. They were teaching me even though I was the one at the front of the room.

Many of my students had experienced violent events that can only occur while either fighting a war or getting caught up in the middle of conflict, things that were beyond my imagination. But there were other, less recognized, traumas. City College is an urban school that services

a largely Latino population, many of whom are still crossing the border from Tijuana every day. Many of these students have immediate family members who had fled from states in Mexico, a process that had required them to encounter dangerous environments in which they were literally running for their lives.

Had I been more attuned to my most vulnerable students, I may have encouraged this student to tackle a different topic or been more proactive during the brainstorming and drafting phases.

These traumatic journeys have lasting impacts not only on the people who experience them, but the generations that follow are also affected, which included my students:

Desjarlais et al (1995) concluded that it is not migration alone but, rather, traumatic or derailing events before, during, or after dislocation that lead to psychological distress of clinical proportions. This new literature identifies four migration stages . . . that may lead to serious psychological distress: 1) premigration trauma, i.e., events experienced just prior to migration that were a chief determinant of the relocation; 2) traumatic events experienced during transit to the new country; 3) continuing traumatogenic experiences during the process of asylum-seeking and resettlement; and 4) substandard living conditions in the host country due to unemployment, inadequate supports, and minority persecution (qtd. in Perez Foster).

Some of the non-traditional students at community colleges have experienced one or more of these stages or have witnessed members of their

(Continued on page 12)

SUMMER 2014 Young Writers' Camp

A Writer's Notebook

Sitting down at an old desk
The kind I believe is made
to be uncomfortable
Your foot bumps a notebook
It looks battered
Lost
Like a wounded animal
Begging to be found.
But there is something more
Something extra
Like a dream
You can't quite remember
Like a song from a far off time
It has energy
All its own.
You open the notebook and find
The ravings of a lunatic,
The wisdom of an old, old man,
The freedom of a bird's song.
A writer's notebook.

—Gabriel Goering

A Chapter in the Past

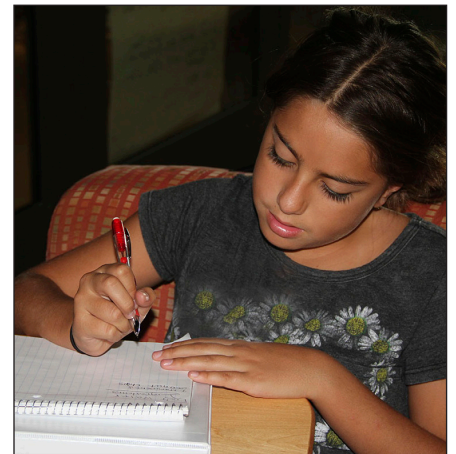
move on.

it is just
a chapter in the past.

a ruffle of realization.
a crumble of disaster.
a rip of an accident.
a bookmark of a mistake.
a missing page of love.
a coffee spill of worry.
or a fold of sickness.

don't close the book of life
just turn the page

—Hannah Nygren



Teenage Life

Change.
The life she used to live,
Filled with the good memories
Washed away with regret.

Her beautiful smile fades,
Like each passing day.
While her nights get longer,
The tears get heavier.

Right from school,
She races home.
To a place of comfort,
Right to her room.

Will she ever escape,
The pain and misery
Picked up
Along the way?

She fights everyday,
She hasn't given up.
But is it really worth it,
To care so much and end up broken?

Puts on a fake smile
She says everything's fine
But that's just a lie,
To keep from letting go, the pain she
Hides deep inside.

She fights a worthless battle
Her thoughts inside not giving up,
But she is brave.
And not ready to lose.

Each broken heart,
Rips at her like a wound
Never to heal,
Just like a simple puzzle piece.

The life she once thought,
Beautiful and magical
Doesn't exist
Now with the darkness inside.

To her she is trapped,
She believes change doesn't exist.
She believes
She was born to live like this.

— Caroline Rembolt



Rainclouds

Spattered with rain
haunted from hail
through thunderstorms
we are not forgotten.
Cloudy days approach us
from distances
that cannot be seen
at a bird's eye view.
With memories
that fade away,
that shade away
from us.

—Stephen Martindale

He draws a sea of stories for me, paints ballads of
revolution and influence, bleak ghosts and silver
roses in attics. He remembers aloud the bend of the
world at dawn, and ebony and ivory piano keys.

Imagination swirls in my mind as he sketches
a memoir, a vintage portrait through his yellow
thoughts. There's the invention of wings, a few disas-
ters, and the jaws of life.

I feast on his language, surrounded by illusion, col-
liding worlds and days of catastrophe. I bid farewell
to the truth, to now.

He is a whisper; blends his perspective cocktail into
the curve of my ear and I swoon, swimming in the
middle of an ocean of his words.

Dark forests and swirling mist, he leads me hand in
hand through landscape after landscape. Here are
rolling hills and endless lines of asphalt that stretch
on, empty for miles and miles. He leaves us alone,
doesn't paint another soul on the road.

His lips move to form soundless words that blur the
edges of my vision, grey smudges on the edges of his
art, and my feet feel heavier and heavier as his tale
drags me on.

—Melba Nuzen

(Continued from page 9)

family endure the daily struggles that accompany migration and settling into the US. They have shared narratives about leaving close family members behind, never to see them again. Others discuss the fear and depression they feel at having been displaced from everything they knew and loved and the difficulty of adjusting to a culture that isn't always hospitable. In fact, many describe the often terrifying and isolating experience of not having an adequate understanding of English as they attempt to seek out social services, navigate new cities, use public transportation, and look for jobs.

They were documenting their narratives, wading through the murky process, yet felt more empowered for having control over revealing their story the way they wanted to share.

One of my students wrote about the persistent fear she faced as an undocumented student and how every interaction outside of her home had the potential to send her back to her home country where violence and poverty were prevalent. The numerous traumatic experiences, exposed by the student narratives, further encouraged me to be sensitive to how these experiences had shaped my students' learning and performance in class.

Experiences of fleeing a country to avoid persecution were common in a course I taught last semester for English learners who had recently come to the United States. Some were immigrants from Mexico and Vietnam, but there were also a few refugees from the civil wars in Eritrea and Somalia. As a class, we read a memoir titled, *The Distance Between Us*, by Reyna Grande, a story about a woman whose parents had

abandoned her for several years to come to the United States. Once she came to join them, she faced physical abuse from her father and complete isolation as a new immigrant who didn't speak English. Reading this narrative seemed to be healing for many of the students in that they saw their experience reflected in Grande's story. More important, through writing and using language to validate their stories and empower their identities, they were able to grapple with some of the difficult feelings that surfaced. They journaled, they shared, and they wrote amazing narratives.

It wasn't all catharsis, however. In individual conferences to review their narratives, some expressed the difficulty of writing about their histories and trauma. To help ensure that they felt supported, I provided a safe environment with one-to-one meetings and gave a "generous reading" of their work. I did not focus on grammar errors or structural problems until I felt it was safe to do so, which wasn't until the second or third draft. They were documenting their narratives, wading through the murky process, yet felt more empowered for having control over revealing their story the way they wanted to share.

Although some instances of trauma stand out as clearly devastating, there are also the less obvious, and more frequent, traumas, that psychologist Laura Brown calls insidious trauma or microaggressions in the article, "Micro Aggression And Insidious Trauma:"

Not all aggression is easily recognizable, especially when it is embedded within the cultural discourse and is socially sanctioned. Those who are marginalized and made to feel less because they are not a part of dominant culture are forced to deal with the subtle realization that they are unwelcome for being who and what they are. Think of insidious trauma as a constant but barely perceptible tapping on your shoulders. Obvious forms of trauma like rape are more like a powerful punch to the face.

The marginalization and aggression I faced growing up were definite fac-

tors in my development into young adulthood. As a lesbian growing up in an era before gay rights had expanded, I got by in a hostile world where I felt invisible. As a result, I retreated to an unhealthy lifestyle and dropped out of school. Looking back, it's clear that the isolation and lack of support I felt at that time hindered my ability to learn and to be a successful student, and I wish that an instructor would have reached out and tried to bridge the gap from the isolation I felt. As psychologist Sandra Bloom states:

A traumatic experience impacts the entire person—the way we think, the way we learn, the way we remember things, the way we feel about ourselves, the way we feel about other people and the way we make sense of the world. (qtd. in Dods)

This led to a feeling of invisibility and lack of self-worth, which eventually contributed to my decision to quit school.

If I had felt less marginalized, would I have been a more successful student? Try to imagine years of not being able to share your narrative in the classroom environment out of fear of exposure and judgment. Sharing parts of our personal lives is so often part of the classroom experience and is an integral part of writing assignments. Years of censoring oneself out of fear has the effect of being profoundly isolating, which can contribute to a lack of motivation to be there. LGBT lifestyles were never reflected in the readings or discussions in class when I was a young student. This led to a feeling of invisibility and lack of self-worth, which eventually contributed to my decision to quit school.

As an instructor, I believe it is my responsibility to reflect the varied cultures represented by my students and create an environment that en-

courages them to reveal their histories when they feel comfortable to do so.

Thinking back to the workshop in Seattle, one of the immediate ways they advocated honoring your students' traumas is by being aware of indirect indicators of past trauma. They explained that many student behaviors could be indirect indicators of past trauma. Some common examples were: depression, anxiety, outbursts, extreme distraction and inability to focus, absences, and failing grades (AWP Panel). These are common behaviors for any student, but taking note of the behavior and showing concern for the student could help mitigate the fear and anxiety the student might feel. Another way to acknowledge the types of trauma our students face is to offer culturally relevant texts that may address a traumatic event they have experienced.

I now make a point of adding a flag to my syllabus that mentions the potentially disturbing content and the possibility of making arrangements for alternative assignments.

However, for students who may not have processed their trauma or might not even be aware of it, this could be harmful. To help reduce this possibility, it is important that students are informed about the texts they will be asked to read. I now make a point of adding a flag to my syllabus that mentions the potentially disturbing content and the possibility of making arrangements for alternative assignments. Looking back, this would have helped the situation with my student who had experienced sexual trauma and couldn't complete the assigned reading. She may have felt relief at know-

ing she wouldn't have to read the upsetting material, or she may have felt safe in reading the text because her trauma had been acknowledged in a general discussion beforehand. Hopefully, this attention to my students' lives will make them feel as if they are in a safe community and learning environment.

These are just some of the ways that I have learned to address the traumatic experiences of my students, but as an educator, I will need to continue to be alert to new challenges and revisions to current practices. One practice that Janet Isserlis suggests is to allow students to inform others about how trauma has impacted them:

Listen to learners and allow their concerns about violence to surface in one form or another. A class in which a learner-centered approach is used enables community to develop among the learners. It is important not to compartmentalize violence or to frame trauma as a medical issue, but rather to understand its many forms ("Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner").

It can become easy for instructors to have a cemented and uniform idea of what trauma looks like, so I commit myself to understanding its various forms as expressed by my students. In the past, I have been surprised at my own assumptions at how my students would react to their painful histories. As a result, my reaction to their behaviors in the classroom and how they are responding to my assignments is always evolving.

This past semester I learned how to allow my students to offer as little or as much information as they felt comfortable sharing. Before, I assumed that my "safe" classroom was enough for them to feel comfortable in revealing the content of their lives, but I realize that this is potentially a harmful practice:

Offer content and activities that allow learners to share as much or as little information about themselves as they want, particularly when they are just beginning to study together. Let learners know that while they are invited to share information about their

lives, they are not obliged to do so (Isserlis, 1996).

It is imperative that students have a choice of topics for their personal narratives, and they must have control over the stories they decide to tell. For example, I had one student who wanted to write about the dif-

It can become easy for instructors to have a cemented and uniform idea of what trauma looks like, so I commit myself to understanding its various forms as expressed by my students.

ficulty she was having coming out as a lesbian to her traditional family. In our individual work, she brainstormed and even wrote a draft, but when it was time for peer review, she came to me crying because she didn't feel like she could share this information with anyone. I explained that she didn't have to share with her peers and could explore another topic. Or alternatively, she could skip peer review that day and we could discuss her draft in office hours. In the end, even though she decided to write another essay, she wrote a wonderful draft about coming out and told me that spending time on the topic had allowed her to feel less ashamed and more content with her identity.

After exploring the topic without having to share with peers, she confessed that she wouldn't be so hesitant to share her next assignment. In fact, her writing encouraged her to seek counseling. I referred her to the mental health services on campus, and I hope to continue to make this a common practice with future students.

Ultimately, my goal is to frame the classroom and my pedagogi-

cal approaches as an environment in which students feel safe and respected. I believe that by being fully committed to the practices above, I am creating a more equitable environment for survivors of trauma.

Most, if not all, educators want this for their students, but as someone who has personally experienced the ways that insidious trauma is like a “perceptible tapping on your shoulders,” I want to offer others what I have learned from my own healing process. My empathy grew out of my own narrative, but it is nurtured by the resilient stories of my students. The best way I know how to honor that resilience is to make a place for it to reside in the classroom.

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Congratulations

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Summer 2014

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Helix Charter High
Grossmont Union High

Emily Tsai

SD Global Vision Academies Charter
San Diego Unified

San Diego Area Writing Project

Practices that Work

Building Writing Fluency in Our Youngest Emerging Writers

Jamie Jackson—SDAWP 2010
(Kinder/Transitional kinder)

They're 4. Some, the wise old age of 5. They are on the brink of learning everything from shoe tying to reading. To build a writing community with kindergartners, we must begin with the belief that they are writers. We do this through the fluency activity called Power Writing. I introduce a topic. We brainstorm and collaborate to generate ideas. We rehearse our responses orally with partners. We share. We take turns. We listen. We pause to think.

And then, we raise our pencils and affirm that we are writers with this simple mantra: "I am a writer. I am a powerful writer. I will write as much as I can, as well as I can, as fast as I can, until the time is through." Finally, we write. Some words. Some letters. Some scribbles.

They write for a few very quiet, very concentrated minutes. But they are writing. It's not about the product. It's not about the feedback. It's about the writer. Every writer is now actively participating in a writing community on a regular basis. They may be young, but they are writers. And our daily practice with writing is through Power Writing.

Putting One's Writing in the Drawer

Matt Jewel—SDAWP 2011
(6th Grade)

In his memoir, *On Writing*, Stephen King suggests that writers put their first drafts in a drawer for at least six weeks before getting feedback from anyone else. It's long enough that they've "almost forgotten" what they've written. I don't have that kind of time, but I have started asking my students to put their writing in the drawer for a week before sharing it with others—and I love what I see.

Here's how it works:

My students draft a piece of writing and turn it in. I don't even look at it. About a week later, I have the students reread what they've written and reflect on the different aspects of their writing on a scale of 1-4 (1 = Not really...okay, not at all, 2 = Umm ...sort of, 3 = Getting there, but needs revision, 4 = Oh yeah—I can't wait to share this!).

The different aspects of writing that they reflect on vary, depending on their purpose for writing. However, the prompts are always focused on the ideas and organization of the piece. For example, students might reflect on the degree to which their lead captures the reader's attention, whether the sequence of ideas seems purposeful, how well they've supported the claim(s) made in their argument, etc. After they've had the opportunity to evaluate their writing, I provide a few of your standard prompts for revision and set a date a few days out for them to share and receive feedback on their writing in their writing response (peer revision) groups. Then, I give them some time to revise on their own. You should see their papers bleed.

We talk a lot about reading like writers as we study mentor texts and apply those crafts, but I also want my students to read their own writing like readers, taking ownership of the revision process as they ask themselves questions. Is the narrative engaging? Does the informational text shed new light on the subject? Is my argument convincing? Putting one's writing in the drawer—simple as it sounds—has done more to flip that switch in my classroom than any other strategy I've found.

Multiple Starts

Divona Roy—SDAWP 1996
(High School)

Multiple starts give my students

the luxury of trying potential topics without investing "too much time and effort" into one dead-end topic. Students fold one piece of paper into a burrito (fold twice so that there are three sections on the front and three sections on the back). I take out my buzzing timer and give three minutes to fill in each of the six spaces. Each space is for one of six prompt choices: one of each student-generated controversial issue topic, one of each point of view (protagonist, antagonist, 3rd person omniscient, etc.), or whichever six writing ideas fit the goal. This surprises students. Sometimes their first choice topic is not something they have much to say about, and sometimes their 4th or 5th choice is something they are passionate about. At the end, students will be exhausted. Have them read through their multiple starts and choose one that they want to develop into a whole draft.

Writing TAG

Laura Smart—SDAWP 2010
(3rd Grade)

How can we empower students to seek out their own supports throughout the writing process and not always turn to the adult in the room when they are struggling? In my third grade classroom students are trained to TAG a friend when they are stuck or need help revising a piece. With a lot of modeling and practice, I have created a community where students feel safe to turn to each other for constructive feedback. When students meet together, they take turns sharing their writing with one another. They use the acronym TAG (Tell something you liked, Ask a question, and Give a suggestion) to help guide their conversations. Students love sharing their ideas and providing feedback to one another. This strategy also gives them many opportunities to learn from each other as writers.



7th Annual Fall Conference: Fall Into Writing

Speed Dating Pedagogy

Callie Brimberry—SDAWP 2008
Lisa Muñoz—SDAWP 2008

“Stop Talking. Start Doing.” Christine Kane’s bold statement, in reference to Jason Fried’s book *Rework*, epitomizes our experience at this year’s fall conference. And, to borrow one of Elizabeth King’s activity titles, we were certainly *speed dating* through the conference. Each time we entered a session to observe, participants were *doing*: sharing, writing, contemplating.

*She uses
the analogy
of boats drifting in
the open sea
to explain
how students feel
in the space of
their minds,
their ideas
vast and
overwhelming.*

We left revitalized. It was just reaching noon on Saturday, and we were aching to get back in the classroom to use what we learned. What kind of other experience could possibly make us feel this way?

Christy Ball tells us that she serves “the top 100% of our community.” As someone who didn’t attend first grade at all, instead learning “out of Kmart workbooks” as her family moved from one state to the next, she found her way to community college and then to Berkeley and beyond. Christy suggests “the patterns of development are not meant

to lead to formulaic assignments. By reframing the patterns as ways of thinking, we enable students to be more intentional during the inquiry and prewriting stage and more coherent and logical during the drafting stage of the writing process.”

She uses the analogy of boats drifting in the open sea to explain how students feel in the space of their minds, their ideas vast and overwhelming. She tells them, “We are not alone in that wide, open sea.” She gives her students the tools, like oars, to navigate through.

In just another room, Elizabeth King talks about another kind of sea—a sea of 160 indistinct essays that threaten to swallow her up. Again and again, her students choose the same quotes, and then, they explain the quotes in almost exactly the same way. So she asks her students, “How do you have a distinct voice?” Like Ball, King gives her students tools, in this case, through a variety of evidence to find their voice. Her clear breakdown of evidence seems obvious, and her tips are accessible and straight-forward. So often, students are told to “use examples” and “be specific,” which they interpret



Volunteer Margit Boyesen (left) and conference co-coordinator Valentyna Banner (right) enjoy the morning too.

as: find a quote. King offers her students a world of evidence: allusions, testimonials, personal experiences, analogies, and facts, and hypotheticals.

Janet Ilko also understands the importance of teaching students how to find, create, and utilize sources. Recently returning from a successful exploration of resources at the Summer Teacher Institute at the Library of Congress, Janet discussed successful strategies for analyzing primary sources. One such analytical tool prompted participants to observe, reflect, and question the significance of political cartoons her students recently examined.

Beyond the various strategies shared, Janet asked educators to remember that “it is important students, especially English learners, question their learning.” She shared her impressive work in guiding students to create their own primary sources by having them document evidence of their classroom activities via social media outlets such as Twitter.

Henry Aronson’s was deep in the revision process as we *speed dated* into his session. His handouts covered elements and standards of critical thinking, while his demonstration showed how to get to those levels of thought. As participants from all teaching levels shared, it became clear that his ARM tips (Add, Remove, Move) could apply to a wide range. The participants wrote, shared, and then rewrote about a



Dialogue editor Lisa Muñoz takes a moment to write and reflect during a session led by Henry Aronson.

picture on the screen—to say that it was simply a picture of a man sitting, legs crossed, and smoking a cigarette does not give justice to what Aronson inspired in his short session. Participants were inhabiting this man's thoughts, wondering about his life, and observing the details around him in ways that the revision tools allowed.

Fellows and friends were revitalized after Abby Robles led them on a journey in understanding the correlation between the physical act of "making" and the theoretical practice of composing writing. The excitement was contagious as participants collaborated to design, create, and test prototypes for hu-



Participants in a *maker* session led by Abby Robles celebrated getting a toy mouse into a humane trap.

manely catching mice. Immediately after testing their prototypes, participants recognized areas in need of improvement, and using their peers' designs as mentor texts, set forth to revise their ideas. Abby shared how design thinking has positively impacted her classroom; once her students saw the tangible results of their revisions during the physical task of making, they were much more motivated to continue the writing and revision processes. The message was refreshing and encouraging: the process of writing can be innovative and enjoyable.

Emily Tsai encouraged participants to "push past the surface level, name game, community building ice-breakers" and use writing as a tool to empower students to co-exist in the classroom and their communities. Using "Raised By" poems

written by fourth graders as mentor texts, Tsai shared how her second grade students built a community of trust, respect, and resiliency.

Along with other participants, I found myself inspired as both a writer and teacher when asked to write a "Raised By" poem. The sense of community and confidence students develop through writing is reaffirmed by the feedback students provide after sharing their poems. With the guidance of sentence starters, asking students to provide genuine affirmation, solidarity, and critique, it is no wonder that students leave Emily Tsai's classroom empowered as writers and leaders of a learning community.

Likewise, it was impossible to walk away from Emily Vizzo's presentation without feeling empowered as a writer and educator. With every anecdote and direction both comforting and challenging, the poet, journalist, and educator shared methods that encourage both novice and expert teachers of writing to improve their instruction.

Participants were happy to be immediately immersed in the process of writing and revising as they learned short radical revision strategies to critically view poetry. As we reviewed student work, we were reminded that "doing great damage to language" can, in fact, create beautiful and powerful prose. With every new method introduced, participants felt increasingly inspired and eager to return to the classroom to guide their students in writing and revising poetry and prose.

Marla Grupe Williams and Divona



Dialogue editor Callie Brimberry participated in a session presented by Elizabeth King.

Roy's group were in the midst of discussion when I walked in. Then Marla showed the new Chipotle commercial, the one with Willie Nelson covering Coldplay's "The Scientist." It shows an industry that has

*We are hesitant
to use the word
magical,
as if getting together
eager educators
and great presenters
is something
in the realm
of mystics,
but the power
of this conference
seems otherworldly.*

standardized food—has made it fit into gray boxes so that food doesn't at all resemble what it once was. The refrain is "I'm going back to the start." It ends with a sprig of green grass, with a single crate produced, farmer smiling. He may not have produced as much as the factory farm, but it is authentic, fresh, and all his own. The commercial closes with "Cultivate a better world."

It seems fitting in the context of this day. Where the commonplace is rigid standards and boxes to fill, we can cultivate better thinking, reading, and writing. We are hesitant to use the word magical, as if getting together eager educators and great presenters is something in the realm of mystics, but the power of this conference seems otherworldly.

We had just three hours to collectively experience eight voices, yet, much like King's *speed dating* activity, we learned about other perspectives and will likely want to meet again.



Resources for Further Study:

How the Traumas and Risks our Students Face Inform Our Teaching Practices

In the United States:

- More than 1.3 million students are homeless, 75,940 of these students live on their own. (Record Number of Public School Students Nationwide are Homeless, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/record-number-of-public-school-students-nationwide-are-homeless/2014/09/22/ef4783d4-427f-11e4-b47c-f5889e061e5f_story.html)
- 46% of student veterans experience significant symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. (Student Veterans: A National Survey Exploring Psychological Symptoms and Suicide Risk, http://www.units.miamioh.edu/celt/resources/strategies_documents/veterans_suicide.pdf)
- 1.3 million students have at least one parent serving in the military; 220,000 have a parent who is currently deployed. (Strengthening Our Military Families, http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0111_initiative/strengthening_our_military_january_2011.pdf)
- 400,000 students are in foster care. (Foster Care, <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=foster-care>)
- 2.7 million children have a parent who is currently incarcerated. (The Silent Victims of Incarceration: Coping with Parents in Prison, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/26/world/cnnheroes-prison-children/>)
- 8,300 high school students drop out EACH DAY. 36% of these cases occur in 9th grade. 30% of college and university students drop out after their first year. (Dropout Prevention and Intervention, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/dropout/>)
- Over 25% of students will experience a traumatic event on school grounds.
- 34,825,978 students experience or witness abuse or neglect in their home. (Essential Trauma Informed Practices in Schools, <http://www.azed.gov/prevention-programs/files/2013/12/trauma-informed-schools-barb-iversen.pdf>)
- Approximately 100,000 students are refugees and asylees seeking sanctuary from persecution. (The UN Refugee Agency Regional Profile, www.unhcr.org)
- "This Is Your Stressed-Out Brain on Scarcity" by Laura Starecheski (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/07/14/330434597/this-is-your-stressed-out-brain-on-scarcity>) Laura Starecheski notes, "Scientists have long recognized that poverty can aggravate health problems. Now they're also beginning to understand that the stress of too little income actually changes the way people think." She inter-

viewed Princeton psychologist Eldar Shafir who has found that when people in poverty are using the majority of their brain bandwidth to think about how to "pay for food and make rent today...it's almost impossible to think about the future." (Sheryl Gobble, Miramar College)

- *I Love You Are for White People* by Lac Su "I'm teaching *I Love You Are for White People* by Lac Su, a memoir of his life growing up as a Vietnamese immigrant in Los Angeles. Educators need to re-evaluate the easy and often negative labels they place on students who under-perform. Struggling students aren't lazy or slow; rather, they're struggling with so many issues that they have a limited amount of energy or mental capacity to also deal with college. Lac Su's memoir drives that point home." (Sheryl Gobble, Miramar College)
- "How Trauma Affects the Brain of a Learner" by Anya Kamenetz (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/ed/2014/06/15/320725558/how-trauma-affects-the-brain-of-a-learner>)
- "Teaching Through Trauma: How Poverty Affects Kids' Brains" by Annie Gilbertson: (<http://www.scpr.org/blogs/education/2014/06/02/16743/poverty-has-been-found-to-affect-kids-brains-can-o/>)
- On Course Workshop (www.oncourseworkshop.com) "I took a 2-day On Course workshop about 10 years ago and it was one of the best I've attended and I continue to implement many of the strategies in my classroom pedagogy today. OC offers a variety of resources, ideas, strategies, best practices etc. from teachers across the country and in all levels and disciplines." (Kenneth Reinstein, Miramar College)
- *Kicked Out* by Sassafras Lowrey "In the U.S., 40% of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer(LGBTQ). *Kicked Out* brings together the voices of current and former homeless LGBTQ youth and tells the forgotten stories of some of our nation's most vulnerable citizens."
- "Trauma-Sensitive Schools Are Better Schools" by Jane Ellen Stevens http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jane-ellen-stevens/trauma-sensitive-schools_b_1625924.html "Trauma-sensitive schools. Trauma-informed classrooms. Compassionate schools. Safe and supportive schools. All different names to describe a movement that's taking shape and gaining momentum across the country. And it all boils down to this: Kids who are experiencing the toxic stress of severe and chronic trauma just can't learn. It's physiologically impossible."



SDAWP's Project Notes

Congratulations to Janet Ilko (SDAWP 2008) who participated in the Summer Teacher Institute at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. over the summer. Alongside fellows from across the country, Janet learned effective strategies for incorporating primary sources in the classroom. (See "Observe, Reflect, Question: Using Primary Sources in the Classroom" on page 7.)

And a round of applause to Janet Ilko and her students at Cajon Valley Middle School. They are featured on the California Writing Project's 'Upstanders Not Bystanders, Project Empathy,' web page for 2014-2015. Lots of exciting writing and digital making going on at CVMS in Mrs. Ilko's class!! Visit the web page here: <http://www.writingforchange.net/projectempathy-upstanders-not-by-standers-with-the-cwp-2014-15/>

Kudos to SDAWP Fellow (2009) Rob Meza-Ehlert who was recently appointed Vice Principal/Dean of Students at Kearny Digital Media Design High School in San Diego Unified. Rob has taught history at Kearny since 2004.

Way to go, Barb Montfort (SDAWP 2011). Barb accepted the position of Coordinator in the Education Services Department in the South Bay Union School District where she will continue to share her passion for learning and student achievement.

Best of luck to Sonja Munévar Gagnon, SDAWP Fellow (1998)! Sonja has a new position as the English Language Coordinator in the Learning & Leadership Services Department at the SD County Office of Education. Sonja taught high school in San Diego Unified and then worked at the Office of Language Acquisition at the District for many years.

Don't forget! Summer Institute applications are due January 16! Visit the website at <http://sdawp.ucsd.edu/> for information.

"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. Participate in SDAWP Photo Voices, share what your students are writing about, glean new information about digital media in the classroom, or join the discussion about the California's Common Core State Standards.

Stay in Touch If you are an SDAWP Fellow and would like regular updates about upcoming events, please send us your email address. Visit our website at <http://sdawp.ucsd.edu>, and go to the 'Contact Us' link, or email us at: sdawp@ucsd.edu. We would love to add you to our eList!

Dialogue

**Call for Manuscripts
Spring 2015 Issue
Submission Deadline:
February 1, 2015**

Religion, Culture, Politics, and Ethics

Individuals, organizations, and society as a whole are continuously impacted by the intersections between religion, culture, politics, and ethics. In a world of continuously changing social circumstances, it is imperative that students become adults who are mindful of the power and privilege wielded by the ethical, political, and cultural structures in a religiously plural world.

Manuscripts should consider but are not limited to the following questions: How do you provide opportunities for students to engage in important conversations regarding the trends of religion, culture, politics, and ethics in society? How do you facilitate respectful discussions of topics that are considered both provocative and necessary? How do you tolerate student opinions that are indicative of intolerance? How do you successfully challenge students to be objective, empathetic, civic minded members of society? What strategies do you employ to promote critical thinking and informed reflection about these topics?

We also welcome submissions for ongoing features:

- **The Review:** We welcome book reviews that reflect current practices and issues in education.
- **Practices that Work:** *Dialogue* invites you to submit a brief synopsis that captures the essence of a writing practice that has been successful in your classroom.
- **Teachers Teaching Teachers:** Submit your experiences as Teacher Consultants and inform readers of SDAWP's innovative professional development.
- *Dialogue* values experiential knowledge and would love to receive reflective pieces written by educators and students. We encourage you to submit your stories, experiences, and strategies.

Email all submissions:
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Calendar of Events

SDAWP's Invitational Summer Institute 2015

Applications due
January 16, 2015
UC San Diego

Dialogue: Writing for Submission Marathon

January 10, 2015
12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
UC San Diego

Study Groups

December 6,
January 10, February 7
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
UC San Diego

24th Annual California Subject Matter Project English Learner Institute

**From Awareness to
Transformation:
English Learners
in the Age of
Common Core, K-12**

January 31, 2015
7:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Handlery Hotel
950 Hotel Circle North
San Diego

Save the Date! SDAWP Spring Conference

March 7, 2015
UC San Diego

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

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