

Dialogue



A Publication of the San Diego Area Writing Project

Spring 2015

Inside This Issue:

Driving Out Darkness
with Light:
Moving Beyond
the Single Story,
On Ethics in the
Elementary Classroom
Margit Boyesen p. 2-5

“In a world that continues to be divided by race and religion, teachers are invited to ask: how do we do our part to foster more tolerant thinking in our students? It may feel like a daunting question—because it is, but it also can’t be ignored.”

#SDAWP—Teaching Memoirs
in 140 Characters
SDAWP Leadership p. 5

“Seven years ago SDAWP and learning the power of mentor text forever changed my teaching in all subject areas #sdawp #cvdld2015”—Lucy Rothlisberger

Navigating the Truths
Within Us
Lisa Munoz p. 6-8

“When a concerned parent called the dean and demanded that I stop teaching *The Scarlet Letter*, he told her that while her daughter could read something else, he would not censor my class. The dean found me in the hallway and assured me that I could continue with my lesson plans.”

Classroom Management
Strategies: Working
with ESL Students
in the Community College
Kristin Krogh and Vickie Mellos
p. 9-12

“This positive interaction between ESL students, their native-speaking classmates, and their teacher can be the tool that makes them feel at home in a mainstream classroom, and by extension, in their new home.”

The Review:
Beyond Heroes and Holidays
Janet Ilko p. 13

“...I found a wonderful book entitled *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*. What makes this resource unique is that it can be used both with students and to prompt discussions for teachers and adult learners who care about equity in education.”

Teaching and Learning:
A Tribute to Mary Barr
Don Mayfield p. 15

“But Mary’s ‘radicalism’ wasn’t her dress. It was the way she treated—excuse me—taught kids. She truly believed that every kid was a learner, but not that every teacher knew how to teach. If kids failed to learn, it was not the student but the teacher who should be accountable.”

Spring Conference 2015:
Why Students Write
Janis Jones p. 14

“After a full morning of thoughtful learning, conference attendees departed UC San Diego ready to ‘overwhelm the world’ with ideas for inspiring student writers of all ages.”

Also in this issue:

Project Notes p. 14
Call for Manuscripts p. 15

Within this issue of *Dialogue*, educators in elementary, high school, and college settings bravely share their experiences in navigating the intersections between beliefs, culture, politics, and ethics in their classrooms. From mediating religious-based conflict at the elementary level to recognizing cultural differences that impact ESL college students, the articles reinforce the need for meaningful dialogue focused on topics that are often avoided because they have the potential to make some feel uncomfortable. The contributors to this issue openly share their stories as they address these difficult subjects directly. Please take part in upcoming events, submit writing to *Dialogue*, and join us as we continue the conversation.

Driving Out Darkness with Light:

Moving Beyond the Single Story, On Ethics in the Elementary Classroom

Margit Boyesen—SDAWP 2008

It was January 19th, 2015, and I had a warm and sunny San Diego winter day off from teaching my first, second, and third grade multi-age class. We were blessed with this day in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose words kept tapping at my mind...

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate;*

only love can do that."

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We're all too familiar with this "darkness"—a place where fear creates panicked reactionism and oppression—which dominates the

news as of late: the illuminating and widening of a racial divide increased by the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, numerous beheadings by ISIS, attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria, the murder of journalists in Paris. The extreme actions of a few threaten to define our times, but equally defining may be the world's reaction. On a global scale, we have been forced to crack open our belief systems and evaluate how to make changes.

As educators, we occupy a unique space in this reaction—one that has the power to foster progress from a truly grassroots level. In a world that continues to be divided by race and religion, teachers are invited to ask: how do we do our part to foster more tolerant thinking in our students? It may feel like a daunting question—because it is, but it also can't be ignored.

"It's not hyperbole to say that we're in danger of losing a generation of children to a world that, at the moment, cannot find its way forward without violence, conflict, and despair," begins Thomas Markham in his article for *Mind/Shift*, "In an Era of Conflict, Healing the World One Classroom at a Time." With our education system's new focus on the Common Core State Standards, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), the Maker-Movement, and more, which are all important foci, it's also important that we listen to students so they feel heard and teach them that they are part of a larger whole.

How young learners experience education is as important as what they learn. On my aforementioned day off in January, *Humans of New York* posted a photo on Instagram of a handsome young African American teenage boy. In the interview with

the boy, HONY asked, "Who's influenced you the most in your life?" And the boy answered:

My principal, Ms. Lopez... When we get in trouble, she doesn't suspend us. She calls us to her office and explains to us how society was built down around us. And she tells us that each time somebody fails out of school, a new jail cell gets built. And one time she made every student stand up, one at a time, and she told each one of us that we matter.

How did we get to a place where so many children experience school as a place where they are talked at rather than honored, the way Mrs. Lopez honors her students? Mrs. Lopez and Mott Hall Bridges Academy have received national attention (and huge donations) thanks to HONY sharing this story, and when they traveled to the White House, President Obama told them his story as well. Students matter, their stories matter, honoring both matters.

My own observations as an elementary school educator are that elementary schools are often left out of the conversation on topics of race, religion, and ethics—sometimes because young learners are assumed to be *too sweet* or *too young* to discuss these topics or more often because the teacher perceives treading on these sensitive topics as too uncomfortable or time-consuming. Thus, it is equally important that we discuss what it is our teachers need in order to be equipped to foster tolerance, social awareness, work, and empathy in our students.

What does driving out the darkness with light mean in the elementary classroom? It means listening to kids, teaching them that they are

Dialogue

Spring 2015
Issue No. 30

Beliefs, Culture, Politics, Ethics

Editors: Callie Brimberry
Lisa Muñoz
Co-Editor: Janis Jones
Layout: Janis Jones
Writing Angel: Susan Minnicks

Published by the
San Diego Area Writing Project

Director: Kim Douillard

UC San Diego
SDAWP
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, CA 92093-0036
(858) 534-2576
<http://sdawp.ucsd.edu/>

important, that they have something valuable to say, and that their stories matter. It also means teaching them to be active listeners within a learning community and to evaluate the lens through which they experience the words of others, so that they come to understand and believe that the words and stories of others around them matter, too. When framed this way, our task becomes far less daunting and the topics embedded in our task far less sensitive and uncomfortable, and the time spent feels less like a trade-off and more like an investment.

*Time is our
relentless enemy as
educators, and with
all the pressures
of the job,
teachers know that
it's not easy
to take the time
to talk things
through with kids.*

**Take the time to listen
to and talk with kids,
which teaches them to do
the same with each other**

Listen to both sides of an argument. Time is our relentless enemy as educators, and with all the pressures of the job, teachers know that it's not easy to take the time to talk things through with kids. My advice? Find the time. Years ago, when I was a green-bud of a teacher, a now-dear colleague of mine taught me a valuable lesson: in any student conflict, *first* establish listening parameters. Each side gets to speak while the other listens without any type of interruption, knowing they'll also get their turn. As the mediator, the teacher listens to both sides without comment as well. We must be cognizant of any tendencies we might have to hear one side and immediately pass judgment on the child's

behavior (they broke a school rule, a code of conduct, they're a bully, etc.).

A few years ago, when I taught 6th grade, a brave student reported that another student had been threatened by a third: she was going to be beat up after school. I invited the threat-maker and the threatened to eat lunch with me, and though tension hung heavy in the air, we were able to establish clear listening and speaking parameters. After giving each girl a chance to express her frustrations, and a chance to hear the frustrations and hurt feelings of the other (which were racially related), and talking through some of them, the girls relaxed their shoulders and began to talk. The threat was dropped, and eventually they actually became friends. As an educator, I made a conscious choice not to report the threat to the administration but to talk with the girls instead. And just a few months ago, I received an email from the girl who was threatened (now in high school) thanking me for helping her in that situation, and she reported still being friends with the near-perpetrator.

As a first, second, and third grade teacher, students often come to me reporting that someone else did something "mean," did something that "hurt their feelings," or "bullied" them. Though I have innumerable other things to take care of at any given moment of the day, I try to schedule time as soon as possible to sit down with both parties, even if for a few minutes. For example, a shy second grader reluctantly reported that a third grader had been "bullying" him for some time on the soccer field (they're both avid players), saying that Germany is a much better team and that England is no good. Being sensitive to world history and invested in helping kids shift from their own single-story, I sat down with the boys. After talking through why each loved and admired their team so much, we agreed that both teams are great and each boy is "allowed to love the team he loves." We named great players from each team and laughed a bit about how some beloved teams (like the San Diego Chargers) win a few and lose a few. The boy who had felt diminished and picked on had an opportunity to widen his lens a bit and share a few

laughs with his *perpetrator*. Though this is a very simple story involving seven and eight year-olds, it speaks to the practice of negotiating hurt feelings and incredibly strong affiliations with one side and creating the opportunity for each side to see the humanity of the other. Since then, I've checked in with the boy who was allegedly being picked on, and he reports that there have been no more issues with the other boy (not that there won't be in the future...).

*This moment
became an
opportunity to
empower her to
speak, not from fear
or resentment, but
from a place rooted
in a sense of being
allowed to have a
different lens or
belief system.*

**Help widen the lens
of their perspective**

A few weeks ago, one of my second graders with a strong religious affiliation to a particular denomination had been admonishing his classmate for "not believing in God." The classmate came to me, dismayed, both because she doesn't believe in God and because she felt harangued by the strong believer. This moment became an opportunity to empower her to speak, not from fear or resentment, but from a place rooted in a sense of being allowed to have a different lens or belief system. "Is it OK that you don't believe in God?" I asked her. "Yes," she said, quite sure of this. "Then you don't need to give him the power of picking on you," I explained. After we talked for a bit, she was able to identify that, at the root of this boy's attempt to convince her that she was wrong to not believe in God, there was a strong love for his own belief-system and

that ultimately he wanted to share it. We talked about the things she loves strongly (surfing, stuffed animals, her family), and we agreed that people often want to share what they're excited about. Our conversation widened the lens for her enough that she could see beyond feeling "picked on" to understand this boy's motivation. If we want to help create a world where people listen before (or after) judging, we need to start in elementary school and continue the conversations into junior high and high school. If we could teach students to listen and to understand the lens with which they're judging what they hear, we may find fewer kids feeling picked on or bullied and more kids feeling empowered to speak, share, and collaborate, knowing their way of viewing the world is simply a manifestation of what they've experienced and that there are a myriad of other realities out there. Our world needs a future where scientists, engineers, doctors, and others can successfully collaborate across disciplines, locally and globally. Understanding diverse perspectives is part of this successful collaboration.

*Our world needs
a future where
scientists, engineers,
doctors, and others
can successfully
collaborate across
disciplines, locally
and globally.*

Self-reflection

As educators, if we are to help young learners widen the lens of their perspectives, we first need to be willing to take a look at our own. Where we were born, how we were raised, and the types of environments in which we grew up are all factors that influence the lens through which we see the world. Starting there, we can take a look at how we view (and possibly judge) those around us—co-workers, friends, partners,

and our students. How do we, ourselves, react during classroom conversations? Are we open to multiple-perspectives? Or do we shut kids down? Do we value and listen to each equally? Are we willing to have our own viewpoint slightly shifted or altered by ideas our students bring forth? Are we willing to say, "I hadn't thought of it that way before; I'm so glad you shared!" or "I'm so sorry, I wasn't listening to you fully; my head is a-buzz with the story I've already created. Would you start again so I can give your words the full attention they deserve?" Being honest with myself, reflective, and aware of my own *single-story* lens has helped me become a more authentic teacher over the years.

Teach kids to honor the skill of listening in the classroom

Often, when young learners have something to say that they feel is important, they raise their hands, focusing solely on their own ideas and do not listen to the points that others are making. Recognizing this, I often have students put their hands down while others are speaking. This sounds too simple to make a difference, I know, but it really does. In addition, I have adapted "discussion functions and starters" from Jeff Zwier's *Building Academic Language*, so that students have to use words to honor the thread of conversation and what was said before them. For example, if you were to come into my room during a discussion, you might hear a student say, "Adding on to what Ava said, I also think that..." or "Kind of like what Paul said a while ago, I agree that..." or "I (respectfully) disagree with Jack, because..." This teaches students that they're not myopic islands in the classroom, but rather they are a part of the greater whole of the classroom learning community. Listening with the possibility of slightly altering your own thinking is something I explicitly teach in relation to opinion/argument writing. Making a point in a vacuum has no positive effect; opinions are to be shared for the purpose of being evaluated by others, and maybe, just maybe, changing someone else's thinking, even if ever-so-slightly.

Use books as starting points to engage in the not-so-easy

conversations in the elementary classroom

It's not necessarily easy or comfortable to talk about race, privilege, and the global village, but I would argue that it is imperative, even in early elementary school. The following resources can provide focal points for discussions.

Making a point in a vacuum has no positive effect; opinions are to be shared for the purpose of being evaluated by others, and maybe, just maybe, changing someone else's thinking, even if ever-so-slightly.

A great place to start a conversation, gain insight, and promote world mindedness is a book about the world's people by David J. Smith called *If the World Were a Village*. It's also an interesting mentor text for non-fiction and informative writing with narrative elements. *Beatrice's Goat* by Page McBrier (with an afterword by Hillary Rodham Clinton) lends a heart-warming story based on the author's research in Uganda, showing the power that micro-loans can have in developing nations. Similarly, *One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference* by Katie Smith Milway beautifully illustrates the true story of Kwabena Darko, "Kojo," a boy from Ghana's Ashanti Region, who, after losing his father, had to help his mother rather than attend school. Kwabena not only learned to care for hens, but his patience and perseverance eventually changed the economic reality of his village. Additionally, *Fourteen Cows for America* by Carmen Agra Deedy

is a book not to miss if you're looking for a way to bridge the topic of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. This beautiful book crosses nations, cultures, and boundaries through the story of how the legendary Maasai warriors honor the sorrow they feel for America's loss on 9/11. Based on a true story, this poetic picture book is appropriate for any age, K-12. In my multi-age classroom of grades 1-5, we've used the above resources at various times over the last two years. *One Hen* was perhaps the most impactful and lead to an engaging micro-loan project. For more information on that project, visit: <http://thinkingwritingcreating.edublogs.org/2014/02/14/packed-with-a-lot-of-love/>

Another resource that provides a jumping-off point, not for the global village but for talking about race and bullying, is *Mr. Lincoln's Way* by Patricia Pollacco. Even though the school bully calls Mr. Lincoln, their super-cool African American principal, and others bad names, Mr. Lincoln says, "He's not such a bad kid." With kindness and patience, Mr. Lincoln establishes a friendship with the bully, giving him an opportunity to share his passion for birds and to admit that these bad names are names he hears and lives with at home. This story gently and beautifully illustrates that what lies beneath bullying behavior is often abusive behavior, which has been passed on to the child, or bully, because of lack of guidance and hate created from a *single story*.

As educators, I am inviting us to create a future where learners—and humanity—can see beyond the *single story*, and choose to seek understanding because they've been taught that judgments are a prohibitive outer layer that prevent truly seeing someone's inner beauty, our shared human frailty, and—ultimately—shedding light in the darkness.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." —Nelson Mandela.

Works Cited:

Adiche, Chimamanda; "The Danger of a Single Story." *TED*. Oct. 2009. Lecture.

Agra Deedy, Carmen. *Fourteen Cows for America*. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, 2009.

Faber, Adele and Elaine Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Can Listen and Listen So Kids Can Talk*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012.

Markham, Thom. "In an Era of Conflict, Healing the World One Classroom at a Time." *MindShift*, 14 Jan. 2015. Web. 20 Jan. 2015. <http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2015/01>

McBrier, Paige. *Beatrice's Goat*. New York: Aladdin, 2004.

Smith, David J. *If the World Were a Village: A Book About the World's People, 2nd Ed. (CitizenKid)*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2011.

Smith Milway, Katie. *One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference (Citizen Kid)*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2008.

Polacco, Patricia. *Mr. Lincoln's Way*. New York: Philomel Books, 2001.

Wheatley, Margaret J. *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*. "Willing to Be Disturbed." San Francisco: Berrett-Koshler Publishers, Inc., 2002.

Zwiers, Jeff. *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classrooms*. 2nd Ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.



#SDAWP Teaching Memoirs in 140 Characters

By SDAWP Leadership

Seven years ago SDAWP and learning the power of mentor text forever changed my teaching in all subject areas #sdawp #cvdld2015

—Lucy Rothlisberger, SDAWP 2007

My educational memoir: student, teacher, principal—never satisfied, always pushing, learning from others, enjoying the rising tide. #sdawp

—Christine Sphar, SDAWP 1996

Always standing at the crossroad of thought and action—a writer's struggle, discovery. What is the "classroom?" #SDAWP

—Marla Williams, SDAWP 2008

Caring-centered social activist w/an existentialist's mind & a traveler's heart, I value & celebrate new knowledge & ways of being. #sdawp

—Christy Ball, SDAWP 2014

Backpack straps, shoelaces, a smile. Everyday the windows are open and love flows. I can never tell if it's me or them who is #learningmore.

—Emily Tsai, SDAWP 2014

Wanted to make a living that was professionally & personally gratifying. As a teacher #IWonBothOfThem Gratefulness to #SDGVA #SDAWP #NWP

—Christine Kane, SDAWP 2004

Advocate for student voice and choice in a world that desperately needs both. Empathy and action through the power of words. #sdawp #cwp

—Janet Ilko, SDAWP 2008

Every day = an opportunity to show a #child they matter and #foster a vision of a #treasure waiting to be found. #sdawp #teaching #learner

—Margit Boyesen, SDAWP 2008

Fortunate to work with amazing educators—SD Area Writing Project—doing the hard work of teaching and learning. #sdawp #teachthechildrenwell

—Carol Schrammel

Side by Side. Learning as Toreros. Enlightened at Iftin. Again as Toreros. Finally sdgva. Side by side in kinder & in fifth. @MrsJacksonSDGVA

—Valentya Banner, SDAWP 2009

Navigating the Truths Within Us

Lisa Muñoz, SDAWP 2008

I was about to begin my 9th/10th grade English lesson, when our dean, an Orthodox rabbi, asked my students to head to the biggest classroom in the school. Our entire school would be there, just thirty-five students in all, with around the same number of staff members.

The guest speaker, a renowned Orthodox rabbi and physician, was already introducing himself, saying he would speak about making choices. He said we don't learn spiritual truths, "we recognize them within us." I leaned forward, captivated by what he would say in that hour. I kept repeating that to myself, ironically fearful that I would forget: we recognize truths within us. We recognize truths within us! I couldn't believe I was so lucky to listen to his lecture during my class period.

This was one of the few times during my six years teaching there that I felt separated from my students or my staff because of our beliefs.

My students, however, were apologetic afterward and asked me if I felt weird about attending. I realized that they felt self-conscious of me, an outsider looking in. I assured them that I felt grateful for the opportunity to listen to the rabbi. This was one of the few times during my six years teaching there that I felt separated from my students or my staff because of our beliefs.

This was an early experience of teaching literature and dance at an Orthodox Jewish, all-girls private

high school. While hired to teach literature, all it took was an after-class conversation with a few enthusiastic students about my ten years of tap and jazz dance, to find myself teaching a fun modern dance class, too.

This is the way it generally went—whenever students, even just one, expressed interest in something, it would turn into an elective: Japanese, Yiddish, digital video production, dance, violin, playwriting—the list goes on to include nearly as many extra classes as there are students. And with class sizes of about eight to ten, this is a place where students are encouraged to pursue their passions and are given the time, attention, and resources they need to do so. I experienced a place where Orthodox Jewish traditions, classic novels, social problems, political issues, and popular culture intersected.

I had heard about this position while teaching basic skills and transfer-level college classes from my department chair. She thought I would be a good fit because of my experiences as an assistant teacher at an arts high school in San Francisco. I was thrilled by the opportunity, but I wasn't so sure that my public arts high school experiences had prepared me—I was coming from an incredibly, boastfully liberal high school environment to interview at a small private school with a strict dress code, even for its teachers.

Before I interviewed for the job, in my nervousness, I contacted a Jewish family friend to ask her advice. I found myself ransacking my closet for a skirt long enough and a blouse that was both professional, high collared, and long-sleeved (this is San Diego, after all!), but I was put at ease by my friend's emphasis on the value of critical thinking in the community. I decided to be honest and authentic in the interview and shared my syllabi and the published

literary journals that my students had created—which were racy, edgy, and completely inappropriate, at least in my mind, to share with the dean, again, an Orthodox rabbi. The dean put me at ease with his smile and genuine kindness. He turned his attention to the school, and he described girls who were bursting with

For the first weeks, I had a pit in my stomach nearly every time I entered the classroom, fearing I wouldn't be taken seriously. After all, I looked about the same age as my students!

curiosity, creativity, and interest. He emphasized academic excellence and a school environment of student inquiry, exposure, and support. When I walked to my car with news I had gotten the position, I'm pretty sure I did a happy dance.

For the first weeks, I had a pit in my stomach nearly every time I entered the classroom, fearing I wouldn't be taken seriously. After all, I looked about the same age as my students! And I found myself agonizing over my clothes: did my skirt show my knees when I sat down? Did my sleeves go well past my elbows? I once thought I was totally appropriate and then went to a staff meeting and realized my V-neck was not modest enough. No one said anything, but the female staff were covered to their collarbones and it literally made me feel naked. Another time, in class, I was bending over to help a student and my shirt lifted to

show about an inch of back. A student tugged at my shirt and quietly said, "You should wear an under-shirt."

But, within a month or so, many of my students would hug me and even squeal, "Hi, Mrs. Muñoz!" as I would enter. They would compliment my shoes or ask me where I bought my sweater. I would often stay with them at lunch time, and every once in a while, a student would style my hair while I ate or another would quiz me on my favorite songs and bands. I felt genuine affection for my students, and I was in awe of the balance of their diverse interests, musical tastes, and demeanors, while being unified by their love of God and interest in their religious studies. This is not to say that I didn't sometimes have challenges in the classroom.

I felt genuine affection for my students, and I was in awe of the balance of their diverse interests, musical tastes, and demeanors, while being unified by their love of God and interest in their religious beliefs.

While generally respectful, some girls were chatty or giggly throughout lessons. And, at times, I could not figure out a way to get students to complete readings short of holding them captive and reading aloud during class to get them through a classic novel. So, I found myself shaping lessons around what would hold their interest and listened to their suggestions: more ways to prepare for the SATs, new popular novels that they were dying to read, discussions about war-torn countries and conflict, immigration, controversial news stories.

The dean not only supported me as a teacher, but he enthusiastically trusted me in my academic choices as I planned these lessons. While it was evident that I needed to clear my curriculum choices with him and that we needed to follow California academic standards and maintain the goal of preparing students for college and beyond, teachers had flexibility in the methods and materials. When a concerned parent called the dean and demanded that I stop teaching *The Scarlet Letter*, he told her that while her daughter could read something else, he would not censor my class. The dean found me in the hallway and assured me that I could continue with my lesson plans.

I taught books that contained female characters who fit outside traditional roles: *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Doll's House*, and others, while my students wore modest uniforms and were expected not to so much as shake hands with male non-relatives. I remember not finding out about women not touching men until about a year in, and then panicking about all the rabbis' hands I probably shook—since the rabbis are so kind that they would rather break their own traditions than embarrass or disrespect someone outside their religion. And, yet, as I navigated learning these customs, I brought in controversial hot-topics from the news, lyrics in popular music, and contemporary novels I knew my students would love.

Regularly, when I went to the office to sign in or print handouts, the dean would praise me and thank me for my work with the students. Throughout those years, I saw the duality of the observance of religious traditions and the appreciation of a diverse, expansive education.

There were moments when I clearly misunderstood traditions altogether. Early in the first year of teaching, I desperately wanted to bond with my students. What better way to bond than over food? I decided to host a class party on a whim, and I brought most of the food myself—dips, chips, fruit. In my mind, I thought I was aware of enough of some of the kosher rules to make this happen—no pork or shellfish, and look for the K for kosher. But as I entered, arms

full of Trader Joe's bags, one student quietly slipped out. She returned with the secretary, who, with a raised voice said, "This isn't kosher!" as she lifted a sour cream. "And this isn't kosher!" She told me the food was unacceptable and it had to be put away. I was embarrassed and confused, and I'm sure my students were embarrassed for me. One offered to take the food to the fridge, where I could pick it up at the end of the day.

I think they saw then that I had recovered from the embarrassment of my mistake, and a new inside joke had formed that would be used for the rest of the year.

Another student drew symbols to show me which signs were Orthodox kosher. While she was showing me, I was thinking, "so many rules! I can't keep this straight." But, then as they explained what kosher is and how it applies to their beliefs, I could see the significance and even beauty of it, really—the rabbi going to each factory and ensuring the cleanliness of the products.

Soon after the food debacle, all was back to normal. The secretary continued to greet me kindly each day, and my students didn't mention it. One day, a student in the front of the class had a plastic toy she kept putting in her mouth for some reason. With a smile I said, "I'm pretty sure that's not kosher," and she and the class erupted in laughter. I think they saw then that I had recovered from the embarrassment of my mistake, and a new inside joke had formed that would be used for the rest of the year. And, I didn't stop having class parties, but I no longer brought the food myself unless it had been previously inspected and approved. In celebration of finishing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, we had a Mad Hatter's Tea Party in a meadow

right outside of the school, and we even dressed as characters from the book. After reading *The House on Mango Street*, we had a Mexican fiesta, where each student brought ingredients from their homes, and I then instructed them on how to prepare my favorite seven-layer dip.

*I knew I could
not sustain the
number of classes
I was teaching,
and that I needed
to leave this
amazing, tiny,
powerful school.
I cried and mourned
the loss before
I even made the call.*

Despite my learning curve, the school not only accepted me, but embraced my entire family; my mother and I would attend yearly Chagiga nights, making crafts like paper mâché vases and playing board games with my students, mothers, siblings, and other teachers. I jumped in bounce houses and went on scavenger hunts with my students during Purim. My parents, husband, and now my son, dress up in formal wear and attend the huge fundraising gala, Casino Night, every single year. I still attend these big events, school assemblies, and graduations, and when I am there, I drink in the dean's sermons and feel immense pride for the students and school.

Most recently, at the huge yearly Casino Night fundraiser we attend, the secretary hugged me and said how happy she was we were all there. Then, her husband found me, got out his cell phone, and called his daughter, who was my student about six or seven years ago. "I have your favorite teacher right here in front of me! Guess who it is!" As he handed me the phone, I heard her say, "Mrs. Muñoz?" We chatted about her career as a researcher in biology, and she said I should be happy to know that she is the best writer in the lab,

and she is given all the lab reports to revise. We laughed about this, and I thought of her as a young teen—at first a reluctant student, who didn't always turn in her work. But, with some encouragement (and a lot of pleading), she finally turned in assignments—and they were beautifully and powerfully written. She is thriving now.

Just as I got off the phone with her, the presentation for the gala was about to begin. We went into the synagogue, and as we watched a student-made video, I cried like a mother cries for her child who is now grown up. Students held signs and one said, "You may see a small school, but we see endless opportunities." I watched these young girls and thought of their brimming potential and my own students over the years. I stay in touch with many of my former students, and I keep hoping that someday I will find the hours in my day to go back and teach a class or two there once again. One of my former students moved to Israel; well, many move to Israel—90% continue Torah education in Israel for at least a year to complete seminary, but this one in particular became an Israeli soldier after she graduated high school. One attends Yale, another NYU, and another Columbia. Another is a dancer who regularly performs with the California Ballet. Yet another is a party and wedding planner. Another is a film producer whose film is going to be shown at Cannes this year.

I can go on and on about these students, my girls, who make me beam with pride for having the opportunity to know them. My students have varied and often ambitious goals, and in this community, they can reach them.

During my time there, I taught up to eight classes at two schools, which was no small feat. But with no children of my own at the time and a family who understood I would have little contact with them during the school year, I was able to manage it. I stayed as long as I did because this environment nourished me and cultivated my skills in ways I can use for the rest of my academic career.

When I found out I was pregnant, just after I called to let my husband

know, one of my very first thoughts was what I would have to give up. I knew I could not sustain the number of classes I was teaching, and that I needed to leave this amazing, tiny, powerful school. I cried and mourned the loss before I even made the call.

My college students read the humanist writer, Erich Fromm, and when we do, I think of my time at this school. At one point, Fromm says that our traditions, customs, and beliefs differ, but at the core, we are the same. We are unified in being human. This resonates with me, and in my heart, I know that it is a spiritual truth that I recognize deep within me.



Introducing *Dialogue* Writing Group

When we proposed the theme for this issue—beliefs, culture, politics, and ethics in the classroom—we recognized that we were asking fellow educators to inhabit uncomfortable spaces as they tackled challenging topics.

In our desire to provide a literal space for exploration and discourse, *Dialogue* hosted a drafting party, during which participants had the opportunity to address prompts and share writing. It was a success and was the first of many *Dialogue* Writing Group events to come.

Our next issue will focus on technology and writing in the classroom, and we invite you to *Dialogue*'s Writing Group to generate ideas, discuss issues, and spend time writing and sharing. Please join us on May 16, 2015 from 9am - 12pm in the UC San Diego Cross-Cultural Center.

Email your RSVP to Carol at
sdawp@ucsd.edu

Classroom Management Strategies:

Working with ESL Students in the Community College

Kristin Krogh & Vickie Mellos, SDAWP 2014

Refugees, international scholars, US military veterans, and working professionals routinely intersect and work side-by-side in the typical San Diego community college classroom. The diversity and cultural richness provide unique opportunities to capitalize on each group's life experiences and understandings of the world. But, it can also be a challenge to integrate and help students who are learning English to feel as if they are part of the classroom community in a mainstream English composition class. As we have collaborated over the years at Miramar College in our student support center, The English Center, and teaching ESL and a variety of basic skills and transfer-level English classes, we have developed effective strategies to address some of these challenges.

ESL students bring fresh perspectives and provide unique insights into global issues as a result of adapting to a new culture and being constantly required to compare social norms. This deep level of insight and knowledge about global issues was recently illustrated in Kristin's class during an assignment that related to social justice. For the assignment, students examined the issue of homelessness in America and the approach of building micro-houses that could be offered to the homeless in order to address this growing problem. Using the topic of homelessness as an example, the students then researched and wrote about a social problem that they found compelling and provided their own commentary on how the problem that they selected, such as drug abuse in Iran or leprosy in Vietnam, should be addressed or tackled. The students then compiled their papers into a self-published anthology. This allowed the students to offer information and bring awareness to global problems that they felt were compelling, and they could use their insider knowledge about diverse

social issues to inform others. This contributed to a heightened level of understanding and empathy of students from different cultures, including building a deeper bond between native English speakers and ESL students.

In addition to offering broad and unique perspectives, many ESL students come from cultures that highly value education and hold teachers in high regard, and students are taught from an early age to give esteem to their learning environment, which makes them a delight for teachers to work with. Or, on the other hand, teachers may encounter ESL students who come from societies in which they have been deprived of an education because of political, social, or economic turmoil. Instructors often find that these students, who have not had much exposure to formal education in their home countries, tend to take their education the most seriously. From young Afghani women who were forbidden by the Taliban to attend school, to young Sudanese and Syrians who have fled civil war, to the Iraqis whose homes have been destroyed by bombs, these students cling to the opportunity to learn English, and they depend on this knowledge for their future well-being in a way that is truly inspiring and impressive. Watching ESL students remain dedicated to learning a new language and adapting to a new culture can, in many cases, help native speaking students have a greater appreciation for the struggle and effort that it takes to acclimate to a new way of life as well as educational opportunities that they may have taken for granted.

Yet, despite the benefits that teachers typically observe, ESL students face a unique set of challenges in the native speaker dominated class, and their behaviors inside and outside of the classroom can sometimes be misunderstood. Likely, having

been sheltered in ESL classes for several years, they are often used to the close-knit communities that their ESL classrooms foster and are also accustomed to teachers' accommodations for their learning needs. As a result, when they enter the mainstream English classroom, they sometimes find themselves overwhelmed with a new set of expectations. It is a regular occurrence in the tutoring center to see students who were perfectly comfortable and were excelling in their ESL classes becoming flustered and frustrated in a native speaker dominated writing course. One Persian student expressed to us that she felt that she had "lost her family." She said, "If I didn't understand something that the teacher said in the ESL class, I used to ask my friend in Farsi to translate and explain it to me at the break. In my new [mainstream] class, no one speaks Farsi, and I'm too embarrassed to ask the Americans who all

*As a result, when
they enter the
mainstream
English classroom,
they sometimes find
themselves
overwhelmed with
a new set
of expectations.*

seem to understand." Therefore, ESL students are not only making a substantial linguistic leap that is required to master the content in a native speaker dominated mainstream course, but they also feel as if they no longer have a safety net. And, to many students, this is just another stressful layer of adapting to a new culture where everything feels foreign.

Likewise, ESL students may have difficulty sharing their ideas, especially when they are exposed to regional topics for which they do not have adequate background knowledge. For example, when one of Vickie's composition classes was exploring the rise of facial recognition systems as a security device, the

ESL students did not initially have the familiarity of American laws to fully understand why this could violate the concept of American civil liberties and why the idea of facial recognition software could cause upset for many Americans. And, when Korean and Japanese students were asked to investigate the concept of childhood obesity, they had almost no frame of reference with which to address the topic because it is not an epidemic in their countries in the same way that it is in the US. Many mainstream courses cover topics like political elections, raising the minimum wage, and legalizing marijuana, all of which may be completely unfamiliar to ESL students. When topics like these arise, students may become lost in the class and fail to participate or ask questions out of confusion or embarrassment.

Based on all of these factors and more, ESL students may feel distressed. In *Theorizing About Intercultural Communication*, William B. Gudykunst, an expert on multicultural communication, suggests that anxiety and uncertainty are two factors that can influence adaptation. Depending on the extent of the cultural gap when it comes to academic expectations, the result may be that anxiety and uncertainty become the forces that motivate students to adapt to the classroom environment; on the other hand, when the anxiety is excessive, it can lead to a failure to adjust to new conditions.

So, what can teachers do to help students overcome their unease and adapt to the new classroom environment? What can teachers do to encourage participation from ESL learners and make them feel more confident in the learning process?

One fundamental place where teachers can start is by understanding cultural influences. We have observed from years of experience that English learners from Asian cultures tend to have rigid rules that govern when it is appropriate to speak and in what order the participants are allowed to take part in the conversation. Since class participation and speaking up in class are highly valued in the United States, ESL students can feel very uncomfortable in this new set of circumstances where

the American conversation style tends to be a free-for-all with the most dominant person controlling the conversation.

Thus, differing social norms and worries about pronunciation or not being understood can keep students from actively participating in class discussions.

This free-for-all style is at odds with Eastern philosophies, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, which highly value and promote peace and harmony, and this cultural difference can cause the non-confrontational behavior of many Asian individuals to be interpreted as seeming overly passive (“American Asians”). Additionally, research indicates that while Chinese students may have high academic levels in reading and writing, they may have weaknesses in listening and speaking (Huang; Yuan). Thus, differing social norms and worries about pronunciation or not being understood can keep students from actively participating in class discussions.

Additionally, in some cultures, it is typically considered disrespectful to make eye contact with an individual of a higher rank, including a teacher, and having your own opinion is generally seen as distasteful because students are expected to agree with the teacher and listen but not speak (Chrisholm; Locker). When Kristin first started teaching, she noticed this with the vast majority of the Korean and Vietnamese students, and it wasn’t until she specifically told them that it is appreciated and even expected in American culture that they make eye contact that they began attempting to meet others at eye level.

Finally, in most Asian cultures, there is extreme pressure to be perfect:

even an A- can be devastating. Many ESL students share stories about how they were ridiculed by their peers or punished by a parent if they did not earn an A on every test. As a result, they sometimes have an extreme fear of failure, which can translate into a fear of participating in the classroom. Some teachers may mistake their lack of participation as a lack of interest when, in reality, they may simply be afraid to speak up. This fear can sometimes even lead to what American teachers would consider cheating.

When we conducted a workshop at Miramar College with regard to the issues that ESL students face, the issue of plagiarism in particular was a hot topic. Unlike students who grow up in the U.S. education system, ESL students may not fully comprehend academic expectations, such as plagiarism. When they are confronted with a new and unfamiliar topic, some of them go to the internet out of desperation and copy information as a way to demonstrate to their teacher that they have mastered the material, which in reality, they have not. Even though most teachers carefully go over plagiarism and cheating policies in their class and syllabi, the message regularly gets lost in translation. It could be that their drive toward perfection and their desire to look informed will often overpower the rules of writing. And, if they come from a culture which tends to overlook plagiarism or typically does not heavily penalize students for it, they may ignore the American statute altogether. This can cause significant hardships for them as they advance, and it can be extremely infuriating for the professor who is working with them.

English language learners may have grown up with different educational values. For example, Middle Eastern cultures are highly collaborative societies in which working together and doing favors for one another is common. Thus, they don’t have the same understanding of “cheating” that Americans have. We have observed that when students turn in highly polished writing assignments that they could not have produced themselves, they appear dumbfounded when told that having someone else “fix” their paper is cheating. For them, it might have

been their friend's or family's obligation to help them. In fact, most of the Middle Eastern students that we interviewed indicated that it would be embarrassing, or even unthinkable, to turn down a request from a family member. This can lead to other people fixing, editing, refining, re-writing, or even creating the first draft of a paper for the student who makes the request. Additionally, in other cultures, there is a tendency toward rote memorization, which can also easily lead to plagiarism, whether the student intends it or not. When Vickie was working as an English teacher in Greece, she learned that the highest scores on university entrance exams were given to those who had memorized texts verbatim, whereas in the United States memorizing the text verbatim and repeating it would likely be seen as having a lack of creativity. Therefore, although rugged individualism and intellectual property are highly valued in the United States, this is directly at odds with the values that many of our students hold, and while it doesn't make the issue of plagiarism and cheating any less frustrating, it is imperative that we are cognizant of the differences between our individualistic American culture and the collective cultures that many of our students come from.

On a more severe level, some students are refugees from war-torn countries. In San Diego, we have one of the largest Iraqi refugee populations in the United States, in addition to many Afghanis, Sudanese, and Syrians. One issue that we see is students whose education has been interrupted because of war. These students may not have strong foundational skills necessary to thrive in college. Additionally, triggers to past trauma may be a challenge for them, whether in class discussion or in the types of assignments they are given. In composition classes, it is not uncommon for them to be assigned writing tasks that ask them to draw from personal experiences that are painful to recall.

One example that we encountered in the writing center involved an Iraqi refugee who was performing quite well in his composition course overall, but was seriously struggling with a narrative assignment because

of the pain of recalling the memory of watching his best friend killed before his eyes. He was reluctant, if not incapable, of completing the assignment. He felt it was disrespectful to his friend and to his teacher to shy away from writing about the most important moment of his life, but he simply sat and stared at the blank computer screen in front of him because he didn't know how to start. Without a great deal of empathy and trust from one of the tutors that he was working with, he may

One issue that we see is students whose education has been interrupted because of war. These students may not have strong foundational skills necessary to thrive in college.

never have finished the paper. In a case like this, if the student felt uncomfortable informing the professor of the reason that he or she failed to complete the assignment, the situation could be misinterpreted, and the professor may simply assume that the student was too lazy or busy to do the work.

While understanding where ESL students are coming from is one step to helping them adapt, it is also critical that we develop classroom practices that provide the environment where these students can thrive. There are a number of strategies that we have found helpful for fostering this kind of productive classroom community, which successfully integrates native and non-native speakers.

What should you do if a student has a hard time understanding you?

- Encourage ESL students to sit in the front of the classroom. This makes it easier for them to see the teacher's gestures

and expressions, which may enhance understanding. There also tends to be less distraction in the front row, and they are more visible if they have questions.

- Use teaching strategies that will assist with comprehension, including the use of multiple inputs. For example, you could model activities before they begin, give examples both orally and in writing, provide a visual when you are talking about a topic, go over directions slowly and clearly, repeat when necessary, and be conscious of any slang/idioms you use.

What can you do if ESL students are hesitant to participate in group or class discussions?

- When possible, tell students in advance which question they will be responsible for answering in front of the class and give them time to prepare a response. Saving face is important, so giving them time to prepare their thoughts reduces stress and helps students to participate actively.
- Avoid yes/no questions and teach students to use reciprocity during a group discussion so that everyone will have an opportunity to take part. Examples of reciprocal questions/phrases include:
What is your opinion about this topic?
I'd like to hear what you think.
What can you add to this idea?
- Write sentence starters on the board that students can refer to during group work:
I agree/disagree that...
I think it's interesting that...
I wonder why...
I'm confused about...
- Offer opportunities for the students to write ideas or answers on the whiteboard. This offers a low-stress option for shy students who are nervous about speaking in front of the group.
- When calling on students with little advanced warning, use 3x5 cards with students' names

on them and pick randomly from the stack when calling on students. This method can be stressful for some students, but it ensures equality in who is called on and avoids our natural tendency to bypass the quieter students.

What could you do if a student has a lot of questions and tends to take longer to complete class activities?

- Set time limits at the beginning of an activity and give five-minute warnings before the activity finishes.
- Limit the number of questions that a very outspoken student can ask per class session. Have that student write down any remaining questions that he/she doesn't have a chance to ask during class, and make time to answer those questions as soon as you get a chance (directly after class, in office hours, by email, etc). This will allow the student to feel like he/she is heard without derailing the class time for the others.

What can you do if a student comes from a culture that emphasizes negotiation?

- Stand your ground. Explain to the student that the learning conditions and grading policy apply equally to everyone.
- Consider offering a revision policy. This gives students the opportunity to earn more points, and negotiation becomes unnecessary.

What should you do if you think your ESL student is cheating or plagiarizing?

Unfortunately, because issues of cheating and plagiarism are closely tied to scores that impact the student's grade, and because some students are more concerned with their score than their progress, this is an issue that is extremely difficult to resolve.

- Perhaps the best strategy is to dialogue with the student about how the rules of collaborat-

ing and using other people's ideas could be different from the expectations in their home country.

- Encourage them to reiterate their educational and personal goals so that they can see how they'll impede their own progress by not learning English to their full potential. We often tell our students that very few people will care about their grade outside of class, but they will care very much about their ability to communicate when they do activities such as going to the doctor or applying for a job. Rather from threatening them with penalties, this will show them that there will be real-life repercussions of not doing their own work, and this may have a greater impact.
- If, however, the student refuses to comply and makes no changes to their behavior, sometimes the only alternative is to penalize their grade. Receiving a 0 can be devastating for a student and can be a very effective way to alter their behavior. However, we recommend that this be done only after the issue of plagiarism has been explained and reiterated and the student has clearly chosen to not comply with the rules.
- If the issue persists, this simply shows an unwillingness to adjust to the classroom expectations. A referral to the Dean of Student Services may be needed, or the student may fail the course if they continue to earn zeroes on their assignments.

Ultimately, it is important to remember that an ESL student's path to adapting to a new educational environment is a complex process that may take time. Being held under the same standards as native speakers of English and having to learn a new set of classroom expectations can be a hurdle for these students. Cultural awareness and small adaptations on the part of the teacher can come a long way in helping students overcome these obstacles, but it also important for ESL students to meet their teachers and native speaking

classmates half-way. Cross-cultural adaptation is not solely a process a student undergoes individually; it's interactive in nature. Although there can be some challenges associated with working with ESL students and helping them acclimate to the mainstream classroom, we have found that, by and large, the students are willing and eager to learn and will work hard to meet a teacher's expectations and can become an inspiration to those around them. This positive interaction between ESL students, their native speaking classmates, and their teacher can be the tool that makes them feel at home in a mainstream classroom, and by extension, in their new home.

Works Cited:

"American Asians & Asian diversity cultural information." *Diversity: Understanding and Teaching Diverse Students*. BYU David O. McKay School of Education, 2014. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.

Chisholm, I. M. "Preparing Teachers for Multicultural Classrooms." *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students* 14 (2004): 43-68. Print.

Gudykunst, William. "An Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory of Strangers' Intercultural Adjustment." *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*. Ed. William Gudykunst. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005. 419-457. Print.

Huang, Jinyan. "English Abilities for Academic Listening: How Confident are Chinese Students?" *College Student Journal* 40.1 (2006): 218-226. Print.

Locker, Kitty O. and Stephen K. Kaczmarek (2007). *Business Communication: Building Critical Skills* 3rd edition. New York: McGraw Hill, 2007. Print.

Yuan, Wenli. "Academic and Cultural Experiences of Chinese Students at an American University: A Qualitative Study." *Intercultural Communication Studies* XX.1 (2011): 141-157. Print.

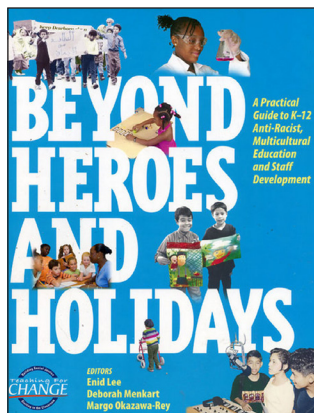


Beyond Heroes and Holidays:

A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development

Edited by Enid Lee,
Deborah Menkart,
and Margo Okazawa-Rey

**A Book Review By
Janet Ilko, SDAWP 2008**



If you ever get the chance to visit Washington D.C., you must make a trip to Teaching for Change's bookstore (located in the Busboys and Poets restaurant). It is a wonderful "source for books that encourage children and adults to question, challenge, and re-think the world beyond the headlines."

It was here that I found a wonderful book entitled *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*. What makes this resource unique is that it can be used both with students and to prompt discussions for teachers and adult learners who care about equity in education. The book is broken down into two main sections: "School Staff, Family and Community Development" and "Lessons for the Classroom." Both sections address the overarching question: How can we effectively incorporate multicultural education into our classrooms and why is it important to do so?

As a teacher born into white privilege who has worked with multilingual, multicultural students in *urban environments* my entire career, I continually struggle with how to enter into these challenging conversations

surrounding issues of equity with students and families. In efforts to overcome this challenge, I strive to find ways to understand my own lens as I prepare to share ideas and texts with my students. I continually ask myself tough questions about my own bias and life experience that encourage me to change my pedagogy as I learn more.

Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development provides diverse perspectives that push my thinking forward and creates a space in which I can navigate difficult discussions on race and equity. The collection provides short but powerful articles along with support materials that are essential in facilitating professional development that digs deep into the conversations that are necessary to bring about true change and authentic dialogue.

Two pieces, especially, have provided talking points for our site team: Peggy McIntosh's article, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" coupled with Ruth Anne Olson's article, "White Privilege in Schools" have guided us as we struggle to meet the needs of the diverse students on our campus. Fortunately, it is one of those rare texts that offers materials both for teacher reflection and classroom implementation all in one place.

With each section of the text, educators, parents, and students are prompted to begin the worthy but difficult conversations regarding race, culture, and discrimination in our nation's schools. The text offers a variety of entrance points into these topics by providing a wide array of resources, models, and strategies for promoting multicultural education for all stakeholders, including educators, families, and students. The articles and discussion questions structure the larger concepts of race, privilege, language, and equity into bite-size pieces, allowing for depth rather than breadth in conversation and study.

Contributing authors such as Linda Christensen, Enid Lee, and Margo Okazawa-Rey provide examples of positive classroom activities that build stronger, richer, and more di-

verse communities while asking readers to critique their own practices surrounding multicultural education.

Too often, multiculturalism is taught as an isolated unit in our classrooms: Holidays Around the World, Black History Month, Women's History Month, etc. In reality, it is not only optimal but crucial to continuously provide rich and diverse texts and conversations in order to build an equitable classroom community. One of my favorite activities from the book is Linda Christensen's

*I continually ask myself
tough questions
about my own bias
and life experience
that encourage me to
change my pedagogy
as I learn more.*

"Portrait Poems: Stepping into the World of Others." In this lesson, students analyze artwork or photos from a particular time period and write their own poetry or descriptions from the point of view of that particular place, person, or era. The lesson aims to create an opportunity for students to empathize with other cultures and perspectives. Similarly, in my classroom, students begin by writing about their own neighborhoods and favorite music to push back on stereotypes or misconceptions using Christensen's "Where I'm From" poem (a lesson also included in the book). With each lesson, students have opportunities to tell their stories and to respect and empathize with the stories of others.

Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development provides a multitude of articles that challenge my pedagogy and provide rich examples of what can be done to go from "tolerance to transformation" in our classrooms, schools, and communities.



SDAWP's Spring Conference:

Why Students Write: To Express, Inform, Argue

Janis Jones, SDAWP 1994

During SDAWP's 8th Annual Spring Conference held on March 7, 2015, SDAWP Fellows and friends discussed writing instruction in a supportive community of K-16 educators. Following Director Kim Douillard's welcome, SDAWP's Co-Director, Christine Kané, encouraged everyone to reflect on core beliefs, and a quote by Desmond Tutu set the tone for the rest of the morning: "Do your little bit of good where you are. It's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

Breakout sessions aligned with the CA Common Core State Standards for ELA were led by SDAWP Teacher Consultants who highlighted successful writing instruction, and special focus strands on meeting the needs of adolescent writers (6-12) and English learners (K-12) were offered. The range of topics included research writing, informative writing, revision, infographics and media literacy, writing in science, reading to write an argument, narrative writing, and analyzing persuasive appeals.

After a full morning of thoughtful learning, conference attendees departed UC San Diego ready to "overwhelm the world" with ideas for inspiring student writers of all ages.



SDAWP's Project Notes

Congratulations to Cindy Jenson-Elliot (SDAWP 2012) who was the recipient of 2014 California Reading Association's EUREKA! Nonfiction Children's Book Award for *Weeds Find a Way*, her book that celebrates those tenacious plants that "send their seeds into the world in wondrous ways" and find "a way to live where other plants can't grow."

Kudos to Jane Slater Meyers (SDAWP 1987) whose first picture book, *Halloween Stew*, was recently published. *Halloween Stew* focuses on the values of sharing and friendship and is available on Amazon.

Way to go, Linda Hirschmiller (SDAWP 2013)! Linda was featured in California Writing Project's iBook *Supporting English Language Learners Toward Their Academic, Linguistic, and Writing Potential*.

Kudos to Margit Boyesen (SDAWP 2008), Kim Douillard (SDAWP 1992), and students in the MAC class at Cardiff Elementary; their writing was published on Chronicle Books' blog. After studying Lizi Boyd's wordless books, *Flashlight* and *Inside Outside*, they shared their own art and writing with the author. View their work in the section entitled "Dear Author: Letters from Young Readers" at <http://www.chroniclebooks.com/blog/2015/02/18/dear-author-letters-from-young-readers/>

Tune in to NPR Blog Radio and listen as Henry Aronson (SDAWP 2014), Kim Douillard (SDAWP 1992), Jamie Jackson (SDAWP 2010), Janis Jones (SDAWP 1994), and others discuss *The Writing Thief MOOC*. "Hear why participants and organizers believe MOOCs work, why they are interested in 'making,' and how online learning promotes learning near and far." http://www.blogtalkradio.com/nwp_radio/2015/03/12/moocs-on-the-loose-the-effect-of-clmooc-on-pd-opportunities-in-the-nwp-network

Teaching and Learning: A Tribute to Mary Barr

Don Mayfield, SDAWP 1977

A friend passed. It was a sweet passing. She died watching a British sitcom, eating gelato. I am not making light of her death. She was an internationally known educator, a local teacher much admired, a mother much loved by her children—and her great-great-grandchildren (not a typo). She was 88—and an inspiration to me. Mary Barr got her teaching credential from Ball State University in 1958, married and had three sons, all of whom live here.

She began teaching in Indiana, but ended up in San Diego teaching at Patrick Henry High School, the first year it opened in 1968. She was radical for being a teacher, and struck a blow for her colleagues by being the first to wear pant suits. Thinking was so odd then that the administration connected going casual to the growing graffiti that was blossoming on campus. Strange, but true.

But Mary's "radicalism" wasn't her dress. It was the way she treated—excuse me—taught kids. She truly believed that every kid was a learner, but not that every teacher knew how to teach. If kids failed to learn, it was not the student but the teacher who should be accountable. There were no dumb kids; there was only inept teaching.

I met Mary when she began teaching teachers that child-centered learning was better than content-based teaching. I taught literature—and had a hell of a lot of content to teach. But none of my students seemed to be learning. Mary said we needed to allow kids to construct their own meaning as they read, not to teach, say, the "correct" interpretation of a poem. Think about that: kids need to construct their own meaning, not adopt the teacher's interpretation. In one way, that meant that the kid had to become engaged more deeply in reading a short story, rather than sit back, suck in, and spew back the teacher's analysis. Yes, sit back, suck in, and spew back. No more.

Mary also taught us—hundreds of teachers locally and statewide—that writing should be taught as a process, with the focus not on the end product, but on the complex way we get to the end—through creation, revision and, finally, production. Writers know what I'm talking about. In the last half of her career, Mary's colleagues called her "Mother Mary." Not her students—her colleagues.

Mid-career, Mary got out of the classroom and began to teach teachers full time at local, statewide, and nationwide conferences. "On stage" her reputation grew. Her fan base also grew. It is rare that teachers adulate other teachers. We often see ourselves more as soldiers in battle, rather than idealists fighting the good fight—sloggers against the oncoming hoards of students, unwashed....at least in junior high and high school. Mary always reminded us English teachers that we were above that, no matter how kids might bring us down from the ivory towers of our "higher" literature.

As the mother of both the San Diego Area Writing Project and the California Literature Project, Mary gave birth to some incredible teacher offspring. The projects live today in their umpteenth generation, giving life to thousands of teachers who thrive on the collegial energy those projects offer. There have been no other programs quite like them.

And so, there is Mary, eating gelato—all the while teachers planning more around how kids learn and less about how teachers teach. Thanks, Mary.



Dialogue

**Call for Manuscripts
Fall 2015 Issue
Submission Deadline:
June 1, 2015**

Technology and Writing in the Classroom

We invite you to share your experiences with technology and writing in the classroom.

"Technology can become the force that equalizes the educational opportunities of all children regardless of location and social and economic circumstance."

—National Academy of Sciences and
the National Academy of Engineering

Manuscripts should consider but not be limited to the following questions: As an educator, how do you promote equitable access to technology in the classroom? What are some strategies you would recommend to educators who are beginning their journey in using technology in the classroom? How do you provide opportunities for students to interact with texts and other students via technology? What challenges have you struggled to overcome as you have integrated technology into your writing instruction?

We also welcome submissions for ongoing features:

- **The Review:** We welcome book reviews that reflect current practices and issues in education.
- **Practices in the SDAWP Classroom:** *Dialogue* invites you to submit a 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:
Callie Brimberry
callieryanbrim@gmail.com
Lisa Muñoz
lemunoz@sdccd.edu

San Diego Area Writing Project
University of California, San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive, Dept. 0036
La Jolla, CA 92093-0036



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Diego, CA
Permit No. 1909

Calendar of Events

"Writing with the Common Core" Open (K-6)

June 23 - 25, 2015
8:00am - 3:00pm
UC San Diego

"Writing, Revision, and the Common Core" Open (K-6)

July 14 - 16, 2015
8:00am - 3:00pm
UC San Diego

YWC Programs Summer 2015

Young Writers and Photography
Cardiff Elementary
June 15-19 (8:30am - 12:30pm)

Young Writers in Nature
UC San Diego
June 22-26 (8:30am - 12:00pm)

Young Writers' Camp
Chula Vista Hills Elementary
June 22 - July 2
(8:30am - 12:00pm)

Young Writers' Camp
Cardiff Elem. & UC San Diego
July 20-31 (8:30am - 12:00pm)

Writing for College
and Career Readiness
UC San Diego
July 6-10 (8:30am - 11:30am)

College Admission and
Application Essay
UC San Diego
July 13-17 (8:30am - 11:30am)

San Diego Area Writing Project

Director

Kim Douillard
teachr0602@aol.com

Co-Director

Christine Kané
kealoha2006@yahoo.com

Program Manager

Carol Schrammel
cschrammel@ucsd.edu

Young Writers' Programs Coordinators

Valentina Banner
valentina.banner@sdgva.net
Janet Ilko
janetilk08@gmail.com
Janis Jones
janisjones@me.com
Divona Roy
mrsroy@hotmail.com
Carol Schrammel
cschrammel@ucsd.edu

To contact the SDAWP office

call (858) 534-2576
or email sdawp@ucsd.edu
Visit our website at
<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/>*