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## The Summer Institute: Articulating Identities

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# Dialogue



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Summer 2017

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“This challenging experience gave me real-life practice with SI protocols and a chance to make them my own through modification. I also realized that even well-prepared students can feel hesitant despite educators’ best efforts to create welcoming spaces. All students—not just students in lower levels of English classes or shy students—can benefit when they are provided both space to think and structure for participation. Just like we should meet our learners where they are in terms of writing skills, we should also meet our learners where they are with their social and discussion skills. In doing so, a space can be transformed from a painfully silent classroom to one that is full of movement, discussion, and critical thinking.”

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“We are not always given the critical training we need to teach all student populations. Through my intentional research and subsequent classroom practice, I dispelled my own stereotypes of veterans and became aware of the complex experiences of this population and how it might positively and negatively affect their learning.”

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“When you tell them my story, Tell them that I was Batman at

seven

And, today, Bad-Ass-Teacher Man  
A hero for true justice,  
A hero for infectious, endless learning,  
A hero for students and teachers”

#### I Remember

Nicole Rios, p. 13

“I remember our brand new, two-story, white stucco house with toasted brown trim  
It was our first,  
and I had my own room  
My mom decorated it with lots of pink and lace, and a big, white, canopy bed  
It wasn’t me”

#### Making to Make a Difference

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“By providing opportunities for students to talk about, work with, and write about the plastic debris, their connections grow even deeper. As their interest and insight develops, I am confident that they will find their own ways to make a difference based on hope—not fear.”

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# Expectations and Reality in Teaching College Composition:

## *How SI Protocols Empowered Student Voice in Discussions*

Stefanie Johnson Shipman, SDAWP 2015

"Hello, writers! Welcome to today's class!"  
Silence.  
"How is everyone doing today?"  
No response.  
"Did anyone do anything interesting this weekend?"  
Still no reply. Not a single, half-hearted reply.

This one-sided exchange of greetings happened each class session—twice a week—in my English 101 composition class. However, the blank stares and non-replies were a new experience for me. Usually, feeling good energy levels in the classroom and maintaining student

interest are areas with which I do not often struggle. Of course, not every single class is a wild success for my students and me, but in general, my efforts to engage students and build community pay off. At first, I chalked it up to the beginning of the semester nerves of my students. After a month of students not engaging, however, it started wearing me out.

Each 85-minute session could only be described as painful—for me, undoubtedly, and likely for the students, too. Only two students would participate by answering questions and offering perspectives. It made class-wide reading discussions non-existent. It made pair and small-group discussions impossible. Even the most basic of questions, such as, "What is the main idea of the reading?" led to no response.

I had to grapple with my own expectations of the course level: this was English 101. I expected my students to be well-prepared for class, having read thoroughly and critically, and ready for active, lively participation. I expected them to have lots to say about the reading and a willingness to have their voices heard. That's how English 101 should be, right?

After each class, I would reflect and start planning fresh: What could I do to drum up interest and engagement? Was it just this group of students? Was it the sleepy time of day at 12:45PM—just after lunch—or were students possibly even skipping lunch? Did my students hate me? Were the students simply not doing the reading?

At first, I required reading summa-

ries as homework to test my hypothesis of whether the reading was being done. I collected the homework at the start of class and had a lack-luster class session, yet again. Once I got back to my office and began reading the homework, I was pleasantly surprised: not only had all students done the reading, but they seemed to understand it well and think critically about it. If they were doing the work, then what? What explained the lack of engagement, and more importantly, what could I do differently to encourage their participation?

It was during one of these moments of reflection that I had a realization: there was a disconnect between my expectations for in-class discussion and the reality of my students. My students were, in fact, well-prepared and reading texts critically; perhaps they needed more support in the classroom to feel confident to participate. My focus shifted from what students were not doing to what I could be doing. I asked myself what I could do to help provide an encouraging space where they felt comfortable to showcase what they had learned. I needed to find ways to get more out of class time and, in particular, the discussions of texts.

Luckily, I had completed the San Diego Area Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute (SI) just months before. As a result, my toolbox of teaching strategies was fuller than it had been previously. So, I went to work.

The next class, I utilized a variation of the block party protocol. Students followed my directions as they labeled each corner of the colored index cards with a smiley face. Intrigued by the colored cards and wondering what we were doing, the energy of the room increased noticeably. After students copied down teacher-created questions on each card, they had a set amount of time to use the readings to respond to each question during class. Students immediately began to work and engage in the protocol; they were writing and referring to the text. At

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### ***The Summer Institute: Articulating Identities***

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long last, no blank stares. I sighed a breath of relief. After they prepared their notes, I explained the activity. Students stood up, moved around the room to seek their first peer-led discussion group, before finding a new discussion group every five to ten minutes. During each round, there was lively chatter about the reading; I found that their conversations were focused on the topic and filled with astute observations of the text, relevant questions, and keen personal observations and connections. Each student was engaging with his or her peers.

To my surprise, as I began to lead the discussion and pose questions, several students—including ones who had previously never participated—shot up their hands.

After the group discussions, we reconvened as a class. To my surprise, as I began to lead the discussion and pose questions, several students—including ones who had previously never participated—shot up their hands. In a single structured discussion activity, I had more conversation in one day than I had had all semester. The students seemed empowered. How could I encourage more of this?

Flushed with success and feeling grateful, I immediately went back to my toolbox to decide which of the many protocols I could use for my next class. I decided to go with another hands-on activity—affinity mapping. I prepared my materials for the next class: copious amounts of post-it notes, markers, and butcher paper to go on the walls. Again, I created questions beforehand that

students had to respond to on their post-its. During class, students were quick to get to work; they individually reviewed their texts and completed their notes. The real test for me, however, was the engagement level during the group-work part. My students did not hesitate to get into their groups, place the notes on the large paper, and silently read and work to look for natural categories of ideas.

When it was time for the discussion and labeling of the categories, students once again were lively in their groups and highly engaged. Each group reported back to the class confidently to wrap up the session, and once again, I felt the sweet relief that comes from a success in a challenging classroom. Was the class turning a corner? Were they getting the hang of how to be active in class?

A few weeks later, I found my answer as I noticed that student participation in class-wide dialogues had improved. Instead of one or two go-to students, who would graciously answer my questions as I stared desperately at the class at the beginning of the semester, I now had nearly all 20 students participating regularly. Also, as the semester progressed, I discovered that I needed to do less scaffolding and less preparation for discussion. By giving students clear directions for interaction and finding ways to get all students involved earlier on, they became more self-confident and engaged throughout class, as well as in their interactions with me and one another.

For nearly every remaining class session, I used some variation of a protocol: chalk talk, speed dating, gallery walks, formative assessment tools, and writing response groups for better peer reviews. While I had some interactive strategies under my belt before participating in the SI, observing and dialoguing with my SDAWP fellows taught me to be more intentional with my group work.

Rather than teach with some general, class-wide discussion questions,

I found myself being more thoughtful in my planning. I began to give clearer directions when setting up group work. I built in classroom time for students to think individually and provided the space for students to bounce ideas off one another before sharing in class. Taking a more methodical approach resulted in a more engaged class and better discussions.

This challenging experience gave me real-life practice with SI protocols and a chance to make them my own through modification. I also realized that even well-prepared students can feel hesitant despite educators' best efforts to create welcoming spaces. All students—not just students in lower levels of English classes or shy students—can benefit when they are provided both space to think and structure for participation. Just like we should meet our learners where they are in terms of writing skills, we should also meet our learners where they are with their social and discussion skills.

Just like we should meet our learners where they are in terms of writing skills, we should also meet our learners where they are with their social and discussion skills.

The SDAWP Summer Institute introduced me to protocols I could use right away to enliven classroom discussions. By incorporating these tools, I was able to understand my students more and empower them to be comfortable and confident when sharing ideas with one another.



# Not Just Lucky: A Mindset Shift

—Emily Yamasaki, SDAWP 2015—

Shallow breaths, sweaty palms, racing mind. I'm swallowing hard, trying to push the angst and nerves down to my gut. It's the second week of the SDAWP Invitational Summer Institute and my demo begins after lunch. Despite having prepared for this presentation for months, reciting the contents of each slide over and over—to my teacher friends, to my sister, to my boyfriend, in the shower, in the grocery line, in my sleep—my anxiety takes over: fight or flight.

She's looking at  
me—it's my cue  
to begin.

All I think is,  
"They're finally  
going to see  
right through me.  
I'm a fraud,  
an imposter."

A friend is introducing me. She's within an arm's reach, but her voice floats like she's miles away. She's looking at me—it's my cue to begin. All I think is, "They're finally going to see right through me. I'm a fraud, an imposter."

This self-doubt and fear of being "found out" is defined as imposter syndrome. When battling this syndrome, no matter how much you prepare and how much knowledge you may have, you feel—at the core of your being—that you are completely inadequate. And that anyone who thinks otherwise, has been fooled. Imposter syndrome, first described in 1978 by psychologists

Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes, has impacted many individuals. Author, Maya Angelou, has felt the tug of discomfort and self-doubt. She claims, "I have written eleven books, but each time I think, 'Uh oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody and they're going to find me out.'"

Imposter syndrome paralyzes me. It has for as long as I can remember. But I learned to play the game. If I play it safe. If I tread quietly. If I take minimal risks. I can be safe from the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach: the feeling that tells me I've been found out. I have learned to rely on trusty coping mechanisms to deal with the discomfort and shame.

In high school, I joined a culture club and began to participate in fundraisers, shows, and other school events. After three years of dedication, I was voted in as the next president of the club. As my teachers and friends congratulated me in the halls, I smiled and said, "I got lucky." This mantra was my way of protecting myself from the inevitable moment when I would be found out. When everyone would realize that I actually didn't have much to contribute, I could say that it was just dumb luck that I became the president of the club. This same mantra followed me when I won a scholarship, was accepted into universities, and even when I was hired for my first teaching job.

Teaching demos, however, are a jolt from my everyday teaching life. A teaching demo is a presentation when an educator showcases effective instructional strategies that have benefitted their students. It became dramatically clear to me that when I prepare a teaching demo, I am also preparing to be out of the safety of my own classroom and in

front of an audience of grown people rather than kids. It is easier to be vulnerable in a classroom full of young children, than in a room full of thoughtful and assertive adults. It's very difficult to fight the fear that rides up my throat each time. But it is with each teaching demo that I learn more about my insecurities, as well as how to face them using three commitments I have found effective.

Imposter syndrome  
paralyzes me.  
It has for as long  
as I can remember.  
But I learned  
to play the game.

**Present what you believe in.**

The authenticity of a teaching demo is an invisible but powerful trait of a successful demo. My favorite and more memorable demos have been on topics that I have spent much of my energy exploring in the classroom. When a series of lessons comes to life and you can see the fire in the eyes of your students—that's good demo material. Last year I was invited to present a teaching demo about opinion writing. I prepared a teaching demo that featured my students' work and their journey through argumentative thinking. In showcasing their fluency writing journals, their oral language practice imbedded with their opinions, and their drafting and revisions, I felt the same excitement I had felt when I had initially taught the lessons. Creating a presentation around the natural progression of student experience and work helps bring the audience along for the ride.

In many ways, demos are like stories. An audience leans into a tempting lead, listens attentively to the ups and downs of the plot, and wants to see how it ends, or even better—sneak a peek at the sequel. The best stories are based on actual experiences. When I present on topics that



actually work in my classroom, I feel less of a fraud because it is real.

### Be honest about the struggles.

Demos showcase a strategy or technique that has worked for students. Many demos come equipped with presentation slides, handouts, and even a variety of student samples. These will highlight what did work well, but it is crucial to also discuss what didn't work. When trying new things, there will inevitably be some pitfalls. During a recent teaching demo, I shared the use of concept circles to engage my students in writing about math. Instead of only featuring polished student samples, I showcased first drafts. It can feel risky to show awkward and forced

**Present what you believe in. Be honest about it. This is where great teaching comes from. You have so much to share.**

writing, but it is important to be honest about both challenges and successes of teaching. Only showing "perfect" samples leads the audience to a false perception of what to expect. Trying new strategies may not always yield immediate results, but progress can be achieved when students and teachers continue to practice. Being honest with my audience allows me to prove that I wasn't just lucky to have succeeded, it was hard work—and that's real.

### Be mindful of your audience.

The best learning comes from doing. This applies to both young students in your classroom and "seasoned students" in your demo audience. As we so often do with our students, strive to build in time for your participants to do more than just actively listen. Provide rich opportu-

nities for the audience to do some reading, writing, talking, sharing, and some reflecting. It is important for me to remember that although I am leading the teaching demo, I am surrounded by other teachers and administrators who have experience and knowledge to contribute as well. Providing time and space for this dynamic group of individuals to interact will enhance your teaching demo because it will continue to inspire ideas and conversations. Whenever I include an excerpt of professional reading in my demo, I make time for my audience to respond to the reading and share their reflections. When you hear the voices of your audience, you can begin to see which parts of your demo can be tailored to fit their strengths and needs.

I was not alone during my first demo at the SDAWP Invitational Summer Institute; there were twenty-five inspiring and dedicated teachers in the room. That summer, I listened and learned from my cohort. Our first demos taught me that there are teacher leaders in each community. Why don't we hear from them? Maybe imposter syndrome silences teacher voices. Maybe when teachers achieve something, they're saying to themselves, "I got lucky."

Teacher leaders are among all of us. But they are seldom heard, so engage with one another in the field with purpose. Share knowledge and learn from one another. Present what you believe in. Be honest about it. This is where great teaching comes from. You have so much to share.

*You are not an imposter...You are not there because of luck, or because you happened to be in the right place at the right moment... You are there because you are you, and that is a remarkable accomplishment in itself.*

—Jodi Picoult



## Project Notes

**Kudos to** Sam Patterson (SDAWP 1998). Sam's book, *Programming in the Primary Grades: Beyond the Hour of Code*, was published on March 21, 2016 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Sam examines how teachers can implement engaging lessons that allow students to learn via programming. For information visit <http://www.beyondthehourofcode.com>.

**Time to Celebrate!** Corinne Rector (SDAWP 2016) gave birth to Ethan (9 lb. 1oz) on Friday, January 6, and Stephanie Johnson Shipman (SDAWP 2015) and her husband Eric welcomed twins Oliver and Iris on April 28. All are doing well!

**Way to go** Kelly Grace Thomas (SDAWP 2008) for winning the 2017 Neil Postman Award for Metaphor for her poem "And the Women Said." Kelly's poem is featured in *Rattle* magazine and can be found in this issue of *Dialogue* on page 9.

**Bravo**, Janis Jones (SDAWP 1994). Janis's *Into the Current* marine debris sculpture, representing the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and the marine litter that gathers there due to the swirling currents in the Pacific Ocean, is now on display in Vista, CA. Visit [www.shoresweep.com](http://www.shoresweep.com) to learn more about *Into the Current*.

**Congratulations** to Cynthia Larkin (SDAWP 2011)! Cynthia will be the new principal at Morse High School in San Diego in the fall!

**Well done**, Mark Manasse (SDAWP 2010). Mark earned his PhD in Leadership Studies from University of San Diego and won the Dean's Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching for Department of learning and Teaching at USD.

**Great job**, Lisa Muñoz (SDAWP 2008). Lisa received the Educator Recognition Award from the University of California, Irvine.

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# A Message to All Teachers from Those Who Have Served

*Michelle B. Crooks, SDAWP 2016*

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It started with Michael\*—an eager front-row student who slowly changed over the course of the two months I had him in my class. He told me matter-of-factly that he had seen a ghost in the parking lot outside of our classroom and at home in his living room. His claims would have seemed absurd had they not been compounded by the fact that he had also seen his friends die in war. His hallucinations worsened, and he slowly slipped away from class participation, barely passing the class. At the time, I did not know what to make of it. I had no idea that this was my first glimpse of a greater pattern I would discover in my work with student veterans.

## Secret Languages

I was only 26 years old when I walked into my first English 100 course on the Coronado Naval Base to find a class of primarily male military veterans, all of whom were older than me. The base was intimidating—it was their territory, and it was an unfamiliar setting for me. I had only been to Coronado to ice skate at the historic Hotel del Coronado and play at its clean beaches as a child. Now, I had a security clearance to get through the armed guards and into a classroom next door to the barracks. I walked into the classroom in my short heels, black dress pants, and a ruffled, high-neck top under a cardigan, with my rolling briefcase right behind me, feeling the need to set myself apart and look smart. I quickly realized the 25 students staring back at me—Navy, Navy Seals, Army, and Marines—were just as nervous as I was.

My intimidation partially stemmed from the stereotypes I held about

who military men were: Conservatives. Hyper-masculine. Rednecks. Homophobes. Partiers. Cheaters. As someone with no military background in my family and no military friends, my preconceived notions had been formed by snippets from the news, movies, and a few friends who had had bad experiences dating service members. I knew that not all of the students would fit this profile perfectly, but I assumed most of them would be close enough. I would be instructing them in a four-hour night class twice a week, and I was regretting my decision before class even started.

**I was only 26 years old when I walked into my first English 100 course on the Coronado Naval Base to find a class of primarily male military veterans, all of whom were older than me.**

However, by the end of the first night of class, and after they had introduced themselves, I was intrigued by their stories about deployment, marriage, children, and their career goals. They were much more complex than my single stories allowed. Most of them were from honorable families with a long-standing tradition of joining the ranks. There were those with thick southern accents, an affinity to barbeque, and strong

Christian beliefs, as well as immigrants from Africa who had joined the U.S. Military to fight for our freedom, despite America's barbaric past.

They were worldly, with vivid stories about travels to Southeast Asia, East Africa, the Middle East, and other areas I had never been to myself. Many of their stories weren't tales of war, but experiences meeting locals, trying exotic foods, and in some cases, finding love. I also learned that they were gentlemen, many of them refusing to refer to me as anything but "Ma'am."

I had a Bachelor's Degree in English, a Master's Degree in Rhetoric, and a whole world of academic and writing-related terminology that was foreign to them—thesis, parallelism, quotation sandwich, MLA. Many of them hadn't written an essay in over a decade—some 25 years. But to my surprise, they were far from novice writers, having scribbled heartfelt letters to family while on deployment and labored over technical documents for office positions in the military. They had their own world of military jargon, the code to a special brotherhood that was just as equally foreign to me—bird, fitty, Bravo Zulu, Twenty-nine Stumps. Amid these discoveries, I slowly started to notice another secret language—one of trauma and alienation.

## Emerging Patterns

After my encounter with Michael, I was more aware of the odd behavior the next time I taught on base. The first night of class, one of the students walked in, went straight for the back row, and sat down wearing his dark sunglasses during the en-

tire class session. *How disrespectful, I thought. I'm definitely going to have a talk with him.* I felt ashamed of my quick judgment when we talked after class, and Pablo\* told me that he wore them to protect his eyes from the bright lights that would give him headaches due to his traumatic brain injury (TBI). However, it was clear the trauma extended beyond his medical needs. One time in class, Pablo instantly ducked under the table when he heard a hallway door slam shut.

He was a diligent student and a strong writer, but he, too, slowly started showing more consistent signs of trauma. The first time it was with the narrative. Pablo had basically retold the story of the *Titanic*. He crumpled up his failing narrative paper, threw it on the ground, and angrily stomped away from my desk. He later told me he was avoiding an assignment that was going to make him face his emotions. In the rhetorical analysis unit, Pablo made a similar comment: "I can't tell you what the writer wants me to feel because I don't have feelings."

*I cried on my way home from class that day out of guilt, sadness, and confusion.*

How am I the authority figure in this room when they know much more about life, death, and the real world? How can I judge their ability to write, read, and critically think when some of them are struggling just to stay engaged? When you are coping with physical or emotional trauma, how can writing an academic essay be a priority?

Pablo ended up revising some of his work and passing the class with an "A," but then I had Hector\*. His best friend had passed away in his arms in combat; Hector survived, but depended on a cane to walk. He told me he had PTSD.

PTSD. I had heard this term in the news, but I did not know much about it. I decided to do some research. Post-traumatic stress disorder. It was much more than stress. It could

be a debilitating condition for a learner, and it made their transition into civilian life and the classroom environment much more difficult. Common symptoms: hypervigilance, nightmares, apathy, distrust, and a continual reliving of the event due to environmental triggers ("Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder"). I had seen these symptoms manifest in the classroom first hand, and everything started making more sense.

## How am I the authority figure in this room when they know much more about life, death, and the real world? How can I judge their ability to write, read, and critically think when some of them are struggling just to stay engaged?

I talked to an old graduate school professor who told me that narrative writing could turn passivity into activity for those dealing with trauma (Robinett). I thought this would be a good way to support these students. I assigned a narrative to the class, and Hector thought it would be helpful to write about his experience; I told him he didn't have to share it with anyone except me. In Hector's narrative, he described the last image

he saw of his friend in the warzone, bloody and dead, and explained that in that moment his belief about humanity had been confirmed: "we are all just animals." Then he dropped out of my class.

*Did I ignite emotions I shouldn't have by encouraging him to write that paper? Is this my fault? Who am I to play the role of a therapist?*

Two years later, Hector reappeared in my class at another college campus, still struggling and seeing a therapist. But again, he disappeared half way through. I emailed him to see how he was doing and whether he planned on coming back to class. His last words over email are still etched into my memory: "I struggle enough being a normal person, let alone a normal student."

## Researching & Responding

I had started to research about student veteran issues after Pablo, but it was at this point that I felt a heavy responsibility to take more action. I was on a mission to figure out how to help these students and fell deeper into the world of reading and research.

*How do I respond to these types of situations? How can I better understand their perspective and the trauma they have been through? What can I do to support their academic success?*

I conducted extensive research on combat-related trauma and its repercussions for veterans in the educational setting. I read articles and studies about the transition from military to civilian/student life, watched webinars, and visited Veterans Affairs counselors and administrators. I also spoke to student veterans in my own classes, candidly telling them about my work and asking about how faculty can better support them.

I was shocked to find out that up to 20% of veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan have PTSD, and 22% of those with casualties suffer from a TBI. And of female veterans, 25% report having experienced Military Sexual Trauma, which can result in PTSD ("Military Sexual Trauma"). Although the majority of veterans do not have documented PTSD, there are other more commonplace struggles plaguing student veterans: the anxiety of making a career change, feeling alienated on campus, and facing loneliness in the absence of the military brotherhood. The social, emotional, mental,

and physical struggles mentioned above contribute to higher than average rates of depression and suicide in the U.S. Military community. In 2014, on average, 20 veterans a day committed suicide in the United States (“VA Suicide”).

Despite the numbers, I had been given no training in graduate school or on the job about how to approach this student population. In California, with the highest veteran population in the country, I felt a sense of urgency for college faculty to be aware of this information and be equipped with strategies to support student veterans (Walters). I co-presented on this topic with a fellow faculty member, who was also a veteran, and we focused on the small changes instructors could make to classroom policies, assignments, and communication styles to help support student veterans in their transition into academic life.

One of the key points in our presentation centered on a major distinction between military and civilian culture: emphasis on outcome vs. process (Joseph). The military world is outcome driven. Soldiers have a clear mission. Structured days. Explicit rules to follow. And, ultimately, a concrete plan placed in front of them that they are required to deploy—hence, “deployment.” They come from a formal environment in which mistakes are not encouraged.

In contrast, in a composition class, we embrace the messy, non-linear process of writing; the informality and autonomy of group work; and a student-centered classroom where the leader is closer to a facilitator than a sergeant. This is a significant change for student veterans, a shift from boot camp practices and the deeply ingrained principles of the military. This can influence their learning and ability to acclimate to the classroom environment. Many of the student veterans in my own classes expressed their frustration when working alongside traditional, young college students who lacked their same level of discipline and ambition.

The research also stressed the unique assets veterans bring to the classroom. They tend to have experience serving in leadership roles and working in culturally diverse teams. Veterans also have experience as real-world writers, as I came to find out. Their unique skill set should be both acknowledged and leveraged in the classroom, such as asking them to take the lead on a group project or to incorporate their workplace experience into their writing and other assignments.

## Many of the student veterans in my own classes expressed their frustration when working alongside traditional, young college students who lacked their same level of discipline and ambition.

I was able to utilize some of these specific teaching techniques that stemmed from my research soon after. To be more specific, I had a student veteran with autism in his first semester in college after 15 years of working on artillery in the Navy. Hands-on work came naturally to him, but he was convinced he would fail in the academic setting. He would write, “I don’t get it,” as a response to homework questions. He also withdrew from group activities. I immediately referred him to the Veterans Center and Disabled Student Services for assistance. I continually gave him words of encouragement and worked with him on assignments after class. I also made sure the prompts allowed for him to write about his unique experiences; he wrote a narrative about his efforts to fix a WWII gun and what that project meant to him. This

support propelled him to do better in my class, and he slowly raised his failing grade and passed the class.

Assigning a narrative in this case was successful. In Hector’s case, however, it had seemed to drive him away. I learned that narrative writing can be a way to heal, but that it should be used with caution. Also, if a veteran has never written about their war-related experiences, a writing class might not be the best place to revisit those memories for the first time (Joseph). In this case, referring them to community resources or mental health counseling on campus might be more appropriate (Joseph).

Most colleges also have a veterans center of some sort. For instance, at Grossmont College, there is a Veteran Affairs Office that offers financial aid support geared toward the GI Bill. We also have a Veterans Resource Center on campus with couches and a private place for them to hang out with fellow veterans, seek support from trained peer mentors, use assistive technology, and get referred to community services for veterans.

Other more general campus resources are important to keep in mind, as well. When a student veteran’s effort does not align with the outcome, they should be referred to resources on campus, such as disabled student services, because mental or emotional issues could be getting in the way of their learning (Joseph).

I also found that there were many simple ways to support student veterans. Before showing a film with graphic images or violence, I started being more mindful to warn all students ahead of time and offer an alternative assignment for those who may be sensitive; violent media can be a trigger for those with PTSD (Joseph).

It became more critical to make sure students understood the attendance policy, but to also be flexible with student veterans in some



cases. Sometimes they would have training, National Guard or Reserve commitments in which formal proof wasn't always available. I was more accommodating in these circumstances, offering ways for them to make up missed work.

I began referring more explicitly to lesson objectives and the clear point-driven guidelines of the rubric, especially when reviewing their rough drafts or paper grades with them. I had the outcome-driven, rule-centric military environment in mind when doing so.

And on November 11th, Veterans Day, I never forgot to acknowledge their service in class or over email with sincerity.

### A Worthy Mission

As teachers, we often share how much we love our jobs because we are always learning from our students in the classroom. I want to argue that sometimes our learning must be more deliberate, and it must extend outside the classroom. It can happen through research, professional development, and talking openly to the students we serve.

We are not always given the critical training we need to teach all student populations. Through my intentional research and subsequent classroom practice, I dispelled my own stereotypes of veterans and became aware of the complex experiences of this population and how it might positively and negatively affect their learning.

In my work with student veterans, I have gained some answers to my questions, but I know that not every veteran is the same—which is true of any other student group. I look forward to learning more about the diversity of the learners in my classroom and continue to find ways to capitalize on the strengths each student brings.

\*All names have been changed to respect the privacy of students.

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## AND THE WOMEN SAID

### 2017 Neil Postman Award Winner

Kelly Grace Thomas, SDAWP 2008

And the women said watch as men call us lottery tickets  
watch as they cash register us into gamble into played  
out combinations of sweaty bills and pocket want  
watch as they lick their lips for that better life  
watch as they pout, when we don't pay out.  
When the bling of our breasts don't make them  
Cheshire cat the same. When we got our own debts  
that gotta be paid, to mirrors, to mammas, to the way our hearts  
traffic light in the closet after we sold ourselves  
whole.  
And the women said feel the way we became campfire  
how we ghost storied into this dangerous beauty.  
How them men can't scrub out our smoke, how our blue learned  
to burn slow, standstill like the moment between beggin and maybe.  
Feel the way we soil into shovel, how we let ourselves be held even  
after a matchbox tongue misspoke of our flames, even after we told flint,  
you don't live here no more. The women said feel how we are not open  
fields waiting for their strike. They cannot not bury us  
deep, call us things of war and be surprised  
when we land mine.

# Spotlight on Summer Institute 2016

Each year, Invitational Summer Institute Fellows participate in a paired interview protocol in which they refer to a mentor text prior to writing poems they later present as an introduction to their partner's demo.

## An Ode to Tania Jabour

Bonnie Lynn Reddick, SDAWP 2016

Brown, curly hair, almond-shaped, passionate, intense brown eyes,  
A kindred spirit; a warrior, fighting to illuminate her authentic self,  
She is introspective, and she asks great questions,  
She reads between the lines, imagines what is not being said, and says it!  
She compels you to think deeper, bottom of the ocean deep,  
Passionate, emotional, intellectual and down-to-earth, all at the same time;  
and she will kill you with her smile, wide, full....real!  
Shaped and molded, nurtured and loved by dear, sweet, Carol,  
"She was an intellect," Tania said, "and she believed in me; I wanted to live up to her expectations,"  
But now she's gone,  
Living in Tania's memories.

"We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes" – Paul Laurence Dunbar

I am fighting to believe in me,  
I put on a brave face, but inside....  
Inside..... I'm scared; I'm insecure, at times, but  
I am fighting to believe in me, I don't want to wear the mask!  
I don't want to be superwoman! I just want to be me!

Andee, her partner of 15 years, anchors her.  
She's the ying to her yang, The butter to her bread,  
A corporate trainer and a great organizer,  
She helps Tania see the value in pragmatism,  
Tania helps Andee see the importance in human relationships; the corporate world can be so cold;

Tania loves reading, cooking, gardening, traveling, taking baths, and lighting candles,  
She is energetic, enthusiastic, and passionate,  
An innate public servant, teaching is her calling, purpose, and destiny.

Grew up between LA and Scottsdale,  
But UCSD is her stomping ground,  
BA in English, MA and Ph.D. in literature,  
Her dissertation critiqued social movements through the lens of three scholars: a Black female,  
an Indian female, and a progressive, feminist, Chinese male,  
The dissertation process, the writing, researching, reading, writing, revising, reading, writing,  
defending, revising, reading, and writing, .....and writing.  
It took a lot out of me,  
There is pain, sadness, uncertainty, isolation and loneliness, there  
At UCSD  
But I have returned, stronger and wiser because  
like Beyonce, "I am a survivor!  
I'm not gon' give up  
I'm not gon' stop  
I'm gon' work harder."

Perfecting my craft, engaging my students, practicing, social justice, fierce, warrior, educator, kindred spirit,  
I present to you, Dr. Tania Jabour.

## Ruby Zamora Baker

Adrian Trayer, SDAWP 2016

When you tell them my story,  
Tell them I am Ruby Zamora Baker  
Ruby Red  
Student, maestro, mother, and wife  
Write that I was born in Charleston but raised in San Diego  
Born on St. Patrick's Day but that does not reveal  
my true Mexican, French, and Native blood  
Tell them birthdays are for relaxing but not when you're thirty-two  
All you need are four great friends  
—dancing  
—downtown  
—3 am comida

Tell them I proudly celebrate Christmas with red, white, and green  
y no vecina, no lo voy a quitar  
because injustice is one thing that makes me mad  
but I won't let them win

Tell them I'm organized, color-coded, straight-A-student  
A life-long learner wrapped in a strong but caring personality  
Who learns most from her students  
First graders to ESL  
Who stays connected with her students  
Long after they start having babies of their own

Tell them I'm a bookworm  
Who always wanted to fly  
My classroom is bursting with books  
My love for fantasy, romance, and mystery  
Genres that I have lived personally

When you write my story,  
tell them I married Matt the marine  
My stalker  
Who became my "pretty lumberjack"  
And now my 6'3" hero (y tu papa)

Write that I am a mother  
Proud of my little painter  
Who is worthy of 1,000 pictures  
Because there are not enough words to describe my love for her

Write that life is full of amazing surprises  
Miracles you never thought possible  
Clarissa  
Matt  
A home on a cul-de-sac in Chula Vista

When you tell them my story,  
Remind them that each day is a blessing  
Slow down and enjoy them  
Snuggle up at the end of each to begin tomorrow together

When you tell them my story,  
Tell them I am Ruby Zamora Baker  
Ruby Red  
Student, maestro, and wife

## Paul Lopez-Bad-Ass-Teacher Man

Margaret E. Van Blaricom, SDAWP 2016

When you tell them my story,  
Tell them that I was Batman at seven  
And, today, Bad-Ass-Teacher Man  
    A hero for true justice,  
    A hero for infectious, endless learning,  
    A hero for students and teachers

Tell them that I am paying it forward,  
    An homage to Jimmy Cannon, the music man of my youth  
    And Carmele Kuehn, the creative writing sage  
    Who stoked the fire of words in me

Tell them I am a language super-hero,  
    A Chicano  
    Gliding effortlessly between two magnificent worlds  
    “Entre compañeros” and among friends  
    Telling the stories of the forgotten or never before seen

Tell them that I have no time for self-righteous hypocrites  
    Fingertip-techno activists unwilling to engage  
    Those who tell others, “You don’t belong here.”  
    “Ah, Hell NO!”

Tell them that creative genius moves me  
    Great musicians like Miles Davis  
    Great authors like William Burroughs  
    Courageous rebels like Gloria Anzaldúa

Tell them about my brilliant and beautiful wife, Mandie  
    About our travels to grand cities and new lands  
    About our wonderful house,  
        our happy puppy, Luka,  
        and our gentle rabbit, Jennifer Lopez

Tell them that I am P-Lo, Baby Paul, Manuel Paul Lopez  
    Quiet, passionate, musician, adventurer, and lover of life

## A Poem for Wendy Schramm

Michelle B. Crooks, SDAWP 2016

Wendy—Nickname “Wendus”  
hard to unpack...a labyrinth of a lady  
both animal rights activist and capitalist show off in Monopoly  
Where do her values lie?  
But it is clear that her heart is with the underdogs and those pushed to the margins  
passionate about standing up for wildlife that need a place of refuge  
observing birds of prey, seeing the intelligence beyond the precision of the kill  
and wishing for a chance to teach banned books with children who are a little less privileged  
A suppressed creative voice who never got to strut down the red carpet as a screenwriter  
Getting to let her voice out of its cage over a summer break  
A falcon when it comes to both words and heart  
not a spark of flint  
but the slowly moving lava of a social justice advocate



# I Remember

Nicole Rios, SDAWP 2016

I remember growing up in Oceanside  
Poppy Circle,  
a small cul-de-sac,  
but it might as well have been the entire planet  
Because everything I needed, and cared about, lay within its boundaries

I remember our brand new, two-story,  
white stucco house with toasted brown trim.  
It was our first, and I had my own room.  
My mom decorated it with lots of pink and lace,  
and a big, white, canopy bed  
It wasn't me

I remember the 7-Eleven up the street  
I wasn't allowed to go there  
too far away,  
too close to busy Vandegrift Boulevard,  
and on the wrong side of the neighborhood

I remember my best friend, Leslie and I,  
playing in our backyard with her little brother, Bobby  
Pretend shoot-em-ups and impromptu karate sparring  
Until only slivers of light remained, or until her dad would call them  
home from the other side of our shared fence

I remember Leslie's home,  
The smell of red rice,  
her mother's red and yellow rose bushes,  
full of prickly thorns and bees  
To ensure we stayed away

I remember the smell of my abuelita roasting chiles,  
Bubbling pinto beans mixed with salty, savory, bacon fat  
And the rhythmic whirr of the electric ice cream maker,  
As we added large, white crystals of salt  
Strawberry cream never tasted so good

I remember drifting to sleep underneath a white canopy  
Listening to "Blue Suede Shoes"  
Dreaming of tomorrow

## Dialogue

**Call for Manuscripts  
Winter 2017 Issue**

**Submission Deadline:  
September 1, 2017**

### **Disrupting Fake News: Creating Critical Media Literacy Consumers & Producers**

"While sharing misinformation is becoming a societal problem, there are ways to help students become mindful, critical users of social media as well as producers of accurate information. It may not save the world, but it is a step toward a solution. At the heart of this work, we believe, is the ability to deconstruct and compose arguments in these socially-networked spaces."

—Kristin Hawley Turner  
and Troy Hicks from  
*Argument in the Real World*

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

- In what ways do you promote inquiry, dialogue, voice, and choice in the classroom? How do you support multiple perspectives/interpretations?
- Are you helping your students become producers of accurate information in the classroom and on social media?
- How do you teach students to be critical media consumers? How do you model differentiating between "fake news" and factual events?
- What types of inquiry strategies and student focused approaches (such as PBL) do you use to facilitate debates on social and political issues?

*Dialogue* would love to receive reflective pieces written by educators and students. We encourage you to submit stories, experiences, and strategies. Email all manuscript submissions, suggestions, letters to the editor and/or Project Notes:

Callie Brimberry  
callieryanbrim@gmail.com  
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# Making to Make a Difference

Janis Jones, SDAWP 1994

As I set out my containers filled with colorful beach plastic in preparation for the activity I had planned for the 5th through 8th graders attending San Diego Area Writing Project's Young Writers' Camp in Cardiff, I stopped and noticed how beautiful it looked and reflected on the incongruity of the marine debris lined up in an elementary school corridor that would soon be filled with eager summer campers.



As the kids arrived, they noticed the colorful plastics and had questions before they even settled in. I introduced myself and shared what I do to make a difference as a teacher, photographer, writer, maker—and avid beach cleaner. I showed examples of my photography and art and asked everyone to theorize about how the plastic items used in my work could have ended up on the beach.

We discussed balloon bits, bucket handles, and bottle caps, and the wide-eyed campers expressed amazement while sharing their insights and observations about the images and objects that I shared with them. They were excited when they found something they recognized, and they even identified an object on my Circles within Circles piece for me. "It's a water gun plug!"

one of the campers exclaimed, and I was grateful to finally know. (I find them often but couldn't figure out what they were.)

From there, we segued into a deeper discussion about marine debris, and I played a video from Ocean Today's *Trash Talk* series to enhance their understanding. Living in coastal San Diego, most were already aware of the problem of ocean pollution, and by a show of hands, a few had participated in beach clean-up events in the past. In addition, many had previously attended environmental assemblies at their schools where they had seen the iconic image of a decomposing albatross with a stomach full of plastic or the picture of the turtle whose shell became deformed as it grew into the plastic six-pack ring wrapped around its middle.

Those images are shocking and cause one to think about the damage we are doing to the planet and its inhabitants, but research has shown that scare tactics aren't the best way to inspire people to effect positive change. In an *Environment360* interview about his book, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming*, psychologist Per Espen Stoknes explains: "What we know from psychological studies



is that if you overuse fear-inducing imagery, what you get is fear and guilt in people, and this makes people more passive, which counteracts engagement."

Knowing that scary images aren't effective in motivating people, I want to engage students by sharing poignantly beautiful photographs and objects that draw them in and allow them to develop connections. By providing opportunities for students to discuss, work with, and write about the plastic debris, their connections grow even deeper. As their interests and insights develop, I am confident that they will find their own ways to make a difference based on hope—not fear.

My ultimate goal is it to have an even greater positive impact by empowering young people to use their creativity to inform and inspire others. I want them to know that their classroom teachers aren't the only people who are educators. They too can teach through their words and actions and through what they cre-



Dialogue, Summer 2017



ate and share with a wider audience.

To lead campers into writing and making, I shared examples from Young Writers and Photography Camp that I co-taught earlier in the summer. (A 25-minute center activity that I did with campers during that program was the seed that grew into this more fully developed presentation.)



After we discussed the endless possibilities for writing, I demonstrated the hands-on work they would be doing. I dumped a tub of plastic out on the floor and explained the connection between writing and making by sharing that just as one might revise a piece of writing one can revise a piece of art that's in process too. Objects in a collage and words/phrases/sentences on a page can be added, deleted, and moved around as the artist/author develops and works to improve the piece.

Finally, campers headed outside and began arranging the plastic into pleasing compositions that they captured with the devices/cameras they brought from home. It probably goes without saying that they had fun working in pairs to lay out their designs. They also enjoyed discussing the pieces of plastic as they placed them on their work surfaces. I heard exclamations of excitement as familiar objects were recognized,

and I overheard a pair seriously negotiating the placement of a bottle cap. Someone held up a black cone-shaped object and was surprised by my explanation that it was part of an eel trap.

As they made their arrangements, I couldn't help but think about the significance of their interactions with the material. The eye-catching plastic, as beautiful as it is, represents humanity's failure to protect our natural resources; it exists in contrast to the fresh-faced innocence of the children who were creating with it—the embodiment of hope for a future in which we can and must do better.

Their final products were beautiful, intriguing...and fun! One of the creators of the "pink beach boy" (image left), and I discussed the fact that the image was both cool and not cool at the same time. We laughed as we came to that realization, which reminded me that humor is another positive way to engage an audience when tackling difficult topics.

After campers finished collaborating on their designs, they grabbed their notebooks and began to write. Some drafted poems, while others crafted letters and stories. A couple of campers asked if they could write comic strips, and I exclaimed, "Yes! A comic strip about marine debris. What a great idea!"

One of the campers in the 5th/6th group drafted a story about the life of one water bottle that eventually ends up in the recycling bin after going on quite an adventure, and an older camper in the 7th/8th grade group began working on a powerful piece about the urban jungle. Two girls in the 3rd/4th grade group who worked together to create their plastic collages wrote very different pieces. While one wrote a letter to the "government," the other developed a poem:

*Sea turtles and sharks  
Dolphins and whales  
Clams and mussels  
Jellyfish and sea snails  
Their lives are endangered by*

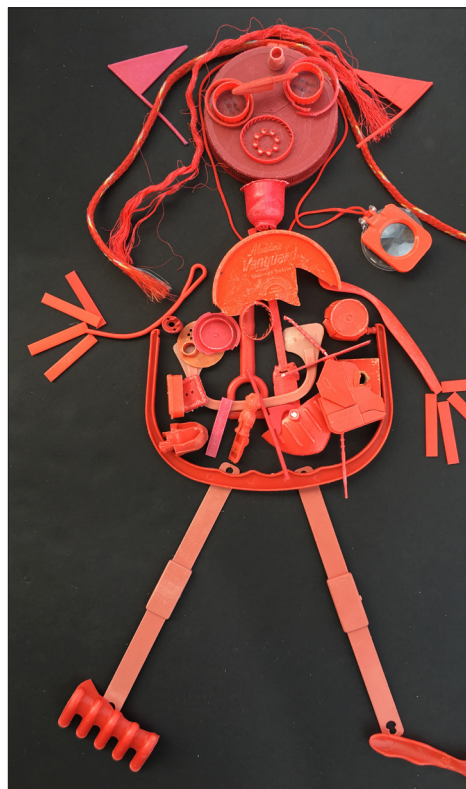
*marine debris  
and humans need to find  
a solution  
So I am asking you please  
When you go to the beach  
Pick up some trash  
So the creatures of the sea  
Can live happy lives in peace*

We had a few minutes for sharing in author's chair before I left the campers with some final thoughts on making to make a difference. I explained that not everyone is as passionate about marine debris and cleaning beaches as I am. I challenged them to discover what they care deeply about and encouraged them to find ways to inform and inspire others through their own making and writing. Then, I asked them two final questions, and I pose the same two questions to you:

What do you care about?

What will you make or do to make a difference?

Janis' blog, *Write the World*,  
can be found at  
<https://writetheworld.net>



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## Calendar of Events

### **Summer 2017 Open Institutes CA Common Core State Standards Series at UCSD**

Preparing College-Ready Writers  
(Grades 6-16)

Supporting and Developing  
Students to Write Arguments  
June 19-21, 2017

Building a Writing Community  
(Grades K-6)

Creating a Safe  
and Responsive Classroom  
for Student Writers  
June 27-29, 2017

Writing, Revision,  
and Mentor Text  
(Grades K-6)

Creating a Context and a  
Culture for Revision  
July 11-13, 2017

### **SDAWP Fall Into Writing Conference**

September 30, 2017

8:00am - 12:00pm

UC San Diego—Price Center

Registration is \$35 per person or  
\$30 each for teams of 3 or more

Registration begins August 15

### **National Day on Writing**

October 20, 2017

Sponsored by the NCTE

For information visit

[www.ncte.org/dayonwriting](http://www.ncte.org/dayonwriting)

### **Save the Dates**

Pre-CATE Convention:

March 8, 2018

CATE Convention:

March 9 - 11, 2018

San Diego Town & Country  
Convention Center

<http://cateweb.org/convention/>

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