

Reflections of Choice: Turning to the Arts to Foster Preservice Teachers' Reflexive Dispositions about Literacy



Janet C. Richards

Shetay Ashford

Elaine Cerrato Fisher

Christiana Succar



Our Objectives

- Why and how we asked the preservice teachers to turn to the arts.
- Share an arts-based study we conducted to explore in what ways creating imaginative, arts representations of personal choice stimulated the preservice teachers' motivation and abilities to thoughtfully consider their pedagogy.
- Describe how the preservice teachers chose to create diverse artistic reflective representations that connected to their talents, aptitudes, and multiple intelligences.
- Share examples of the preservice teachers' imaginative, arts-based reflections that include self-portraits, poetry, visual art, RAP, chants, emoticons, dramatic arts, and prose.



Three diverse literatures informed the inquiry

- Arts-based research in education, which is “predicated on a constructivist epistemology that posits there are multiple realities and ways of doing and understanding” (Butler-Kisber & Poldmer 2010, np).
- Scholars’ views on teachers’ reflexive dispositions that indicate beginning teachers usually need interventions to carefully consider the consequences of their work in order for them to learn the attitudes and skills required for the reflective process (Richert & Bove, 2010; Russell, 2005; Schön, 1996).
- Tenets of feminist and postmodern theory that consider the process of constructing and thinking about the process of art more important than the art itself (Suominen, 2008).



Contextual Description

- As part of course requirements:
 - 19 education majors in a master's cohort tutored groups of primary children (the same groups throughout the semester) in an after-school emergent literacy program in which critical reflection about one's teaching was paramount.
 - The education majors had never taught children prior to participating in the course and consequently had difficulties reflecting about their lessons through required weekly e-mail communication.



A Priori Questions

1. What themes (i.e., ideas, values, emotions, insights, concerns, and understandings about self, children, and teaching writing) are visible in the preservice teachers' arts-based reflections?
2. What arts modalities were most conducive to promoting and illuminating the preservice teachers' reflections?



Educational Importance

- The study illuminates multiple modalities of inquiry.
- This discovery opens up emancipating, introspective possibilities for both education majors and literacy teacher educators.
- The inquiry also contributes to literacy teacher educators' understanding of the power of the arts.



Dear Future Alana,

Can you believe how far you have come? You are a teacher....an AWESOME teacher. Everyday you get to go to work and make a genuine difference in your students' lives. How amazing is that? Can you remember the days that you once were working a terribly boring 9-5-desk job...day dreaming, literally DAY DREAMING of something more, and you did it! Do you remember how lost you felt for so long, and then that feeling you got when you were accepted in to the MAT program and everything fell into place? Not many people get to say they truly love their career. You are a lucky woman.



Think back to the first couple of lessons you taught. You were teaching a small group of 3rd graders in a lunchroom. You walked in with a plan, and guess what....IT WORKED! Maybe not exactly how you imagined, but it all came together. You were nervous and anxious, but you learned, just as the kids you were tutoring in literacy learned. Throughout that first semester, you were able to witness the difference you made with those students, from start to finish. You taught them reading and writing strategies that they will be able to use throughout their entire lives. They were bright to begin with, and you taught them how to shine.

Everyday you get to do what you were born to do. You are a natural, and I am so proud.

Love,

Present Alana



Perfection

“The story of three future educators, and their pursuit of perfection”

Starring:

Gloria Wong

Eric Miller

Brett Kushner

Dr. Janet Richards



Story Overview

Three future educators (Gloria, Eric, and Brett) set out on a mission to have their tutoring group of 3rd graders create a story of their own. Along the way, the future educators find that things are easier said than done when working with children. They also discover that forming a bond and working together can get them through anything.

I am still a little overwhelmed.

I am excited to watch them progress.

I am still intimidated

Planning is everything!

I still have a lot to learn about teaching!

Patience!





Follow the yellow brick road?

As beginner teachers

We want that path

We feel that we need that path

To succeed

But what happens

If you follow the

Yellow brick road

And you have choices to make?

Do you stay?

Do you leave?



DARE TO BE ADVENTUREOUS

DARE TO WALK THE PATH
YOU MAY NOT KNOW

So

Should you always

Follow the yellow brick road?

Yes, it's convenient

That it's there

In fact what a relief

But

Won't it be so straight forward?

Won't it be so predictable?

DARE TO BE ADVENTUREOUS



DARE TO WALK THE PATH YOU MAY NOT KNOW

I am strong

I am confident

I want to be a teacher

No!

My passion and destiny

Is to be a teacher

So

Do I want to follow the

Yellow brick road?

Once upon a time

I did

Now for me to grow
Now for me to be a better
Teacher for my students
I need to stray, I need to find other roads
So the yellow brick road
Can be there
But it does not need
To define me
For I want to achieve more
I want to *always*
Make a difference
So yellow brick road
Thank you for my start
But I think I' ll take it
From here now!