

Sponsoring Committee: Dr. Rick Grove, Moravian College
Doris Correll, Moravian College
Ann Goldberg, Moravian College

**DANCING WITH THE MELODY OF WIND:
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY
IN THE SECONDARY ESOL CLASSROOM**

Barbara D. Schaffer

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
Moravian College
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
2011

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study uses Autobiographical Inquiry to examine a ninth-grade class of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students in an urban high school in eastern Pennsylvania. The study documents the observed behaviors and reported experiences of these ESOL students as they participated in autobiographical inquiry in the classroom. The students were asked to keep daily journals in response to questions eliciting their opinions; construct a timeline of their educational experiences; and participate in Language Arts activities designed around the essential question, “Who Am I?” The highlight of the research came as the class participated in a district-wide “Young Authors’ Celebration.” The students wrote autobiographical poetry and fabricated papier maché masks as a metaphor for the way they viewed themselves. The poetry and masks were displayed during a public event. Students completed surveys about their attitudes toward the classroom, the school, and their experiences during the study. The observations from this study provided insights for the teacher to reflect on her teaching methods and attitudes, and to gain the flexibility needed to reach the students on a daily basis. She discovered that project learning was an enjoyable *and* effective experience for students and teacher alike, and that many of the issues she interpreted solely as struggles with language acquisition were essentially normal, teenage angst amid the search for personal identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank the students in my class who participated in this study—most willingly, but a few with reservations about my motives and the possible consequences they might suffer in the hands of a *teacher*. They opened their thoughts and lives to my probing. Their adolescent exuberance tests my patience daily, but at the same time it inspires the best in my pedagogy and in my personal life; the two are inextricably bound. I love witnessing their journeys toward a future they are only beginning to imagine.

To Rick: You captained us safely to harbor when the winds of chance and circumstance buffeted our tattered sails. Thank you for patiently encouraging me not to panic. ➤ 42 §

To Doris, my role model. Thank you for being a consummate professional. And lots of fun. I wish I possessed a mere fraction of your energy and considerable knowledge. I hope my research honors your pedagogy.

To Ann, the epitome of grace and serenity. The charitable manner in which you guided us through the intricacies of ESL assessment has been one of the highlights of my Master's studies. Thank you for showing us what we can aspire to be.

To Camie, who opened my ears to hearing the stories of those whose lives intertwine with our own. Your instruction planted the seed that grew into this study.

To my sons, Warren and Neal, who persevered with piles of unwashed dishes and stacks of laundry waiting to be washed during my long journey to this destination. They listened to my thoughts and complaints patiently, offering advice only they had the insights to articulate. Both entered and graduated from college, cultivating their own lives and careers, as I was plodding along. Warren married our sweet Barbie and Neal began his own encounter with living the life of an educator. I love you both beyond measure.

Pop, this is for you, a boy who struggled with acquiring English in many of the same ways as my students; this study allowed me to imagine you in a new light. I find it fascinating that I should discover myself teaching English Language Learners at this point in my pedagogy, closing in on the circle. All our journeys lead us back home.



Photo Courtesy of Alfred DiNenno

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
PROLOGUE: THE CART TEACHER	
I'm Gonna Sue You	1
Transporting a Critically Ill Patient	2
Peppermint Starlight Mints	3
Daydreaming	5
A Red Clay Pot of Purple and Yellow Pansies	6
Found Objects	8
A Few Small Sunfish Glimmer as They Swim Upstream	9
RESEARCHER'S STANCE	
The Research Question	12
Defining the Question	13
Rationale	14
Practical Knowledge	17
My Personal Educational Philosophy	
The Ideal Learner	20
The Source of the Curriculum	21
The Central Idea	22
The Role of the Teacher	22

The Purpose of School	23
HOW THE EXPERTS INFORM THE STUDY.....	24
Using Student Narratives for Autobiographical Inquiry.....	24
Using Autobiographical Inquiry as a Tool for Professional Growth.....	27
Multicultural Education and Demographics.....	29
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	
Proposal Design	33
Data Collection Tools	35
Insuring Trustworthiness	36
THE SCREENPLAY: A NOT-SO-NEW BEGINNING	
Your Blood Pressure is Going to Go Through the Roof	39
Who Am I?	43
I Will Be an Angler	44
The Ferst Tim We Sall the Rayn Her It Was Crazy	47
Igihugu Cange	52
<i>Me</i> : Dancing With the Melody of Wind	59
A Green-and-Orange Plaid Apron	71
Baby Stuff: The Mask Is a Metaphor	73
Young Author's Celebration	76
The Field Trip	76

MAKING MEANING OF THE JOURNEY

Critical Incidents	82
The Oppressed, the Oppressor, and Praxis	82
The Mask as True Identity	87
<i>Me Poem</i>	89
The Survey Data	91
Themes	95
What's Changed?	96
As a Teacher, Am I the Same Person?	96
What Happened to Me?	97
An Over-Arching Theme: The Search for Identity	99
Vinyard Vines	99
Roots in the Adriatic	101
All Our Journeys Lead Us Back Home	101
EPILOGUE: PLANTING MARIGOLDS.....	103
REFERENCES	107
APPENDICES	112
A Principal Consent Form	113
B Parent Permission Form: English	114
C Parent Permission Form: Spanish	115
D Survey: <i>How Do You Feel About School?</i>	116

E	Survey: <i>And One More Confidential Survey Please</i>	117
F	Daily Journal Questions for September	118
G	Daily Journal Questions for October	119

PROLOGUE: THE CART TEACHER

(This story is not based on an actual location; it is loosely based on the composite previous experiences of the researcher. The characters of the students and other staff portrayed in this section are also composite and do not represent authentic identities.)

I'm Gonna Sue You

Approximately one year ago...Teacher's Point of View (POV), a moving shot: A teacher, who is probably in the final decade of her career, makes her cart down the crowded hallway of an urban high school, mostly unnoticed by the students. As she is walking we see, through her eyes, double rows of narrow, dark blue lockers lining both sides of the walls from floor to above-head height. Lighting comes from overhead fluorescent strips. The floor is a checkerboard of tan and dark blue laminate tiles. The students are mostly ninth graders and they are passing between classes, making the most of their five minutes of freedom by causing auditory mayhem. However, the hallway sounds seem muffled and low, as if something is not right with the sound. Although we can't make out the exact words, we see the students scream out greetings to each other; some epithets are obscene and in Spanish. A few students smack each other as they pass by, hoping to get a rise out of a victim who hasn't the time or the nerve to retaliate. Although against the school's dress code, lots of the male students are wearing dropped

pants, with patterned boxers visible as they pass by. This style of dress necessitates a peculiar gait in which the adherent must spread his legs wide and waddle forward in an effort to keep his pants from falling to the floor. There are fleeting kisses and hugs as family members—sisters, brothers, cousins, “kissing” cousins—pass by each other. Lunch money, bus money, and perhaps other money, changes hands. We see the backs of two girls walking side-by-side just ahead. They are laughing and shouting over the noise. As we get closer, the camera tightens in and abruptly stops on a close up of the back of a female student’s head. The camera reveals black hair that has been pulled back into a tight pony tail with a purple scrunchie. In slow motion the student turns her head and looks straight at the camera, as if into the face of the teacher. We first see a twirl of dangling gold earrings, then green eyes with heavy black eyeliner and sparkly purple eye shadow. Slowly her chapped lips part and we see her mouth the words, “I’m gonna sue you.”

Transporting a Critically Ill Patient

The camera angle changes and we see the scene as a medium shot, focusing on the teacher and the students immediately surrounding her. The teacher takes an earplug out of her right ear and the hallway sounds come up with a vengeance, augmented by a loud beeping noise because a hallway door has now been held open for longer than 30 seconds. The teacher has been wearing the kind

of earplugs that paramedics wear on the ground when they are transporting a critically ill patient to a medical helicopter. She carries them in a small white plastic holder attached by a short chain to her identification lanyard. We see that the teacher has been pushing a cart down the hallway and has bumped into a student who unpredictably stopped in front of her. Because she has not been able to engage the teacher in a heated verbal exchange, the student who has threatened to sue the teacher shrugs and turns, entering the doorway to her class, yelling “¡Coño!” to someone already in the room. The camera follows the teacher as she replaces the earplug in her ear. The sound becomes muffles again. The teacher resumes pushing her cart through the hallway to the classroom she will be using for the next two periods. As she crosses the threshold of the doorway, the teacher removes her earplugs and places them into their holder. The loudness of the sound begins to come into a normal range inside the classroom, although we can still hear shouting coming from the hallway. One of the teacher’s students, who has already been in the room, bolts past her back into the hallway and knocks her planning book off the cart; papers scatter to the floor. As the teacher is collecting the book and its contents, the camera comes in for a close up of the teacher’s cart.

Peppermint Starlight Mints

The cart is grey plastic with two shelves, each divided lengthwise down the center so that books can stand up. There are indentations near the handle for

chalk, pencils, and a cup. The camera circles from the left side of the cart, first revealing the handle area with its contents: paperclips and a few rubber bands in the cup area, white and yellow bits of chalk, three yellow No. 2 pencils, and two individually-wrapped, red-and-white-striped peppermint starlight mints resting in the other sections. The teacher's black attaché bag hangs over the handle; the bag contains a school laptop and what few personal belongings she brings to school daily. The camera scans over the top shelf. On the left side of the divider there is a black plastic organizer—the type that holds contents upright in compartments and will spin—containing a small stapler, a black and a blue whiteboard marker, a few yellow highlighters, a pair of scissors, a bottle of correction fluid, some Band-Aids, and a supply of staples. A stack of four black plastic bins, stocked with supplies of different types of writing, graph, and printer paper sits at the end of the shelf. Between the organizer and the stacking bins of paper resides a clear pink, plastic bin containing an assortment of old, wooden rulers in varying states of serviceability, a hole punch, and scrap paper of various sizes. On the right side of the top shelf, all of the textbooks that the teacher uses, along with the teacher manuals and workbooks, are stacked upright, held in their vertical positions by back-to-back wire racks storing manila folders marked with their contents.

The camera now circles down to the bottom shelf, revealing neatly piled dictionaries in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic. There are also stacks of grammar and other reference books on the same side. The other side of the bottom

shelf holds construction paper and a variety of plastic boxes with art materials, scissors, and glue, as well as 30 handwriting workbooks in blue folders. As the camera circles back up to the top, the teacher is placing the planning book back on the cart, where she has fashioned a work area on top of the handle.

Daydreaming

The camera now pans over the room. The walls are beige and there are three rows of florescent lights in the ceiling. There is a row of tightly-sealed windows lining the wall across from the door. The combination of the natural and artificial lighting reflecting on the whiteboards covering the front wall gives the room a harsh glare. A similar pattern of checkerboard tiles continues into the classroom from the hallway. There are 36 desks arranged in pairs, facing the whiteboards; the desks are one-size-fits-all—a blue plastic chair attached to a neutral grey Formica desktop. Some of the students who have arrived for class are chatting at the windows; two boys are shoving each other into a pair of desks at the back of the room. The camera stops on the teacher; she is staring across the room at the distant view outside the windows—a baseball diamond and two tennis courts with a community park beyond, all surrounded by city streets, duplex homes, a red brick firehouse, and a small, Evangelical church with a modest cross painted over the entrance doors. The camera comes in for a close up of the teacher's face and we see that she is daydreaming. The scene fades out.

A Red Clay Pot of Purple and Yellow Pansies

As the camera fades back in, we are in new scene. We see a rustic house surrounded by a red barn, a fenced horse corral, and 98 acres of Eastern woodlands. It is an early morning in mid-April. All the colors are misty and rich, and the lighting is low, as would be appropriate for a wooded landscape in the morning, and we hear the sounds of birds chirping brightly. The scene brightens and we see about 20 teenage students step off a yellow school bus, one-by-one, and enter a vestibule through the back screen door of the house. They are chatting and laughing as two teachers —one is our same teacher with the cart—greet the students outside the door. A red clay pot of purple and yellow pansies sits on the barn side of the screen door. The camera follows the students into the house and into a large living room where the students place their backpacks on a row of long tables pushed together at one end of the room. There are pale yellow-and-brown houndstooth curtains at the windows —probably made at least fifteen years ago by a Girl Scout troop in fulfillment of a sewing badge; the walls are wood-paneled and the worn, fir floorboards are scattered with various sizes of carpet runners.

The camera focuses in on two girls standing near the Dutch door to the porch, and follows them on their way to the kitchen. We see them walk past three well-used, mismatched sofas arranged in a U-shape around a stone fireplace wall. To welcome the students on this cool spring morning, a youth worker is building a fire in the fireplace with oak and maple logs that the park ranger has cut for

them from the surrounding woods. We hear the fire crackle. In the background we hear the voices of teenagers joking and chatting; we do not hear their words distinctly, but we hear some laughter. On the brown and tan plaid sofa, a young, female counselor is sitting with a girl who looks like she has had a sleepless night. They are talking quietly and privately.

The camera comes in to a medium shot of the two girls who are speaking to each other as they walk.

FIRST GIRL: (This girl is tall and quite thin, with straight blonde hair reaching below her waist. She is named after a country music star and lives alone in a small apartment with her father, who is unemployed.) Last night I read my dad's e-mail after he had three forties and crashed. You cannot believe what he told some skuzz named Amanda. He said he's gonna to meet her in Atlantic City for some fun. What the f...? If he does, I swear, I'm gonna make him pay. I'll sell his f...in' chopper to Carl.

SECOND GIRL: (This girl is adopted from Chile and lives with her adopted family, including an older brother who is the biological child of the parents. This brother has been in and out of jail for the past several years.) No way! What the f...? You sure?

FIRST GIRL: Yeah. She e-mailed 'em back that she's gonna call in sick. Just let 'er know the days. I swear. She looks older than dirt, too. Hey. How come your eyes look so bad? Ron's gonna think you were drinking again last night.

SECOND GIRL: S...t. My mom pulled me out of bed this morning. She grabbed my hair. It hurt mad bad! Then I screamed at her and my f...in' brother ran in my bedroom in his boxers.

FIRST GIRL: Gross.

SECOND GIRL: Yeah. If that f...er comes in my room in his boxers again I'm gonna tell my caseworker. He gives me the creeps. He needs to go back to lockup.

Found Objects

The camera follows the girls as they enter the kitchen. FIRST GIRL takes a large box of cereal from an overhead cabinet. SECOND GIRL takes a gallon of milk from the refrigerator. We see a serious boy in a white T-shirt, pale blue sweat pants, and white sneakers placing a pot on the stove; the pot contains a dozen eggs covered with water that the boy is going to hard boil to make egg salad sandwiches for lunch. The camera follows the two girls into a small eating area adjoining the kitchen where two hungry boys are already working on their second bowls of corn flakes. One also has a peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich by his bowl of cereal, sitting on a paper napkin. There are two half-gallon cartons of orange juice on the table, which is covered in fruit-patterned plastic tablecloths. The dishes, glasses, and silverware, although mismatched, are all nondisposable; students will be taking turns washing the dishes after lunch. (A system has been mutually agreed upon by teachers and students that each student will take a turn at

washing dishes. Each student has written his or her name on a slip of paper and placed it in a cup. A name is drawn each day. A student can decline to do the dishes on a day his or her name is drawn. The paper will be returned into the cup and another name will be selected. However, all students must take a turn before all the names are replaced in the cup.)

The two girls sit down at the table as far away from the boys as possible, toward the entrance to a carpeted classroom. Behind the students we see a row of windows revealing a backyard of white and pink dogwood trees in bloom. There are a half dozen birdhouses hanging from the branches of the dogwood trees. (Using scrap and found objects, the students designed and made the bird houses during the winter when it was too cold to go outside.) Daffodil bulbs, planted in the ground around the dogwoods by the students the previous November, now glow golden as the mid-morning sunlight reaches down through the branches of towering oaks to illuminate their yellow trumpets. The camera takes our view through the window into the outdoors, but the scene blurs into another.

A Few Small Sunfish Glimmer as They Swim Upstream

Now we are deep in the woods, and we again see through the eyes of the same teacher. We are walking on a narrow, stony path through the woods. There are trees in full leaf on either side of the pathway—maples, sycamores, oaks, and poplars. Our view follows the teacher's as she looks up to see a robin flit through

the branches on her way to a nest. We look back down to the path and step over a fallen branch. We look ahead and see the backs of students walking in front of us, making their way single file along the pathway. We hear bird calls and the cry of a red-tailed hawk far up in the sky. We hear the voices of students laughing. We look back down and see the horizontal slats of a wooden bridge that we are crossing over. We stop briefly at a wooden railing made from tree branches, and our view spans down to the sparkling water bubbling through a pebble-lined, shallow creek. We can see a few small sunfish glimmer as they swim upstream. We look back up and notice that the students have gotten about fifteen feet ahead of us. We begin walking again and pick up the pace. As we cross over the bridge to the other side, we see that a male teacher in the lead is taking some students into a clearing where they begin to take seats on the trunk of a fallen tree. We see the students take out small notebooks that they have been carrying in their pockets and begin to sketch. We see through the teacher's eyes as she comes up to a girl wearing a dark blue sweatshirt, Tims boots, and jeans torn at the knees, her curly brown hair pinned up behind a red bandana; she is focused on her work. We look down at the girl's sketchbook and see a tawny brown left hand, encircled at the wrist with bands of colored cords; she is drawing a fan-shaped mushroom that she sees growing on the side of a fallen log. Our attention is drawn away by a chattering noise. We look up, beyond the student, and into the woods where we see two squirrels chasing each other up the trunk of a poplar tree. Their chattering

gets louder as they ascend the tree. As the noise increases, the tree and squirrels morph into two boys who are quarreling over a piece of paper in front of a window. We are abruptly back in the loud, bright classroom with the tiled floor, still looking out from the teacher's Point of View.

We see one boy, holding what looks like a homework assignment, over another boy's head out of his reach, taunting him with it. The victim tries to grab the paper back, but only succeeds in tearing the paper from the bully's clutches. Now the perpetrator begins to run around the room with the largest piece while the victimized student runs after him. The bell rings loudly, signaling the beginning of class, but most of the students in the room (except one) are not in their seats; they are yelling out words of encouragement to the bully.

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT VOICES: ¡Tómalo! ¡Tómalo!

A lone student not involved in the fracas has her hands in her backpack, which she has placed in front of her on her desktop; she is texting on her cellphone. The noise of the commotion diminishes as we hear the sound of a loud sigh.

CART TEACHER: (Voiceover, as if coming from inside our own head.) How am I ever going to make it through this year?

Her gaze turns back toward the window as the scene fades out.



RESEARCHER'S STANCE

Photo Courtesy Alfred DiNeno

If their overwhelming emotions could in some way be identified and named, would it assist teachers in helping the children find their way?

— Christina Igoa (*The Inner World of the Immigrant Child*)

The Research Question

What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of secondary ELL students when they participate in autobiographical inquiry in my classroom?

As the research question for this study, I have chosen the use of autobiographical inquiry to facilitate understanding the role of past experience on the classroom behaviors affecting academic achievement. As a teacher of secondary English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), I have found that students' past academic and life experiences have a profound effect on their attitudes toward education and their individual perceptions of appropriate

classroom behaviors. When these sometimes widely-ranging perceptions aggregate in a classroom setting, misunderstanding, anger, and even chaotic situations can develop. Academic progress can be difficult to achieve for the group as well as individual students when these perceptions, hence behaviors, have not been addressed appropriately and adequately. This study is designed to uncover some of those previous attitudes and experiences through the use of autobiographical inquiry, and in so doing, to suggest a possible course for a reasonable pedagogical design for this particular class of learners (Igoa, 1995).

Defining the Question

Defining my question has been difficult because ESOL teachers in our high school do not know their assignments until the opening of school each fall as enrollments are determined. Teaching in an urban school is always challenging, of course, but in addition to an increasing demographic of foreign-born students, our school population has been affected by a growing gang presence in the community. The pressures of meeting AYP have limited the time we have to actually provide instruction to our students, and constant testing disrupts the flow of the school year. My English Language Learners (ELLs) have the added pressure of a yearly WIDA test to assess their progress in English language acquisition, as well as series of 4Sight tests, administered four times a year, to prepare them to take the state's standard assessment of their cumulative academic

knowledge in their Junior year of high school . These and other pressures affect students as well as teachers, and add to the issues of maintaining a positive learning environment in the classroom.

I chose my assigned ninth-grade English I class to conduct what is essentially a case study of the class to try to determine what experiences and attitudes these students have acquired and how to use this information in designing a functional classroom with a communal agreement on appropriate behaviors (McGonical, 2000).

Rationale

Six years ago, I moved from an alternative school designed for at-risk adolescents, to language instruction in the public venue. The focus of my pedagogy shifted from students with complex emotional and behavioral needs—and the learning issues resulting from these needs—to English Language Learners (ELLs). What I have come to realize is that my pedagogy didn't *shift* so much as *increase* in focus. The students I now teach exhibit many of the emotional and behavioral characteristics of the students who were not culturally and linguistically diverse. Many of my ELLs have distinct gaps in their formal educations (DeCapua, Smathers & Tang, 2007). Most all have schooling experiences divergent from the configuration of their current school. While it is expected that these students will face academic challenges in their current school,

the perceptions they have acquired in their previous schooling can greatly affect the attitudes and expectations they bring to their current school experience.

Except for newcomers to the U.S., all of the ninth grade students in our district have essentially received some previous schooling in the U.S., many in our district's own middle schools. Often the behavioral needs of these ninth-graders supersede their academic needs, which can be as profound as not being able to read or write in either their native or second language. With my ninth-grade class last year, I felt frustrated in my attempts to provide meaningful, hands-on activities for them because many students in my class seemed to be unable to handle anything other than the teacher-as-lecturer model. In ESOL instruction, that format is appropriate for some of the work we do, such as word pronunciation and phonics instruction. However, the freshmen I taught last year were not newcomers to the language and should have been working in the higher cognitive levels (Freeman & Freeman, 2005). I used instructional techniques such as group work, literature circles, and other engaging learning activities, but most of the students were still unable to handle that much self direction. I had planned station work and a moveable mini-library with an assortment of "reading for pleasure" books, but was not able to implement those activities because chaos broke out in the classroom if I wasn't playing the roll of "enforcer." This was a most stressful predicament for students and teacher alike, and certainly not the appropriate learning environment for ELLs.

Because this situation was so problematic, I felt that addressing it as my research project with this year's ninth-grade class might provide some answers for changes in my pedagogy. First, I'm seeking understanding. What is going on in the freshman classroom? As a veteran teacher, I'm wondering how I can enrich my professional knowledge and experience to more easily handle this type of learner. I'm hoping to view my research with autobiographic inquiry as a collection of representative case studies of my students.

Second, I'd like to propose a plan of action to allow me to be successful with my ELLs and take them into the higher cognitive domains. From my past work with behaviorally and academically at-risk students, I realized that addressing the student's emotional needs is foremost in effecting receptivity to academic learning (Igoa, 1995). However, I don't separate the affective and cognitive domains (Freeman & Freeman, 2005); they are interrelated and form a more holistic view of a student's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Especially as teachers are increasingly asked to individualize for a classroom filled with a wide variety of learners, I need to know where my students are, academically and emotionally. I'm hoping that by learning their individual stories I will achieve an insight about where to start.

Practical Knowledge

I chose autobiographical inquiry as my instructional strategy because I have often used it in the past and have witnessed how understanding can evolve—the student’s understanding of self as well as my understanding of the student. Additionally, autobiographical inquiry is a quick way to reach both the affective and higher cognitive domains simultaneously. In the past, my preferred methodologies have been surveys, timelines, poems, journaling, and questionnaires. Although I’ve used these instructional strategies before, I had not applied them in the organized and reflective approach a study would require.

I was abruptly introduced to issues of ELLs and the affective domain when I began teaching in my current district. As a newly-hired English teacher, I was asked to teach ESOL, which meant pursuing an ESL certification. So, my first day on the job, with no prior training in teaching ESOL, I stood in front of a class of high school students with geographical backgrounds ranging from the Middle East to Africa to Central America. Thankfully, they were not Newcomers to the country and language, meaning that they had been in the U.S. for at least a full year. However, their adjustments varied. They were all scattered throughout the “four H” stages of adjustment: honeymoon, hostility, humor and home (Law & Eckes, 2000). I could see I had a lot to learn! I decided to open up to the students, listen, and let them teach me about what *they* needed.

A few of my students were still in a silent stage (Igoa, 1995), which can appear early on and last for some time. Even some adults who have immigrated to a new country can still carry remnants of their silent period of adjustment. My class just needed space, encouragement, and time. I found that many of my students were stuck in the humor phase (Law & Eckes, 2000). Everything was a big joke to them, especially learning! Being a new teacher to the school, I wasn't sure of how much leeway I had to accommodate their behaviors, but I gave these students space, too. I discovered that there was tension between the students from the Caribbean Islands and the students from the Middle East. One girl from Africa had the most trouble adjusting; nobody wanted to be near her. Of course I reached out to her, but it wasn't enough; she needed the acceptance of her peers.

As the days passed, I realized that the students (except for the girl from Africa) liked to talk about their origins and their home countries. Whenever they had access to a computer—when we were at the library computer lab, for instance—they immediately searched for pictures of their home countries. Some brought in photos to share about their friends and families back home. Some brought in food for me to taste. I began to give them academic assignments related to their histories and preferences. I guided their efforts into an autobiographical portfolio including geographical profiles and photos of their home countries, journaling with prompts, reminiscences, and a section of career exploration. The career exploration evolved because several of these students

were close to graduation; however, it seemed like a wonderful way for all of the students to think about a possible future. Most of the students were resigned to staying in the U.S., but a few were determined to return to their home countries when they were old enough to decide for themselves.

The girl from Africa continued to isolate herself from the rest of the class, but demonstrated her frustration by participating in a yelling match with a girl from Puerto Rico. As we shared our histories, I tried to speak for the African girl in some ways; I informed the rest of the class about the geographical and political history of Liberia, her home country. When I told the class about the wars she had witnessed, they listened. They began to ask her questions and she began, slowly, to open up to the group. The other students asked her to speak her language, which is officially English, but she spoke some of her tribal tongue for them. When we compared schooling experiences, she told about how she was hit and had her hair pulled by her teachers if she talked or misbehaved in some way. The students from the islands were stunned; the students from the Middle East knew what she was talking about. We were beginning to become a cohesive group by exploring our histories.

At the end of the school year, I arranged for these students to take a field trip to a small Quaker elementary school in the area, to share our autobiographies and participate in a question-and-answer session. The students found it easier to

keep their portfolios electronically, so we printed out the PowerPoints as books. It was a wonderful experience for everyone!

I had hoped that by repeating this autobiographical inquiry in a more organized and expanded fashion, and by introducing it earlier in the year, the students participating in my study this year would benefit from these types of self-revelatory activities. I decided to plan a field trip at the end of the study, as I did with my first ELL class, and had my fingers crossed for success.

My Personal Educational Philosophy

The Ideal Learner

My ideal learner would be a student with curiosity. This student would not come to school sleepy or hungry, or would not have been beaten, abused or bullied the night before or morning of. This student would have been read to all his life and made to feel secure and loved just exactly for what he is. He would be respectful of others even when he disagreed. He would be interested in many things and enjoy finding answers to his questions. He would have played a lot, by himself and with others. He would be imaginative. He would experiment with creating sounds and visual representations of his ideas. He would find companionship with other creatures, as well as with his family and friends, and feel at home in the greater, natural environment. He would manifest growth in many spheres.

Source of the Curriculum

The source of the curriculum for teaching this learner would be the world, tiny at first, then expanding to envelope the universe and beyond! For example, as one of my students was searching the internet for pictures of his home country in preparation of his autobiographical PowerPoint, he was captivated by starry visions of the universe and the variously-shaped galaxies. I loved it! When I looked at what was on his computer screen and asked him if he was finding pictures of his home, he pointed to the starry galaxy and indicated that he felt at home in the universe. I love this student! One of the privileges I have as a teacher of ELLs is that I can—and must—incorporate curricula that span subject matter. I consider my students' needs and what background I need to build upon to fill in the gaps that may have occurred as my students shifted their homes and cultures.

Of course, a committee, with massive support from a publisher, has decided what textbooks to use. I did have some input on whether or not I felt the materials were useful, and, considering the alternatives, I endorsed the choice of textbook. Other committees have decided the standards to which I must ascribe, so I play the game. I can imagine a board game in which my students are the playing pieces (proxies) as they move around the game board to the roll of the dice. Whatever card they pull or space they land on could advance them or send them back. What is my role? Host, or maybe hostess. I turn over the cards after the students roll the dice and help them interpret the instructions. The rules are

constantly changing according to the name of the game: some days it's *The SAS* (Pennsylvania's Standards Aligned System) *Game*; other days *The WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) Game*; other days it's *The 4Sight Game*; other days *The PSSA (Pennsylvania State System of Assessments) Prep Game*. Wouldn't it be great to have the *Who Am I?* game everyday? This is the theme I've chosen to represent my classroom and for my research.

The Central Idea

Self exploration as a means of self-actualization would be the central idea of my ideal curriculum. Students would be encouraged to explore their interests and use these explorations to map out a life that fully encompasses their interests and potentials. They could then use this map to circumnavigate their particular universe. "All real meaning is made by the individual as choices are invested in and acted upon." (Dewey, 1938).

Role of the Teacher

I see the teacher as a guide for the individual learner. The teacher's job is to encourage the learner to reach into their zone of proximal development, to expand their knowledge in an ever-widening "spiral" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 56). The difficulty in this is to understand each student's current sphere of knowledge and to figure out a way to support (scaffold) that knowledge to blossom. This is

Vygotsky's metaphor of "buds" representing the learner's embryonic state of development, not yet the "fruit" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) Everything I would hope to do in my pedagogy encourages relationship building: between learner and teacher; learner to learner; learner to the exterior universe; and learner to their inner universe.

Purpose of School

Discovering myself solidly planted in the field of Personal Relevance, I would continue using Vygotsky's metaphor to describe the purpose of school as a venue for growth. Yes! Lots of manure to stimulate growth! No artificial hormones, though. Plenty of clean air and oxygen. A balance of sunlight and shadow. Some rain and wind. A faithful gardener to tend to the weeds to keep the overgrowth from suffocating the young vegetation.

More straightforwardly, I see the purpose of school as serving to foster the development of an individual who can think, is relatively happy and adjusted, and is able to divine a personal meaning for his own life.

HOW THE EXPERTS INFORM THE STUDY

Although I consulted numerous sources to inform my research, as well as draw on my own previous experience, I found the following most pertinent to the methodology of autobiographical inquiry.

Using Student Narratives for Autobiographical Inquiry

I believe that every teacher should read Igoa's book, *The Inner Life of the Immigrant Child* (Igoa, 1995), essentially an action research study conducted over a career. Jim Cummins, who has been a seminal influence in the teaching of ELL's, makes a point in praising Igoa's book that served to influence me in the choice of my study. "This book is unique in the recent North American literature on bilingual/bicultural education and addresses an important and often neglected area: the affective dimensions of immigrant children's experience and the relationship of this experience to academic development...." I believe that the affective domain is a much neglected aspect of bi- or multicultural teaching. In my own practice, I'm finding that the affective domain is taking precedence over—overwhelming might be a better word—the cognitive domain, so I determined that I need to do something to understand how my students' backgrounds influenced their present actions. This book gave me a pathway. As did Igoa, I used teacher journaling and student autobiographical writing as

methodologies to collect data. I also used a timeline or chart such as Igoa uses to note my students' educational backgrounds, cross referenced with the geographical locations of the classrooms. I did not feel comfortable, however, making home visits to my students, as Igoa recommends. Igoa suggests asking students to make a report at whatever linguistic level they are able, on their native country; I have incorporated that suggestion by using the PowerPoint format.

Campano's article, "Honoring Student Stories: One of the Most Powerful Interventions That Teachers Can Make for Immigrant Students Is to Celebrate the Human and Academic Value of Their Stories (Campano, 2007)" along with Igoa's book, is a cornerstone for my study. The subtitle states the theme well. Campano contrasts the "subtle yet pervasive image" of the ideal student with that of the immigrant student "whose education is framed as a series of problems: of language, cultural integration, parental participation, school readiness, background knowledge, literacy, and classroom decorum, to name a few." Campano writes that using narratives in the classroom curriculum is "one of the most powerful ways students can share their knowledge, partake in their own education, and intervene on their own behalf...." I have often used personal narrative and autobiographical perspective as part of my own pedagogy, so I resonate with Campano.

Wong, at the time an assistant professor of history at Williams College, writes about his use of autobiographical inquiry to build a meaningful curriculum for his students in “Crossing the Borders of the Personal and the Public: Family History and the Teaching of Asian American History (Wong, 1996).” He writes, “I have found that the most successful and meaningful assignments are for personal or family histories. This allows for a balance between scholarly inquiry and personal discovery.” Wong asks students to interview parents and other family members to help each student construct a personal timeline of their heritage. Some of the autobiographical products his students have made for this class include, in addition to papers, “videos, photographic essays, extended verse, and physical artifacts.” Wong writes that, in an age when classroom are becoming “increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation, it is essential that we encourage our students to appreciate these differences while trying to locate some area of commonality among them so that there is an avenue for communication.” As with Wong’s study, I, too, am concerned with finding this bridge to understanding and commonality through “personal discovery.” I don’t yet have the confidence that this has occurred during the time frame of my particular study, but I’m sure it will be at least a beginning.

In “I, Too, Am an American: Preservice Teachers Reflect Upon National Identity” (Gallavan, 2002), Gallavan describes a research study conducted on “a

group of 25 preservice teachers enrolled in a social studies methods course. The article identifies the students as “in the U.S.” but does not give a location; I would deduce it’s California because the study design was based on an article published “in a California newspaper.” The preservice teachers were given two poems: one by Langston Hughes, “I, too, Sing America,” and one by Ali Rafi, with the same title. The second poem describes the contrasting perspective of an “Arab-American enrolled in a language arts class. While I didn’t use this specific poetry, I used a poem in my study called the “Me” poem. I’ve used this poem before with great success to encourage students to express their backgrounds as well as their hopes and dreams for the future. I have found, and as I describe in the “Making Meaning of the Journey” section in this document, that poetry writing releases personal expression that is not assessable in any other mode.

Using Autobiographical Inquiry as a Tool for Professional Growth

“Exploring Where the ‘Self’ and ‘Study’ Intersect: Autobiographical Inquiry as a Framework for Qualitative Research” was originally presented by McCallister at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, on April 8-12, 1996. It represents the work of her doctoral thesis. Originally planning on using autobiographical inquiry as a qualitative research tool, she discovered that, conversely, using qualitative research tools helped her “construct a better, more useful autobiography.” While at first I didn’t comprehend the

distinction, I came to understand her research stance, in that her pedagogy was a part of her autobiographical experience. She explored the “methods of learning and the nature of relationships between learner and teacher” on a personal, experiential basis. McCallister found two helpful standards for qualitative analysis, those of Goswami and Lincoln, which she reproduces in her paper. She also provides a quote I particularly like from Bill Ayres’ book, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*. In part, it reads, “An encounter with these [autobiographical] kinds of questions is critical to outstanding teaching because teachers, whatever else they teach, teach themselves. Of all the knowledge they need to draw on, self-knowledge is most important.” I kept a journal of my research as a part of my study, which has certainly become a part of my autobiography, as did McCallister’s.

Although the content area was science, I found McGonical’s article “Transacting with Autobiography to Transform the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Science” to be one of the most helpful in informing my research study (McGonical, 2000). McGonical writes in her abstract: “This is an autobiographical case study that examines the multiple ways autobiography informed the restructuring of science education in my elementary classroom.” She writes that the methodology came to her naturally because she had “acquired the habit of automatically generating and preserving student journals,”

correspondence, parent interviews and other artifacts “as part of my teaching practice.” She found what she terms “a discrepant event” in her thinking when she took a summer course and discovered she had an avoidance of fire. She began to investigate her thinking and was lead to the realization that her students’ engagement with the science curriculum was informed by their own experiences, not on *her* experience. She changed her practice to help her students discover their personal interests through science investigation. McGonical uses a phrase, “doing science,” that provided a way for me to express what is an essential parallel in my study; I’m expecting my students to “do behaving” when my perceptions are based on my experiences and their perceptions are based on their experiences. The question is how to reconcile the two and come to some common understanding. I’ve chosen autobiographical inquiry, as did McGonical, and I have come to realize that I must investigate my own perceptions and experiences as I investigate my students’.

Multicultural Education and Demographics

I located an article on relevance and multicultural education “The Importance of Multicultural Education,” in the anthology *Contemporary Issues in Curriculum* (Ornstein, et al, 2007) that I found to be particularly useful. Gay writes that “Students from difference ethnic groups are more likely to be interested and engaged in learning situations that occur in familiar and friendly

frameworks....” This puts a tremendous responsibility on the classroom teacher to offer learning strategies that can accommodate a variety of learning styles. Gay also mentions the beneficial involvement of the students’ elders. While I intended to involve at least one adult for each of my student participants, I realized that it would have complicated my study in terms of obtaining permissions and translating materials. However, I truly would have liked to question these parents or guardians about their child’s academic history as well as their hopes for their child. It also would have helped me to identify the adult or adults most responsible for the child’s welfare. Perhaps I will be able to extend autobiographical inquiry to include parents at a time in the future.

Student demographics in the United States have changed dramatically over the past three decades. In “2003, racial/ethnic minority students accounted for 41 percent of the enrollments in U.S. public schools.” As of 2007, “one in five students speaks a language other than English at home.” To successfully teach this population, teachers need “a new way of looking at teaching grounded in an understanding of the role of culture and language in learning.” By cultivating six qualities, a teacher can be responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). I appreciated the instructive, but non-judgmental tone of this article, “The Culturally Responsive Teacher,” in asking teachers to “see them [culturally diverse students] as capable learners. Too

often teachers feel that students who are not part of the school's majority demographic are incapable of learning, or try to teach in a way that is not culturally or experientially appropriate for the students. Villegas and Lucas encourage teachers to learn about their students' lives and cultural backgrounds. The authors also advocate for building classroom activities with the students' backgrounds in mind and by activating prior knowledge. I'm hoping that my study will be available for other educators and administrators in my building, at the least, to foster some additional insights into our student body.

Hodgkinson's article on the changing demographics in education, "Educational Demographics: What Teachers Should Know" (Hodgkinson, 2001), spelled out some important points. The quote, "Nothing is distributed evenly across the United States." is succinct. While written ten years ago, this article predicted accurately the changing demographics in the U.S. and what implications that will have for educators. I found particularly instructive Hodgkinson's mention of the switch from the term "race" to "national origin." Knowing a student's cultural background tells much more about the student (allowing for individual differences and attempting to avoid cultural stereotyping) than knowing whether or not the student is "Hispanic" for instance. This is the essence of what I'm trying to understand in my study. The advice I found in this article to maintain sensitivity and to "communicate clearly to your class that you value *all*

children and that you expect them to do their best” is a recommendation I always try to follow.

“Schooling Interrupted: Schools Can Help English Language Learners Who Have Sizeable Gaps in Their Formal Education” (DeCapua, et al, 2007) describes how the variety of academic and personal backgrounds of English language learners can, and often does, impact their progress in U.S. schools. Especially impacted are high school students, who are expected to acquire “higher-order thinking skills and prepare for high-stakes tests while mastering basic literacy and math skills in a language other than their own.” While the article discusses program models that work for these students, I’m primarily interested in the instruments mentioned to gather information about the student’s possible “gaps” in education, specifically writing samples in their home language and/or English, and student and parent questionnaires. While I specifically employed questionnaires to ascertain my students’ location of schooling, and obtained many writing samples, I was not able to take adequate samples of their first languages. However, I will be employing this technique in a follow up activity after the study formally ends.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Proposal Design

The subjects chosen for this research are secondary students enrolled in a public school, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course. These students are part of my regularly assigned classes. Because they all have life histories involving countries other than the United States, the students have a variety of cultural and educational backgrounds.

There are approximately 18 students involved in the study. All students in the selected class have been offered the opportunity to be involved in the study. Because the work the students have done is a part of the regular curriculum, all students in the class have participated in the student activities. However, the results of the data collection instruments include only those students with parental permission to be involved in the study. If a student had arrived from another country or another U.S. school and was assigned to this class during the study, this student would have been provided the opportunity to be involved in the study.

The subjects in this study are high school students and all under the age of 18. However, the rules in Penna. allow students studying English (ELLs) to be enrolled until age 21. I have chosen this class for my study because the focus of my pedagogy is teaching English Language Learners at the secondary level. All research data has been kept confidentially and secured in my home when not in

use by me. All students in the class participated in the activities as part of the regular curriculum, but I collected data only on those from whom I have written parental consent. Students' grades have not been affected by their participation or nonparticipation in the study; none have withdrawn from the study, but if they had, they would not have been penalized.

All students involved in the study have been assigned a pseudonym. Students have been told that they have a pseudonym, but they have not had access to their pseudonym or the pseudonym of anyone else. I have repeatedly reassured the students that any information they disclose to me will not contain their name on the study and that I will keep all of the data collected confidential. All information concerning the pseudonyms have been kept at my home. When observing students at school, their pseudonyms have been used on any observational notes. Any information kept electronically during the course of the study has been stored on a password-protected computer and/or on my home computer. I have assured the students that their grades will not be affected by the surveys or any other responses used to solicit their opinions.

I informed the students of the research study on the first day of school, which is the start date of the study. I advised them that the study will be conducted during our regular activities and that if they choose to participate in the study, data collected for the study will not affect their grade. I also, at that time,

provided the students with a parental consent form, translated into the parents' native language, if necessary.

Data Collection Tools

Students participating in the study were asked to perform a variety of activities to facilitate autobiographical inquiry. The design of the study included the following data collection tools:

- A two-column teacher/researcher observational journal (noting classroom behaviors with comments) to be kept throughout the entire length of the study
- A teacher/researcher-designed sociogram of classroom interactions and relationships to be kept as part of the observational/reflective journal
- A daily student journal using a series of questions designed to prompt students' exploration of acquired attitudes and experiences (adapted from Wheeler, 1995)
- A PowerPoint presentation to include autobiographical components
- A student survey administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the study
- An autobiographical timeline completed by each student to include academic as well as pertinent life experiences (adapted from Igoa, 1995)

- A mask designed as a metaphor to represent the student's personal identity (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002)
- An autobiographical poem written by students to articulate their hopes and dreams
- An exit survey to elicit students' opinions of the activities in the study

Insuring Trustworthiness

I have attempted to assure trustworthiness and validity (Johnson, 2008) by including a rich variety of data sources in my study. I used daily journaling, including sociograms, to observe and record detailed descriptions of situations and student behaviors. I asked students to keep a daily journal using questions to elicit their reflections and opinions. I surveyed students to evaluate the effect of these autobiographical activities on their attitudes and behaviors, and correlated these results with my own journal observations. I have tried to be open to researcher bias as I conduct my research. Because I chose this methodology for my study, and with my past experience, I already believed that autobiographical inquiry would serve to add to my individual students' sense of belongingness (Igoa, 1995), but it remains open to interpretation. I have tried to be open to glitches in the research and adjusted data collection procedures when necessary. The poetry and mask-making activity was a serendipitous opportunity I used to

enrich the data collection. My reflective journal entries have helped me to understand what unfolded along the journey.

I have engaged in discussion with professional colleagues (from this thesis program) to stimulate interpretation of the data results. All of the work has been for evaluation as an audit trail as part of the thesis process. (Hendricks, 2006, p. 106-109)

In order to establish accuracy and credibility in my research, I incorporated the three essential elements of validity, reliability, and triangulation. (Johnson, 2008). My data measures what it reports to measure (Johnson, 2008) by using authentic samples of student work. Using personal surveys, I have asked students to identify their sense of place and comfort in the class and track the evolution (or lack thereof) of their feelings toward their place in the classroom and the school. I have used writing samples taken from daily journal prompts that ask students to express their thoughts, beliefs, and hopes. In the surveys and in discussions, I have asked students to reflect on the various activities I in the project, such as sharing their journal thoughts and their autobiographical PowerPoints.

This study can be repeated reliably in the future, as I have used the same methods in the past. This is the fourth year I have used autobiographical inquiry in my classroom, and although each class is unique, the methodology remains the same. The work that we have done during this study, though, is particular to this

class. Although I might be tempted to make generalizations for the future, this study does not stereotype. It does not make assumptions about specific cultures or ethnicities; the observations pertain only to the previous, personal experiences and thoughts of the individual students participating in the study. However, I will use the findings to “help understand particular situations as well as inform similar situations” that arise in my pedagogy (Johnson, 2008).

Triangulation of data sources has been built into the study design. I have used a variety of sources for collecting data: student artifacts, surveys, my own observer reflections in a journal, sociograms, check-ins with students as we progress through the study, and peer debriefing. I have also informally interviewed several students.

THE SCREENPLAY: A NOT-SO-NEW BEGINNING

Your Blood Pressure Is Going To Go Through the Roof

Approximately six months ago, in early September... We are in a classroom, similar to the one we saw a year ago. Again, we are looking from the POV of a person standing in the room. As the camera scans over the room, we see the same tiled floor and the same fluorescent lights overhead. There are 36 desks arranged neatly in rows, but they are older and smaller than those in the previous classroom and all a light beige color. Our gaze moves to a window wall, again with a nearly floor-to-ceiling bank of sealed windows. In this classroom, however, the view beyond the windows shows a mature red maple tree in full leaf, growing out of a small patch of ground that is part of a courtyard design. The camera focuses through the windows but our POV remains as from the inside (not a close up of the outside). It is an interior courtyard, enclosed on all four sides by the walls of a one-story, tan brick school building. There are several black metal-and-wood benches in various states of disrepair scattered around the concrete paving that covers most of the courtyard. There are a few mature azalea bushes and some overgrown yews in corners of the courtyard, sharing their own patches of hard-baked ground. A swirl of leaves and debris caught within the courtyard is spiraling around a recycling container that is lying on its side. We see two squirrels chasing each other across a wooden bridge that is set on the concrete,

over a storm drain. A crow flies into sight and alights at the top of the maple tree. We can see the crow cawing, but the only sounds we hear are a hissing and a high-pitched whirring noise that seems to be coming from the overhead air conditioning ducts in the room. (We are minimally aware of a regular, calm breathing sound.) Our focus comes back into the room and we look up to see that the heating system and cooling pipes are exposed in a retrofit that is intended to reflect industrial design. The pipes are painted a dark blue that reflects no light.

Now we look down and see a piece of paper lifting up into our view. A close up reveals a schedule printed on the paper.

Academic Year 2010/2011
Period 1: W-APT Testing of New ESOL Students
Period 2: Prep
Period 3: 1011-1 ESOL English I (Grade 9)
Period 4: 1000-1 Newcomer ESOL English
Period 5: 1011-2 ESOL English I (Grade 9)
Period 6: 1000-2 Newcomer ESOL English
Period 7: 1000-3 Newcomer ESOL English

Our focus remains on the paper as it moves away and is placed on top of a deep garnet teacher's planning book that is on top of a student desk. We hear an

audible sigh, as if coming from inside our own head, as the schedule is placed on the planning book.

TEACHER: (Voice over. We hear the voice again as from within.) How am I going to teach two classes of ninth graders again? The same kids for two hours a day? It's going to drive me crazy!

The scene fades out.

A new camera angle now pans the entire room clockwise from about eye-height, beginning with the span of windows. We are looking at a brick wall adjacent to the window wall; it was obviously once an exterior wall. Below a run of piping at the ceiling, there is a triple-sectioned slate blackboard spanning the entire wall. We look right, in a clockwise motion. This wall is lined with a light maple wooden cabinet, drawers, and shelves. The unit is in remarkably good condition, considering it has weathered 60 years of continual use. A double section of the same vintage slate blackboards is centered between tall shelves on either end of the wall. Above the blackboards is a round clock, approximately 18 inches in diameter. The black hour and minute hands show that it is 8:43. The red second hand clicks steadily, revealing the passage of six seconds before our view moves right to the doorway. A new, solid oak door has been set into the previous frame—a dark blue metal casing that is sectioned to frame the door, an overhead fixed-glass transom, and a side window that is composed of two, vertically-aligned panes of safety glass. We continue clockwise to see a freshly painted

beige wall. A bulletin board approximately four feet tall by 10 feet long is fixed to the wall; the cork and framing have also been painted beige. We come back around to the window wall where we see a man in a dark green maintenance uniform, directly outside the classroom in the courtyard, feeding two ears of dried corn to the squirrels. He turns and begins to head back into the building.

The camera angle changes to an interior hallway, just outside of the doorway to the classroom we have seen. We see the maintenance worker and a teacher talking. (It is the same teacher we have seen with a cart in the opening scene.) In the background, about twenty feet away, we hear the voices of two adults who are laughing and talking, but we cannot hear what they are saying. The hissing noise is always in the background. We come in for alternate, over-the-shoulder shots as the maintenance man and the teacher speak to each other.

BILL: Bobette, do you like the desks I got for you?

TEACHER: They're so clean. Where did you ever find them?

BILL: They were in the basement. Must be from the original building. I got the best ones for you 'cause I know how happy you are to have a classroom. We'll have to get you a desk, though.

TEACHER: (Barely touching Bill, tenderly, on the shoulder.) Thanks. You always look out for me, Bill.

BILL: Gotta run. The new stoves are in for the kitchen. Kathy needs them installed for when the kids get here on Tuesday. (Bill continues down the hallway.)

TEACHER: (Calling out to Bill as he hurries away.) Bill, don't rush so much. Your blood pressure is going to go through the roof!

The scene fades out as the teacher turns back to enter the classroom.

Who Am I?

As the scene fades back in, we are now entering a fully furnished classroom, but devoid of students. The individual desks have been replaced with three, eight-foot long tables, placed in a U formation in the center of the room; the opening of the U is facing toward the shelf wall where a freestanding PolyVision whiteboard has been placed in front of the blackboards. The clock on the wall above the whiteboard says 8:11 am. In front of the PolyVision whiteboard, placed in the center of a 5'X7' bound piece of royal blue carpet, there is a small table with a projector and speakers, to be used with the whiteboard. There is a teacher's desk placed in front of the bulletin boards, facing out from the wall toward the long tables. Stapled individually to the bulletin board behind the teacher's desk we see paper letters that have obviously been colored and cut out by students:

Who am I? There is a grey metal floor lamp beside the teacher's desk that fans out with five lights in white plastic, cone-shaped shades on the ends of five goose-neck arms. Two of the lights are bent down to provide illumination for a tin of ivy on the desk. A globe sits next to the ivy. In front of the window we see a row of four of the original beige, desk/chair combinations that have not been removed to

make space for the long, communal tables. There are semi-opaque, long, white cotton curtains at the windows. We hear the ringing of a loud bell signaling a change of classes. The camera pans up to the clock, where we now see 10:03. When the camera returns to the classroom we see that the room is full of students who are taking seats at the three communal tables.

I Will Be an Angler

The students have been in school for several weeks now, during which time the teacher has allowed them to experiment with seating choices. Each day the seating arrangement changes, sometimes dramatically. Most students, though, are settled by their own compatibility. Since many of these ninth-grade students have either been together in middle school or know each other from outside of school, a lot of chatting is going on as they are writing in their daily journals.

The camera shows a wide shot of the classroom, changing angles to favor the speaker.

TEACHER: (Standing at the small table in front of the whiteboard.) Would someone like to share what they've written?

(We hear shouting. "Me!. "Me!") OK. Alan. Please read the question you chose before you tell us your answer.

ALAN: (Stands at his place, revealing a tall young man in a red T-shirt. Reads from a spiral-bound notebook folded back.) The question is, “What do you like about yourself?” *That I get along with people well. Also I have fun in my life. Also sometimes I get what I want and I am an only child.*”

TEACHER: Thank you, Alan. Someone else?

STEVEN: (Stands voluntarily at his place and reads quietly from his notebook, matter-of-factly. He is wearing light grey sweatpants and a sweatshirt imprinted with the Air Force Junior ROTC emblem. He is well groomed and looks a bit more mature than the other students.) *The happiest moment of my life is... Well I don't have any most of my life has been sad only a few happy moments but the happiest has yet to come.*” (Smiles and sits down.)

Most students are not listening to Steven; we hear chatting from students around the room. The camera follows Steven as he sits back down and pans to his left. Next to Steven, we see Alan tapping out a rhythm on the table. Next to Alan, at the end of the table, José is picking apart his mechanical pencil. José moves his hands under the table and throws pieces of lead and eraser at a giggling girl, Victoria, who is sitting to José’s left, at the end of the middle table. The camera cuts to a medium shot of the teacher who is now standing by the far table near the brick wall.

TEACHER: Anyone else want to share?

JOSÉ: (We hear José's voice, but the camera moves from the teacher to a student sitting directly to her right, close to the wall.) Tubby! Tubby wants to! Go ahead, Tubby!

TAIBI: (Reluctantly.) OK. (He stands. We see that he is wearing the same JROTC attire as Steven. He is shorter than Steven and has a sweet, round face. He is not "tubby," but he does not correct José's mispronunciation of his name.) "What was the happiest moment of your life?" *Wen I wen to Syria and sowl mey famele and my litol cacenz I was so hape I cod not slipe*" [When I went to Syria and saw my family and my little cousins I was so happy I could not sleep.]

TEACHER: Thank you, Taibi. When did you go back to visit your family in Syria?

TAIBI: (Proudly.) Last summer. (Sits back down.)

TEACHER: (Seeing that the students are restless.) We have time for one more journal response before we begin our reading assignment today. Is there another volunteer?

MIRIAM: (Who has been sitting quietly, directly across from Taibi, raises her hand.) I will, Miss. (She stands and we see that she is about four-and-a-half feet tall. A flowered yellow ribbon is tied around her short black hair. Miriam reads over her entries, chooses one, and reads aloud, soberly.) "Who would you be if you could be a different person for a day? Why?" *If I would be a different person for a day I will be an angler. because if I would be an angler I would talk to the God and ask different questions also I would make a wish on fronte of God. then if I'm an angler I can fly in*

sky." (Miriam sits back down and folds her spiral-bound notebook so that the red cover is showing.)

TEACHER: That would be quite a wonderful day, Miriam. I can picture you as an angel, flying up in the clouds. OK. Let's collect the notebooks. (Steven stands and voluntarily walks around the room to collect the books. The camera follows him around the room as he places the notebooks back on the top shelf of the maple bookcase near the door. The scene fades out.)

The Ferst Tim We Sall the Rayn Her It Was Crazy

It is now two weeks later... The camera fades in and we see our class sitting in a computer lab. The camera pans over the room. We see the same checkerboard pattern of blue and beige tiles on the floor, the same harsh, fluorescent lighting overhead. The same beige walls, but there are no windows. All of the students are sitting directly in front of their own individual, black, flat computer monitor, at long tables that run across the entire width of the room, save for an aisle down one side. The students are chatting and joking with each other. We hear the Windows log-on theme music every time a student logs on. We see that most students have an assignment paper beside their monitor. The camera comes in for a close up of a student, Miriam, who is sitting near the aisle and focuses over her shoulder on the paper beside her monitor.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Computer Lab Autobiography Assignment

Objective: You will be able to use Microsoft Word to write about three (3) things:

1. What was your biggest surprise when you came to this country?
2. What do you miss the most about your home country?
3. How does school here compare? What is the same? What is different?

Find a picture or photo on Google Image that relates to one of your answers and insert it into the document.



Example:

Figure 1

The camera moves up to the computer monitor and as it does, we see what she is typing.

1. *The first time I came to this country it was really surprise because I see different thing I never saw. The bigges surprise it was to leave with different kind of people, to go to different school, and I ate different food then I use to. also I didn't speak any english. people try to talk to me. then I tell them that I don't speak English.*

2. *I really miss my home country. I miss to see it. I Miss my cousin, my grandmom and all of my friend. to leave your home country is really sad. you miss everything you have done. I really really miss my home country.*
3. *If I compare my home country school is litter bit same you sit next to other person. The teacher are the same. They treat student as the student want to. The different is that _____ school they have a lot of boking student kill each other, fights but in my home country it not of lot of boking and a lot of fight. My home country school is litter bit different than _____ school.*

The camera now cuts to several student monitors, holding on each monitor long enough to read the writing. We hear constant chatting and laughing, and the ever present high-pitched hissing from the overhead ducts of the closed air system.

ALBA:

1. *My biggest surprise when I first came to this country was the snow.*
2. *The most that I miss about my home country is my family and friends...*

NANCY:

1. *My first surprise when I got here was so nervous I was shy and I didn't know any English I had a translate. I had to have somebody so it could help me.*
2. *I miss my sisters My family Because they were greate and they help me in everything...*

MIMI: ... *I miss my home country because most of my family 3 cusins are over there. I also miss it because it's where I come from PR is like my home basically...*

MARISOL: ...What I miss most about my home country is my family, the beach, the food, the schools, my friends, etc. I most defiantly miss my family & food. The food in my culture is so delicious...

STEVEN: ...What I miss the most of my P.R. is my family. When I came here I left all my family behind.

JOSÉ: The biggest surprise when I came to this country was that there was so Many cultures in one place...

LUISA:

1. My biggest surprise when I came first came to this country from Puerto Rico was that in United States they speak English and in Puerto Rico speak Spanish. It surprise me because when I first came here I don't know how to speak the language. I was 12 years old.
2. What I miss the most about Puerto Rico is my family because we are far. The beach because we always went there. My friends because we study together since we are young.

TAIBI:

- Wen my and my famely ferst caym to United Stayts we wer speraysd cuz of the Rayen.
[When me and my family first came to United States we were surprised 'cause of the rain.]

- The ferst tim we sall the rayn her it was crazy.

[The first time we saw the rain here it was crazy.]

- we were jest standing awet sayd watsheng it.

[We were just standing outside and watching it.]

- it waz soo metch it was Boreng.

[It was so much it was pouring.]

-and that waz watt spraysd me the mowest.

[And that was what surprised me the most.]

The camera cuts to one last close up of the papers being printed as we hear a voice over of several students calling out.

STUDENTS: Miss, can I print out a picture? Miss, just one? Please?

TEACHER: OK. One each.

We see a networked printer on a table by the aisle wall. Blank white papers are printing out; they appear one after another. We see a student's hand reach and take a stack of papers from the tray at the top of the printer. The camera follows the hand as it moves to the left of the printer, toward the surface of the long table on which the printer sits. The student's other hand comes into view and begins to turn the papers over one-by-one and lay them on the counter side-by-side. The camera pans over the photos lined up on the counter; they are almost all black-and-white photos of islands and beaches. There are also several print-outs of the flags of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. One print out shows a time-lapse photo of nighttime traffic circling the golden Ángel de la Independencia on the Paseo de la Reforma in downtown Mexico City. A loud bell rings and the scene cuts to black.

Igihugu Cange

A few weeks later... As the camera fades back in, the bare branches of the red maple tree in the courtyard outside of the students' classroom come into focus in a long shot. The sky is a silvery grey and overcast with low clouds. In the courtyard we can see dry brown leaves swirling in eddies around the drain in the concrete pavement under the wooden foot bridge. A solitary squirrel is digging in the compacted soil beneath a patch of scruffy grass. Torn pieces of opaque plastic flap in the wind, caught in the broken seat of a splintered wooden bench. The camera comes into close focus on a white cotton curtain being pulled across the window inside the room. The camera dissolves to the other side of the classroom, where a student is standing in front of the PolyVision board. The screen is centered in the area between the wooden bookshelves. We see that the student is Steven. He is in a dark blue JROTC uniform, standing erect in the darkened room, patiently explaining his PowerPoint presentation to his rather disinterested classmates. While Steven is showing slides of family photos from his early childhood in Puerto Rico, Alan is poking Ramón in the elbow with his chewed-up pencil. Horacio is rolling his forehead around on the section of grey formica tabletop in front of him. Lisette is repositioning her bangs and applying lip gloss in front of a small, hand-held mirror partially hidden in the top flap of her backpack. Over by the side of the room, near what used to be the exterior wall, Anita and Mimi are holding a whispered conversation over something written in

the private journal Anita carries with her at all times. Nancy and Victoria are sitting side-by-side in individual desks at the back of the room, in front of the curtained windows, giggling about the slide of Steven's grandmother lying on an outside lawn chair in her nightgown, her legs exposed up to her knees, slippers on her swollen feet.

STEVEN: (In a flat tone, with no obvious emotion.) This is the last picture we have of my grandmother before she died. She came home from the hospital that day. You can see she's sick in this picture.

As Steven ends his presentation with the photo of his grandmother, Taibi raises his hand. Students take the end of Steven's presentation as an opportunity to resume loud talking.

TAIBI: (Over the noise.) Miss, I want to go next.

TEACHER: Great, Taibi. Bring your laptop up to the projector and we'll get it started.

As the noise continues, Taibi walks up to the projector table in front of the screen and plugs the corresponding cables into his laptop. Like Steven, Taibi is wearing his JROTC dress blues. As the title page of Taibi's Powerpoint is projected, we hear loud Middle Eastern music coming through the speakers on the front table. The students look up and begin to pay attention. We see a close up of the title page: "About Syria, by Tiabi" in large white print that is placed over a photo of Taibi that he digitally altered with PhotoBooth.

JOSÉ: (José laughs at the PowerPoint.) Tubby, that music is really stupid.

Alan bangs on the table to the sound, as if playing drums. Lisette and Luisa laugh, their petite hands placed over their recently-glossed lips. Nancy and Victoria are giggling at their twin desks near the windows. Ramón joins Alan in banging on the table.

The camera focuses on a wide shot of Taibi as he lets the music play for about 30 seconds, waiting for his classmates to pay attention to his masterpiece. As Taibi begins the next slide, the camera comes in tight on the PolyVision screen for a fast motion mosaic of images. We hear a voice over of Taibi explaining the pictures he has chosen—Syria (four maps of Syria placed over the Syrian flag as a background); Syrian currency; Syrian food; Syrian sweets [sweets]; Syrian weather; Syrian drinks; Syrian animals; Syrian plants; Syrian government; Syrian clothes; Syrian traditional clothes; Syrian music; Syrian holidays—all of the required elements and then some. The music continues in the background throughout the mosaic, then stops as the camera comes back to Taibi.

(We're back in real time.) Taibi stands patiently beside his laptop as he anticipates some type of reaction from his classmates. The camera changes angles to cut from speaker to speaker.

TEACHER: Does anyone have any questions for Taibi?

ALAN: Yeah. How come that one guy is wearing a dress?

(We see Taibi scanning back through his presentation to the slide of Syrian Traditional Clothes. Taibi points to a man wearing a long black robe over his clothes, a black-and-white-checked cloth fastened to his head by a black cord.

TAIBI: That's what the men used to wear when they're going to war. Sometimes they wear it today if they go to meetings.

ALAN: Why do you have Christmas in Syria?

Taibi finds the final slide of his presentation, and brings it onto the screen. It shows a nativity scene, a Merry Christmas banner with Santa hats, and a blue square with white letters spelling "Happy New Year." Taibi has designed a background for this slide that shows an explosion of fireworks.

TAIBI: We have Christmas because that's our religion.

The scene fades out as Taibi unplugs the cables from his laptop.

As the scene fades back in, Miriam is standing shyly at her computer in front of the screen, her hands folded in front of her. We hear Alan drumming on the tabletop and girls laughing from the corner of the room. Behind Miriam the screen is purple with the word "Tanzania" in blue, yellow, green, and black letters. Miriam waits for a signal to begin.

TEACHER: (Voice over as the camera holds on Miriam.) Miriam is the last presentation. Go ahead, Miriam.

The room becomes quiet as Miriam begins the slide show. She brings up the next slide.

MIRIAM: This is a picture of my country, the beach. I was born in Congo, but when I was one my mother took me to Tanzania, so I think of it as my home.

As Miriam points to the slide on the screen, the camera focuses in and we see a turquoise sea, gentle waves breaking white on a blonde sand beach, a row of tall palm trees, fronds swaying in the ocean breeze. Miriam has labeled this slide in yellow: “My home country (igihugu cange).”

Miriam forwards to the next slide. We see a stunning face appear on a black background; it is the face of a child, painted in stripes with the colors of the Tanzanian flag—green, yellow, black, and blue. The letters of label are again yellow: “My Flag (idarapo).” The large image is so stunning that the students in the room become quiet. Miriam does not say a word; she advances to the next slide.

Now we see two maps, side-by-side on a white background, labeled in blue, “Map (iguhugu).” One map shows the continent of Africa in brown, surrounded by blue ocean, a yellow Tanzania located on the eastern coast. The map next to it shows the country of Tanzania with its major cities and game preserves labeled.

MIRIAM: (Miriam points to a city labeled Dar is lam [Dar Es Salaam] on the coast.) I lived near here.

We see Miriam reach over to her laptop and advance to the next slide.

MIRIAM: These are the kinds of homes where people live. Here is where the rich people live and here is where a poor person lives.

MARISOL: (Voice over.) Which kind of house did you live in?

Miriam points to the house she has indicated as a rich person's home.

MARISOL: (Voice over.) Oh. You were rich? Is that really a picture of your house?

MIRIAM: No, but my house was like almost this.

MARISOL: (Voice over.) It's nice.

The camera holds on Miriam as she again reaches over to her laptop to continue advancing the slides. Today Miriam is wearing blue jeans and a red blouse with short, puffy sleeves. She has a fashioned a headband from a twisted length of printed fabric, mostly green and orange, that is tied around her head, ending in a knot over her right ear. She is a tiny figure highlighted against the images she brings up on the next slide. We see photos of women in brightly printed, long cotton dresses, their hair covered with matching wraps. We hear Marisol's voice again.

MARISOL: (Voice over.) Did you wear dresses like that?

MIRIAM: No. Just the older women wear them.

MARISOL: What kind of clothes did you wear?

MIRIAM: Like I do now.

MARISOL: Can you wrap your head?

MIRIAM: (Giggles a bit.) I did once. My mother showed me how. It's hard.

Miriam continues with her presentation, bringing up a slide with three photos on a white background. It's labeled "schools" at the top, in blue-and-white letters with no translation. One photo shows a one-story building, the size of a small ranch house. We see two other photos of school children. The camera angle shifts from Miriam to the photos. The first close up shows a group of children sitting two-by-two at desks that look like tall benches. They are all wearing long grey skirts and white blouses. A girl in the front row has rested her head on her arm, looking tired. The camera angle moves to the other photo. We see two rows of smiling faces looking at us. Thirteen children standing in blue skirts and white blouses, hands folded in front, and one man in at the back. We hear Miriam's voice as we look at the photo.

MIRIAM: (Voice over.) All of the girls have to cut their hair short for school.

We hear voices of surprise from the girls in the classroom, as the camera scans the happy faces in the photo, showing each girl with barely a half inch of black hair capping her head. The camera comes back to Miriam and we see her look back up at the screen; her hands remain clasped and folded in front of her.

MIRIAM: (Quietly.) I'm letting mine grow now.

The camera fades out.

ME: Dancing With the Melody of Wind

One week later...As the camera comes up, we are back in the computer lab in a long shot. It looks exactly the same as it did when we previously saw the students writing their autobiographic assignment and printing out their flag and beach pictures, except that there is now an assortment of abandoned print outs scattered around the networked printer near the wall. Students are sitting at the long tables, working at their individual computer monitors. The room is fairly quiet but we still hear the constant hiss of the HVAC system in the background.

TEACHER: (Voice loud enough so the entire class can hear.) Remember. This poetry will be on display with your masks at our district's "Young Author's Celebration," so do your best. We'll print these out today before you leave the computer lab, and I'll take a look at them for you. I've scheduled the computer lab next week again, so you'll have one more time to work on your poems. Then we'll print out the final copies and I'll laminate them for you.

MARISOL: Miss, can we use symbols and colors?

TEACHER: Yes, but this printer will only print out in black and white. But use the colors and fonts you'd like.

The camera cuts in and out of close up shots of several students' monitors as they work. We see the back of a student's head, and in the monitor we can read what that student is writing. The camera cuts from angle-to-angle in a montage of close up shots.

FIRST MONITOR: (We see the back of a boy's round head. He has very short, black hair. The camera moves in tight to his monitor and we see what he is writing.)

Me by Alan

He looks
at people in school
to see
ethnicities

He learns
how to play
an instrument
and play music

He sees
fireworks and hearts
shooting up
thinking of love

He loses
himself at stores
finding his parents
to give them something

He dances
with his friend
got tired
and sat down

He adopts
abandoned toys
gives them
to kids

Figure 2

SECOND MONITOR: (We see the profile of José, with his short black hair and his aquiline nose. The camera catches his hand in mid-stroke.)

Me By José

He Looks In The Sky

And Takes a Nap

His Hands

He Snaps his Fingers And Slaps

He Opens The Door And Runs
TO His Room

He Jumps In His Bed And jams TO His Music

Figure 3

THIRD MONITOR: (The camera cuts to another monitor and we see the back of a girl's head. Her black, curly hair has been tied up in a tight pony tail high on the right side of her head with a black corded elastic band and she has a wide white headband encircling her head.)

*Me poem by: lisette
She looks*

*At beautiful flowers
She learns*

To draw the beautiful flowers

She loses



The paper

Of her flower drawing

Figure 4

The camera now cuts to the table with the printer and we see papers popping up as they are printed. We see the teacher walk into the shot. As she does, the camera comes in close and focuses on a tight shot of her right hand. We watch as her hand removes a paper from the printer. We follow her hand as it moves to the side of the printer and places the paper on the tabletop. The camera comes in for a very tight shot of the paper and holds for 30 seconds, allowing us to read what has been printed. After 30 seconds, the hand places another paper on the table and, again, holds so that we can read it. This occurs nine times, and we are able to read each paper as the teacher's hand places it on the table.

Me Poem BY: Anita

SHE LOOKS
STRAIGHT UP
INTO HIS EYES

IF HE FINDS OUT
WHAT SHE DID

SHE REALIZES
HOW MUCH
SHE REALLY
LOVES HIM

SHE OPENS
UP HER MIND
AND STARTS THINKING
ABOUT THAT GUY
SHE WAITS
OUT SIDE
JUST TO SEE HIM
PASSING BY

SHE FEELS
HER PASION REALLY
HIGH THAT MAKES
HER FEEL SHE
IS IN THE SKY

SHE PONERS
TO FLY REALLY HIGH
INTO THE SKY
HOLDING HANDS
WITH THAT GUY

SHE LOOSEES
HER SELF
INTO HER
IMAGINATION

SHE DREAMS
OF LIFE BEING
PERFECT AS LIGHT
IOOKING AT THE STAR
SHINES SO BRIGHT

SHE DANCES
SO HAPPILY ALONG
THE MUSIC IN
HER HEART

SHE IS ME.

SHE ADOPTS
A LITTLE CAT AND
SHE NAMES IT
LIKE THAT GUY

SHE WONDERES WHAT
WOULD HE THINK

“ME” poem

Figure 5

BY: LUISA

She looks

At boys' hearts

**To see
If they're saying the truth**

**She learns
To speak
A new language
For a successful life**

**She sees
The sky clouds
And falls in love**

**She loses
Her imagination
Thinking of things
Never thought of**

**She dances
With her imagination
Dancing and dancing
In her sweet dreams**

**She adopts
The love of her family
When she is unhappy**

She wanders

**On many different places
Letting the wind forgive
As she seen the sky**

**She opens
Her eyes
To see
Others bring love to her**

**She waits
For her future
And become a professional
nurse**

**She ponders
Her dreams
Money and hopes
For her future life**

**She dreams
To become a professional
nurse
To help people get better**

She is ME!!

Figure 6

Me poem ") By : Mimi

She looks
At me
With her beautiful eyes
That makes me feel like a
Butterfly

She learns
That happiness is true
And sadness
Wont come thru

She sees
Herself day and night
And shell know
Every thing alright

She loses
Herself with
The music and art
Because it's something
In her heart

She dances
To the sound of the
Beat that makes her
Wanna move her feet

She adopts
Animals in the
Street because
She won't let them die
By the creek

She wonders
What life would
Be like when she's older
She knows the story
About the soldiers

She opens
Her eyes ready to
Fly and imagines her self
To be in the sky

She waits
To dream
In a world
Of peace

She ponders
Above with the
Guy she loves

She dreams
Every night
That the world
Is really Bright

She's the sun
Just like the light shell
Remember when her mom says
Shell be alright.

She is me Figure 7

* ❤ “Me” Poem By : Marisol ❤ *

She Looks
Into Boys' Hearts ♀
To See What
♂ They Really Feel.

She Learns
A lot
About Her Mistakes
But She Never Regrets. * ^

She See's
The Beautiful Colors
Everywhere When
She Steps Outside.

She Loses
Her Own Self When
She Is Trying To
Find Out Reality.

She Dances
When She Feel's Like
Dancing When She has
Made
It Somewhere In Life ♥

She Adopts
What She Thinks'
She Can Handle &
Take Care Of.

She Wanders
In Places When She
Wants To Think
Over Things.

She Opens
The Refrigerator When
She's Feeling Sad Or Has Too
Many Things To Handle x3

She Waits
Knowing That What Shes
Waiting For Will Happen Soon
Or Later

She Ponders
Imaginations When She Knows
She Wants Something
That She Can't Have.

She Dreams
On Everything That Would
Make Her Life Different.

SHE IS ME <3

Figure 8

Me: Victoria♥*

She learns
To dance
And see
Her dreams

She waits
Thinks
looks
And wonders

She sees
Herself
Lost
In a beautiful place

She looks
Around
And starts to laugh

She opens
Her eyes
And ponders
dancing

she walks

around and
finds a big box

she picks up
the box and sees a
shiny star

She says that
she's never seen something
that bright

She waits
And thinks
But there is no
Explanation

She stares
And stares until she wakes up
She wakesUp and realize
That it was just
a beautiful dream

she is me

Figure 9

* Me



By: nancy

**She looks
Up in my eyes
Then falls into
My arms**

**She learns
How to love
Painting a
Heart of hope**

**She sees
My heart and
Creating
Art**

**She loses
Her self into
A passage
Of love**

**She dances
While She
Wonders into
The sky**

**She adopts
Abandoned pets
And Turns it**

Into Love

**She wanders
Into a palace
Leaving her
Dreams fall**

**She opens
Her Heart
Letting
Everything go
To normal**

**She waits
With Her heart Open
Trying to get
Her peace back**

**She ponders
Around with
Peace and love**

**She dreams
To Get hope
Into Her heart
She is me**

Figure 10

Me poem *by miriam*

*She looks
to the families and
thinks how
life will be*

*She learns
That people living
different lives some are happy
and other are not happy*

*She sees
people going to
the hospital and they
need help*

*She loses
herself in lot of
people that she can
know how people feel about
being doctors and
how they help people*

*She walks
into the city
people were sick and
she feels sad*

*She went
to school and
the students were going
to the nurse*

*She hears
people talking about
their pains and how
to go to see the doctor
to tell them about their
problems*

*She wonders
how to help people
and how to talk to different
people*

*She opens
all the doors
letting people go
inside the hospital so they can
talk to the doctor*

*She waits
to go to college
to learn more about
doctors and learn many things
they do when they want
to help people*

*She dreams
to be a doctor
so she can help people
and give them medicine*

She is me Figure 11

Me

by *talbi*

he looks
into her heart
looking
for love

he learns
that love hurts
and he needs
to fight for it

he sees
a dead rose
dripping red
and red love

he loses
words trying
to write a
poem for her

he dances
under a dead
rose dripping
red hoping a
dripping love
lands on him

he gathers
red drops
building her
face

he wanders
under the
sundown
thinking of
her

he opens the
door hoping
that he sees
her

he waits
until their
rose will come
alive again

he ponders
about his
dreams
of the dead rose

he dreams
of her being
far away
from him

He is me

Figure 12

“ME” POEM BY: ALBA

*She looks
At other people
Thinking and comparing
Different cultures and languages*

*She learns
The English language
How to be a better person
And more about herself*

*She sees
The beautiful sea
Comparing it to the sky
Clouds and ocean waver
It is the melody of love?*

*She loses
In the big bushes
But she doesn't lose
Her hope*

*She dances
With the melody of wind
Dancing and dancing
In her sweet dreams*

*She adopts
Love of others
People that need help
And the happiness of her family*

*When she is sad
She wanders
On beautiful places
She takes the wind
And breaths deeply*

*She opens
Her heart
To others
And brings her love for them*

*She waits
For the future
To be a professional lawyer
And have a beautiful family*

*She ponders
Her dreams
Money and hopes
For her future*

*She dreams
To be a lawyer
To have a big and happy family
And that her parents be together*

“*SHE IS ME*”

Figure 13

The camera fades out as we read the last of the nine poems.

A Green-and-Orange Plaid Apron

The scene fades back in on a pasty blur that fills the screen. We hear the voices of students laughing. The voice of a young girl proclaims “Eewwwww!

The camera focuses and pulls back, and we see that we are looking at a close up of a white plastic bowl, about seven inches high and 15 inches in diameter, that is filled with some sort of gluey paste. A hand enters the shot from the right side and pushes a torn strip of newspaper into the paste. The other hand of the pair reaches in and pokes at the newspaper with an index finger. We follow the coated strip of paper as it is lifted out of the paste with the right hand and is placed over an aluminum form shaped vaguely like a face, sitting next to the bowl on a piece of newspaper. The camera moves up to reveal the face that matches the hand. We see a teenage boy, about 14 years old, with bronze skin and the eyes of a hawk. His hair is also black and cut fairly short. It is José, sitting with his back to the window at the end of one of the three long tables, concentrating on his task. He takes another strip of newspaper from the pile in the center of the table and submerges it in the bowl of paste. He haphazardly slaps this strip onto the form and calls out.

JOSE: Miss. I'm done.

The teacher appears by his side in the frame. She is wearing a cotton, green-and-orange plaid apron tied around her waist, as if she were cooking in her own kitchen.

TEACHER: José, you only have three pieces of papier maché on your mask. Put a few more strips on so the first coat will completely cover the mask.

JOSE: I like it like that.

TEACHER: José. You're going to be applying at least three layers of papier maché. You have to let each layer dry before you paint it. Then, you'll remove the aluminum foil form. If you don't cover the mask each time and let it dry, the whole thing will collapse when you take the foil backing off.

JOSE: Alright...

Jose reluctantly dips a few strips of paper into the glue and slaps the goopy mess onto his mask. The shot fades out as he uses his fingers to smooth out the glue to cover the entire form.

Cut to a wide angle of the classroom. We see students in various stages of applying papier maché layers to their aluminum foil mask forms. Some students are standing as they work, some are sitting. They are all busy. We hear laughing and chatting. Students are focused on applying the papier maché strips to their own work. The three long tables are covered with newspaper and students are sharing from piles of newspaper strips in the center of each table. There are several bowls of white flour-and-water paste placed among the wet masks. The students take turns dipping their paper strips into the bowls.

The camera pans over to the far corner of the room and we see Taibi patiently holding a folded piece of aluminum foil to his face, large enough to cover his entire face. The teacher is gently pressing the foil around the curves of his cheeks and into the indentations of his eye sockets and nostrils to form a mask. The camera fades out.

Baby Stuff: The Mask Is a Metaphor

One week later...The scene opens on the same classroom, same wide angle shot, and pans down to Taibi, who is now seated at his table near the exterior wall. He is carefully holding a blue plastic paint brush as he diligently paints a green star on his mask. As the camera pans across the table from Taibi we hear the teacher in a voice over.

TEACHER: (Voice Over) Remember, the mask is a metaphor for how you see yourself. You may paint whatever you want on it, just be sure it represents *you*. What is important to you? What things do you like to draw?

The camera cuts to Marisol and Alba, who are seated next to each other at the long table nearest the door. The girls are carefully dipping their paintbrushes into dabs of white, black, blue, red and yellow poster paints, puddled on foam plates. They mix colors together and examine the resultant shades.

MARISOL: Miss, can I paint my flag?

TEACHER: (Voice Over) Of course. Paint whatever you like. Alba, you had a lot of nice images in your *Me* poem, Maybe you'd like to paint one of them. Or maybe a butterfly—I know you like to draw those.

The camera stays with the girls for a minute or so, long enough so that we can watch Alba mixing her primary colors to make orange and green. We watch her outline a butterfly in black paint on the cheek of her mask. The camera pans across the room to Miriam, who is sitting next to Taibi at the table by the wall. We watch as Miriam covers her mask with a bright shade of green paint that she has mixed on her plate. Miriam is using the green to totally cover a mask that has been painted to look like a leopard. The teacher walks into view and stands by Miriam's side.

TEACHER: That mask was so beautiful! Why are you painting over it?

MIRIAM: (Quietly) I don't know. I want to.

TEACHER: OK. Whatever you think you should do...

The camera follows the teacher as she walks to another table. We stop at Jonathan, who has no work in front of him. He is standing by Alan, looking on as Alan paints a bright blue strip on his mask.

TEACHER: Jonathan, you haven't made a mask yet. You're going to be getting a grade on this project, you know.

JONATHAN: (Quietly, head lowered.) I know.

TEACHER: (With more than a hint of accusation in her voice.) Then why aren't you doing it? What's going on? We've been working on this for more than a week, now.

JONATHAN: (Lift's head, and speaks defensively, loudly enough so that Alan can hear.) This is baby stuff.

TEACHER: (Hesitates for a few seconds while she thinks about what Jonathan has said. She begins to speak more patiently.) Jonathan, what we're doing is a lot more than baby work. We're learning about "metaphor." Remember, we talked about that when we made our Code of Beliefs? The shield we made was a metaphor for using our positive beliefs to protect ourselves as we faced challenges in life. A metaphor is a symbol for something. It's one thing, but it means something else, too. Also, art is another way our brains learn. It's called a "Multiple Intelligence." Some people are good at music or art or sports, and some people are good at reading and writing. We're using art to help us learn the reading and writing part.

JONATHAN: I'm still not doing it.

TEACHER: Well, it's up to you, but I can't give you a grade if you don't make a mask.

(The camera fades out.)



Young Authors' Celebration

The camera comes up on a blur of blue, white, and red. As the focus comes in, we see a flag of Puerto Rico, hand-painted across the top portion of a papier maché mask. The lone white star in the flag is outlined in gold. The camera begins to pan out to a wide angle of the classroom. There are no students in the room. We hear Hawaiian music playing in the background as we see that the masks are sitting on waxed paper, lining the window sills. The teacher is gently placing the masks in cardboard boxes, being careful to support each one with more waxed paper. After she has placed two layers of masks in a box, the camera fades out.

As the camera fades back in, the teacher is placing a stack of laminated papers on top of the last of the three boxes she has been packing with the students' masks. We follow her hand as she places the papers in the box. The camera comes in for a close up and we see Alba's *Me* poem on the top of the stack. The flaps of the box close over the contents. The teacher picks up a black marker and writes, "Young Author's Celebration" on the top box. The camera fades out.

The Field Trip

Approximately three weeks later... The camera comes up on a long shot of a modest, one-level, brick elementary school, obviously situated in a rural area.

It is winter. We can see fallow farm fields surrounding the school on both sides and in the back. In the distance, there are a few bare trees lining the edges of the fields. As the camera comes in, we begin to see a line of about a dozen teenagers walking along the pathway to the entrance of the school. We recognize Taibi in the front of the line. Farther back we see Victoria and Nancy, walking side-by-side, dressed in jeans and puffy winter jackets. Miriam is near the back; she is looking at a birdhouse hung in the exposed branches of a dogwood tree that is part of the entrance landscaping. The camera follows Miriam into the building.

Waiting inside the glass double doors is a welcoming committee of a half-dozen third grade students who have prepared greetings for the teenagers, as well as cards that they hand out. The children and the teenagers look over each other apprehensively for a few minutes, and then decide they'll all be fine. The children lead the teens on a tour of their school. The camera follows the tour through the hallways at the height of the third graders. We see the mid-sections of the teens at the same level as the heads of the younger ones. We hear oh's and ah's as the children point out their artwork showcased on the walls of the passageways.

We come to a stop and the camera moves out to give a wide shot of the group now standing in an atrium around a huge Christmas tree that reaches up almost to the ceiling. Sunlight from overhead streams down on the tree, illuminating the children's handmade ornaments. The teens stand quietly in awe as the children read from short essays they have written to explain holiday

traditions in their own homes. The camera fades out on the tree, defocusing to end with a blur of green, red, and white.

As the camera comes back in, we see a wide shot of our group now seated at eight long tables in a room that is obviously the school cafeteria. The tables are covered with red and green paper tablecloths. A globe sits on each table. Flags representing the home countries of the visiting teens—Mexico, Peru, Vietnam, Jordan, Syria, Tanzania—are placed around the tabletops. A large white screen has been pulled down at the front of the room and we can see that a projector has been set up, ready to begin a show.

Taibi stands up and walks to the front. He positions himself near the center of the giant screen. A technician appears, crouching low so that she doesn't block the view of the screen, and places a wireless microphone in Taibi's hand. The room darkens and Taibi's PowerPoint is seen on the giant screen, ten feet high. There is quiet as Taibi's Syrian music begins to play over his title page. He advances the slide and begins his show. This time, unlike his presentation in his own classroom, Taibi's work meets with wonder and curiosity. The children raise their hands with questions. Taibi becomes the master of ceremonies, taking their questions with poise and confidence. We watch a montage of photos appear on the screen. When Taibi's mosaic of "Syrian sweats" appears, the young children all gasp in awe. It is the holiday season, after all, and the piles of cookies and cakes are very impressive. Taibi names them all. The camera resumes the

montage and holds on Taibi's last slide. We hear loud applause over the looming image of fireworks with the messages of "Merry Christmas" and Happy New Year!" The applause fades as the camera blurs out on a golden burst of trailing fireworks.

As the blur comes back into focus, we see Miriam standing in front of the giant screen that now displays exotic flowers; it's labeled "Flower (amashugwe)" in yellow letters. Miriam is pointing to an orchid with orange petals pointing upward like a crown.

MIRIAM: We call this flower (makes a sound like a rooster) because it open up in the morning when the chicken wake up. The name of the flower is like the chicken sound.

Children laugh as Miriam explains. Miriam advances the slide and the children gasp again. They are looking at ten photos of wild animals and birds—zebras, a giraffe, a leopard, a cheetah, a lion, elephants, a hippopotamus, a lemur, colorful birds, and a chimp. One student asks if Miriam has actually seen all of these animals herself.

MIRIAM: Yes. One time there was a zebra right outside my house. My uncle tell me to look, but not get close. I was scared.

Miriam goes to the next slide, and we see "Money (amahera)" in green letters. There are photos of coins with fluted edges and bills in green and red print. All of the currency has an engraving of an animal native to Tanzania.

MIRIAM: (With pride.) You can see that animals are everywhere in my country!

Miriam advances to the next slide and we see the photos of school children in their uniforms. Miriam explains, as she did previously to her own classmates, that the girls all have to cut their hair short. This time, Miriam's tone is explanatory, not regretful. She is smiling. The camera fades out on her face.

We are now looking from the Point of View of a person who is walking out of the elementary school's double doors. We see the doors open and close behind us. Our view turns to the right and we see that we are walking on a concrete sidewalk, past the landscaping we saw as we entered the building. We look up and see the back of Victoria's puffy blue jacket. Over Victoria's shoulder, to her right, we see all of the third grade children lined up at the windows on the inside of the cafeteria. They are waving good bye. All of the teenagers are waving back. We watch the teens walk to the school's parking lot and hop into dark blue vans. We see the hand of the teacher open a driver's side door, then we see the steering wheel. As if looking out of her eyes, we watch her turn the key and we hear the engine start. We look in the rearview mirror and see the top of Miriam's head in the seat behind. She is focusing on something in her lap. It looks like she is writing, but we can't see below her shoulders. The teacher looks back to the front of the van, and we see that the van is moving forward. We watch as if in the driver's seat, and see the road ahead of us. As we drive by the school on the way back, the children are still waving in the cafeteria windows. The scene fades out.

We're now back in the classroom. We hear a loud dismissal bell ring and a wide angle shot shows students disappear beyond the classroom door. The teacher walks over to Miriam as she is putting her notebook into her backpack, preparing to leave the class.

TEACHER: Miriam, I thought I saw you writing something in the van when we were leaving the elementary school today.

MIRIAM: I was. I wrote in my journal to show my tutor after school. Want to read it?

TEACHER: I'd love to.

Miriam takes a purple spiral notebook out of her backpack and looks through the pages. She folds it back and hands it to the teacher.

A trip I took today was pretty good. Because I like to be with letter children and talk to them. I really fell happy because I'm an orney [only] child. I like to be next to the kids and talk to them. I think it was good when the kid show me the class and their work they have done it was really good and I love to be with kids like different kind of kids.



Figure 14: Pencil Drawing of Glory Lily by Miriam

MAKING MEANING OF THE JOURNEY

My intentions in this study—and the reasons for forming a general, rather than a specific, research question—were to seek an understanding of my students through exploring their stories, and to propose a course of action—a working plan—to meet both the affective and cognitive needs of these students. Although I realize that the information and conclusions I draw from this study are applicable to this particular freshman class of students, I do hope that the knowledge I gain from my research might provide insights into understanding future classes of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Maybe I can understand *this* class, and in that understanding, change my teaching in a way that makes me relevant to my students, both current and future.

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are what I call those moments which have allowed me to stand back and examine my beliefs and my teaching critically....A critical incident can be triggered in the midst of teaching, but I have found myself contemplating my teaching while I'm reading something (Newman, 2007).

The Oppressed, the Oppressor, and Praxis

I found myself experiencing three critical incidents and what might be called a critical *perspective* during this study, each flash of understanding

spiraling into the next. The first dumbfounded me during instruction. I was in the midst of our regularly scheduled “Grammar Day” lesson, in which I focus on some aspect of grammar. On this particular day I decided to use a linguistic comparison of the future tense in English to Spanish, which is the first language (L₁) (as described in Herrara & Murray, 2005, p.9) of all but two of my students. I have done this successfully in the past with my Spanish-speaking Newcomer students and have witnessed the “light bulb” of comprehension flash as they make the connection. As an inclusionary practice, after using this comparison I always ask my non-Spanish speaking students to tell how they would say the word or phrase in their home language.

I gave a comparison in Spanish for the simple future tense using the infinitive caminar: caminaré. The response was puzzled looks. I asked, “OK. How would you say ‘I’m going to walk?’” Alan replied, “Voy a caminar.” I explained that was one way of saying the future, but that Spanish also had a future tense that just changed the verb ending. José questioned me, with loud accusation in his voice, “**You’re** going to tell **us** how to speak **our** language?” I was taken aback and had to pause to think. My intention was to provide accurate information, so I replied, “Yes. Yes I am.” That felt like a terribly insensitive answer as soon as the words left my mouth. I had asserted my power to teach. I had become an oppressor, and as the oppressed, José was bringing us to praxis (Freire, 1970).

Upon reflection, I asked myself some very pointed questions. Why didn't I use a question as my comeback to elicit more information about what José was thinking? Does he think I can't ultimately understand him because I'm a *gringa*? And, if he thinks I can't understand his language, what does this say about his attitude toward learning English? Did he ever learn to read and write in Spanish? Is something else going on with José, because he often presents this "in your face" attitude in his demeanor and utterances? How did Alan feel about our exchange, because he was actually born and raised in our very district? How did Miriam and Taibi feel when I used the language of the majority of the class—perhaps even further marginalized?

I found some of the answers in studying the Location of School Timeline chart I assembled (Igoa 1995). (See Figure 15) Although all of the students in this class have a composite level III as assessed by the WIDA, most of my students with higher reading and writing skills in English had solid instruction in their L₁ during the years when they were learning to read and write. One exception was Taibi, who had been schooled in Syria. He had been given some background in both English and French during grades one through six in Syria's schools, but his writing in English is barely phonetic. Taibi seems to have effectively acquired his Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in the three years he has been in the U.S. (Cummins, 1979), so his listening comprehension and speaking skills are more than adequate. I attribute his difficulty in writing and spelling to the

Location of Schooling Timeline

Grade 9	CD	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D
Grade 8	CD	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	U S	P R	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D
Grade 7	CD	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	U S	P R	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	M A	C C
Grade 6	SY	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	P R	U S	P R	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	P R	C C
Grade 5	SY	D R	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	P R	U S	P R	C D	P R	P R	C D	P R	C T	Z
Grade 4	SY	D R	C D	C D	C D	C D	C D	P R	U S	P R	C D	P R	P R	C D	P R	C T	Z
Grade 3	SY	D R	C D	M X	C D	D R	C D	P R	M X	P R	C D	P R	P R	C D	P R	D R	T Z
Grade 2	SY	D R	C D	M X	C D	D R	C D	P R	M X	P R	C D	P R	P R	P R	P R	D R	T Z
Grade 1	SY	D R	C D	M X	C D	D R	C D	P R	M X	P R	C D	P R	P R	P R	P R	D R	T Z
Kinder-garten		D R	C D		C D	D R	P R	P R	M X	P R	C D	P R	P R	P R	P R	D R	T Z
Pre-school			C D					P R						P R		D R	
Place of Birth	SY	D R	M X	M X	U S	D R	PR	PR	M X	P R	P R	P R	P R	N Y	P R	D R	C G
Student	Taibi	Anita	José	Nancy	Alan	Horacio	Marisol	Patricia	Victoria	Alba	Mimi	Luisa	Lisette	Jonathan	Steven	Ramón	Miriam

LEGEND

Syria	Dominican Republic	Mexico	Puerto Rico	Congo	Tanzania	Current
District	Massachusetts	New York				

Figure 15

considerable dissimilarities between Arabic and English. Taibi not only had to learn a new alphabet, but spoken Arabic does not correspond to written Arabic, as it does in English. Also, Taibi probably missed phonics instruction in English when he first entered U.S. school in the seventh grade.

Another exception was Alan, who had been born and raised in the US., and was actually schooled in his current district from Kindergarten upward. Because Alan entered school within a bilingual family, he was placed in ESOL classes and never progressed enough to exit out of the program. Perhaps it's time to examine his case more closely and see if there might be a reason for his continued placement in ESOL. Alan's focus needs to be frequently redirected to what is going on in the classroom; possibly this is an issue that should be discussed with his parents.

In José's case, although he was born in Mexico, he had attended school in the U.S, in his current district, from Kindergarten through his present ninth grade level. The Spanish that José learned from his family was truly *not* the Spanish I learned. As a native English speaker, I studied Spanish in a U.S. high school and in a graduate-level course in Mexico; José, however learned Spanish as a baby acquires his first language, from his family and caregivers. He was "bathed in the language through so-called *motherese*" as he progressed through a "complex series of processes and transitions, beginning with the development of ...oral

language capabilities" (Herrera & Murry, 2005, p.61). He spoke and understood his language, but he did not learn to write it. *Of course* his Spanish and my Spanish were not the same language!

The Mask as True Identity

I think I survived my high school years by assuming the best mask ever fabricated: the mask of language (Dowdy, 2002, p.9).

The second critical incident arose as I was reading an autobiographical reflection by Joanne Kilgore Dowdy, Associate Professor of Adolescent/Adult Literacy at Kent State University, about her youthful experiences as a middle class, black Trinidadian. Dowdy had been encouraged by her mother to learn to “curse in white (Dowdy, 2002, p.5).” As she recounts it:

Being middle class and black brought particular burdens and responsibilities. Especially since our great uncle had actually been a past mayor of the Port of Spain, the Capital of Trinidad. He had met and sat with Queen Elizabeth, Her Majesty, and the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. If we were to continue this outstanding tradition of service in public life...we needed to have certain baggage.... To “curse in white” was the epitome of embracing the creed of colonization. One not only had to look the

part, light-skinned, chemical curls for a coiffure, but one had to sound the part, perfect British diction (Dowdy, 2002, p. 5).

Dowdy's own critical incident came about when, as a child, she was playing a game of street cricket with her friends and hit the ball past the sidewalk and over a fence. She directed the outfielders to look for the ball "Over there," fully pronouncing the "th." Her friends began to imitate her perfect British diction and she was "frozen to the asphalt" in shame. She writes that "Any sensible person in those given circumstances would have enunciated "Ovuh dyuh" (Dowdy, 2002, p. 6). Thus began her journey to "operate from behind the mask of the 'white' language" (Dowdy, p. 11)," by embracing and exploring her "Afrocentric identity (Dowdy, p. 10)."

After reading Dowdy's reflection on her personal path to claiming an authentic identity, I thought that maybe I might be able to use the metaphor in reverse. What would happen if I asked my students to construct a mask revealing their perceived identities? What would these masks reveal? Would they reveal a truer identity than the mask they daily wear as English Language Learners?

The task turned out to be messy, and I had to live with a more unstructured classroom than I thought might be perceived as acceptable should an administrator drop by my classroom for a "walk in" assessment of my pedagogy. But we were all having a wonderful time! I looked forward to this class each day as we progressed on the masks. The kids were focused and had fun with the tactile

aspects of the flour paste. No one threw paste around the room or at each other. Everyone at each table cooperated to share the strips of newspaper, the bowls of paste and the art materials. There was no loud yelling. Everyone pitched in to clean up the room after each class period. Each day they carefully lined up the masks to dry overnight on the windowsills. We were enjoying school.

When the students began to decorate their masks, I noticed quickly that many painted the flags of their home country as a major design element. To me, this is another reminder that these children had lives and identities before they came to the U.S., and none made the decision to emigrate for themselves. As in their PowerPoint presentations showing their *home* countries, these students certainly felt that their home was rooted in their previous *homelands*. And like Dowdy, they were seeking to define an identity that would graft the branches to the roots.

Me Poem

As the class was involved in the mask-making project, we were invited to submit entries for a district-wide exhibit showcasing the work of our English Language Learners. We could offer anything the children wrote or constructed about their heritage, their hopes, and dreams. I saw that as an opportunity to employ a poetry-writing activity that I have previously used with students in the regular curriculum. I base the activity on a model poem to teach the third person

point-of-view, as well as the third person singular present tense, which is always a grammatical point that English Language Learners seem to find puzzling. The poem has structured, but non-rhyming, four-line stanzas, each beginning with either “He” or “She” (depending on the student writing the poem) and a present tense verb. Although written from the third person point-of-view, the poet is writing autobiographically. I’ve discovered that for some reason, this activity seems to free up the imagination, allowing the students to write in a very poetic fashion and in a very personal way. This time the activity didn’t disappoint my intentions and stimulated my third critical incident.

As I expected from previous experience, the students took a day or two to really understand the structure of the poem and that it was not a rote exercise—they would be writing from personal experience. I told them that we were going to use our masks and poems as submissions for the Young Author’s Celebration so that they would know that the public would be viewing their work. With this caveat, they got to work. What emanated seemed to originate in their hearts and I became awed at their candor. They wrote of romantic love, their families, their dreams, and their sadnesses—all of the subjects any teenager finds looming and compelling. I remember writing this kind of poetry in my youth as well. Indeed, most poetry abides in that very realm. I began to see the students through a wider lens, and lessened my teacher’s focus on the pedagogy and its attendant theory. Again, we all seemed happier.

The Survey Data

I surveyed the students four times during the course of the study. One survey, administered on three separate occasions, was used to assess students' perceptions of belongingness in the class and at school. (See Appendix D) A final survey was used to consider what possible effects the autobiographical exploration had on the students' attitudes and behaviors. In the final survey, I was surprised to learn that students liked the three, community-table arrangement by 11 to two. Nine students were proud that their work was displayed at the Young Author's Celebration, while four declined. Ten students felt that the autobiographical activities helped to improve their behavior in our class, while three did not. That perception was at odds with mine. I allowed students to sit wherever they wanted to as long as it didn't disrupt the classroom. I made many sociograms at the beginning of the study to note the shifts and changes the students made in their seating, but they eventually chose permanent seating. This allowed for more chatting; I saw it as disruption when I was trying to give direct instruction, but I'm supposing that in the students' judgment, the seating arrangement allowed them to partner and work collaboratively. We certainly *all* enjoyed being together in class when the project work was in progress.

However, reviewing the comparison of the three surveys I gave intermittently during the study provided me with an insight into an incident involving a cultural conflict that happened during the second month into the study.

Students were given a cooperative assignment to be completed by the group at each table. One of the girls, Luisa, began making faces at Miriam, who was seated at the same table. Luisa stated to me out loud several times, in English, “I’m not working with her. I don’t like her.” Miriam replied, “Well, I don’t like her either.” Miriam is not prone to teasing, or even speaking out, so her response seemed in earnest to me. Luisa was obviously the instigator in this exchange and also seemed serious. I became confused because I had never seen any outward expression of exclusion. I said to Luisa, in Spanish and then in English so that both girls would understand, “Is this a joke?” Curiously, Alba spoke up and questioned Luisa directly, in Spanish, “Why? She’s the smartest person at this table.” Luisa, with her arms folded across her chest, then repeated aloud, in English, “I don’t like her.” I asked Luisa why and she merely shrugged her shoulders. Miriam began to ignore the comments and went to work by herself. I was still confused about whether or not this was a genuine exchange so I said, “Well, I guess we’ll have to send you two to the guidance counselor.” At that Luisa commented, “It’s a joke Missy.” I was convinced, however, it was authentic because of Alba’s questioning.

I later contacted the guidance counselor who set up a conflict mediation meeting between the two girls, but the counselor reported back to me that the girls said they were joking. I think it was a clear example of bullying, although cloaked in denial. Several times after this incident Miriam asked me to excuse her for a meeting with her guidance counselor.

Tallying the results from the three surveys confirmed my belief (See Figure 16). The eighth question on the survey reads, “In this class, other students bully or tease me.” The possible answers were *Always*, *Most of the Time*, *Sometimes*, or *Never*. While it dismayed me to see that any students felt bullied, it was especially disheartening to see that two students who felt they were always bullied increased to three on the final survey. The students who felt sometimes bullied increased from one, to three, then down to two. And yet, question two, “At school, I respect people who are different from me” remained almost constant: from 13 at first, to 12 and 12, while students who declared they never disrespected others remained at zero. This seems a major disparity in perceptions.

Taken together, these observations gave me a critical *perspective*. While from three different countries, the Spanish-speaking students in my class represent the majority culture. Only two students—Miriam and Taibi—and the teacher are culturally and linguistically diverse. From what I have witnessed in the classroom and the comments I have overheard, I feel almost certain that the two students who are bullied are those two. I’m not sure who the other two are

who feel bullied “sometimes,” but there might be an indication in the fact that the two girls from Mexico, Victoria and Nancy, have decided to sit together near the windows, away from the rest of the class.

Figure 16

©This is not a test! Everything will be confidential (private)!
 I will use what you tell me to help me know how students in our class feel about school so we can have a better class.
 Please be as honest as you can and put a check ✓ in the box that shows **how you feel today**.
 (Note: Results are tallied from surveys given on 10/6/10, 11/30/10, and 1/19/11)

		Always	Most of the Time	Sometimes	Never
1	I like to come to school.	4-3-4	4-3-4	8-10-8	0-2-2
2	I try my best at school.	10-7-6	4-10-8	3-3-3	0-0-1
3	School is important to me.	11-8-8	3-9-2	2-2-7	0-0-1
4	Teachers treat all students fairly at this school.	4-3-4	5-4-6	6-8-6	2-3-2
5	At school, I respect people who are different from me.	13-12-12	4-6-4	1-0-2	0-0-0
6	In this class, other students respect me.	7-7-11	8-7-3	2-4-3	0-0-0
7	In this class, the teacher respects me.	10-9-8	1-3-2	5-3-5	2-3-2
8	In this class, other students bully or tease me.	2-2-3	1-3-2	3-3-5	14-10-8
9	In this class, I know what behavior is acceptable.	7-8-7	6-4-5	3-5-6	1-1-0
10	In this class, I am proud of the way I behave.	9-8-7	6-4-4	1-5-5	1-0-1
11	In this class, I am able to get along with other students.	9-10-11	4-4-4	0-1-2	0-2-1
12	In this class, I am comfortable talking to my teacher.	7-4-5	6-4-4	4-6-8	0-3-1
13	In this class, I feel comfortable expressing my opinion.	4-3-4	9-4-4	3-8-7	1-3-3
14	In this class, the teacher wants to help me learn.	10-10-8	4-2-2	2-1-2	0-5-5
15	I feel like I belong in this class.	6-9-7	8-5-5	4-2-4	2-2-2
16	I feel like I belong in this school.	6-5-7	5-4-4	4-7-4	2-2-3

Themes

Reflecting on the data gathered from various sources in this study on autobiographical inquiry—student journals; surveys; personal timelines and PowerPoint presentations; a mask-making activity; expressive poetry; sociogram charting; teacher observations and reflections—I was able to formulate some of the individual perceptions, attitudes and personal experiences of my students that I sought to uncover. And I feel that I did, indeed, discover information that would advise, as well as inspire, my teaching with future classes of students. I made three general hypotheses.

- ♦ Regardless of their cultural backgrounds and experiences, English Language Learners go through typical teenage developmental stages that affect their learning.
 - Students can enjoy learning when they are encouraged to express their home culture and inner lives with their peers in a safe classroom environment.
- ♦ The *way* a teacher interacts with students, not just the actual meaning of the words the teacher chooses, has a profound effect on the students' receptivity to learning.
 - The teacher can enjoy teaching when positive personal relationships are made, student-to-student as well as student-to-

teacher, within a secure learning environment, structured around the academic and cultural needs of the students.

◆ Both students *and the teacher* can resist investment in school when they feel the work lacks a direct relationship to their lives and needs.

- Teachers, as well as students, can resist investment because they feel an inherent lack of mutual trust within the culture of the high school structure and in the expectations of the institution of school.

What's Changed?

My attitude has changed more than anything during this study, which in turn has a major positive effect on the way I approach my students—the student/teacher discourse. If I see my students as young people trying to make sense of their changing world, I'm more able to focus on the things that matter and leave the little stuff alone. The common aphorism is to “pick your battles.” However, I try not to see battles, but kids pushing up new growth through the soil of their experiences.

As a Teacher, Am I the Same Person?

No, I'd say not. Actually, I've gone back to some of the idealism I first had as an educator. A lot of it has to do with gaining confidence in my beliefs as a teacher, finally getting a room where I can set up an environment with a reduced

affective filter, and realizing that these kids are acting age-appropriately for ninth graders. They're all about looking good, having a social life, being accepted by their peers, and being a bit narcissistic in their thoughts. They are at the center of their own universe and aren't we all?

What Happened To Me?

I began to enjoy teaching more. I thought I had lost that joy in teaching and was asking myself, "What else I can possibly do for employment?" But I evolved through it, through my data collection, and by observing how the students began to relate to me positively as I began to enjoy them. It's curious how designing a mask revealed a lot of their interior attitudes about themselves. Their poetry was perhaps even more revealing—most were dreaming about love. They were concerned about finding love, either in a one-on-one relationship or with their families. Several revealed their hopes for the future, writing of their desires for a particular career. Kids started joking with me and laughing. Several of the girls and I developed a routine in which I put my fingers in my ears and cringe when they approach the room and they shout out together, "Hi Miss!" just to tease me. I joke with these girls because they're very tiny but loud. This is much better than yelling at them to quiet down, and it tends to pass quickly.

I was also very motivated by an article called "Teaching as a Subversive Activity" (Postman & Weingartner, 1969) in which the authors propose standards

for teaching that are based on a series of questions generated by the teacher *with* the students. The following questions should then be applied to the inquiries:

- *Will your questions increase the learner's will as well as his capacity to learn?*
- *Will they help to give him a sense of joy in learning?*
- *Will they help to provide the learner with confidence in his ability to learn?*
- *In order to get answers, will the learner be required to make inquiries? (Ask further questions, clarify terms, make observations, classify data, etc.?)*
- *Does each question allow for alternative answers (which implies alternative modes of inquiry)?*
- *Will the process of answering the questions tend to stress the uniqueness of the learner?*
- *Would the questions produce different answers if asked at different stages of the learner's development?*
- *Will the answers help the learner to sense and understand the universals in the human condition and so enhance his ability to draw closer to other people?" (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 65-67).*

Reading these standards took me back to an appreciation of what I see as the real focus of teaching: the promotion of personal growth for both student and teacher. What the heck is life all about anyway? It released me from my own fear that I would be judged a poorly performing teacher by all of the professional hoops we jump through each day—the professional “standards” we must meet

and the evaluations to which we're subjected by administrators and "master teachers" who "visit" from the state's Department of Education. I may well be evaluated and found lacking professionally, but I don't want to be found dead from a heart attack on the floor by the janitor when he empties the trash at the end of the day.

An Over-arching Theme: The Search for Identity

Interventions must...encompass the complexities and promises of students' identities. Allowing the diverse voices of a classroom community to surface and claim their truths entails a fundamental shift: Teachers move away from anxiety over difference and authority for control toward a sense of humility about the wisdom of the young people we teach. In the process of teaching them, we become part of their immigration stories, and they, in turn, become part of our own intellectual and professional odysseys. (Campano, 2007).

Vineyard Vines

Through the process of autobiographical inquiry with my students, I explored more deeply my own personal autobiography. I regained an appreciation for the struggles of my own immigrant ancestry. I reread some of the historical writing of my French uncle, Pierre Legaux, who Anglicized his name to Peter to

better fit in with his friends and contemporaries in the emerging Republic of the United States. I imagined him overcoming his French accent to be understood within the walls of the American Philosophical Society—still located next door to a building we now refer to as Independence Hall—to which he had been elected in 1789. I was delighted to read that “In 1786 a Frenchman of adventurous, but rather dubious, past named Peter Legaux (1746-1827) bought an estate of 206 acres at Spring Mill, on the east bank of the Schuylkill River, two miles below Conshohocken in Montgomery County; there he began planting European vines on the slopes of his property and building vaults for wine storage” (Pinney, 1989). In 1793, this endeavor was to become the Pennsylvania Vine Company, the first commercial winery in the United States (Pinney, 1989). I know, through family stories, that I as a child I must have visited the site of Legaux’s vineyards and home in Mt. Joy, (now an elegant banquet hall for weddings and other events), but I can’t remember. I do remember spending time in my early childhood at the nearby Righter family home with my great grandfather. Legaux’s daughter had married a Righter, and Peter passed on his journals to his son-in-law, John Righter. So, the roots from this side of my family were planted along with the vines more than two centuries ago.

Roots in the Adriatic

The other side of my family came to the U.S. a mere three generations ago. I found myself sitting with my eighty-seven year old father and looking through his family photo albums as he recounted stories he heard from his parents who emigrated from Campo Basso, on the Adriatic side of Italy. I examined black-and-white photos of his World War II army buddies and listened to stories about the war that he would never reveal when I was a child. I marveled over grainy, black-and-white portraits of family members as they posed for special occasions—weddings, births, birthdays, and holiday celebrations. I saw my grandparents, who immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s, as brave souls who longed for a new life. They left their olive orchards and their families in the old country to settle in a small, three-story row home, in an alley of row homes, where they raised five sons. I remember vividly the summer my grandfather poured concrete over his tiny fenced-in back yard and set out pots of basil and tomatoes on the grey cement. I recalled the sounds of a strange language being spoken in that house, one I couldn't understand, but one in which my father expressively participated.

All Our Journeys Lead Us Back Home

All of these reminiscences brought me closer to my students. What I realized clearly is that we all, throughout our lives, search for an evolving

identity. We are all continuously melding our history with our present circumstance. We are all redefining ourselves as circumstance creates new experiences. I told my students about feeling different when I was in school because my last name was not easily pronounceable, as were the names of my fellow classmates. I felt isolated from the mainstream. I told them that my father went to school speaking only his native language and had to learn both English and his school subjects, just as they were doing. I told them to think what their children might be like, what they might face. I don't know if any of them understood the comparison, or if any were actually listening, but I felt compelled to plant the seeds of awareness. Their lives are in the process of unfolding. Their stories have only just begun.

EPILOGUE: PLANTING MARIGOLDS

Several months later... We're back in our classroom, and the camera pans out the window wall, through the curtains, to reveal a red maple tree now in full spring leaf. A robin flies into the tree with food in its beak for the nestlings. Above the crown of the tree is a cloudless, blue sky. A few yellow daffodils have poked through the scraggly earth alongside the still-broken, wooden bench. The camera pulls back through the windows, into the room, and over an assortment of plastic pots sitting on the windowsill. Green seedlings have pushed their way up through the potting soil to reach for the sunlight. Each small pot contains a popsicle stick labeled with the gardener's name and the identity of the seedling.

The camera continues to pull back into the classroom and passes over Victoria and Nancy who are sitting with their backs against the window wall, their individual desk/chair combinations pulled closely next to each other. They are both looking at the screen of a white MacBook on Nancy's desk. The camera pans the room and we see students sitting at their communal tables. Mimi and Anita are sitting side-by-side near the brick interior wall, each concentrating on their own MacBook. Near them, the teacher sits with Ramón; they are looking up words in a yellow, paperback Spanish/English dictionary. We hear the voices of Marisol and Alba and the camera pans over to the other side of the room. Marisol is advising Alba on a story she is writing about the summer her parents were divorced. Alba

listens intently to her friend's advice, then writes on the lined paper in front of her. On the end of her pencil sits a blue butterfly eraser.

The camera moves away from Alba as she writes, across the tabletop to her left, and focuses in on drawing of a snake in progress. As the camera lifts back, we see that the artist is Miriam. She is illustrating a story about the time one of her friends was eaten by a snake. On the top of the paper she has written the story in both English and Swahili. She is drawing the snake approaching a group of young children who are playing under a tree near a riverbank. The camera fades out.

We are now looking at the teacher who is standing in the front of the room. The PolyVision board is behind her. We see her as if we are sitting near the windows, from the Point of View of Victoria and Nancy. We look across a table and past the heads of Alan and Steven. Alan is staring across the room at Ramón, who is sitting near the brick wall, noiselessly playing an imaginary drum.

TEACHER: Your family stories are really looking good. We'll need to have the stories finished in both English and your home language by Friday so we can get them to the Spanish IV class for editing. Taibi, Mrs. Afash will edit yours and Miriam, you'll be giving your story to your mother, correct?

MIRIAM: Well, my aunt will look at it, too.

TEACHER: Terrific! I can't wait until we put this book of our family stories together. We'll send it downtown and have copies made for everyone in our class and one to send over to our third-grade friends for their classroom library. OK. We have about five minutes

left, so let's put your materials away and get this room cleaned up. Make sure you put all of your work in the folder so it's safe.

The camera pulls away from the teacher and fades out on a wide shot of the room as the students stand up from their seats and begin to replace colored markers into white, red, and green wire baskets.

Several weeks have passed....We are back at the elementary school, following behind Miriam as she walks with her left arm around the shoulders of a little girl in robin's egg blue shorts and a white sweater. We see that Miriam has a petite pony tail perked on top of her head, decorated on either side with two small yellow barrettes. Miriam is wearing jeans and a pink blouse with short, puffy sleeves. The child tucked beneath Miriam's arm has long, blond tresses that reach to her waist in the back. We follow the two as they walk along the sidewalk, past the cafeteria windows, into a field beside the school building. As they reach the garden, the camera pulls back for a wider shot. We see the two girls walk past rows of small plantings to the center of the garden, where there is a brown ceramic birdbath. The girls kneel down together, and the little girl begins to dig out a small hole in the soil near the birdbath. She has been carrying a miniature red shovel in her hand for the task. Miriam places a plant in the hole, removes the popsicle stick label it carries in its soil, and we see three, orange-tipped yellow marigolds blooming amidst dark green, notched leaves. Miriam firms the soil around the young plant with her hands. The camera comes in for a close shot of

the marigolds. The picture of the marigolds shrinks to become a still-life portrait, framed in black at the center of the screen. The scene fades out.



Figure 17: Pencil Drawing of Marigold by Miriam

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed). Washington, DC: Author.
- Bullough, R.V. & Pinnegar, S. (2001, April). *Guidelines for quality in autobiographical forms of self-study research*. Educational Researcher, 30(4): 13-21.
- Campano, G. (2007). *Honoring student stories: One of the most powerful interventions that teachers can make for immigrant students is to celebrate the human and academic value of their stories*. Educational Leadership, (3):48-54.
- Caruthers, H .R., Morris, J., Tarrier, N, & Whorwell, P. (2010). *The Manchester color wheel: development of a novel way of identifying color choice and its validation in healthy, anxious and depressed individuals*. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 10:12. doi:10.1186/1471-2288-10-12
- Cazden, C. B. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Conle, C. (2001). *The rationality of narrative inquiry in research and professional development*. European Journal of Teacher Education, 24(1): 21-33.
- DeCapua, A., Smathers, W., Tang, L. F. (2007, March). *Schooling interrupted: schools can help English language learners who have sizeable gaps in their formal education*. Educational Leadership, 40-46.
- Delpit, L. & Dowdy, J. K. (Eds.) (2002). *The skin we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom*. New York: The New Press.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Diamond, M. C. (2004). *Response of the brain to enrichment*. New Horizons for Learning. <http://www.newhorizons.org>

- Dillard, C. B. (1996). *From lessons of self to lessons of others: Exploring the role of autobiography in the process of multicultural learning and teaching*. Multicultural Education: The Magazine of the National Association for Multicultural Education, 42(2): 33-37.
- Ely, M., Vinz, R., Anzul, M., & Dowling, M. (1997). *On writing qualitative research: Living by words*. London: Falmer Press.
- Family photos*. (1934). Courtesy of Alfred DiNenno
- Field, S. (1994). *Screenplay: The foundations of screenwriting* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Dell Publishing.
- Feynman, M. (Ed) & Feynman, R. P. (2005). *Perfectly reasonable deviations from the beaten track: The letters of Richard P. Feynman*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Freeman, Y. S. & Freeman, D. E. (1998). *ESL/EFL teaching: Principles for success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gallavan, N. P. (2002, Spring). *I, too, am an American: Preservice teachers reflect upon national identity*. Multicultural Teaching, 123-127.
- Gay, G. (2007). *The importance of multicultural education*. In Ornstein, A.C., Pajak, E. F., & Ornstein, S. B. (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Curriculum*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Grove, R.W. (1988). *An analysis of the constant comparative*. Qualitative Studies in Education, 1(3): 273-279.
- Gibbons, P. (1993). *Learning to learn in a second language*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hendricks, C. (2006). *Improving schools through action research: A comprehensive guide for educators*. Boston: Pearson.
- Herrera, S. G. & Murry, K. C. (2005). *Mastering ESL and bilingual methods: Differentiated instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

- Hodgkinson, H. (December/January 2001). *Educational demographics: what teachers should know*. Educational Leadership, 58(4): 24-29.
- Igoa, C. (1995). *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Johnson, A. P. (2008). *A short guide to action research* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Johnston, P. H. (2004). *Choice words: How language affects children's learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Law, B. & Eckes, M. (2000). *The more than just surviving handbook: ESL for every classroom teacher*. Winnipeg, Canada: Portage & Main Press.
- MacLean, M. & Mohr, M. (1999). *Teacher-researchers at work*. Berkeley, CA: The National Writing Project.
- McCallister, C. (1996). *Exploring where the "self" and "study" intersect: Autobiographical inquiry as a framework for qualitative research*. (EDRS Document No. ED400 309).
- McGonical, J. A. (2000). *Transacting with autobiography to transform the learning and teaching of elementary science*. Research in Science Education, 30(1): 75-88.
- Myers, W. D. (1999). *Monster*. Carmel, CA: Hampton-Brown.
- National Archives. *Brown Brothers. (ca. 1908). Immigrant children, Ellis Island, New York*. Vintage Print, Records of the Public Health Service (90-G-125-29). Retrieved from www.archives.gov
- Newman, J. M., (2007, April). *Action research: Exploring the tensions of teaching*. Lupinworks: Literacy & learning. Retrieved from <http://lupinworks.com/article/ar.html>
- Niebur, G. (2002, Spring). *Muslims in America: Identity develops as a community grows*. Carnegie Reporter, 1(4): 15-21.
- Ornstein, A. C., et al. (2007). *Contemporary issues in curriculum* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Ovando, C. J., Combs, M. C. & Collier, V. P. (2006). *Bilingual & ESL classrooms: Teaching in multicultural contexts* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Paley, V. G. (1997). *The girl with the brown crayon*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- _____. (1992). *You can't say you can't play*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pinney, T. (2989). *A history of wine in America: From the beginnings to prohibition*. University of California Press: Berkeley, California
Retrieved from www.books.google.com/books?isbn=0520062248
- Postman, N. & Weingartner, C. (1996). *Teaching as a subversive activity*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.
- Shosh, J. M. & Zales, C. R. (2007). *Graduate teacher education as inquiry: A case study*. *Teaching Education*, 18(3): 257-275.
- Tenni, C., Smyth, A. & Boucher, C. (2003, March). *The researcher as autobiographer: Analysing data written about oneself*. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(1). Retrieved April 17, 2010 from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-1/.html>
- Tomioka, N. (2000). *A bilingual production model*. Paper presented at the *Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States* on July 25-29, 2000. Retrieved April 23, 2010 from <http://www.semioticon.com/virtuals/talks/tomioka.htm>
- Standen, M. (2008, August). *Telling their tales at last: Urban youth use technology to express themselves*. The George Lucas Education Foundation. Retreived from <http://www.edutopia.org/print/5620>
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2007). *The Culturally Responsive Teacher*. *Educational Leadership*, (3): 28-33.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Web-Johnson, G. (2003, Winter). *Behaving while black: A hazardous reality for African American learners?* *Beyond Behavior*, 3-7.

Wheeler, V. R .H. (1995). *Daily Writing Topics*. Villa Maria, PA: The Center for Learning.

Wolcott, H. (2009) *Writing up qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wong, K. S. (1996). *Crossing the borders of the personal and the public: Family history and the teaching of Asian American history*. Magazine of American History, 10(4): 28-31.

APPENDICES

- A Principal Consent Form
- B Parent Permission Form: English
- C Parent Permission Form: Spanish
- D Survey: *How Do You Feel About School?*
- E Survey: *And One More Confidential Survey Please*
- F Daily Journal Questions for September.
- G Daily Journal Questions for October

November 16, 2010

Dear Mrs. Principal:

During this fall semester of the 2010/2011 school year, I am conducting an action research study of my teaching as part of my Master's thesis for Moravian College. I am studying ways to improve my pedagogy by implementing a systematic study using autobiographical inquiry to facilitate classroom community and decrease disruptive behaviors.

My study focuses on using written narratives to uncover students' previous academic experiences. I will ask students to keep journals to explore their memories, preferences, and attitudes toward their past and present school experiences, as well as how they see themselves as students. Activities such as poetry writing, compiling timelines of their schooling, self-assessment surveys, and journal-entry prompts will be incorporated into the regular ESOL English curriculum. The students will be guided step-by-step in writing and "publishing" their autobiographies using the technology available.

All of the students in my ninth grade ESOL English I class will participate in the autobiographical project as part of the regular instructional process, but their participation in the actual study is voluntary. Their identities will be kept strictly confidential at all times. No student will be penalized for not participating in the study nor for withdrawing from the study. Parental/guardian permission will be obtained. Names of faculty, students, and participating institutions will not appear in the study. The study has been pre-approved by the Human Subject Institutional Review Board. My sponsoring professor is Dr. Richard Grove; he may be contacted at Moravian College by email: rgrove@moravian.edu or by phone: 610-861-1400.

I would be happy to address any concerns you may have about this study or to provide further information. Would you please sign and date below? Please keep one copy for your records. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Babette Schaffer, ESOL Teacher

As academic principal of [participating] High School, I give my permission for Mrs. Babette Schaffer to conduct this study.

(Signature)

(Date)

Dear Parents:

We have begun a special project in our English class! We are exploring our life histories by writing poems, making masks, keeping a daily journal with responses to questions about our thoughts, and composing autobiographical PowerPoint presentations about our families, our home countries, our school experiences, and our hopes and dreams for the future. At the end of the project, students will publish selections of their writing in a class book. They may take this special book home to share with their family and keep as a memory of their learning.

I would like your permission to use information from this project for a study I am conducting for a Master's thesis at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Although the activities will be part of our regular classwork, I'm interested to know how students *feel* about this project, so I will be conducting surveys during the project. Students will receive a grade for the classwork, but they will not receive a grade for the surveys or for their thoughts, which will be confidential.

Students' identities will be kept confidential at all times. No student will be penalized in any way for not participating in or withdrawing from the study. The names of students, faculty members, and participating institutions will not appear in the study.

Under the above conditions, [the] Principal of [participating] High School, has given me permission to conduct the study. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at school by phone or by e-mail.

Would you please sign below to give your permission or refusal to allow your child to participate in my research study? Please send the signed form back to school with your child as soon as possible. Thank you very much!

Mrs Babette Schaffer, ESOL Teacher
[participating] High School, [participating] School District

- I give my permission for my child to be included in the study.
- I do not give my permission for my child to be included in the study.

Student's Name: _____

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

Date: _____

Estimada familia,

Estamos empezando un proyecto especial en nuestra clase de inglés. Estamos escribiendo autobiografías de nuestras familias, nuestras experiencias de escuela, nuestras esperanzas, y las aspiraciones para el futuro. Cuando se termina este proyecto, los estudiantes publicarán su obra en forma de un libro. Este libro especial se podrá compartir con la familia o ser parte de un recuerdo de su aprendizaje en la clase.

Yo quisiera su permiso de usar la información de cómo se hizo este proyecto para un estudio que estoy tomando para mi maestría. Como sabemos el escribir es un componente importante del estudio de su hijo(a), pero también estoy interesada de cómo se siente su hijo(a) sobre este proyecto. Por esa razón conduciré yo unas encuestas y entrevistas durante este proyecto. Su hijo(a) recibirá una calificación por su proyecto pero nunca se evaluará por una entrevista o encuesta. Todo esto se mantendrá confidencial.

De ningún modo se revelará la identidad del estudiante, ni se penalizará por no participar en la encuesta tampoco. Los nombres de su hijo(a), las instituciones, y los profesores nunca aparecerán en este estudio.

El principal de [participating] High School me ha dado permiso para esto, pero si Ud. tiene preguntas o preocupaciones, favor de contactarme en la escuela o por correo electrónico.

Favor de firmar abajo dándome permiso o no el permiso de participar en el estudio y devuelva la forma firmada a la escuela con su hijo(a) antes el viernes de esta semana.

En su servicio, la Sra. Babette Schaffer, *ESOL*

-
- Sí, le doy permiso que mi hijo(a) participe en un estudio.
 No, no le doy permiso que mi hijo(a) participe en un estudio.

Nombre de estudiante

Firma de
Parientes/Familia

Fecha

☺**This is not a test!** Everything will be confidential (private)!
I will use what you tell me to help me know how students in our class feel
about school so we can have a better class.

Please be as honest as you can and put a check ✓ in the box that shows
how you feel today.

		Always	Most of the Time	Som- times	Never
1	I like to come to school.				
2	I try my best at school.				
3	School is important to me.				
4	Teachers treat all students fairly at this school.				
5	At school, I respect people who are different from me.				
6	In this class, other students respect me.				
7	In this class, the teacher respects me.				
8	In this class, other students bully or tease me.				
9	In this class, I know what behavior is acceptable.				
10	In this class, I am proud of the way I behave.				
11	In this class, I am able to get along with other students.				
12	In this class, I am comfortable talking to my teacher.				
13	In this class, I feel comfortable expressing my opinion.				
14	In this class, the teacher wants to help me learn.				
15	I feel like I belong in this class.				
16	I feel like I belong in this school.				

Would you like to write any message to me? You may write it here or on the back of the page.



And One More Confidential Survey

Please...

		Yes	No
1	Did writing in your daily journal help you to understand yourself better?		
2	Did sharing your daily journal responses help you to understand your classmates better?		
3	Did making a timeline of your life help you to understand yourself better?		
4	Did making your mask help you to understand yourself better?		
5	Did seeing and hearing about other students' masks help you to understand your classmates better?		
6	Did writing the Me poem help you to understand yourself better?		
7	Did reading other students' Me poems help you to understand your classmates better?		
8	Did you feel proud that your poem and mask were displayed at the Young Author's Celebration?		
9	Did making your PowerPoint help you to understand yourself better?		
10	Did seeing other students' PowerPoint presentations help you to understand your classmates better?		
11	Did these activities help to improve your behavior in this class?		
12	Do you think these activities helped to improve the behavior of your classmates?		
13	Do you think sitting at the big tables in our classroom helped you learn?		



Thank you for your honest answers!



Journal Freewriting for September

Select one question each day (except Friday) and write your thoughts in your journal. Write at least three sentences for each entry.

1. If you won a million dollars, but had to spend it in one day, how would you do it?
2. If you could invent a new animal, what would it look like? What would it do? What would it eat? Where would it live?
3. What makes you happy?
4. What do you like best about being your age?
5. Who would you be if you could be a different person for a day? Why?
6. Is music important to you? Why or why not?
7. Why do you think people become criminals?
8. Who is the funniest person you know? What makes that person funny?
9. What has been the most unusual event in your life?
10. What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
11. What is the strangest weather you have ever experienced? Describe it.

12. Who is the nicest person you have ever known? What makes this person so nice?



Journal Freewriting for October

Select one question each day except Friday and write your thoughts in your journal. Write at least three sentences for each entry.

1. What is special about your family?
2. What was the happiest moment of your life?
3. Why do people like horror movies?
4. How do you feel about being in high school?
5. Do you think doing homework is fair?
6. What is your favorite game? Why do you like that game?
7. What do you like best about yourself?
8. What is your favorite television show? Why do you like it?
9. How do you know when someone is really your friend?
10. What do you do when you are angry?
11. Would you like to have a twin? Why or why not?
12. When do you feel the most peaceful?
13. Could you live on the space station for a month? Why or why not?

14. Are you going to dress up in a costume for Halloween? What will your costume be?

15. How does the weather affect you?