

2016

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Recommended Citation

Morawski, C. M., Rottmann, J., Afrakomah, E., Balatti, E., Christens, M., & Kellar, L. (2016). Journaling the Art of Teaching: Multimodal Responding for Narrative Inquiry. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(1).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n1.9>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol41/iss1/9>

Journaling the Art of Teaching: Multimodal Responding for Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract: Research underscores the integral role that narrative inquiry plays in teachers' everyday classroom practices. This article discusses the findings from an action research study on the use of a multimodal response journaling component for teacher narrative inquiry in a teacher education methods class. Exercises such as early teacher memories and book as educator were carried out using multiple modes of expressions, from the written word to abstract visuals. Specific details on the actual journaling component are included. Themes that emerged from the analysis of four teacher candidates' journals, their responses to questionnaires and follow-up interviews are illustrated by specific examples from these data sources. Recommendations present valuable information for future implementations.

Introduction

Research underscores the integral role that narrative inquiry, the study of the ways humans experience the world via the construction and reconstruction of their own stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; 2006), plays in everyday teaching agendas (Fairbanks, Duffy, Faircloth, He, Levin, Rohr, & Stein, 2010; Leggo & Irwin, 2013). Like the students in their classrooms, teachers comprise a diverse group of individuals representing a myriad of ways to learn and teach, stemming from such factors as pedagogical approaches, prior life experiences, and familial relationships (LaFontaine, Gardner, & Miedema, 2003; Vinz, 1996). Berghoff, Borgmann, and Parr (2003) agree that the use of multiple sign systems, communication systems consisting of signs and agreement about their use (e.g., language, art, or music), "can transform the way teachers think about and practice the art of teaching" (p. 362). Applying multimodal learning to response journaling has the potential to expand teacher candidates' opportunities to address the role that narratives play in developing their daily practices in language arts. Action research, designed to discover and develop new approaches for classroom application (Nolan & Patterson, 2000), can facilitate the study of narrative inquiry via multimodal response journaling. According to Groman (2015), "If we wish to have teachers who are going to transform the field of education we must let them experience what it is to be transformed" (p.6). Methodologically supported by action research in relation to narrative inquiry and multimodal learning, we asked,

"What are the effects of multimodal journaling on the recurring narratives of teacher candidates in a junior-intermediate language arts methods class?"

Multimodal Response Journaling Component

The sections that follow provide important information on the journaling component. The first section focuses on the context of the study, while the subsequent section sets out the details of the actual journal.

Context

The journaling component took place in a required language arts methods class for 38 junior-intermediate (grades 4-10) teacher candidates enrolled in a Canadian post graduate one-year Bachelor of Education program, which provided them with academic courses and two practicum field experiences to become certified to teach in the province. The methods course, comprised of eleven weekly 3¼-hour classes, addressed both theory and practice of language arts—the study of oral communication, reading, writing, and media literacy resources (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006), with a focus on such considerations as curriculum design and evaluation, applications of learning experiences related to creativity and expressiveness, and preparation and use of teaching strategies and resources. I, the course instructor, promoted different forms of expressions and representations to encourage teacher candidates to inquiry into their teaching narratives in relation to language arts. Moveable furniture, usually arranged in groupings of six, facilitated the delivery of the course.

The Journal

Although the study of digital literacies, such as the use of a class wiki, was integrated into the implementation of the language arts course, for the journaling component, I wanted the teachers to experience the use of easily found and repurposed materials such as wrapping paper, cardboard boxes, and string. As Costello (2008) stated about her study of the Romeo and Juliet Comic Book Project in a secondary school class,

As researchers and scholars in the field of English education continue to place well-deserved emphasis on the exploration of digital literacies, the value of more easily accessible (and often more economical) arts endeavors—involving scissors, colored pencils, and paper, for example—should not be overlooked (p. 3).

In this way, the teachers would be in a better position to provide their own future students with learning experiences involving a broad range of expressions and representations.

For the journal, which was used to record and maintain responses arising from the multimodal activities, teachers first folded plain white 11 x 17 inch paper in half vertically. Next, teachers selected a material of choice, such as a cereal box cover or file folder, to construct the covers, which they then cut to size to fit the paper supplied for journaling. Next, using a simple binding technique, they attached the covers to the paper, adding personal touches. (See figure 1.) The format and content of the journaling component are as follows:

General Description and Format

Each teacher maintained an in-class journal. Entries consisted of response pieces to activities presented in class to engage them both cognitively and affectively in the topic of the day. The one criterion for evaluation was completion. The time of journal responses varied from class to class. That is, a journal activity could take place at the beginning of one class, while another one might occur toward the end of a different class. The instructor encouraged teachers to make generous use of multimodalities, while emphasizing that there were no right or wrong answers or ways of completing a journal entry. For example, at the beginning of a novel study, I engaged the students in a journal entry in which they had to express a memory of running away from home by first selecting a color sheet of paper representing the event, and then, using only their fingers, tearing the paper into the shape of the event. For still another entry, I encouraged students to study elements of a painting by “jumping into” one and exploring the scene as newcomer who wants to stay. For a full description of these three journal activities as well as others, see Appendix B.



Figure 1: Journal cover

Background

The following sections provide information related to both practice and research on two key concepts of our study. The first section focuses on the importance of multimodal learning in the classroom, while the second section on the reflective practice of journaling and its various applications.

Multimodal Learning

Multimodal learning is the practice of making meaning by combining multiple means of expressions and representations, from the written word to the painted picture. (Rosenblatt, 1982; Siegel, 2012). Short, Kauffman, & Kahn (2000) found that when individuals take meanings they are constructing through reading, writing, or talk and think about them through art, music, drama and other sign systems, they become woven into their thinking, providing multiple perspectives and points of connection. Furthermore, Albers, Holbrook and Harste (2010) claim that multimodalities can tap the full range of individuals' potential, encouraging them to step outside themselves and see new possibilities. When applied to the process of teacher narrative inquiry, multimodalities have the potential to encourage teachers to make sense of their teaching lives from a variety of different perspectives. Moreover, Leggo (2008) maintains that narratives can be

told in many different genres, from cartoon to clothing, from illustration to journal, from waxworks to yarn.

Placing emphasis on multiple modes of expressions and representations has been shared by other advocates of multimodal learning. For example, in her introduction to teaching a course, Groman (2015) engaged the students in the art of sculpting to make connections to their teaching philosophies, which they eventually crafted into a written paper. After being given a piece of clay, the students sculpted their philosophies on foil and a paper plate and then presented them the next class by way of both individual and group process. As the conversations continued, Groman observed a growing awareness of personal and professional connections within a community of learners as students shared significant past experiences in relation to current and future aspirations. To quote one of the students, "...I learned this week that I finally am now seeing what my teaching philosophy is and understanding exactly who I am as a teacher. Once I started playing with the clay to form into something that represented me, I started really realizing who I am (p. 14)."

After participating in an immersion course on the use of arts integration to teach nonfiction, Orzulak (2006) found that "when teachers can experience teaching techniques as active participants, they can imagine new methods for engaging students as creative participants in the classroom" (p. 79). More specifically, she considered a variety of possible applications with her own secondary school students. For example, she invited her first year students to write interior monologues from the perspectives of individuals mentioned in an article on factory working conditions. Several weeks later, when the students wrote their final-exam essays, they were able to accurately cite examples from the article. On another occasion, Orzulak assembled her students into groups to compose poetry on voicelessness. After first free-writing on the topic, each student contributed lines to create a collaborative poem, which they then recited to the whole class. In addition to the targeted topic, students also addressed elements of poetic expression. After ample reflection, Orzulak concluded, "While the immersion program taught me that experiential professional development is ideal for teachers, we must also learn to take risks by reading about and trying out new activities" (p. 83).

Upon analyzing the transcripts between researchers and three senior high school students composing compositions about masks of self-awareness, Zoss, Smagorinsky, and O'Donnell-Allen (2007) found that their use of both written and non-verbal forms allowed the students to utilize "different and possibly complementary means for getting at the same ideas, in this case identity" (p. 35). In particular, they focused on the students' goals for composing the masks, the tools they used, and the settings in which they learned how to use the tools. One student, emphasizing that he spent much time at home to finish his mask properly, commented that the mask displayed, "a really nice side that is fun to be with" and a side that wanted to be "alone...and [is] kind of angry" (p. 26). The researchers concluded that a successful lesson is not necessarily associated with high marks. Rather it is "how the students experience the activity" (p. 34). They would like educators to consider using multimodal teaching that "enables students to find school a ripe site for extending their knowledge, broadening their horizons, and moving them more fluently into new vistas of learning about themselves and their worlds" (p. 36).

Response Journaling

According to Smith (2001), response journaling is a discovery process that "not only includes thinking about new concepts, it is also a way for students to reflect on themselves and

use this self-knowledge to help process new information” (p. 3). The response journal, materializing in such forms as blogs (Combs & Goodwin, 2013), dialogue journals (Stillman, Anderson & Struthers, 2014), and class journals (Longfield, 1993), offers a vital means of promoting narrative inquiry. Applying multimodal learning to response journaling expands further teacher candidates’ opportunities to address the role that their narratives play in developing their language arts practice. That is, what was once expressed only in the written word, can now be represented in such modes as torn paper, symbol, image, and much more. For example, at the beginning of each class, Dolan (1993) merged music appreciation and writing by inviting his class of undergraduate students to respond to music selections, from Ravel to Gershwin, via a means of their choice such as a poem or an argumentative piece. Dolan found that he was "...continually amazed at the freshness and originality of language and perceptions that music can draw from students, in particular from reluctant and apprehensive writers" (p. 18).

Leigh (2012) conducted a qualitative study in an arts-integrated school, where she interviewed 12 secondary school students on their use of sketchbooks in language arts. She found that work in the visual mode supported work in the verbal mode, and acted as "...doorways to private worlds" (p. 539). One student, a watercolor artist, noted that her knowledge regarding color informed her response to characterization in a poem, particularly in relation to the notions of tone, nuance, and mood. Leigh concluded that boundary crossing between art and language "...can restore sensitivity to language, make us excited about a topic, and motivate us to explore and write it" (p. 548). Using a qualitative research design, McMillan and Wilhelm (2007) initiated an environmental observation project to investigate students' participation in the integration of nature study and language arts instruction. More specifically, they collaborated with one science teacher, one math teacher, and one language arts teacher to engage sixty-seven junior high school students in a moon observation in which they recorded nightly observations via writing and sketching. To support their observation journal entries, the students engaged in daily readings of related texts such as legends, and also received pertinent instruction in math and science. McMillan and Wilhelm concluded that the nature observation journaling helped to develop the students' ability to visualize, comprehend text, and write, especially with figurative language, while becoming more aware of their self identities and the natural world. As one of the student commented, " It (the moon) looks like a white slice of watermelon. More light each night..." (p. 375).

Wanting to continue taking notice of my practice (Jewett, 2010) and provide teacher candidates, hereafter referred to as teachers, with a wider range of possibilities to inquire into their teaching narratives, especially in relation to language arts, I, the course instructor, created and implemented multimodal response journaling, theoretically grounded and practically enacted by narrative inquiry and multimodal learning, and methodologically supported by action research. Details of the implementation of the component are as follows:

Methodology and Related Considerations

I invited four teachers who participated in the implementation of the journal as well as a colleague, who also teaches language arts, to investigate the component’s effectiveness for language arts teacher narrative inquiry. For our research, we asked, "What are the effects of multimodal journaling on the recurring narratives of teacher candidates in a junior-intermediate language arts methods class? Action research, in concert with narrative inquiry, acted as the

primary means of investigation for the study of the multimodal response journal component. Action research is a form of ongoing inquiry into the understanding and improvement of one's own practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). More specifically, Mertler (2009) states that,

action research is characterized as research that is done *by teachers for themselves*. Action research allows teachers to study their own classrooms—for example, their own instructional methods...—in order to better understand them and be able to improve their quality or effectiveness (p. 4).

Reason and Bradbury (2004) contend that action research, “seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to...individual persons and their communities” (p. 1). In the community of teacher education, teachers and students can collaborate to improve instructional practices for professional growth across the curriculum, including language arts.

In addition to being the focus of the teachers' personal and professional development, narrative inquiry, the recurrent process of inquiring into who we are and are becoming in relation to our teaching beliefs and practices (Chan, 2012; Saleh, Menon & Clandinin, 2014), also provided the working material or data used to answer our main research question. That is, as the teachers responded to the various activities, they not only inquired into their own narratives, but also provided important information for future implementations of the journal component. As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) stated, “Narrative inquirers study an individual's experiences in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others” (p. 42).

Participants and Data Collection.

At the conclusion of the language arts course, we, the course instructor and colleague co-investigator, carefully considered the journals of the 38 teachers, finally settling on four that seemed to best represent the contents of the teachers' entries, especially their use of multimodalities. In particular, we were looking for ones that contained responses expressed with a variety of modes. Without looking at the names on the journals, my colleague and I first went through the journals separately, and then together. We repeated this process several more times until we arrived at the final four. We then identified and invited the four teachers, all female and in their twenties, to collaborate with us on our investigation of the multimodal response journal component. All four readily accepted our invitation. To clarify responses or include additional information on their experiences, the teachers first responded individually in writing to an open-ended questionnaire (See Appendix A), which took approximately thirty minutes to complete, and then participated in individual face-to-face follow-up sessions ranging from twenty to forty minutes. They also submitted their journals to be read closely in concert with the first two sources of data. The use of the different forms of data collection further allowed for rigor, complexity, and depth to the proposed research inquiry via triangulation, the “...process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2005, p. 454).

Data Analysis

We, the course instructor and co-investigator colleague, used an inductive approach (Hendricks, 2009; Mertler, 2009) to analyze the data. More specifically, we carried out an in-depth reading of the journal entries, the content of the answers to the questionnaire and the transcriptions of the follow-up interviews. Rather than using a software program to inquire into our findings, we elected to employ a more organic and multimodal procedure, which would allow for a closer access to the nuances found in the data. In particular, we used different colored highlighters to mark initial themes throughout the sheets of paper, which we then cut apart and rearranged until we settled on our final findings (McAteer, 2013; Mertler, 2009), all the while periodically stepping back from ongoing inspection and interpretation by introspection (Mertler, 2009). (See figure 2.) “Constant comparison, a thematic form of qualitative work that uses categorizing, or the comparing and contrasting of units and categories of field texts, to produce conceptual understandings of experiences and/or phenomena that are ultimately constructed into larger themes” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 47), played an integral role in our analysis, which resulted in three themes.

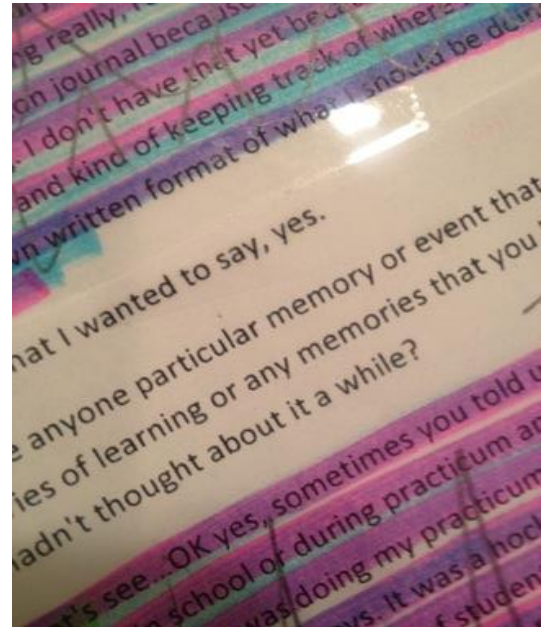


Figure 2: The color of data

Discussion

In this section, we present the three themes—(i) interpersonal and intrapersonal reflection,

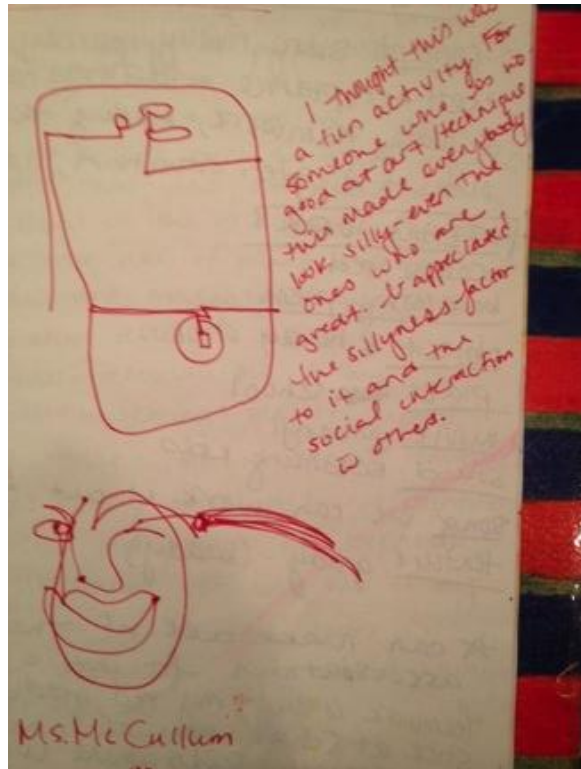
(ii) expanded use of expressions, and (iii) teaching practice, which emerged from the analysis of our data. We also include examples from the participants' journals to illustrate emerging themes.

Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Reflection

In their research on reflective practice, Hagevik, Aydeniz, and Rowell (2012) emphasize that a teacher's education needs to include critical reflection which "...can develop into more transformative practices" (p. 683). Engaging in the multimodal response journal heightened all four teachers' awareness of themselves as life-long learners of language arts, other subjects, and themselves. For example, Elizabeth, one of the participants and a co-author, appreciated the opportunity to write because "...I have time to think and I can go back and rearrange my thoughts...it's such a good way to reflect and learn." In addition, hearing other people's entries on a poem helped to reinforce her confidence to justify and rethink her thoughts on the same poem and other literary texts. She continued, "So just being able to go back and read what I wrote and hear what other people had to say...you can reflect again and again and again." Laura, another

participant and co-author, concurring with Elizabeth said, "I enjoyed the poem activity where we were interpreting the poem...because my interpretation of it was so completely different than everybody else's." Referring to her participation in the *jumping into a painting* activity described in Appendix B, she continued, "...most people were looking at the painting whereas my perspective was across the painting, so I really liked those activities. They made me happy."

In his eloquent essay on the importance of narrative inquiry for personal and professional growth, Leggo (2008) states, "...we should be opening up possibilities for wide-ranging connections, questions, and insights" (p. 6). Further teachers' responses indicated that such possibilities existed in the journaling component. Emili, another participant and co-author,



mentioning the two novels assigned for the class, reflected, "...doing the journal entries got me to connect to the books in a different way and got me to understand them in a different way." She emphasized that journaling allowed her to actively reflect on her reading, "like a continuation of your thoughts on what we're discussing or viewing in class." Laura, recognizing that her entries focused on subject matter, pointed to a drawing of her eight-year old self in her journal and explained, "...even there I was reflecting on the vocabulary that I was learning in the subject, not just me...I was thinking about the books that I'd read...and generally reflecting on...language arts." Meg, another participant and co-author, who identified herself as "phys ed and not a writer", noted that the journal allowed her to realize "the value of narrative writing for sure because for me personally it brought out...being able to actually write down what I'm thinking..."

Figure 3: Contour drawing

Making connections with other activities, the teachers expressed further episodes of awareness by way of reflection. For example, when sharing their experience with the flow exercise, Meg and Laura exclaimed that they both had selected a sports-related event, volley ball and rowing respectively, to describe a time when they became engrossed in a personal pursuit. They readily agreed that everyone's response experience is different, with Meg commenting, "The benefit of writing in the journal is that you get to know students...Everybody brings a different story..." These same two teachers also spoke about the exercise in which they recollected, with both word and image, about a time when they ran away from home. Meg, reminiscing about her penned note to her parents in anticipation of leaving, showed an image of her bed where she hid. Claiming that it seemed so silly now, she did experience the emotions all come back, allowing her to be more empathetic of others feelings. Meg shared, "So I guess just those feelings reminded me...to be aware of not looking past even the most ridiculous of thoughts." Laura, identifying with Meg's remarks, while remembering her own event of running into the trees at the back lot and then coming home remarked, "You can take a lot from...what

you get out of them (the journal entries) because they can tell you a lot about the person who wrote them."

Making reference to two other journaling activities, Meg emphasized the personal benefits derived from their implementation. For the *leaving home* exercise, described in Appendix B, she eagerly admitted making an instant connection to the song, especially in relation to a reading she did for another class. "So I'm already engaged and then you took a turn, you took the basis of the song and made it personal so that we had our own experience." Meg found the other exercise, the *contour drawing* one, to level the playing field in relation to artistic performance. (See figure 3.) She explained, "I just thought it was so funny because I'm terrible at art but even the students who are awesome at art are having such troubles...and it made me more interested because "Oh I'm just as bad as everybody else or I'm just as good as everybody else." As Albers, Holbrook, and Harste (2010), practicing artists and teachers, posit, "...when viewed as a language, art allows us to develop a critical stance; we consciously engage, entertain alternate ways of being, we continuously inquire, and are reflexive" (p. 168). As Emili so aptly stated, "... You can see people differently with art...With art you can see who they really are."

Expanded Use of Expressions

Focusing on the journaling activities that impacted their personal perspectives on using multi-modalities, particularly those related to the arts, the teachers shared a number of relevant experiences. For example, Meg exclaimed,

I think regardless of anything that was written or anything at all, I just remember after handing this in, I was so proud of this. Look at all this color that I used! When else would I take out pencil crayons and markers and express myself in this way. I can't even draw stick people you know, but...it brought out something new in me...whenever I write a journal entry I always think of this one and I try to use it as the basis to remember that I can be creative and artsy even though I don't think I really am. Elizabeth, expressing regret over having dropped her art course in Grade 11, shared I thought the whole construction of this journal is very different for me...I like the different ways that you can express yourself, not just in words, but in the art format as well. I thought that really brought it together with the language and the arts part for me, it really brought it together. I really liked the cereal box.

Her awareness of the arts affecting her journaling responses also emerged during the *leaving home* exercise when she "was just going with the rhythm and beat of the music so I would go a little bit faster when the song was faster."

Emili focused on the *jumping into the painting* activity because it encouraged active use of one's senses. That is,

Yes, I thought that was really great because it wasn't just what do you see, [it was] what do you hear. I heard the room was silent, but not just silent; I could hear everyone's breathing and everyone's being so attentive to try and figure out the painting whereas I was just, I see a lot of different things and I think that was great because it gets you thinking...I liked that and I really like art.

Similar reactions surfaced during the *leaving home* exercise where Emili captured her own leaving home event using "dark colours but then also light ones because I'd feel bad running away or thinking of running away." She emphasized, "I really liked that it got me to express different feelings." Continuing to concentrate on her intrapersonal reservoir of making sense,

Emili recollected the unsettling experience of doing puppet theater her first year of university. It reminded her of the music videos with the clown sitting in the back seat waving. Emili's participation in the methods class puppet activity, however, allowed her to turn a real terrifying experience into a really good one. "I liked using the found objects and then you get to write about how you felt after...It made it pleasant and it was like a real little theater and writing about you know these are just puppets this is an extension of me. This is how I form them."

Laura, focusing on the creative aspect of journaling, emphasized that the guidance she received from the activities allowed her to be "more creative in my writing." In particular, she attributed her spurt of creativity to the questions posed and the scenarios offered during the activities. Meg, concurring with Laura claimed, "I had a lot of fun with this one...there is so much freedom allowed in this but you still knew where you were going, like I always knew what I was writing and I was never stumped or stopped." In an interview on her theory and practice of transactional analysis, Rosenblatt (1938/1995) stated, "...the reader may aesthetically focus on the experiential qualities of what is being evoked during the reading event and give more attention to the private aspect, the personal aura in which the referential is embedded--sensations, images, feelings, emotional, and intellectual associations" (p. 350). (See figure 4.)

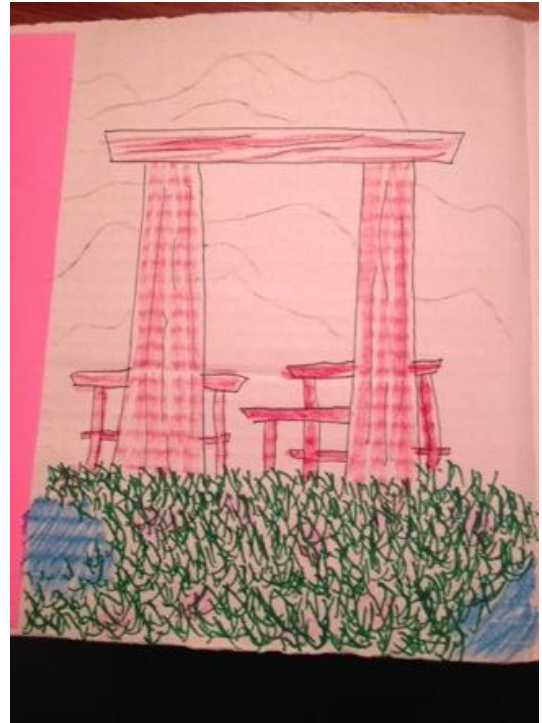


Figure 4: Reflection

Meg, who so aptly observed that individuals have both a public and private persona, saw one friend's journal and said "Oh my gosh!! That's amazing. It's so vibrant and so inviting...You're a different person inside than you are when you present yourself to people...It comes out in your work." It is apparent that all four teachers' experiences in the multimodal journaling component helped to foster their readings of themselves as artistic and creative individuals.

Teaching Practice

When Berghoff, Borgmann, and Parr (2015) implemented an integrated arts curriculum with a teacher education class, they reported that the teachers left "determined to teach in new ways" (p. 361). The four teachers reported that they either already used or would be considering using adaptations of the activities they experienced in the journaling component. Both Meg and Laura agreed that the activities provided a fun and engaging introduction to the lessons planned for that day, and would encourage reflection on relevant prior knowledge. In particular, considering their future students, Meg stated, "a lot of my students are going to need something like a journal or something similar...", while Laura added, "I could foresee myself using a journal and kind of keeping track of where my students are, how my teaching is going, and having my own written format of what...I could be doing differently or what is going well."

As it happened, two teachers reported on incorporating elements of the journaling component into their practice teaching experiences. After conferring with her associate teacher, Emili decided to enact the *jumping into a painting* exercise for an art class with sixth graders. More specifically, displaying a painting by Robert Bateman, she asked the students to respond to the image via an adaptation of the response questions used in our methods class. The students, obviously engrossed in the activity, asked her to display more paintings. In fact, she then followed the same procedure using a song. Emili commented,

And the kids loved it and said who taught you that? ...and now they want to go to university. They wanted to continue on and do more. I intend to teach French and would like to help students along with the journal...maybe a verb journal...or how did you interpret the French song...they can communicate through drawing, through writing.

Meg, wanting to expand the way students are assessed in physical education class, particularly with volleyball, integrated multimodal response journaling in her practicum experience. In particular, she brought in a variety of materials and had the students respond the last five minutes of the class. Meg observed, "They got really creative...some people's journals were buckets, like big jars, and they would stick a little note in it and that was what they handed in." Upon reading the students' entries, she derived valuable information concerning the students' perspectives on their performance, perceived abilities, and attitudes. Meg added,

I thought this was awesome because...this is allowing them to you know, express themselves. I would definitely use it in the future, no matter the subject matter.

Hearing the students' perspective is so important I think to improve your own teaching and in order to improve their learning.



Figure 5: The journal

During her practicum placement with a class of fourth-grade boys, Elizabeth recounted her use of flow, a state of complete immersion in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), when her students reacted enthusiastically to her lesson on an African folk tale related to drumming. "The kids really really enjoyed it, like their reaction to it was totally different from what I would have imagined...and that is still touching me." Although she did not record the event, she claimed that just rereading an entry in her journal made the event more meaningful.

In addition to the actual practices implemented during their practicum assignments, the teachers expressed that they would include multimodal response journaling in their future teaching. (See figure 5.) For instance, Meg, citing the *leaving home* journal exercise, recognized the benefit that students who are musically inclined would derive from

responding to a song: "That's huge for them...This will get them interested and who doesn't like listening to a song." Meg also acknowledged that the journaling component would support differentiation in the classroom. That is, "...whether it's a student regardless of their individual education plan or if their writing is on the lower end of the spectrum, or whether they're in a gifted program, this really did allow you to meet within any point along the spectrum within your instruction." Laura supported the practice of using the journal as an introductory activity. That is,

according to her, "I think pre-class or pre-lesson journal writing is a good way to do it or during obviously, but after-the-fact makes it a little harder." Laura also emphasized that she would add a dialogue element to journaling in her future classes because she would be able to make closer connections with her students. She stated, "I think personally I would like to have the one where the teacher responds back to the students because it's nice seeing my entries but it would be neat to have that dialogue with the teacher...It's also like when you get feedback from a teacher, it's really motivational." As Stillman, Anderson, and Struthers (2014) stated, "rather than focusing on correcting students' written language, dialogue journals emphasize authentic communication" (p. 147).

Elizabeth's comments regarding the multimodal respond journal seemed to capture the essence of the messages contained in the teachers' responses: "Like I'm going to give them that artistic freedom...to express themselves not just in words. I think even doing video responses if they are really good with the technical stuff. (See figure 6.) Even poetry responses like we did with music...there are so many different things that you could do." Short, Kauffman, and Kahn (2000) posited that integrating multi-modal practices into classroom learning "...provides students with alternative perspectives and so support them in more complex thinking" (p. 164).



Figure 6: Teacher self-expression

Considerations for Future Implementations

An important goal of action research is the improvement of one's own practice. The three teachers who participated in our action research project provided us with valuable working material for future implementations. While retaining the elements contained in the original component, we would incorporate a number of additions or modifications. First, creating a space where teachers and the course instructor can establish dialogue would be an important consideration for further use. When Chandler (1997) invited her students to provide input on the use of dialogue journals in her pre-service class, they emphasized the importance of receiving feedback that was "honestly as a human being" (p. 48), rather than general questions or corrective statements. Engaging in dialogue would require time commitment, especially with a larger size class. As an alternative, the instructor could respond to journals on a rotating basis, designating specific teacher groupings every week (Bean & Zulich, 1989).

Secondly, offering teacher candidate opportunities to interact with classmates would provide opportunities to encounter additional perspectives on specific subject matter as well as means of communication. For instance, teacher candidates could respond to each other's entries by way of a variety of configurations, such as pair-shares to round robin journaling (Henning,

2011; Stillman, Anderson & Struthers, 2014). Peer interaction, which Chandler (1997) also advocated for further validation of teacher candidates' responses, could play a valuable role in inserting dialogue into journaling practice. As is the case with any form of journaling, basic guidelines, such as respecting others' responses and maintaining confidentiality need to be established collaboratively. Furthermore, Coombs and Goodwin (2013) stated that dialogue contributes to "deeper teacher reflection and inquiry as well as increased understanding on behalf of the new teachers and their mentors" (p. 64).

Thirdly, although the use of multimodalities via tangible and found materials would still be the focus of future journaling, electronic means of interaction, such as a class wiki or blog, could supplement the in-class journal, while expanding the range of learning among teachers (Luce-Kapler, 2007; Zhang, 2009). Basic guidelines regarding respect and confidentiality would apply here also.

Fourthly, courses change over time. Curricular revisions occur or the number of required hours fluctuates. Whatever the reason, the activities included in the journaling component can be altered or changed to suit the evolving goals of the course. An important consideration is that they would generate reflective inquiry (Coombs and Goodwin, 2013).

Concentrating on a smaller number of participants can lead to larger avenues for future investigation. Taking into account the findings of our research generated by the four teachers' journals, the content of their answers to the questionnaire and the transcriptions of the follow-up interviews, three themes emerged—interpersonal and intrapersonal reflections, expanded use of expressions, and teaching practice. Using these findings as a starting point, we would proceed with future research by inviting a larger number of teachers to participate in a study of the journaling component, which would incorporate our "considerations for future implementations". Collaborating with instructors teaching another section of the same methods course, or even collaborating with methods instructors teaching another subject area, such as social studies, would provide considerable working material to further improve the journaling component for teacher education.

Concluding Comments

When Lentine (1992) wanted to help her students avoid being intimidated by a blank page she told them, "Think of your journal as a snapshot album and yourself as a roving photographer clicking a shutter on life. Include light and dark contrasts, color, texture, angles and circles, portraits, landscapes. See life through various lenses: telescopic, microscopic, wide-angle, and close-up" (p. 47). Our action research study on the implementation of a multimodal journal component in a language arts methods class responded to the need for further investigation into teacher narrative inquiry. As the above teachers' comments indicated, they greatly benefitted from their participation in the various multimodal activities, expanding their views of themselves and their everyday world in association with their current and future teaching. Their comments also generated recommendations for future implementations. Discovering their uniqueness in relation to others, conveying their thoughts and feelings with a deeper sense of their own voice, acquiring a stronger connection with others' perspectives, revisiting earlier events and activities to recognize their importance in relation to current perceptions and actions, and much more emanated from the teachers' experiences in the multimodal journal component. Vinz (1996) stated, "...we are constantly in the process of

composing our lives” (p. 23). Multimodal response journaling has the capacity to play an integral role in supporting teachers’ inquiry into their recurring teaching narratives and thus place them in a better position to engage their own students in the learning process.

Appendix A

Journals in the Junior/Intermediate Language Arts Questionnaire

Name:

In the space below, please include your comments on the educational effectiveness and appropriateness of the journal for (i) engaging you in the study of your own teaching narrative, and (ii) preparing you to teaching language/arts to students in the junior (4-6) and intermediate (7-10) divisions. Please be as specific as possible, considering such factors as:

- materiality (the physical aspects of constructing, personalizing and using the journal)
- aesthetic connections (e.g., personal aspects of learning such as connections to your prior knowledge, life experiences, background, feelings)
- efferent connections (e.g., knowledge gleamed for use in your current classes, practice teaching experiences, and future practice)

Appendix B

The following includes a sampling of the specific activities used to generate journal entries.

Multiple Intelligence as Flow

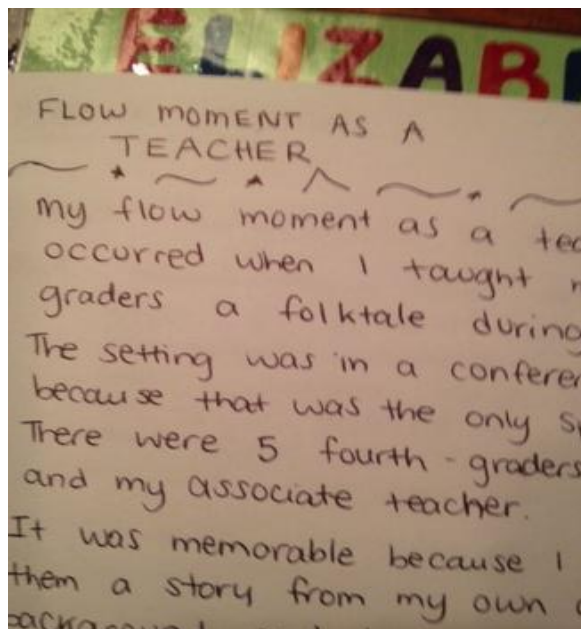


Figure 7: Multiple intelligence as flow

For the first journal exercise, teachers wrote about a specific learning situation where they experienced “flow”—a state of complete immersion in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), such as playing in a league soccer game, or solving a complicated math problem. Small group and whole class sharing followed. Then, the teachers heard about Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (Stanford, 2003), and selected one that best represented their flow experience by writing it on separate post-it notes. Next, teachers placed their post-its under corresponding headings of intelligences arranged across the classroom blackboard. A whole-class discussion on the pattern emerging from the placement of everyone’s post-its followed, with special emphasis placed on the teachers’ approaches to classroom instruction in relation to their preferred intelligences. (See figure 7.)

Leaving Home

To make connections to the concept of running away from home, a theme in an assigned novel, teachers first listened to The Beatles' song, *She's Leaving Home* (Lennon & McCartney, 1967). While listening, they responded in their journals, guided by a number of prompts such as, "What are you feeling?" and "What images come to mind?" At the end of the song, teachers completed their entry. Next, teachers shared their responses with another class member. A whole class discussion followed. For the second part of the activity, teachers, in their journals, conveyed a time in their lives when they wanted to run away from home either metaphorically or in real time. As they composed their experience, they considered such questions as, What or whom were you running from? and Did you take anything with you? Then, armed with an array of colored paper, teachers selected the colored sheet that best represented their memory. Using only their fingers (Milgrom, 1992), teachers tore the paper into their experience as a realistic or abstract form, which they glued into their journals. (See figure 8.) Sharing in pairs preceded a whole class discussion on what they learned about themselves, particularly in relation to the use of multimodalities.

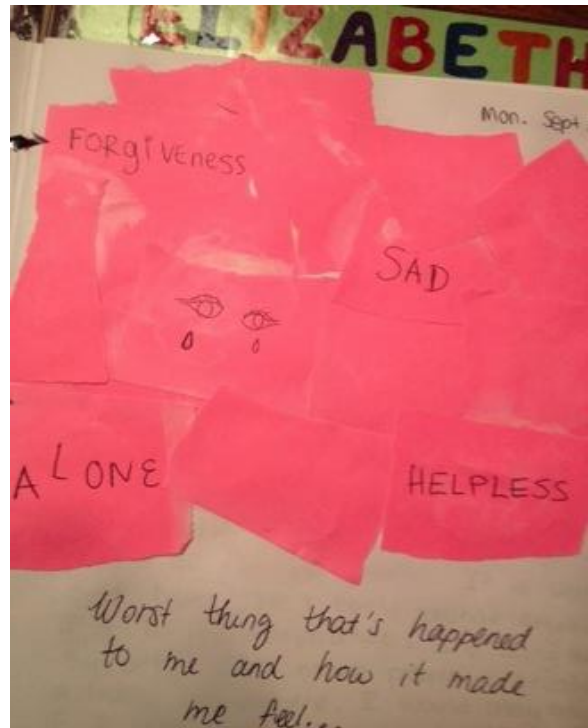


Figure 8: Leaving home

Book as Educator

After the course instructor read an excerpt from one of her favorite books, and discussed the reasons for its personal and professional importance, teachers then identified a fiction or nonfiction book that influenced their life. In their journals, they briefly described the plot, setting, characters, theme and conflict, followed by their aesthetic and efferent reaction to it (Rosenblatt, 1982). That is, what was personally activated for them, and what knowledge or information did they take away for later use. After volunteers shared their journal entries, a discussion on the influence of books ensued, while making specific connections to the importance of using them in language arts and across the school curriculum.

Jumping into a Painting

Drawing from Lelli's (1990) activity on connecting abstract art to writing, teachers first imagined a frame around Van Gogh's (1888) painting entitled *Starry Night Over the Rhone* projected on the classroom screen. Then, in their journals, teachers responded as the course instructor guided them through a series of prompts such as the following: Sitting on the frame of the painting, what do you see? Jumping onto the surface of the painting, what texture do you

feel? Do you decide to stay or leave? Within their small groupings, teachers shared their journal entries, focusing on the differences among each other's answers as well as the general experience of participating in the activity, which was then expanded upon in the a whole class conversation.

Contour Drawings

After first being read the picture book entitled *The Dot* (Reynolds, 2003), which is about an artistically discouraged girl who gradually becomes encouraged by her teacher to draw, teachers selected an ordinary everyday object from among their possessions. Next in their journals, they draw the object without looking at the paper, nor lifting their pens. Teachers share their drawings within their groupings. Next, teachers go through the same process while focusing on a face. Once again, they shared each other's drawings and responded to the activity within a whole class discussion. At the conclusion of the discussion, they comment about both experiences in their journals.

Metaphor Medley

Adapted from Garcia's (1990) lesson on creative writing, this activity encouraged teachers to experience the concept of metaphor in relation to a specific word of their choice, such as *identity* or *home*, featured in our assigned novel. First, in their journals, each teacher wrote associations connected to their chosen word for each of the following categories: *book, place, color, song, book, film, feeling, object, shape, and sound*. For example, one teacher who had selected *identity* for her word, associated *library* for the category *place*, and *rainbow* for the category *color*. Next, teachers used their associations to compose a paragraph starting with the sentence stem, *Identity (or their chosen word) is...* Sharing, first in pairs, and then in the entire group followed.

Illustration Response

As a way to experience Louise Rosenblatt's (1982) reader response theory in which individuals transact in a work as a lived-through event or happening evoked by related words and images teachers studied an illustration of Ashley Bryan's (1997) work entitled *Z* in his poetry book displayed on the classroom screen. In particular, they concentrated on details such as, color, line, shape, and general first impressions, which they recorded in their journals. Next, the teachers described in writing how the illustration represented their lives. After completing their entries, teachers shared with one other classmate, and then the whole class. At the conclusion of the activity, the course instructor reviewed key elements of Rosenblatt's reader response theory, focusing on a reader's stance—aesthetic, what is personally activated, and/or efferent, what is carried away (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995).

Story Completion

Having access to a variety of materials, such as crayons, markers, pens and construction paper, teachers, working in their journals, first listened to an instructor-composed story stem pertaining to Big Foot visiting a group of teenage campers one moonlit night. Next, with George Gershwin's (1936) work entitled *Hurricane* playing in the background, teachers selected the materials of their choice and completed the story. After sharing their story completion with another classmate, volunteers read their stories to the class and also reflected on their choice of materials. The activity concludes with teachers writing a final response on their experience with the activity.

Found Object

After viewing a film on assemblage and ecology artist Ron Noganosh (Churchill, 2005), and revisiting the biography and some of the works of Ashley Bryan (2009), teachers selected an object from a box containing such things as cassette tapes, bottle tops, and bubble wrap. In their journals, teachers then examined their objects in relation to such questions as: Where did this object come from? Who had it before me? What can I make using this object? After sharing their responses within their individual groups, a whole-class discussion occurred. Teachers then worked together in groups to select a scene from an assigned novel, which they subsequently enacted using puppets they made from an array of found materials.

Poetry Connection

To begin a poetry lesson, teachers first recorded their initial reactions to the word *poetry* in their journals, guided by the following questions: What are your experiences with poetry? Would you elect to teach poetry in your classroom? Do you feel comfortable teaching poetry? After sharing answers in a whole-class discussion, teachers participated in a response activity adapted from Doyle's (1992) article on expanding responses to poetic works. The course instructor first read the poem, *Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923) to the teachers, who could also follow a written version on the classroom screen. The teachers then wrote down their initial reactions to the poem. After sharing their entries in smaller groupings, volunteers read their entries out loud to the whole class, after which the course instructor shared several different interpretations of the poem found in Doyle's article. Teachers then returned to their journals, revising their initial responses to the poem, if needed.

Remembered Teacher

In this activity, adapted from Colvin's (1994) exercise on using images to compose a teaching philosophy, teachers first listened to the instructor reading a few excerpts from O'Reilly-Scanlon's (1992) book on individuals' positive accounts of former educators. Next, teachers described in their journals their own positive experiences of a memorable educator. After reading their entries to the other teachers in their group, teachers then selected words and phrases from the entries that would exemplify their vision of an exemplary educator. Still working within their

groups, and using their selected words and phrases, they collaborated to compose a piece of their choice, such as a poem or word web, that represents the characteristics of an effective educator of language arts. Upon completion of the finished products, a whole-class sharing and discussion ensued.

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