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Poems Found Among the Resolution Scrapbooks: A Teacher Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract: Six pre-service teachers participated in a component of narrative inquiry that took place the week before their teacher education program began. The component offered the teachers a variety of multimodal activities, such as body biographies, teaching museums, and paper tearing representations, all making use of repurposed materials, to critically consider their recurring narratives in relation to their recurring pedagogical beliefs and practices. Handmade journals and resolution scrapbooks acted as places to reflect and record their responses (Author). For this paper, I turned to narrative inquiry supported by found poetry and focus on the part of the component that contains the written contents of the teachers' resolution scrapbooks. More specifically, I asked, "What are the effects of the application of the resolution scrapbook on the recurring narratives of six pre-service teachers?"

Introduction

Six pre-service teachers participated in a weeklong component of teacher narrative inquiry that took place on a voluntary basis the week before their teacher education program began. The component, consisting of five two-hour daily sessions, and an additional one taking place at the beginning of the second term, offered the pre-service teachers, hereafter referred to as teachers, a variety of multimodal activities, such as body biographies and teaching museums, and paper tearing representations, all making use of repurposed materials, to critically consider their recurring pedagogical beliefs and practices. Handmade journals and resolution scrapbooks acted as places to reflect and record their responses (Morawski & Rottmann, 2016). For this paper, I turned to narrative inquiry supported by found poetry and focused on the written contents of the teachers' resolution scrapbooks. More specifically, I asked, "What are the effects of the application of the resolution scrapbook on the recurring narratives of six pre-service teachers?"

Background

In his book, *When Teachers Face Themselves*, Jersild (1955/1970) emphasised that in order for teachers to make sense of their students' experiences of learning, they needed to look inward upon their own recurring experiences as both individuals and teachers. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) maintained, "Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first

and foremost a way of thinking about experience” (p. 477). Furthermore, pertinent research underscored the integral role that narratives play in teachers’ daily agendas, from establishing a system of classroom management to working with students with special needs (Davis & Murphy, 2016; Saleh, Menon & Clandinin, 2014; Schultz & Ravitch, 2013). Multimodalities, an amalgam of available modes of meaning making, such as collage and film (Cyr, 2009; Siegel, 2006), have already shown great potential for facilitating teacher narrative inquiry, tapping into their full



Figure 1: Resolution scrapbook covers

range of potential to learn (Albers, Holbrook & Harste, 2010). Moreover, Leggo (2008) maintained that narratives can be told in many different genres, from cartoon to clothing, from illustration to journal, from waxworks to yarn. Based on prior work in social work (Aust, 1981; Heegard, 1991; Lowenstein, 1995), and then transported to the English classroom (Morawski, 2012), the resolution scrapbook offered the pre-service teachers a place to record and reflect on their responses as they inquired into their teaching narratives by way of multiple means from body biographies (Morawski, 2010) to metaphor medley (Garcia, 1990), all making use of repurposed materials such as cardboard, ribbon, abandoned sheets of construction paper, and the spines of discarded notebooks. To construct the actual scrapbooks, teachers used large sheets of cream-coloured paper to create four-leaf fold-a-books (Bohning & Cuccia, 1990), simple origami books that “...require no glue, tape, stitching, fasteners, or staples” (p. 527). The final book consisted of a front and back cover and six pages

in between, each of which acted as a repository for the teachers’ thoughts and feelings as they proceeded through each of the daily multimodal activities. To convey the written contents of the teachers’ responses in the their resolution scrapbooks, I used found poetry, which offered me ways of staying connected to the teachers’ experiences (Burchell, 2010). Furthermore, Butler-Kisber and Stewart (2009) stated, “Found poetry not only mediates different kinds of understanding, but also enhances the relational dimensions of research” (p. 4).

For example, to help her make sense of the complex writing of Blau, a former forward-looking theater director and now an eminent performance theorist, Prendergast (2004) used found poetry as she engaged with his work entitled *The Audience*. She found that her interpretative reading and poetic rewriting of his work allowed her to move her “...understanding of audience into a new, problematized and critically aware place within [her] doctoral curriculum research project” (p. 90). To more fully understand the notion of identity in relation to her family’s storied heritage, which included a long-buried secret, Pryer (2005) entered into close readings of several related theoretical sources. In particular, she used the words of these works, “editing and arranging “fragments of original texts to create texts in new forms” (p. 3). As a result of this process, she came to discover that one’s perspective of identity may be “anti-essentialist” (p. 2). To compose three found poems on “The necessity of art” (p. 325), Sullivan (2000) attended to the words in John Dewey’s *Art as Experience*. More

specifically, she focused on three themes—the act of expression, on rhythm, and space-time, with each one drawing from specific pages of his book. To quote her lines from the beginning of space-time, “Physicists have been forced to see/the artist’s discovery from the beginning/not space and time, but space-time/spatial and temporal always together” (p. 327). In essence, poetry is a means of engagement with language to give voice to lived experiences and their recurring impact on life (Leggo, 2005, 2006).

Methodology

Participants

At the beginning of August, I issued a written invitation to teachers who were to begin a one-year Canadian teacher certification program in September. Teachers come to the program with undergraduate, and sometimes graduate degrees, as well as prior experience in education. On a first-come, first-served basis in response to my invitation, I accepted the six students who responded to participate, three females and three males representing the subject areas of History, English, Geography, Music, and Biology.

Narrative Inquiry

To derive the working material of experiences from each of the teachers’ resolution scrapbooks, I used narrative inquiry, the study of the way individuals make meaning of their worlds via the construction of their own stories (Kooy, 2006; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In general, such stories emerge from the selected accumulation of daily life experiences with the world and the roles assumed in it. In the case of teacher candidates, who enter classrooms with their own unique store of experiential knowledge, the stories by which they teach play integral roles in the development and implementation of their teaching agendas, including making a multitude of daily decisions. That is, whether it is the response to a student’s lack of interest in learning new material, or a disagreement with a colleague over classroom management, a teacher’s narrative needs to be considered. Recently, a number of means have been used to help teachers make sense of the stories that comprised their teaching narratives.

For example, MacKenzie (2011) revealed that her various life roles helped to shape her pedagogy, while Sinner (2008) discovered that her elementary school artwork represented the physical and social-cultural places of her private and public worlds. In addition, Spitler (2011) found that her pre-service education students transformed their views and practices on teaching specific subject areas by examining their early recollections related to their literacy biographies. Rossiter (2002) states, “Learners connect new knowledge with lived experience and weave it into existing narratives of meaning of teaching” (p. 1). For my study, the various activities of the resolution scrapbook allowed the teachers to make connections to important working material of their storied narratives to help them make sense of their current and future teaching.

Data Collection and Analysis

To give voice to facets of their teaching narratives, I composed poems based on words found in their resolution scrapbook entries. That is, I used found poetry, a means of analysis where "...words are extracted from transcripts and shaped into poetic form (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 83). According to Ely (2007), "Poems streamline, encapsulate, and define, usually with brevity but always with the intent to plumb the heart of the matter; to bring the reader to live the emotions, the tone, the physicality, the voiced and not-voiced moments" (p. 575). Furthermore, Shapiro (2004) claims, "Poetry speaks in a unique way from the interior of human experience..." (p. 172).

To practically and theoretically support the findings of meaning in the written and illustrated responses of the teachers via found poetry, I approached each reading as a transaction or a happening—"an active process lived through during the relationship between a reader and a text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 20-21). I used only their words, their reflections, their lived moments, their images, while moving back and forth between "...a close and more distant reading" (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009, p. 6). In particular, I strove to communicate the essence, both aesthetically and efferently, of the many aspects of their teaching narratives, generated and complemented by multimodal means. After each of the found poems, I also included my own reflections in found poetry, generated from my responses to the teachers' words.

To begin the process of composing the found poems, I acknowledged the influential role that the self plays in the meaning of a text, especially the dual role that I played as both reader and author (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1982). First I returned to the teachers' responses and reread them numerous times on several different occasions. Then, opting for an organic approach to more closely access the nuances found in the words of the teachers' entries, I used coloured highlighters to indicate initial meaning units, which I then cut apart and arranged and rearranged (Butler-Kisber, 2010; McTeer, 2013) until I arrived at the found poems. All this time, I asked myself such questions as, What do I hear?, What do I feel?, Why am I drawn to these words? (Shapiro, 2004). Finally, for the benefit of the reader, I illustrated the poems by examples of the teachers' multimodal works. Always striving to represent the voices of the teachers both aesthetically and efferently, I took into consideration the messages and accompanying feelings expressed in their responses. As Rosenblatt (1978) stated, "Always there is an individual human being choosing, selectively constructing meaning, and consciously or unconsciously transacting with the factors, contextual and human, entering into that particular situation" (p. 187). For my own found poems, I reread the teachers' found poems many times on different occasions, writing down my reflections in the form of key words, phrases, and sentences. Following the above described organic approach used for composing the teachers' poems, I produced my own poems, which I included after each one of the teachers'. As Leggo (1995) explained, "I am not writing history in the commonly understood notion of factual narration about the



Figure 2: Torn teacher memory

empirical details of people in particular places and events...I am writing my impressions, and perhaps my impressions are writing me (p. 6)

In the pages that follow, I focus on the teachers' written responses derived from their participation in the resolution scrapbook activities. To help inform the reader about the activities, I include a brief written description of each one, along with examples of the teachers' visual expressions. Hear and see the teachers' hopes, fears, joys, dreams, and tears—perfected through mistakes, embodied by insight, separated across years, and answered in dares. I begin in the middle, where it started on our first day.

Session One, Pages 3 and 4: Recollected Teacher

After listening to a lead-in of reflective readings and prompts related to teaching images (Cisneros, 1984; Colvin, 1994;

O'Reily-Scanlon, 1992; Polacco, 1998), teachers expressed their positive and negative memories of past teachers via selecting coloured sheets of paper of their choice, which they then tore into shapes that represented their experiences (Milgrom, 1992). Next, teachers glued their representations to the top half of pages 3 and 4, and then wrote about the same event on the second half of pages 3 and 4. Small group and whole class sharing followed.

The Teachers' Responses (Participants)

The Good, The Bad, Teacher as Recurring Presence

I always had trouble believing in myself, But Professor Simpson really taught me how to redirect that insecurity into becoming a better writer, a communicator of ideas.

He knew so much about the world, He always seemed to know what to say always full of charisma, intellect, I never wanted to let him down.

A Sharp dresser, a Walking wiki, I won't forget the time he took the TIME.

Made an impact beyond the classroom, Charismatic, unorthodox, human, He was so impressive I will never forget. I have since used the same technique in my own teaching.

EMBARASSMENT, FEAR

Read out loud our marks and errors, incorrect sentences. Work torn apart,

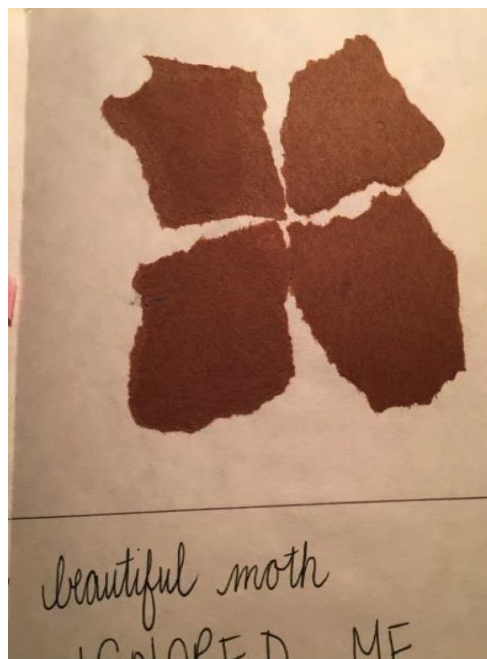


Figure 3: Torn teacher memory

CRIED
LEFT
THE CLASSROOM

The consequences were
SEVERE.
Ignored my beautiful moth
Left out,
less confident
I was doing really well,
All humans make mistakes.
Shafted me!
I felt like something had been taken away, but I was able to transcend.

My Response (Author):

Past experiences recalled

TEACHERS

Role Models

Positive,
negative,
hurtful,
helpful,
encouraging,
discouraging,
mistaken
supported.

Memories have a way of entering into our teaching lives, shaping present beliefs and practices.

As the teachers selected, recalled, confronted, embraced prior educators, they came to consider the impact such knowing can have on their lives of everyday teaching.

In the midst of a frustrating and overwhelming day,

A student sits and struggles with a one-page essay,

Could Professor Simpson reappear once again with words of encouragement thoughtfully conveyed?

At the end of a day filled with mistakes and uncertainty,

Will a student doing her best encounter ears of empathy?

Her moth featured on the classroom wall.

Her confidence rising more than ten meters tall.

Do we teach how we were taught, or how we would like to teach? Returning to past teachers can help to reconsider present teaching ways.

Session 2, Page 1: Multiple Intelligences in Flow

Teachers first viewed two film excerpts representing traditional and unconventional teaching styles from the *The Dead Poets Society*. Teachers then wrote about a learning situation where they experienced “flow”— a state of complete immersion in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), such as playing a musical instrument, or solving a math problem. Small group and whole class sharing followed. Next, teachers selected two of Gardner’s multiple intelligences (Stanford, 2003) that best represented their flow experience by writing each one on separate post-it notes, which they then placed under corresponding headings of intelligences arranged across the classroom blackboard. A whole-class discussion on the emerging pattern of post-its followed. Finally, teachers placed their post-its on page 1 of their resolution scrapbooks and then, in writing, reflected on connections between their flow experience and what it means to be a teacher.

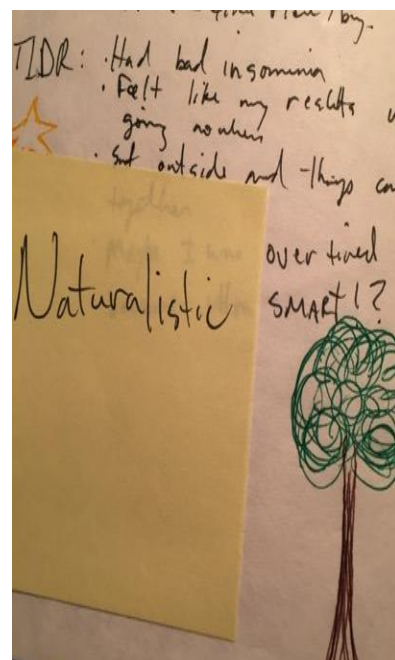


Figure 4: Multiple intelligence in teaching

The Teachers’ Responses:

Timeless Concentration
Intrapersonal Interpersonal
Verbal Linguistic,
Bodily Kinesthetic Naturalistic,

Logical Mathematical Visual Spatial,
A state of timeless concentration.

Bad bio insomnia in the outside enviro labs of my third year

CRANKING

*a research paper hopeless tired drained
Sitting under an evening sky the stars brought a
moment of clarity
Overtired, time flew my Results*

ULTRASMART!

Smallest distractions irritate, and fade into a bubble of concentration

One idea leads the next, never ending struggle of possibilities, of seeing the small details.

Pouring over war diaries

Respecting the boundaries—fact or fiction

The memories of the dead.

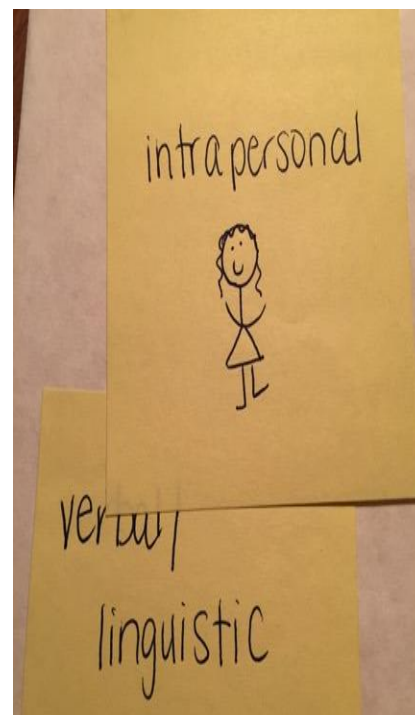


Figure 5: Multiple Intelligence in teaching

You always knew it was going to go that way,
Passionate research
Flies by in time
 read
 written
 noted
A recurring happening
Nothing else exists, I wrote it again and again and again my fingers kept
Typing TIMELESS concentration in visual spaces.
Absorbed,
In the logical details of the greater picture
Created
Never bored or impatient,
Leaving a bubble of concentration
We will never stop reaching for
FLOW
In our classrooms.

My Response:

Posting Post-its
Two at a time.

Emerging from the flow of
naturalistic trees
intrapersonal figures,
absorbed in deep satisfaction

Visual details in space

Teachers have their own ways of learning.
Their own approaches to teaching.

Show and tell,

Direct instruction,

The classroom as exploratory laboratory,

A studio where
hours fly by
In captivation
Does time stand still in classrooms today?

Are students permitted to keep
writing and writing,

minds focused on the scene,
fingers typing and typing?

Are students allowed
countless hours to pour,
searching the world
for answers and more?

Do classrooms allow students
to write, read, delete,
questioning boundaries,
where learning and teaching meet?

Teachers

Remember the learning that made you flow
Think of those times when you want your students to know.

Session 2, Page 2: Sibling as Co-Authors of Our Teaching.

The sibling positions that individuals assume in their families play important roles in the formation and enactment of their teacher identities (Morawski, 1999). After sharing excerpts from novels (Frank, 1993; Hinton, 1967; Patterson, 1980) capturing the essence of characters portraying specific sibling positions, teachers identified their own sibling positions. Next, after grouping themselves according to these positions, each group brainstormed and presented a list of characteristics representing their specific sibling position. To make connections between sibling position and teaching narrative, each teacher first constructed a foldable booklet (Fisher, Zike & Frey, 2007) by folding a piece of construction paper in half lengthwise and then making three equally distanced flaps by cutting horizontally from the edge of the top page up to the fold. Next, to represent their own sibling position, each teacher selected three characteristics from their brainstormed list, writing one characteristic on the top of each booklet flap.

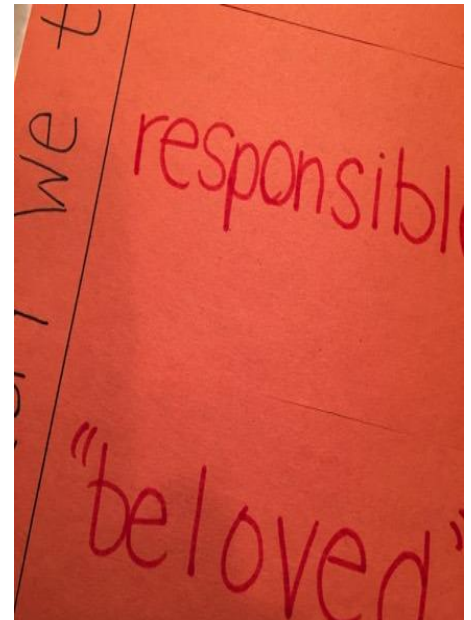


Figure 6: Sibling teacher co-author

Under each corresponding flap, each teacher then addressed, in writing, the implications of that characteristic for their teaching practice. A whole group discussion ensued.

The Teachers' Responses:

Who am I?

An Only Child

Overachieving Responsible Adventurer, I am the centre of my family.

Beloved pride of the family

Fused on work.

An independent individual

Who can bear down and survive moments of extreme stress in teaching.

An Eldest Child

Reliable Sacrificing Leader, I am the one who left.

An older brother prepared to lead the way in the chaos of students' concerns.

A steady problem solver

Prepared at all times

To let learners learn.

A caring responsible protector,
Yet having the power to tease and control
I am wary of showing domination in teaching

Instead creating a curriculum for all.

A Youngest Child,

Loud Cheerful Adventurer, I am the youngest on both sides of my family.

An outspoken diplomat
moving beyond classroom walls

Exploring the everyday active in life
Creating original lessons
In loving humor.

A free spirit and gentle caregiver,
I will reach troubled students

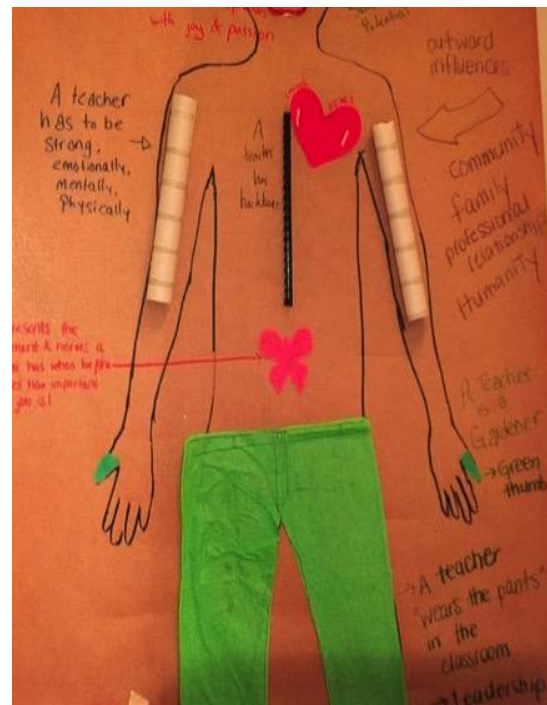


Figure 7: Teacher body biography

I will try things that haven't been done before
I will take charge.

My Response:

Only child

Eldest in the family

A youngest daughter

In the middle of six.

Roles assumed and assigned
in the family constellation,
recur throughout life.

Replayed in friendships,
playground squabbles,
homes,
neighborhoods
and office meetings.

Classrooms
curricular agendas of daily decision-making,
creative enterprises
formed by members of human geographies,
moving within a defined space and place,
Always searching to belong.

Quiet thinker,
Adventurer,
Rebel,
Optimist,
Pessimist,
Victim,
Reliable leader,
Defender of the family name.

The teachers,
one by one,
and together,
reconsidered their teaching
in relation to their sibling configurations.
Reenactment told in self-identified attributes and liabilities,
always moving toward the continuous process of becoming teachers.



Figure 8: Teacher body biography 1

When students challenge their authority to speak
Will they reply as strong leaders or remain voiceless and meek?

When students sit at her desk discouraged and refusing to act
Will they take it personally, shut down, or approach them with tact?

Which approach will they assume
And which will they revise?
Can be helped by their awareness
Of past sibling lives.

Session 3, Page 5: Embodied Teaching.

Teachers first viewed an excerpt of a film on Ron Noganosh (Churchill, 2005), an assemblage artist. Next working in two groups, teachers engaged in round robin journal exercises focusing on the sentence stem, “A teacher is...” A brief discussion with everyone ensued, after which teachers reassembled in their respective groups to construct a body biography of the concept of teacher (Morawski, 2010). The teachers first drew life-size body outlines on sheets of paper. Then, using a variety of writing implements, various craft supplies, and repurposed materials such as string, yarn, and fabric, they filled in their body outlines with pertinent quotes, symbols, phrases, and physical features. Teachers then taped their respective biography to the wall, inviting discussion, which culminated in individual journal responses. The following day, teachers placed photographs of their body biographies on page 5.

The Teachers’ Responses:

A Teacher Embodied Is...Ideally...
A tool to greatness,
a light house in the dark,
a gardener, a leader, communicator,
with white hair representing years of wisdom.

Passionate,
Creative,
An observant expert who wears the pants in the classroom,

opens doors into the outer world
Large eyes see things in students others don’t
Alive with joy and passion.

A Teacher is...
Committed
Hardworking

A smiling and active communicator
With a flexible loving heart,
Building foundations
hungry for knowledge.

Mobile
Flexible
Foundation builder
With nervous excitement,
realizing the importance of her job
to answer our curiosity.

Creative (OOPS a repeat!)
Inspirational

An outward listener
with a built-in backbone,
Needing to be strong
A teacher speaks things others do not.

Sensitive

Discriminating

Within the school nation
Tread lightly down
the pathways of our students,
Teaching is not just a job

It is a life style,
A lighthouse opening doors,
A net to catch students,
When they
FALL...

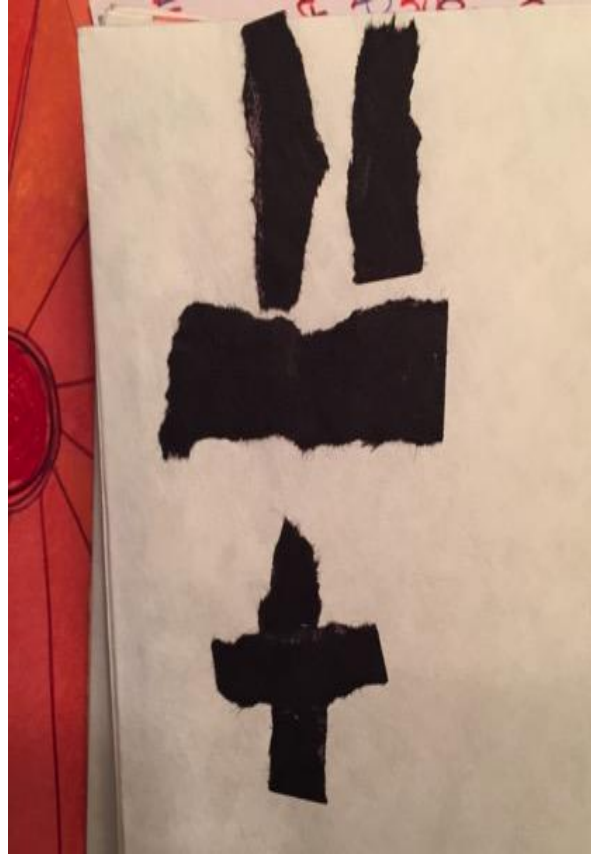


Figure 9: Torn teacher memory

My Response:

Embodied in life-sized compositions of found materials, the teachers cast concrete visuals of what teacher means to them, what they aspire to be.

Quotes, colors, shapes, lines, textures, and shades, all came together to express the many facets of a life in the classroom

—a lighthouse in the middle of the outer world, a garden of curiosity.

In life-sized compositions,
the teachers revisit their images of what a teacher means to them,
what they aspire to be.

Amid the possibilities of working material
comprised of values, beliefs, memories, approaches, practices, and experiences,
they re-inform themselves and each other,

Revisiting

What does it mean to be a teacher?

What if each teacher could create a gallery show?
An annual exhibition featuring what they have come to know.

Body biographies lined up in a row
A place where teachers needing reflection could go.

Session 4, Page 6: Curating Our Teaching Museum.

Teachers first viewed a film clip from *Black Board Jungle*, which focused on a teacher in a potentially violent encounter with one of his students. Next, with music playing in the background, and using a variety of materials, such as markers, and crayons, students completed the ending of the scene in their journals. First in pairs and then as a whole group, teachers shared their entries, while addressing such questions as the following: What choices did you make to complete the scene? What/Who influenced your decisions? Did you begin with one medium, and then switch to another? At the completion of the discussion, the session transitioned into the main phase of the activity, adapted from Collison's (2004) lesson on establishing a classroom museum in a secondary literature class. First, teachers identified three artifacts brought from home and the significance that they associated with their teaching narratives. Teachers then set up their displays in designated spaces, with each artifact having a card that contained name, title, medium, date acquired, description, and significance. Each teacher presented the details of their displays, followed by a general circulation to obtain closer views. At the conclusion of the session, teachers included their cards and photographs of their displays on page 6 of their scrapbooks.

The Teachers' Responses:

Our Exhibition Catalogue
No pain No gain
Struggle and Success
A friend
Guides me through my first marathon.

Then my band links to my past
Youth culture, ethics, DIY
Forked Tongues Record
2009.

National Geographic
Literature
Access to information
Opens the world to my students.

Rebelling in a high school scavenger hunt
The Diplomats' license plates go missing
Is a government take-over taking place?
The RCMP investigates.

The administration suspends
Barred from graduation and final exams
I am issued a notification of suspension
A reminder of the contempt for choosing
the school's reputation.

Over a student's life.

Plagiarized from the World Book
Rife with errors
A good chunk of what I wrote featured a professor's own ideas
Tempered my pride.

Past experiences emerge in the everyday of my teaching life
Fauré Fantasie, The Hobbit, three summers of teaching in a public library
All auditions for a western flute solo
Can literature and music teach us to learn?

A mad minute



Figure 10: Curating a teaching museum

The students who always wore uniforms
Brought flowers and bracelets
To dress up their teachers
Who were free to wear what they wanted.

Like the felt hat that I bought for myself in Salzburg,
Austria or the wooden ring made by my girlfriend's
father
Reminders of why I want to be a great teacher
A master made from years of hard work.

But I will never forget the influence of family.
My mother read incredible tales that motivated,
inspired to this day the passion to teach reading
runs through me.

My Response:

Like curators in local museums,
teachers turned artifacts into local exhibits.

Maquettes of meaning told through keepsakes.
backed in time remembered
in present teaching.

Circulating among the displays,
Catalogued objects tell stories,

Letters,

Fabric,

Songs,

Books,

Flowers,

and a Felt Hat

—each one telling about the other.

Recollecting the stolen diplomat's plates,
the school administration decided his fate.

Reminders of what motivated students to read,
a mother's incredible tale takes the lead.

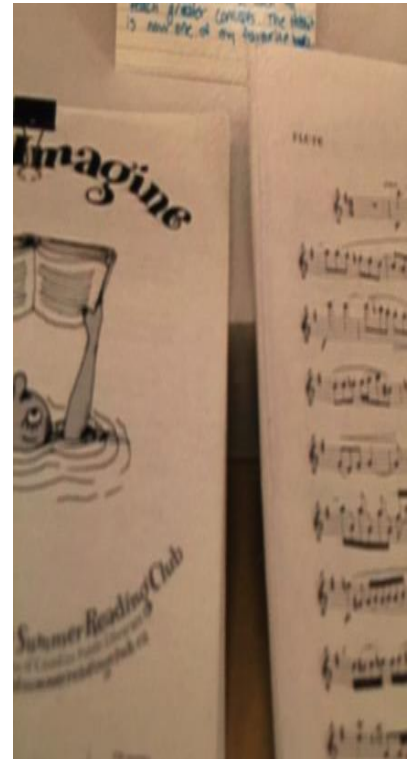


Figure 11: Curating a teaching museum

Auditions, solos, flowered bracelets and a run.
Which new ones will the teachers add
when their first year is done?

Session 5, Front Cover: Metaphor Medley:

Based on Garcia's (1990) lesson on using sentence stems and metaphors for creative writing, in this activity teachers first made associations in relation to the concept *teacher* for each of the following words: *building, song, book, film, feeling, object, shape, time, and sound*. For example, one teacher identified *A Prayer for Owen Meany* for the word, *book*, while another teacher selected a Sousa march for the word *song*. Next, in their journals, teachers used their associations to compose a paragraph starting with the sentence stem, *A teacher is...* Sharing, first in pairs, then in the entire group, followed. The teachers next selected a portion of their paragraphs to rewrite and illustrate on the covers of their resolutions scrapbooks.

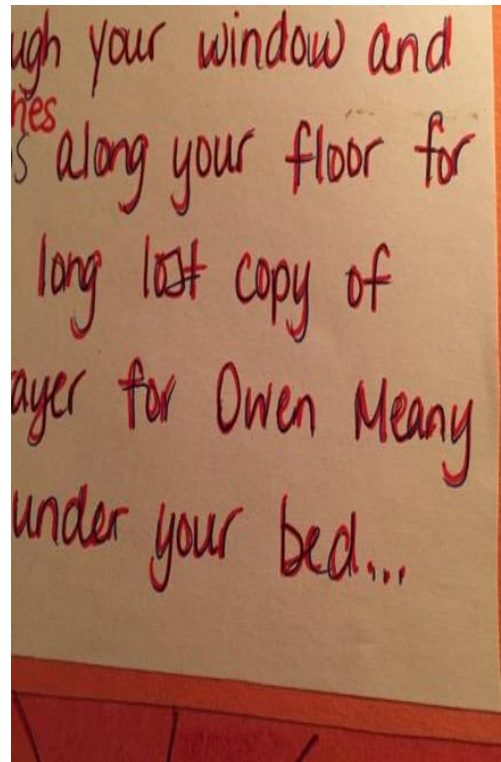


Figure 12: Metaphor cover

The Teachers' Responses:

A Teacher is...

A teacher is the Autumn sun
that shines through your window,
searching along your floor for that long lost copy of
A Prayer for Owen Meany lying under your bed...

A teacher is a benevolent authority,
like Mr. Lazar in the eponymous film;
students feel safe and drowsy hearing the
chalk-writing swish in the early morning.

A teacher is a body of characteristics
of ever changing structures assisting others
to learn new things whether about school subjects
or about oneself.

A teacher is superhuman!
Our role model,
knowledge giver,
The enabler of our future selves.

A teacher is a bringer of hope and excitement,

like the promise of a brand-new, blank-paged workbook.
Surrounded by the feelings of the crisp cool air
I was about to take in.

A teacher is the dawn of early morning
on the promise of a brisk fall day
an expectation of something new.
Entering the music room to the sounds of a spirited Sousa march,

I lift my baton.

My Response:

In the metaphor of associations
teachers re-commemorate
their lives

A promise of hope
passes through a window
in autumn sun shine.

Pyramids of curiosity
gifts of future selves
in human knowledge

Teachers are the possibilities of themselves
The expectations of yet another lesson
Facing their students every morning.

Session 6, Back Cover: Letter to my Future Teaching Self.

For the back cover, teachers wrote a letter to either their future students, past teachers, or themselves. In the letter, they made connections between their past in relation to their expectations and goals as aspiring teachers. Upon completion, each teacher placed the letter in an envelope, and glued it to the back cover of their scrapbooks. At the conclusion of the activity, teachers shared their letters.

The Teachers' Responses:

Dear Former Teacher,

I know that it is important to let teachers know when their work is successful. I like to think that your influence on me has been a resounding success. I have always known that I wanted to be a teacher. But you showed me just what kind of teacher I want to be.

Not only did you inspire me as a musician and a student. You inspired me to pour my passion into sharing a gift you gave to me first, the gift of music. Without you I would never have had the confidence to discover that the thing I was made to do—teach music.

Thank you for giving me a foundation to build on. Thank you for pushing me to work harder. Thank you for giving me advice—school related and personal life. Thank you for teaching me to dream big. And thank you for helping me get to where I am today.

Not everyone is as lucky as I am; to know my path so early in life. Not everyone is lucky enough to have a teacher as kind, caring, dedicated and inspiring as you. I hope I can do the same for someone else some day. Thank you Madame...

Your Former Student

Dear Self,

I write to you from the past, knowing that at some point you will need encouragement. You have finally made it to where you want to be. Do not forget this is an upward calling. Just think of how much potential exists in a single day.

I know sometimes it was a struggle when you had your own tutoring centre, but even with limited resources, you made the experience so fun. You held promise in every student and never doubted if they could finish any task or achieve any goal.

You're already halfway there. Keep going. I hope you shrugged off some cynicism. This is not a paycheck. This is your life. Take a minute to recall what happened in that classroom. The argument that no one gets an A in grade 12 English was changed. I hope you remember.

Honour Mr. Hodgson and the joy of being a student under teachers like him. Remember what it's like to be a teenager. Steel yourself against fear and fatigue. Make a difference. Love your students as you would your own. Love what you do. Be a light.

Our Selves



Figure 13: Teaching letter

My Response:

Dear Teachers,

As I look back on that one week at the end of August, I am more than reminded that narratives are comprised of many stories—especially the stories by which we teach. With thoughts and feelings ranging from scepticism to anticipation, and on the cusp of beginning your teacher education program, the six of you entered our classroom each day, uncertain about what you would uncover about your past to inform your present. Despite the possibility of encountering risks, you persevered, contributing rich working material derived from your participation in the daily activities, one building on the other. A protector feeling responsible for students. A diplomat bringing flexibility and fairness to the classroom. A sixth grader using a favourite book to teach greater concepts. A hat bought in Austria symbolizing the desire to teach. Every reclaimed piece of your past that you storied in relationship to your present underscored the integral role that narratives, and their recurring investigation, play in the continuous process of becoming a teacher. Thank you for your participation, for taking the time to narrate your life, while you look back at another autumn in the scrapbooks of your lives.

Your Multimodal Narrative Teacher

Discussion

To encourage the six teachers in my study to reach a better understanding of the relationship between their life experiences and their professional knowledge and practices, I invited them to participate in the resolution scrapbook. Each activity provided them with multiple opportunities to revisit past experiences in relation to their current pedagogical beliefs and actions.

For example, during the activity on sibling influences, teachers identified specific personal attributes they associated with their own sibling position and their implications for performance in the classroom. One teacher intimated that his strong sense of self-independence could cause him to be overbearing and intimidating to his students. Another teacher came to recognise that her perceived lack of appreciation in her family configuration could lead to a desire to dominate the classroom. For a different activity concentrating on experiences of flow in relationship to multiple intelligences, one teacher came to see her visual-spatial capacity to see details while taking in the whole picture as an asset, particularly when working with students requiring special support. A different teacher, who focused on the hours devoted to writing his thesis, realised that some of his future students may not have had such positive experiences with writing and would rather express themselves in alternate means. With each storied part of their narratives emanating from the daily activities reported in their resolution scrapbooks, the teachers reconsidered and recomposed their recurring narratives of teaching. In turn, as I transacted in the teachers' written responses to form the found poems, I became better informed of their various hopes, needs, prior life influences, and general background of experiences. In transacting in a storied text, Rosenblatt (1982) stated, "We participate in the story, we identify with the characters, we share their conflicts and their feelings" (p. 270).

In addition to researching and poetically conveying the rich entries of the six teachers, I composed my own found poems in response to theirs. For example, when I reread the poem

regarding the teachers' memories of former teachers, I responded by emphasising that such experiences can linger as reminders of the possible ramifications of our actions in the classroom. As I reconsidered the poem surrounding the artifacts that the teachers selected for their teaching museums, I responded by acknowledging the significant role that earlier life events can have on our current beliefs and approaches to teaching practice. When I reviewed the poem representing the teachers' responses to the activity on multiple intelligences, I emphasised the need to make connections between our own ways of learning and those of our students. According to Leggo (2006), "...a poetics of research is about searching, and returning to the texts of our searching, again and again..." (p. 90).

Although each found poem can stand on its own as a representation of the teachers' and my own reflections related to the activities of the resolution scrapbook, it is when the poems are read together that the notion of narrative reveals as a compilation of past experiences can influence current teaching life (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009). More specifically, the poems emphasised the wealth of life experiences that individuals bring to the teaching process, while underscoring the need for teacher educators to acknowledge and use such experiences to support narrative inquiry with their own teacher candidates. For future implementations of the resolution scrapbook, the teachers themselves could come together at the same time to collaborate with the researcher or course instructor to compose their responses in found poems. As well, scrapbooks could be digitalised allowing for the inclusion of more forms of expressions such as dance compositions and readers theatre (McCormick, 2011; Worthy & Prater, 2006). Whichever route is taken, Leggo (2008) maintains, "We need to be able to tell stories with a tentativeness, a sense of being in process, an acknowledgement that any interpretation is temporary" (p. 8) That is, as the six teachers move on in their teaching lives, other recollections and future experiences will continue to enter into the fabric of their narratives, influencing the many aspects of their classroom beliefs and practices.

Concluding Comments

As Mackenzie (2011) concluded from her own research on teacher candidates and narrative inquiry, "...it is important to start...from where they are—drawing on the memories that shape them..." (p. 8). Thus, the poems I found among the words of the six teacher's scrapbook entries expressed valuable parts of the stories by which they come to teach. Moment by moment, page by page, the teachers opened the pages of their resolution scrapbooks to reveal events from their past, which will follow them into the teaching lives of their present. A youngest child brings new ideas to old plans. A former educator inspires current ways to teach. A mother's passion for reading runs through a daughter's desire to teach. A net catches students when they fall. To quote one of the six teachers who so aptly encapsulated her experience with the resolution scrapbook,

I didn't anticipate looking back
into my past and seeing what
had influenced who I am today, but
I think the activities we've had,
opened up the door to my own memories...
opened another creative door for me to explore.

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