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Re-Imaging Student Learning Through Arts and Literacy

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Abstract
In this article, the authors consider the role that arts-integrated writing might play in shaping student learning opportunities. It explores the topic of using photos, drawings, and other images in the classroom as visual texts to mediate personal expression, thinking, and learning with language-based texts. Existing literature on multimodal curricula is briefly reviewed and ideas are provided for teachers who would like to explore this approach to writing instruction. Issues of equitable access to learning opportunities that are centered on students' multiple ways of knowing and the funds of knowledge they bring to school, as well as shifting cultural definitions of literacy and multimodality, are also explored. Specific examples of how teachers can maximize the potential of multimodal, arts-integrated teaching and learning in their classrooms are shared. The article concludes with implications for teachers, their teaching practices, and student learning.

Stacks of textured paper, flattened cereal boxes, a tangled web of ribbons and strings, scissors, bags of colored markers, shiny red and black buttons, two hefty black staplers, glue sticks, tape of all sizes and colors, scraps of fabric and sheets of old newspapers were spread on a long table at the front of the room as an invitation for teachers. As I scooted a few old magazines over a bit to make room for a ream of bright white typing paper, the teachers explored it all, taking what they would need to create their own books. (Louise)

The topic of this article is art and writing integration as professional development for teachers. Specifically, it relates the story of two literacy teacher educators exploring the potential of preservice and inservice teachers integrating art and writing instruction in their classrooms as part of their teaching practice with children.

Why is this Work Important?

We live in an ever shifting, rapidly expanding social world where both children and adults eagerly and necessarily generate multimodal texts on a daily basis. Although the realization that "communication may involve a diversity of modes – visual, written, auditory, musical, gestural, and so on" (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013, p. 97) -- is not a new one, rapid advances in technology have expanded our definitions of what it means to be literate (Siegel, 2012). In particular, visual images are currently challenging the centrality and "once dominant role of written language" (Serafini, 2013, p. 12) as a way to make and share meaning in our world.

Children construct and interact with meaningful texts in a variety of ways every day. They utilize writing and drawing, for example, to demonstrate their learning, to express themselves, to generate and share ideas, and to develop self understanding. Furthermore, adults often note young people's engagement with social media and virtual settings (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, YouTube) and recognize their desire to create and share meaning using a combination of modes, such as symbols, drawings, words, colors, photos, movement, and sounds (Harste, 2010). Outside of school, students are accustomed to selecting modes and media to express their thinking through new and interesting multimodal texts. Multimodal discourse is dominant in most children's lives today, and they bring that knowledge to school with them (Albers, 2009; Papandraeou, 2014; Shivers, Levenson, & Tan, 2017; Siegel, 2012). In fact, thinking broadly about literacy, young children are experienced meaning-makers before ever setting foot in the school classroom (Vygotsky, 1978).

Student engagement with multimodality in contexts outside of school has significant implications for literacy learning and instruction inside school (Skerrett & Hersi, 2012). Undoubtedly, teachers understand that students of all ages can construct all kinds of texts to generate ideas, create meaning, and express knowledge in many different ways and that each form of representation has the potential to contribute uniquely to their overall learning (Eisner, 1998; Flint, Allen, Nason, Rodriguez, Thornton, & Wynter-Hoyte, 2015). By the same token, however, teachers are often unprepared to integrate arts and literacy learning in their classroom, lacking the experience and confidence necessary to teach using methods that depart from a conventional perspective on literacy, such as reading and writing the printed word (Siegel, 2012).

At first glance, it seems reasonable to expect that school classrooms could provide rich settings for teachers and students to enact multimodal learning opportunities and that teacher educators could play an important role in transforming school literacy practices. Although few argue against these ideas, the reality is that the existing policies and structures of "school" and traditional print-based literacy as cultural institutions often makes it problematic to implement a meaningful multimodal curriculum (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006; Cook & Sams, 2018). After all, such change requires more than just rethinking definitions of literacy and instruction in K-12 schools; it also requires that we rethink literacy teacher education (Cook & Sams, 2018). Harste (2010) asserts

> As literacy and language arts teacher educators, we continually struggle with the tension between the restrictive culture of political mandates that value traditional approaches to literacy and how we must work to develop a culture of possibilities that engage and build upon the new literacies that students bring with them to class daily. (p. 2)

Of course, we do not know with certainty what children need to know for the future in this rapidly changing world, but, as teacher educators, we must always be concerned with possibilities, as well as the knowledge and dispositions that teachers may need to prepare students to be active participants in our society and the world. Navigating and creating complex multimodal texts requires a cognitive shift; it requires an expansion of thinking from linear processing of printed text to the parallel processing of texts composed by integrating art and writing, as well as the ability to identify relationships between ideas (Luke, 2003; Strauch-Nelson, 2011). Culturally and pedagogically, this means that the ability to read and design texts using multiple modes to make and share meaning can no longer be treated simply as an "add-on" to traditional, print-based reading and writing instruction.

Purpose

As literacy professionals and teacher educators, our reflections on arts and literacy integration, specifically visual art and writing integration, led us to consider this guiding question in our work: *In what ways can we help teachers design learning opportunities for their students to use multimodal texts to mediate personal expression, generate thinking, and support learning with language-based texts?*

Come take a second look with us as we reimagine what teachers need to know or be able to do to facilitate this kind of work in their classrooms (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006). In our exploration, we reconsider how photos, illustrations and drawings can be used as visual texts to "transform and strengthen the literacy practices and repertories of students" (Flint, Allen, Nason, Rodriguez, Thornton, & Wynter-Hoyt, 2015, p. 34). In the process of working directly with teachers, we look at a variety of personal writing and instructional engagements that involve multimodal texts as examples of how they can maximize the potential of integrated art and writing instruction in their classrooms (Albers, 2009). Before they can teach it, however, they must experience it.

Theoretical Perspectives

This project emerged from our work as members of the National Writing Project (NWP), an organization that supports a teachers-leading-teachers model of professional development for improving the writing of all learners. From this perspective, teachers as writers are better positioned to teach writing. A central belief of the NWP is that teachers' "practice is strengthened when we incorporate multiple ways of knowing that are informed by culture and experience" (https://www.nwp.org), providing a clear pathway to our work with teachers on art and writing integration as social and teaching practice. Therefore, this work is grounded in sociocultural theory, particularly the idea that text making, in all its forms, is "a social practice and a tool for thinking" (Flint, Allen, Nason, Rodriguez, Thornton, & Wynter-Hoyt, 2015, p. 25).

A Broader Definition of Literacy

The overall theoretical approach of this project is that literacies are multiple and that literacy practices as communicative practices are situated within social, cultural, and ideological contexts as students strive to construct meaning (Gee, 2015; New London Group, 2000). As literacy professionals, we are concerned with school-based issues of equitable learning opportunities that are focused on students' multiple ways of knowing and the funds of knowledge they bring to school, especially in light of shifting cultural definitions of literacy and multimodality (Harste, 2010; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Kress, 2010). That is to say, this exploratory project is focused on helping teachers to expand their own definitions of literacy, if necessary, and on supporting the reality that traditional, print-dominated literacy instruction in schools needs to shift as we recognize that students have diverse experiences and skillfully use many different literacies outside of school.

In turn, teachers need to find ways through the curriculum to integrate students' outside-of-school literacies with inside-of-school literacies, perhaps even eliminating such a dichotomy, to enhance their learning. All children deserve multiple pathways to success in school (Sanders, 2010). Such equity requires many opportunities for them to learn about and practice creating multiple types of texts, including language-based texts and visual texts that generate meaning beyond words (Albers, 2006; Serafini, 2013).

Multimodality: Multiple Opportunities for Expression and Many Roads to Meaning

In American educational institutions, print-based written language has traditionally been viewed as the "dominant and most valuable form of representation" (Serafini, 2013, p. 30). Multimodality as a social theory of communication is part of the broader field of semiotics (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2012). Semiotic systems such as verbal and written language, visual art, music, photography, and dance are languages, or modes, of thought and communication that represent all the ways we have of making meaning in the world, which include more than written language alone (Cook & Sams, 2018; Gray, 2006; Harste, 2010; Serafini, 2013; Valerie & Abed, 2013).

Thinking about literacy in these broader terms allows us to consider photos and images (e.g., drawings, diagrams, illustrations) as visual texts (Albers, 2009). Further to

that, Walsh (2008) suggests that multimodal literacy can be defined as "the meaning-making that occurs at different levels through the reading, viewing, understanding, responding to, producing and interacting with multimodal texts" (p. 106). That is, multimodal literacy may include cohesive, synchronous use of multiple modes to create a single text. Increased opportunities to interact with and create these multimodal texts, as well as new takes on the arts, allows us to represent and generate meaning in a variety of mediums (Eisner, 2002; Goldberg, 2017; Sanders & Albers, 2010). Given such opportunities, students develop a broader set of literacy practices that enable them to choose from a repertoire of strategies to read, design and create texts in ways that best suit their needs (Cowan & Albers, 2006; Flint, Allen, Nason, Rodriguez, Thornton, & Wynter-Hoyte, 2015).

According to some, our ability to create and use words as symbols for meaning sets us apart as human. However, tradition and this cultural belief can also ideologically drive educators to value language as the only channel for learning and to separate it from other ways of knowing, as is evidenced in commonly used instructional methods, curriculum guides, and assessment practices. It is important instead that schools and universities provide creative educational environments where preservice and inservice teachers and their students are encouraged to use multiple modes as they all make meaning and share their learning (Siegel, 1995; 2012).

Art and Writing Integration

What do we mean by integration? The Kennedy Center defines arts integration as "an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate learning through an art form. Students engage in a creative process, which connects an art form and another subject and meets evolving objectives in both" (Silverstein & Layne, n.d.). Although this project does not specifically address learning objectives that represent both writing and art form, it does examine opportunities for literacy teachers to engage students in noticing and creating texts that integrate art and writing to construct and share meaning, rather than simply enhancing writing with art (Smilan, 2016). We encourage literacy teachers to talk, and even collaborate, with their art teacher colleagues, because their knowledge of art techniques, creative thinking processes, and appropriate learning objectives are invaluable to implementing an integrated, multimodal curriculum.

Why art and writing? Writing brings vague perceptions or ideas to a verbal level that is explicit enough to reconsider or extend. Multiple theorists and researchers have contemplated the idea that writing promotes and extends thinking for many years. The slower nature of writing allows for and encourages movement among past, present, and future experiences and thought. (Flint, Allen, Nason, Rodriguez, Thornton, & Wynter-Hoyte, 2015, p. 27)

As a mediating tool between thought and activity, however, writing is not the only possibility. Integrating visual arts and writing can further support student learning by working together through transmediation, or translation from one medium or mode to another, to deepen understanding (Bryce, 2012; Siegel, 2006). Rather than a simple substitution of one sign system for another, moving between one sign system (i.e., writing) and another (i.e., the elements of visual art) enlarges meaning and generates

new connections (Flint, Allen, Nason, Rodriguez, Thornton, & Wynter-Hoyte, 2015; Short, Kauffman, & Kahn, 2000; Siegel, 1995).

A tool for learning. Art and writing integration is a tool for teaching and learning. Used together, art and writing provide students with opportunities to document and reflect on their learning, to choose how they respond to the world in ways that make the most sense to them, and to generate original ideas. Text-making and text-reading take on a new, more complex meaning (Mercurio & Randall, 2016). As Goldberg (2017) states,

> Engaging with the arts as students journey through learning opens windows to multiple worlds, and provides bridges to understandings whether they are in other content matter, or to other peoples and cultures. Engaging with the arts can also be a vehicle to self-understanding and compassion. (p. 12)

Exploration and Inquiry

This naturalistic qualitative inquiry project explored how preservice and inservice literacy teachers engaged with and composed multimodal texts to generate thinking and share their learning. We provide example activities and describe their work, relating possibilities for teachers taking it into their classrooms to implement with their students.

Participants and Setting

We (the authors) were participant observers for this project. We brought our own knowledge and experiences with art, such as photography and bookmaking, and writing to the activities, as we took anecdotal notes and photographs to document teachers' responses.

Teacher participants in this exploration included inservice teachers who teach reading and writing to K-12 students, as well as preservice teachers who plan to work with children in the future.

The teaching practices and instructional strategies explored in this work are intended to extend teachers' understandings of literacy as they serve the real needs of students in the authentic context of their classroom (Flint, Allen, Nason, Rodriguez, Thornton, & Wynter-Hoyt, 2015).

Learning Opportunities for Exploration: Gathering Anecdotal Data

In this article, we outline four learning opportunities that use or create visual texts that can help teachers to integrate and scaffold learning with language-based texts. They range from using photographs to prompt thinking and writing to creating a multimodal piece in the form of a book.

Each researcher summarized her work and shared examples of participants' work. This project is qualitative and preliminary as we looked for new pathways, patterns, and ideas to try. All of the activities were used with teachers in the hope that they would find it a valuable learning experience to share with their students.

The first learning opportunity, *showusyourcharacter*, was developed by Lynda Valerie for the Central Connecticut Writing Project (CCWP), a local site of the National

Writing Project, in New Britain, Connecticut. It used photos to help students create prose portraits to generate stories with three-dimensional characters.

The next activity, *Imaging a Life*, is an outgrowth of workshops presented by Lynda Valerie and Jean Madden, a CCWP teacher consultant. In this activity, images of people were paired with written responses in many genres into a collection that, taken together, created an engaging memoir.

Literacy Autobiography and Self-Portraits (Spitler, 2009), the third activity shared, offered teachers the opportunity for self-expression, exploration of identity, and non-linguistic meaning-making. Recognizing and understanding their own beliefs about literacy is important for instructional decision making in the classroom, as teachers design a range of opportunities for student learning.

The final activity to be shared, *Bookmaking as a Tool for Learning,* is a new activity for exploration and a next logical step for scaffolding teachers (and their students) toward art and writing integration in the classroom.

The following activities evolved - and continue to evolve - from our work with teachers and children.

Showusyourcharacter. Generating ideas for story writing can be entered through several doors. Sometimes, a fantastical setting can spur a tale. Young writers seem especially drawn to writing complicated twisting and turning plots. Themes can also drive a story. For this activity, we entered with inservice teachers through the character door. We began with reading an excerpt from a book that offers a rich description of a character, such as the following one from *Time's Witness* by Michael Malone (1989):

> Isaac Rosenthorn's a fat old bachelor who's never done a thing to deserve still being alive at sixty-four. Living in the South, his family had totally tossed away all the healthy habits of living. When he wasn't eating spareribs or fried chicken wings, he was drinking bourbon; when he wasn't taking naps on his worn out couch, he was sucking on unfiltered Chesterfields, holding the smoke down until it puffed out of his wide mouth like steam from a train. (p. 42)

In this instance, Michael Malone's richly descriptive words painted a prose portrait. The text selection has also been used with high school students and preservice teachers. A different, more appropriate, rich character excerpt can be selected to work with younger students.

The reading was followed by a discussion of what and how we know about a character. Guiding questions moved the discussion along as we created a list on the board. What do we know about this character? What has been stated, and what has been implied? What did you visualize? How does the character act? What does he say? What does he think? What is his backstory? What do others say about him? What hints are given through artifacts or documents? Based on this description, what possible plot lines or settings come to mind?

Teachers were then invited to enter the character door. They were invited to select a black and white photograph of an individual from an array of photos, to write about the subject in the photograph using narrative, dialogue, backstory, first or third person, to write an introduction for social media, or to work with any of the ideas elicited from the discussion on character.

In a classroom writing workshop setting, students would be familiar ahead of time with the possible variations for writing that are suggested through the group discussion. The students and the teacher wrote for about twenty minutes before everyone read their piece aloud while the others tried to guess which description matched each photo. Finally, students could either continue with the photograph in their possession or they selected another photograph to further build characters for a story.

This activity works well for generating ideas for creating stories and has been successfully presented many times with fourth graders right up to preservice and inservice teachers. In fact, it was introduced in a CCWP Invitational Summer Institute several years ago and has resulted in a multitude of variations and examples, including a published young adult novel called *The Smile*, by Nicholas Chanese (2010).

Imaging a Life. This activity tells a story of an individual using images paired intertextually with words. It originally emerged from work with several teachers who participated in the CCWP Invitational Summer Institute. It was inspired by *Something Permanent*, a collection of poems by Cynthia Rylant (1994), who composed poems in response to photos taken by Walker Evans during the Great Depression. In this book, both the image (visual text) and the accompanying words (printed text) were enriched through their interplay, adding layers of perspectives and meanings. Image possibilities might include items such as photos, maps, advertisements, book jackets, movie posters, music scores, performance tickets, store signs, sketches, birth/marriage/death certificates, bills of sale, letters, military documents, or travel papers, for example. Printed text also has numerous format possibilities such as letters, notes, poems, songs, dialogue, essays, and lists. For the most part, print responses are kept to the one page facing the image.

Imaging a Life with teachers. Teacher and CCWP Fellow Michelle Spelling's project organized four generations of family photos, many of which conjured up vignettes, tales, personalities, and some almost-forgotten skeletons. The pictures stimulated stories that would have been lost forever if there had not been written text to accompany them to the fifth and sixth generations. She integrated images and words to tell her family stories in a powerful multimodal format.

At the same time, Jean Madden, another CCWP Fellow, grappled with how to format her memoir. She wondered what thread would weave the events together and decided to adopt Rylant's *Something Permanent* (1994) format as well. Jean positioned an image on the left page of a journal with the printed text on the facing page, though this may be reversed if desired. Browsing the work of other teachers and CCWP Fellows, one would find a paragraph recalling a special family memory accompanied by an image of a favorite children's book. Another image was of a mother's faded recipe, with clearly visible handwriting in the margin stating, "Frankie loves this." The next page included the typed recipe along with a sentence or two about "Frank and Stacia."

Imaging a Life with students. Using image to stimulate and support writing also works well with younger, linguistically diverse students. As reported by Shaw (2014), Anne Morrison, third grade teacher, took *Imaging a Life* into her classroom as she explored the use of student drawing to support writing instruction. In the process, she made a responsive instructional decision that provided the flexibility one English language learner needed to visually share a story that he was unable to articulate using

words alone. The teacher originally asked the student to write a paragraph about something he had one with his family during the summer. When the student appeared unable to write more than a few sentences, the teacher asked him to draw a picture of what he did at the fair with his family. He proceeded to draw a beautifully detailed picture with a ferris wheel and a ticket booth. As he described the adventure to Anne, she wrote down key words so he could use those words and the drawing to help him write a more detailed accompanying paragraph. The teacher used formative assessment and scaffolding in a writing-conference context to help position this young English learner as both a written text maker and a visual text maker, or someone who was able to successfully generate and represent his ideas (Albers, 2007; Coufal & Coufal, 2002). As the teacher discovered, "Multimodal texts are a powerful resource for enhancing the literacy engagement and comprehension of linguistically diverse students" (Skerrett & Hersi, 2012, p. 241). The teacher supported the student's collaborative use of artistic and written composition as he used both symbol systems together to work recursively toward his goal, which was to share the story about his family's trip to a summer fair (Sanders, 2010).

In another creative twist, fourth-grade teacher Jennifer Amalfa cleverly incorporated technology through the use of *Comic Life*, comic production software (http://plasq.com/education/take-comic- life-to-school/), into her writing instruction so students could enhance their nonfiction narrative stories with images drawn or imported, dialog bubbles, and lettering art. Additionally, reading specialist Janice Bouchard teamed up with a fourth grade social studies teacher and utilized the same comic production software to enable students to produce brief biographies of explorers that featured maps, flags, and photos to accompany printed text. Both teachers reported that even their most reluctant writers demonstrated increased writing stamina and motivation, along with improved inclusion of descriptive details. The social studies teacher reported that students asked to work on their biographies during indoor recess. Students came to class with a rough draft already sketched out and were able to find or draw symbols and graphics that accurately depicted important ideas and events in each explorer's life. Janice compared pre- and post-motivation-to-write surveys to find out if using visual graphics changed students' dispositions about themselves as writers and the value of writing. Students were presented with the statement,"I am a (poor, good, very good) writer." Seventy-six percent of students showed a more positive response from to pre- to post-survey. Thirty-five percent showed a more positive response to the statement, "Knowing how to write well is (not important, sort of important, very important."

Teachers using Imaging a Life with colleagues. Finally, Jill Armstrong, another CCWP Fellow, incorporated this idea of writing building from an image in a professional development workshop with other teachers. She asked the them to take out their cell phones, go to the camera roll and choose an image. Each person's image became his or her writing prompt based on individual memory and meaning. The workshop served as a springboard for several teachers to create text-picture pairings. The following poem, "Montereggio Evening" (see figure 1), with the accompanying photo below (see figure 2) is one example. This activity can be adapted for use with students by asking them to bring photos from home.

Figure 2. Photo that inspired the poem "Montereggio Evening."

Montereggio Evening

Sun tilting low
Sign pointing left
Spur of the moment detour

Stepping through arched entry
a not yet discovered town square

A few steps
A grandfather, worn T-shirt, calls out
we smile, hesitant, his head tilts, his hand beckons into paradise
we don't understand his words but we all speak the language of gardens
he strolls, pointing, touching
his voice...a lullaby...*Odore! Odore!* our noses tingle
plucking a rosemary sprig, he inhales, chuckles
melanzana, basilica, oregano, a figo tree,
                         his pride, pamadore
caressing the swelling fruit, he whispers praise, encouragement
          our heads bow
          finding us worthy, flicks his wrist,
          bestows upon us two plump red globes
             our hands receive the communion, body and soul of the sun, earth
and his labors

A few steps
church, doors open
Dark interior
          suspended crucifix casts a shadow on the stone wall.
                                        that shadow draws, holds, the mind's eye
  no loud proclamations of piety,
peace resides here
          candles lit for souls remembered
          hands clasped in prayer
                 a father's health, a child's happiness, a lover's desire
god's blessing

More steps
   vineyard views
   Franciscan Way pilgrims
   one bench, two women, daily natter

Last few steps
   Carla's childhood house
      porcini polenta, wild boar pasta, zucchini fritters
          wine glasses lifting,
                                        salute

Figure 1. Poem inspired by the photo in *Figure 2.*

Literacy Self-Portrait and Autobiography. This activity was presented to preservice and inservice teachers, including CCWP teachers, as a two-part learning opportunity that included composing an abstract literacy self-portrait (Spitler, 2009) paired with a brief written literacy autobiography. In essence, teachers were encouraged to transmediate, or move across sign systems, as they made connections and shared memorable lifetime experiences that influenced who they had become as readers and writers. This is important and deeply personal work, as teachers' experiences and beliefs about literacy uniquely drive their instructional decision-making in the classroom. As it pertains to elementary and secondary classrooms, the decisions teachers make about literacy instruction ultimately impact students' opportunities for learning (Gee, 2015; Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

How it works. To help them get started, teachers were asked to reflect on topics such as their literacy histories and beliefs, positive or negative memories of learning to read and write, and the literacies they practice each day inside and outside of school (e.g., answering emails, writing a to-do list, reading a magazine). Next, they listed the three or four things that they felt were most influential in their literate lives. The brief written literacy autobiography and the abstract literacy self-portrait, both composed through transmediation, or working across sign systems, followed from there.

The literacy self-portrait. The literacy self-portrait relied heavily on teachers using images and symbolism to design visual texts that communicated their past literacy experiences and reflected on their beliefs about literacy, giving them the opportunity to practice making and sharing meaning in non-linguistic ways.

Going beyond the written literacy autobiography, the multimodal art project, or abstract literacy self-portrait, created an opportunity for teachers to expand definitions and concepts of literacy by using a variety of materials to represent their literacy experiences. In university courses and CCWP invitational institutes, each teacher was given a blank piece of oak tag or a large sturdy sheet of paper. Piled on a desk were myriad materials, such as fabric, magazines, cards, buttons, feathers, pipe cleaners, ink stamps, newspapers, stickers, gift wrap, and tin foil. Also on the desk were a profusion of glue, tapes, and scissors, as well as a basket of crayons, colored markers, and pencils. Teachers were invited to use these and any other materials as meaning-making objects to represent their literacy identity and experiences, and each material used was expected to serve a specific representational purpose. Although the portraits generally started out as two-dimensional projects, some developed into three-dimensional projects, while others took on a more abstract look. Interestingly, most teachers chose to include words as part of their self-portrait, or visual text (see figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Literacy Self-Portrait created by Bethany, an inservice teacher.

Figure 4. Literacy Self-Portrait created by Jessica, a preservice teacher.

The results. The literacy autobiography and self-portrait activity encouraged teachers to create visual and written texts to communicate their past literacy experiences and to reflect on their beliefs about literacy. In reflection, they were asked to consider what this process was like for them and how it might impact their future teaching.

Teacher responses and reflections on teaching. As teachers reflected on their experiences with this activity, it became clear that they had traveled numerous diverse paths to completion. They had also formed different ideas about how to use this project, one that integrates visual art and writing, in their own classrooms.

For instance, Susan, a middle school Spanish teacher, started with the self-portrait. She described herself as *"someone with a shaky artist voice at best"* and shared that she was nervous as she began the process. However, she continued to explain, "*Excited, nostalgic, and even a little unsure, I persevered...Then, all of a sudden, it was as if the collage had finished itself - my work was done and I felt incredibly proud.*" For the written autobiography, Susan decided to write a letter to her mother and found that her thoughts "*poured out quickly and effortlessly*" because of her work on the self-portrait. She shared that integrating art and writing may benefit and encourage students, such as those in her Spanish class, in learning a new language.

Alyssa, a high school English teacher, chose to write her autobiography first. And yet, she found herself moving back and forth between the written and visual modes (transmediating). "*In many ways, the artwork informed my writing even as my writing informed my artwork. I was amazed that the two pieces became so interconnected rather than the autobiography being the singular inspiration for the portrait.*" As she contemplated her teaching practices in the future, Alyssa revealed that she had never really thought about her students' early reading and writing experiences, but that had changed. "*As I delved into my own literacy, I found that I had a better understanding of the literacies involved in my English classroom.*"

A first grade teacher named Bethany shared her sense of anxiety after realizing that she had to create a self-portrait. She wrote, "*Art [projects] and I were not the closest of friends.*" She started with the written autobiography before moving to the self-portrait, and it appeared that her anxiety lifted as engaged in the process of meaning-making .

While organizing my selected materials into my self-portrait, I found myself less concerned with with the appearance of the portrait and more focused on the meaning behind the materials. The negative feelings that I had towards art at the beginning of this project began to subside. I soon realized that the meaning and

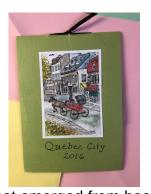*experiences behind the materials were more important than the actual aesthetic of the portrait.* (Bethany)

Because her students were so young, Bethany shared that she would adapt this activity by having students write one sentence and draw a self-portrait of themselves as readers and writers at the beginning of the school year. Then, at the end of the school year, she would have them do it again and look back to see how they had changed and how much they had learned.

Bookmaking as a tool for learning. A new area of exploratory research for this project involves bookmaking as a tool for learning. It is in the very early stages, but worth sharing here, as it may demonstrate how art and writing integration can produce an authentic and truly integrated multimodal text. On that rainy summer afternoon mentioned at the opening of this article, a group of teachers gathered for a university course on writing instruction. The plan for the day was for them to experience art and writing integration by constructing a book that included a written piece from their writing notebooks.

Working through the process of planning and building a book within an integrated, multimodal curriculum requires learning about content, organizing and prioritizing ideas to fit the book format, and considering the reader, or audience, while carefully composing the visual details of the book (Strauch-Nelson, 2011; Whitmore & Gernes, 2013). In this context, bookmaking as integrated art and writing can be viewed as one more important tool for thinking and learning in the classroom. Furthermore, the greater the range of experiences with texts, the more meaning students have to draw on, and the more complex their understandings (Whitin, 2005).

Admittedly, bookmaking is not a new concept in school classrooms, but we asked the teachers revisit it with us from an integrated, multimodal point of view, which might be a new perspective for them. Below are early examples of books that emerged from this work (see figures 5 and 6).

Figures 5 and 6. Examples of projects that emerged from bookmaking with teachers.

What We Learned and Where We Go from Here

"The arts encircle learning with meaning and thereby make comprehension and engagement fundamental for participation" (Heath, 2004, p. 339).

As literacy teacher educators, we have been exploring art and writing integration with preservice and inservice teachers. In that work, as anticipated, we noticed new

pathways, patterns, and ideas that will propel us forward in our research plans. Following are highlights of those findings.

Transformative Experience

What appears to stand out by far, through all of these activities, is that many teachers shared their transformation as text-makers, in small and large ways, through their experiences with art and writing integration. Nick Chanese, for example, was motivated to complete and publish his young adult novel, *The Smile* (2010), through the showusyourcharacter activity. Third grade teacher, Anne Morrison, found the courage to challenge her own teaching practices as she invited a bilingual student to express himself through a drawing as well as written text. Finally, as Allison Lyndner reflected on her Literacy Self-Portrait, she shared,

> It was as if the lights had turned on as to why I have such a passion and understanding for my young learners. As a young struggling reader with negative school experiences, I remember these times very clearly. I do not want my students to think back on their year in Kindergarten and think about how much they hated literacy because of their teacher. I feel like being able to reflect back on my reading both inside and outside of school helped me understand the way I teach.

Taken altogether, these are profound thoughts that will likely impact these teachers and their students for years to come.

Inspiring Memories

Across all four activities, teachers shared that using images and words together inspired and enriched their lifetime of memories, as if opening a kind of sensory floodgate. They reflected that hazy or long forgotten memories seemed to emerge again, in rich detail, as they progressed in their visual and written work. For example, Lisa Ellis reflected on the Literacy Autobiography and Self-Portrait activity: "The most surprising part...was [sic] the memories that emerged unexpectedly." For Michelle Spelling, whose project organized generations of her family's photos for the Imaging a Life project, the photos inspired memories that may have been lost forever had they not been remembered and documented in writing.

Choosing an Approach

For activities that invited multimodal text composition, teachers chose to approach art and writing integration in different ways as part of their own creative experience. Some started with the visual and moved to the writing; some started with the writing and moved to the visual; and some moved back and forth between modes. This has implications for the freedom children have to select how they will approach text composition in the classroom setting.

This also brings to mind Jennifer Sanders' (2010) work with fourth grade students in which she identified seven relationships between artistic and written composing

processes, based on the degree of interaction between each student's art and writing (pp. 123-129).

  A. *Converse relationship*: art and writing are doing the opposite work;
  B. *Independent relationship*: art and writing are on the same topic but have different purposes;
  C. *Mirrored relationship*: the same composing processes are used in both symbolic systems;
  D. *Dependent relationship*: work in one symbolic system is reliant on work in the other;
  E. *Recursive relationship*: back and forth movement between symbolic systems;
  F. *Collaborative relationship:* art and writing work together toward the same goal;
  G. *Reciprocal relationship*: built on the collaborative relationship, where both composing processes benefit from the interaction between them.

The nature of this moving across or between sign systems, or transmediation, in an art and writing integration context appears to apply to teachers as well and would be an interesting topic to pursue through further research.

Implications for Teachers: Getting Started with Art and Writing Integration

Teacher Reflection

Start by reflecting on your beliefs and understandings about literacy and learning. Consider your personal definition of literacy and how that influences the instructional decisions you make in your classroom. Explore how you *already do* or *could* create space for multimodal opportunities, including integrating visual art and writing, in your curriculum.

Student-Centered Instruction

Notice the outside-of-school literacy practices, or funds of knowledge, that students bring to school each day and the many ways that they make meaning. How can you use what they already know and do to enhance your curriculum to make learning more student-centered, actively engaging, and relevant?

Reach Out to an Art Teacher

Art and writing integration requires that both disciplines are valued and taught and students are provided with equitable access opportunities in the classroom. Although well-intentioned, many literacy teachers do not have the background or expertise needed to teach others how to create and communicate through art-making, but art teachers do (Smilan, 2016). Furthermore, multimodality and thinking critically about the interaction among modes, such as how elements of visual art work together, are not new to art teachers and the field of art (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013). There are more cognitive parallels between art-making and writing than may be apparent at first glance, such as problem-solving, making connections, generating ideas, and considering audience (Strauch-Nelson, 2011). The school art teacher is an invaluable

professional resource for those literacy teachers who want to make space for true art and writing integration in their classroom (Smilan, 2016).

Visual Text vs. Add-On

Not all art is a visual text (Albers, 2006). Be sure that multimodal instructional activities go beyond being "add-ons" in the sense that the visual piece is something students do after the "real work" of writing is finished. In an integrated, multimodal curriculum, student-generated work should be meaningful and intentional. Creating an environment in which both the visual arts and the written word can be legitimate ways of making and sharing meaning help to support this message with students.

Diverse Media and Text Formats

Take advantage of small opportunities to include visual literacy in existing content area lessons. For instance, do your students use science journals to record observations and learning? Encourage students to draw, in detail, what they are observing and then to write about it. Provide opportunities for students to share the integrated texts they create.

Explore Online Resources

There is a wealth of information online to support teachers who are interested in enacting an integrated, multimodal curriculum in their classroom. To get started, use key words, such as *arts-integrated curriculum, multimodal curriculum, visual literacy, transmediation* to conduct an Internet search. In addition, visit art museum websites around the world, as they provide comprehensive information for educators that can be very helpful.

In Closing

We believe that teacher education programs and professional development need to help teachers understand students' multiple literacies and link literacy instruction with students' lives in meaningful ways (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006). This article provides demonstrates that multimodal learning has academic value and needs to be an integral part of the intended, presented-inside-school curriculum. We have included specific examples and hope they will generate further examples for taking a second look and re-imaging student learning in every curriculum nook and cranny.

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