

Big Idea Questions to Think About

- How have your experiences shaped you as a teacher?
- What experiences have your students had?
- How do you teach in a way that is sensitive to your students, and builds a bridge to everyone's experience?

After each presentation, please take 5 minutes and reflect on the following questions!

Bird/ Ellie- "Co-constructing with adolescents"

- 1) What did you learn from the articles, what stood out?
- 2) Where does this fit in your literacy autobiography? (give an example)
- 3) What are you learning about adolescents?
- 4) What are you learning about co-constructing with Adolescents?

Your thoughts below!

Kathryn's Thoughts:

- 1) What did you learn from the articles, what stood out?
I hadn't thought that much about how my students influence me and my identity (especially my "teacher identity") as much as I influence them. I can see now how that happens and how powerful that can be.
- 2) Where does this fit in your literacy autobiography? (give an example)
I would want to delve a little deeper into my teacher identity. Why do I find it so adversarial when a student refuses to identify themselves as a student? What does that say about me and my own insecurities as a teacher? as a learner? I never had the experience of completely shutting down in school. I always tried to do the best I was capable of, so I do not have a framework for understanding how students can be content with failure.
- 3) What are you learning about adolescents?
I think it's more about myself, than about adolescents really.
- 4) What are you learning about co-constructing with Adolescents?
That I need to be very careful about the narratives I present in my classroom.

Jen's Thoughts:

The presentation about constructing identity helped me to frame my own identity as an adolescent, and I realize that there was a piece missing in my life: co-construction. This fits perfectly into my literacy autobio...and explains why I felt so 'lost' and 'other'. This was interesting to think about both as a mother and a teacher. How often do students (and grownups) create stories to justify 'who they are' or 'what they are doing'?

How can I better facilitate this proclivity in order to help students make effective choices while co-constructing their identity through effective assignments, interactions, word choices, sharing, etc.? It struck me that all three constructions used in tandem will best benefit an adolescent.

Danielle's thoughts:

I learned that adolescents form identities through very specific ways. We are always forming our identities and reforming identities and in the adolescent years it might feel more overwhelming because there isn't an awareness that adulthood offers. This presentation taught me that I influence the kids I work with and they influence my identity as a teacher. I still don't understand what co-constructing means, however, I think it's important to understand where they are coming from. I also think this is pretty basic stuff. When the kids walk through your door, they are bringing a lot of things with them. Baggage that is unseen to the naked eye. As a teacher, it's my job to be compassionate and understanding, meet them where they are, and then push through that. I want to challenge my students, and provide them with safe spaces to grow. Understanding that we are all forming identities, we are all moving and changing as people and that it's important to hold space for each other. If I can help the kids I work with see that the identities and stories they form can work for them, not against them, I find that more valuable for them as people than remembering some random facts. That is why I am very excited about the superpower unit, because we are teaching them awareness at an early age, and hopefully that will help them construct their identities in ways that serve them, not hinder them.

Marissa's Thoughts

Understanding what has shaped the student's narratives-respecting and honoring it as a practice is what will open the door to becoming an influence on their perspectives. We need to be careful that we do not overwhelm students with our own personal narrative, our stories. These can be used as examples, but not necessarily truths.

Marianne's thoughts:

The 3 key concepts stood out, in particular, authoring life stories and mind-to-mind learning. I am (re)learning that adolescents are strongly influenced by their life experiences and the people around them. In my life, college broadened my views and perspectives of the world that I had authored as I transitioned into adulthood.

My experiences have shaped me as a teacher because I was always an obedient student and eager learner, so I was frequently disappointed when students did not eagerly begin whatever task they were given, ask questions, and generally behave well. Co-constructing with adolescents is a wonderful reminder that I am just as changed by my students as they are by me. This makes me feel responsible for being vulnerable and influenced by them, because that is required for reciprocal construction of influence.

Kelley's thoughts:

We are all aware that we have an influence on the childhood development of the adolescents with which we come in contact. This gave a great defining breakdown of 3 specific ways. It is a very important topic to keep in the forefront of our minds on a daily basis. The positive influences in my literacy autobiography outweighed the negative. Adolescents are more sensitive and impressionable than they seem.

Christine's Thoughts:

This demo reminds adults that they need to be much more present in the lives of adolescents and that while teaching them, we help them evolve. It reminded me of my own adolescence. I was highly influenced by everyone around me and distrusted adults because of the many mixed messages I got from them. Kids need reasonable, rational, loving people especially if they are not so. It also makes me think of those students who

have come back to see me as they grow into adolescence. I will be more aware of my influence.

Bird's Thoughts:

I was not aware of just how important the relationship between the student and teacher is. In the article, it stated that teacher's perceptions can even keep kids from going to college and the frustrations that both and teachers experience in the classroom when we don't live up to the other's expectations. Teachers are interwoven throughout my Literacy Autobiography, partially due to the roles they played in shaping who I am today, not even just from a literacy standpoint. While the article was a lot of fancy words for what is really common sense, I think it is important to understand how interwoven adolescence identity is to the school experience.

Haley/Christine - “Multiculturalism”

- 1) What did you learn from the articles, what stood out?
- 2) Where does this fit in your literacy autobiography? (give an example)
- 3) What is white privilege?
- 4) How is white privilege connected to racism?
- 5) What is color blind teaching?
- 6) What does multicultural education do?

Your thoughts below!

Kathryn's Thoughts:

Addressing race in the classroom is tough in Ithaca. In some ways I wonder if our hyper-sensitivity to race and our commitment to multi-culturalism without really examining solutions is helpful. I notice that our disenfranchised students who use cries of racism do it to shut down conversations. They have learned that calling a white person “racist” will end situations they are uncomfortable with. By not pushing back, by not asking all students to unpack their own impressions of racism what justice are we doing? When white people do not push back against this they are acting out of fear and intimidation. Doesn't that just reinforce the paradigm that black youth are people to fear, or at least be wary of? Does not pushing against the accusation further develop racism and create a “life story” for those students that exerting the negative stereotypes of their race is the only way to gain power in a “white world”?

I grew up on military bases until I was in eighth grade, There was an unspoken rule of colorblindness based on the Army structure of advancement based from merit. Most of the history of the military nonwhites had been segregated within its ranks and the established hierarchy of the military was a result of white privilege, but that was not discussed, and if it was it was treated as an excuse for lack of succeeding. In eight grade, I moved to the rural South. I went to a school that was 94 percent black. I lived in a small town that was divided racially by the railroad tracks. We talked about multiculturalism all of the time. The history of the Civil Rights Movement, the books about racial issues took on color and realism. There was no denial anymore, but this was not any better in some regards because we spent a lot of time in the South trying to keep things polite instead of real discussion.

Marianne's Thoughts: There are a multitude of advantages consciously or unconsciously granted to white-skinned people over non-white people. White privilege and racism fuel each other - it would be difficult to end one without simultaneously ending the other. One way I would like to address this in my class is to accommodate for and embrace different cultures by incorporating the geographical history of Math into my classroom as I introduce topics. I will also teach students about white privilege and race and teach them acceptable ways to describe themselves and others that do not offend other cultures.

Danielle's Thoughts:

I like this topic a lot. I feel like I have been struggling with it in my classroom and not understanding how to address it. I would like to talk about solutions and perhaps even have more discussions on how to address it. I

feel like my students are so unaware of their socio economic status because they are relying on white privilege. I think the relationships between race and economic status is very interesting and even bringing awareness to these issues in my classroom would be huge. I teach in a very homogenous environment of all white, mostly women staff and pretty religious. The kids are all the same, and mostly blonde to boot. However, very poor and come from a diverse background economically. They are also not exposed to a lot outside their small rural towns, and their breadth of knowledge is limited. It's my job to bring to world to them in a way that makes sense, and allows for understanding. How to do that effectively. **I want more resources on this, from real teachers in the same situation I'm in (rural white school).** I feel like this relates to my experience growing up a lot. I would love to write more about my time as a white teacher in a full minority school vs. being a white teacher in a mostly white school and how different those two experiences have been.

Jen's Thoughts:

I grapple with these thoughts every day, and sometimes I feel racist because I notice people's color or socioeconomic status or etc. I don't judge on it, but I notice. And as a person of white privilege, I have become conditioned to feeling racist for noticing.

I also wonder how people judge me because of my external indicators, like how am I judged for being white and living in an urban neighborhood or driving a stupid luxury car that my husband wanted? I want to talk about these things and long to discover other people's thoughts on it.

In classes I have taken that are multi-culturally focused, I have learned so much about other people and who they are, what they think of themselves, how they identify 'Who Am I?' but I still notice race and status, etc. My question is, Don't we seem to be demonizing multicultural education just a bit in this discussion? As a non-political person, I am not adept at thinking about the solutions to racism, etc. Is awareness enough? Should I be doing more to become truly multicultural?

Ellie's Thoughts:

My father's family, being socialists who lived in an artist's colony, very much embraced multicultural perspectives. My mother's was a little different. Once, I remember her being resentful when she was passed over for a promotion, and a black guy got the job. I wonder a lot about how to support the rich multiculturalism in our school. I embrace its richness.

Kelley's Thoughts:

White privilege drives racism, colorblind teaching is a copout, and multicultural education is the feel good band-aid, failing to address the differences. Where does this fit in your literacy autobiography? I was a tourist in Chinatown NYC, enjoying the experience in a new place. I did not feel out of place until I took a photo in the crowd. A grandmother with a baby who was in the photo, began chattering at me what I imagine to be Chinese curses. I understood that I had inadvertently done something to offend her. I felt remorse, and ignorant, and for the first time I felt like a minority. As a minority, I had no right to take photos. The Chinese people with cameras did not seem to get the same response. White privilege is an attitude of entitlement and elitism. White privilege is an impetus behind racism. Color blind teaching is ignoring or avoiding the differences. People pretend that they see everyone the same to avoid confrontation or political incorrectness. Multicultural education emphasizes the differences in students backgrounds, and cultures. It doesn't acknowledge the relationship to power and doesn't require action.

Bird's thoughts

Until recently, the people designing school curriculums were white males. Schools weren't de-segregated until the fifties and sixties. The combination of the two seems ripe for masking white privilege by re-branding it as the colorblind philosophy. I would like to think that it comes out of white guilt, but I think the colorblind classroom came out of still wanting control. And soon, educators knew this was not enough and moved to multicultural teaching. I think it stems into guilt and how do we all identify with each other and make things work. We can't seem to do it at a national level and that is where the decisions are being made. At my school, we talk a lot about different cultures and I supply them with books that have characters that are from all different backgrounds- Native American, LGBT, black, Asian, etc. (I even feel weird lumping all of those different cultures into those labels) in order to help show the students the struggles that people are facing today with not being a white heterosexual. But I still want more. How can my rural students understand what it is like to live in an urban environment? How can I get comfortable to move forward (that fear of saying the wrong thing, tripping up and offending someone) and get an open dialogue with people to help work on something in my classroom that is more reflective of real life? I never really fully my white privilege until I lost it while living in New Mexico. It was life changing. Being white meant (most of the time) that you faced open hostility wherever you went.

Christine's Thoughts:

I had to read this article a few times to feel like I had a handle on what it was saying. There were so many concepts. While planning the demo, I wrote down many questions which would lead to many discussions, and struggled about which way to go. Some examples of these are: Define racism and sexism. For whom or to what purpose does racism or sexism? Why might a person not want to acknowledge his/her white privilege? How does our language influence our ideas about poverty? and What purpose do common stereotypes such as "welfare queen" serve? I think any of these could have led to a great conversation about racism and white privilege.

I am glad to have the author's definition of multiculturalism and colorblindness. As a white teacher I want to be very careful to make sure that I am honoring the background of all the students and people I encounter, not pretend it is not there.

Kelley/Marissa- "Critical Literacy"

- 1) What did you learn from the articles, what stood out?
- 2) Where does this fit in your literacy autobiography? (give an example)
- 3) Why is Linda Christensen so mad?
- 4) How does critical literacy empower her and her students?
- 5) What does co constructed critical literacy look like?

Danielle's Critical Literacy Poem:

**I'm from 'swego
where the water never ends**

genee light

BAG-els

PEllows

"I'll do" when ordering food.

I'm from 'swego

wicked awesome

throw it out

quick like a bunny

I'm from 'swego

drinks flow at all family meetings

dead soldiers, empty bottles

bar hopping is a sport

I'm from 'swego

big little town

forks of the road

west side vs. east side

more churches and bars than people

I'm from 'swego

home sweet home



Kathryn's Critical Literacy:

Unmappable

I am from meatballs

simmering on Grandma Kate's stove.

From octopus, fried,

and artichokes, steamed

The sizzle of garlic accompaniment

to Scap's silly songs.

From walks in the woods

and hours in Grumpy's workshop.

From moving vans,

and pulled up roots,

a balloon adrift on the wind.

I am from
everywhere and nowhere.
I am from my people:
my family,
my friends,
my love,
I am home.

Jen's Poem

LongIsland is the center of the Universe.
You should know that.
"What do you drive?"
"How long did it to you to get here?"
"How much did you pay for your house?"
"How many carats is that ring he gave you."

Why do we live here? It's too expensive!
-It's near the city! We never go. Too dangerous.
-It's near the beach! We never go. Too crowded.
-It's near the family! Oh, yes. We see the family.

The family, the family. The obligations and tribulations.
We stay here because Mema is down the street
and Auntie Sue is around the corner
This is where I was born.
Where else could there be to live?
This is the center of the Universe.
Why in the hell would you leave, Jennifer Ann?

I'm from Wilks Berry
We take q-pons to the acame to buy the ingredients for halushki or pagach, and when we ask if you'd like some be prepared to answer, hayna or no?
Hayna Gulch is the official language of da valley
It sounds like this, "Grab a couple-to-tree bat-trees for the discman" or...
"It's the turd of the month and the checks are out, so we took a cab to Bosco's and bot lotsa nifty things."
It's a whole nutter way of speaking, really.
But all-in-all, it ain't a bad place to grow up.
Haynit?

Marianne:

Tripes and Melanios
Two villages, back in time
Sad, deserted now

Rowesville, formerly New Hope
Marissa Joy Mims

I am from South Carolina
low country-Rowesville, formerly New Hope
Boiled peanuts, stone stew, chitlings
catfish from the Edisto River
liver puddin so nothing goes to waste
Sunday go to meeting
 Yes Sir, Yes, Madam
 Who are your people?
 Simpson, Seabrook, Jenkins
 My dead are in Peter Bowman
Sunday dinner
field hands waiting by the tracks
high yellor coveted pretty
pecan pie, red velvet cake
rag quilts sewed
guns under the bed
 don't you carry no greasy sack
 don't you show your teeth to men you don't know
 don't you get caught with no dirty front room
 don't you forget to sweep first and dust second

Ellie's Thoughts

Schenevus

Back to the land
Neighbors just neighbors
Learned to talk "Upstate"
Ate a lot of rhubarb.

Then we had to move
Money scarce; jobs hard to find
Wished I could go home
Where mom and dad didn't fight

Where there was plenty

Of maple syrup and honey
Milk came from cows
Vegetables from the garden

My friend said, "You never did
Talk like the rest of us."

No Real Lexicon by Bird

I am from Jersey Shore, Pennslytucky
Where we pronounce egg differently and eat hoagies
Where families have at least 16 kids and attend morning mass every Sunday

Baseball is king; Wrestling a close second
I can recall hours of practicing in the backyard with my dad
And hours running around the baseball diamond, for fun and for sport

My mom went topless in summers
which were spent around the pool, picking weeds for an hour before we were allowed to jump in
Jess and I pulling wedgies in our bathing suits, exposing our bare cheeks to get down the slide just a little
faster

.
Jackie the Elf would give us a pre-Santa check-up,
Leaving a small reminder to keep being good
Dad would check out, even after he sobered up- some memories will always haunt him

Nighttime, Dad would tell Paddy-Boo (the magic dog of his childhood) stories before bed
Matt would sometimes tuck me in with a story, too.
Jon was busy defining his adolescence

I could write about the bad but instead I want to celebrate
that my family is human-
flawed, but trying their best.

p.s. Telling your nine-year-old that you "are done being a mother" is one phrase that will never leave her mind

Christine's Critical Literacy Poem

Townies - low class
Rhinedogs
near the railroad tracks
West End life
among immigrants
cabbage rolls, ham, yams - rice pudding
diners bars
canned tomatoes in jars
electrical union men
proud to have a say
hard living, hard drinking

all work, all play
get ahead someday
move away
up on the hill
far away
from the Rhine
a heritage that's mine
I'm glad to say
my ancestors would not
discuss it much
I figured it out myself
which is the way we do things
in the Rhine

Jen/Marianne- "Ethical Imagination"

- 1) What did you learn from the articles, what stood out?
- 2) Where does this fit in your literacy autobiography? (give an example)
- 3) What is dialogic inquiry?
- 4) How does it connect to critical literacy?
- 5) How does Brian Edmiston design dialogic teaching?

Your thoughts below!

Kelley's Response

Thinking from another perspective can be useful in my professional and personal life. In general I think about the other's perspective often, but seldom dig deep and take on that dramatic role. It will help relationships with certain personality types with whom I seem to often conflict. If I can stop and put myself in their shoes before reacting with anger or disapproval, it should minimize my stress and open up possibilities for positive relationships. I'm hoping it will help me to find a job, since I will be forced to shift from my 'this is me, take me or leave me' approach to a job search. It will allow me to use the skills I've developed in empathy with children, and apply them to adults. It will also be useful as an anti-bullying and conflict-resolution strategy for students. Thanks for opening up new horizons.

Danielle's Response:

I actually really liked looking at drama, talking about the facts, and then blowing it up, then revisiting it from a different perspective. I will use this in a bunch of different ways. First of all, I do the Christopher Columbus thing in my classroom, and I love adding this to it. I also want to use this with problem solving with kids, and part of my superpower unit. I think using drama to get at an emotion is powerful, because it engages a person in the learning. However, this is a great way to take an emotional response and make it more academic by examining why you think and feel the way you do, and then adding a different perspective which allows you to channel your emotions in a productive direction.