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EDSE 457

Literate Lives: Mini-Narratives

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Self-Narrative

The ability to read and write are extremely useful tools, which afford the autonomy to express myself, acquire knowledge, in addition to participating and experiencing the social aspects of society. I was diagnosed with dyslexia at a young age, and attention deficit disorder (ADD) as an early teenager, this made comprehension of words difficult at first. Although reading and proper speech intonation did not come naturally, I eventually learned, which allowed my imagination to comprehend more enjoyable, entertaining aspects of literacy. Having a sporadic thought process has a tendency to disrupt my ability to write clearly and concisely. However, I have found continued success by allowing extra time within the writing process for editing and rewriting several drafts in order to bring the message of my literacy process to light.

Throughout my academic career, I have experienced several different learning comprehension techniques that are dependent on the specific learning environment I am participating in. For instance, some teachers have a tendency to utilize more complex technical terminology for the entirety of the classroom experience. When this occurs, I must allow more time to revisit and process this kind of literary information after the class has finished. With regard to a more casual setting, such as a friendly conversation, I can remain engaged and process more informal types of literacy. Discovering my weaknesses with reading and writing at an early age afforded the realization of a different form of intelligence soon afterwards. I found a

natural ability to understand and create visual art. Throughout high school and college I was able to thrive in an academic environment that focused on aspects more attuned to my thought process. I began to use painting and writing as a form of therapy to communicate my emotions to myself and reflect on the change I was experiencing. I was fortunate to have supportive parents that recognized my natural strengths with creativity, which built the confidence for understanding and performing well.

Over time, I have learned to utilize my creative abilities towards other aspects in my life, such as returning to higher education to become an art teacher in addition to furthering other various pursuits and gaining life experiences. I have created a social connection to other forms of communication and literacy through finding identity within art communities. Although my particular style of communication may be viewed as unconventional or scenic, the ability to translate a visual message to another person is in essence, a form of literacy. Reading and writing are undoubtedly important for a person to understand what they are visually experiencing. However, my unique journey through life and learning should be seen as a prime example that literacy is an ambiguous concept that should always be open for interpretation.

Student Narrative

Students are processing a vast range of information now more than ever in previous generations. Some types of literacy that students may engage in are digital, academic, social, and creative. As a future art teacher, students within my classes will be practicing their understanding of the curriculum language through exposure of the values and purpose with learning art history and modern art. Students will also obtain vocabulary and conceptual understanding of recognizing and applying the elements and principles of art.

As a form of visual communication, students will demonstrate their knowledge through application of the elements of art in their work. With language communication, assessment of student knowledge will take form with various activities that give ranges of learning abilities various opportunities to perform learned knowledge. For instance, students will participate with individual written reflections of personal, peer, or professional artwork. They will have chances to grow as a community through auditory group critiques of classwork and visual thinking strategy exercises of expressing what they see and their impressions of professional artists' work in the format of group discussion.

Challenges students experience with developing literacy skills are factors such as learning disabilities and the type of academic and social support they have at home and at school. Students are developing their communication skills and identities at the adolescent age range. Such areas of growth can be practiced and further developed within an art class setting through such exercises as community discussions and artistic explorations of self-narratives. It is vital for students to be able to read and write so they can practice their power to express themselves and further develop their knowledge. Through language development, students also gain perspectives to successfully participate in our social world because of their understand of their surroundings and be productive future citizens in the ever-expanding competitive workforce.

Society Narrative

To be literate person in society means you are being included in some way; you are participating in life. To be able to survive, one has to be able to read people and the world around them. This includes understanding cultural differences. We are a consumeristic world and ideas are constantly being "sold" to people. This is a literacy that is necessary to filter through to figure out what your needs are and how to use your environment to help yourself. Literacy also

strengthens individual autonomy and advocacy creating stronger participation in their community. As a citizen, individual input matters. For example, being able to read signs to know where you are, understand what you are voting, and being aware of the complex events that happen daily in our world helps people be connected to their surroundings and fellow humans.

Power is connected to literacy because it supports advocacy for individuals and autonomy for controlling outcomes. In society, some people do have more power than others due to such factors like socioeconomic status. However, more people have the opportunity to be heard now more than ever no matter the personal background because of the doors that technology opens for global communication. With more platforms and avenues of self-expression, more issues and ideas are being exchanged, developed, and challenged. This creates opportunities for communities to grow because of this global exchange of perspectives. Such technologies like the internet gives a space to understand the growing diverse societies that are living together in closer proximity and a grander variety of accessibility to obtain more concrete ideas to connect to one's environment.

Reflection

Upon reviewing the three narratives regarding personal, student and societal literacies, the most common theme I discovered was the importance of individuality. Acknowledging different types of literacy styles demonstrates an open-minded perspective, which allows us the ability to appreciate the abundant diversity of social narrative contexts. Reflecting on these narratives emerges the idea that humans are in a constant state of learning, whether sitting inside the classroom or walking around the outside world. The unfortunate realization from these narratives with regard to my own personal experiences with higher education and traditional literacy experiences is the concept of a standard pace of learning. We tend to absorb and

comprehend information at different rates of understanding. I feel this attitude will reflect within my teaching strategies towards my future students and how I see realistic opportunities for people within the community.

Some obvious differences amongst these narratives relates to technology and culture. My personal connection with technology is seemingly different compared to our modern youth culture. The aspect of perceived identity through social communication platforms and media are becoming increasingly prevalent among adolescents and older teenagers. However, as a future educator, I plan to utilize technology as a tool in my classroom for enhancing student engagement as the familiarity will already be inherent in their everyday lives. Future success as a teacher and person participating in society means continually practicing empathy, engaging in conversations – listening and observing diverse backgrounds – always gaining more perspectives. Creating opportunities for future students with regard to literacy in society requires active involvement in the classroom and in life.