Introduction To Learning

Sociocultural/Situative Perspective

Ed 232C

April 15, 2002

Lecture 2

* Please Note: Much of the text that appears in the up-coming slides have been borrowed from course readings and other supplemental texts.

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My Particular Interests

- As an educational linguist, I am drawn to a study of Vygotsky's notions of:
- Internalization
- The ZPD
- role of semiotic mediation within the ZPD
- What we can learn from Activity Theory that can be useful in the design of effective programs for teaching and learning

Internalization

- Vygotsky and his colleagues felt that in uncovering the problem of thought and speech as the focal issue of human psychology, they could make an essential contribution; they were most interested in the problem of the internalization of symbolic psychological tools and social relations

- Wertsch and Stone (1985) argued that one way to construct an integrated account of internalization is to examine an individual's emerging control of external signs. They concluded that "Vygotsky laid the groundwork for our argument, but he left many aspects of it largely undeveloped. We would argue that future work in this area would contribute significantly to our understanding of the nature and origins of internal activity" (p. 177).

- I am interested in understanding this phenomenon as it relates to teacher development.

Internalization

- Unlike those who claimed that intrapersonal processes are just transformed interpersonal relations, Vygotsky proposed that internalization was the process of transformation of external actions into internal psychological functions

- In Leont'ev's words: "the process of internalization is not the *transferal* of an external activity to a preexisting, internal 'plane of consciousness': it is the *process in which this plane is formed*."

- "Each function of the child's (or adult's) cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child or adult (intrapsychological)"
- Vygotsky argued that if one is to take the development of consciousness as a subject of study, then … he suggested that socially meaningful activity might play the role of an explanatory principle. He suggested that socially meaningful activity might serve as a generator of consciousness (or internal thought)
- And so, I am looking to see if socially meaningful activity might serve as a generator of change in teachers' internal thoughts on diversity

The Zone of Proximal Development

- Vygotsky defined the zone of proximal development as the difference between a child's "actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving" and the higher level of "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers."

- He argued that assessment should examine the the realm of activity where the potential for growth is greatest (the area of potential development)

- Vygotsky's evaluation of *instruction* was motivated by his claim that intrapsychological functioning grows out of interpsychological functioning. He argued that optimum instruction will take place within the zpd just ahead of the students' level of readiness

- "instruction is good only *when it proceeds ahead of development*, when it awakens and rouses to life those functions that are in the process of maturing or in the zone of proximal development (1956, p. 278)

- It is in this way that instruction plays an extremely important role in development

Semiotic Mediation w/in the ZPD

- Vygotsky argued that it is by mastering semiotically mediated processes and categories in social interaction that human consciousness is formed in the individual

- …in the process of development, children begin to use the same forms of behavior in relation to themselves that others initially used in relation to them…(e.g,consider how language develops)

- For the individual, culture takes the form of meanings transmitted by speech sign-symbols. The historian traces the stages in the dev of ideas that a culture carries: sociohistorical

- Cazden (1988) directs our attention to the importance of not having a mechanical conception of the process of internalization. She warns us that "[I]n teaching…we should not assume a one-to-one relationship between the components of mature performance and the ingredients of the most effective instruction. *As with children's language development, the models provided are samples to learn from, not examples to learn.*" (Cazden, 1988, p. 108. Emphasis added). Expanding on Cazden's interpretation of Engestrom important point that scaffolds as an instructional model cannot account for the mental leap to a new idea, I add my observation that: internalization as we now understand it, cannot account for the preservice teacher's *leap* from cognitive internalization of theories to positions of commitment, advocacy and efficacy needed to transform the teaching and learning that goes in their day to day teaching.

- Take a few minutes and try your hand at creating a visualization of what you think the ZPD looks like
- The I will show you the visualization that I have envisioned
- And finally, I will share a bit of my research that draws on the concepts of internalization and the ZPD

Using Sociocultural Theory to Investigate Teachers' Changing Perspectives About Teaching Diverse Students:

Lessons Learned From the U.S. And South Africa

- Internalization
- The ZPD
- The role of semiotic mediation within the ZPD
- What we can learn from Activity Theory that can be useful in the design of effective programs

The Study

- The motivation for the study is that globally teacher education programs are challenged to prepare teachers who are committed to working effectively with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and who attend urban schools

- Thus, my research focused on finding a theoretical framework for considering the development of commitment to becoming teachers in diverse schools

- It also focuses on refining the uses discourse and linguistic analyses as a tool for gauging the effectiveness of our teacher education programs toward achieving this goal

Study Participants

- **50 United States Participants**
  - ◆ 40 Teachers Enrolled in a Traditional Teacher Education Program
  - ◆ 10 teachers Enrolled in a Non-Traditional Teacher Education Program
- **50 South African Participants**
  - ◆ 25 Teachers Enrolled in a Traditional Teacher Education Program
  - ◆ 25 teachers Enrolled in a Non-Traditional Teacher Education Program

Two Versions of Class Activity

The process of Internalization was facilitated by the nature of the activity teachers engaged in

- Mostly talking about theory and its application

- Talk about theory
- Engagement with carefully designed classroom-based activities
- Extensive use of reflective writing
- Classroom discussions that challenged previously held notions about literacy and diversity
- Enacting the theory through their own classroom-based teaching an action research
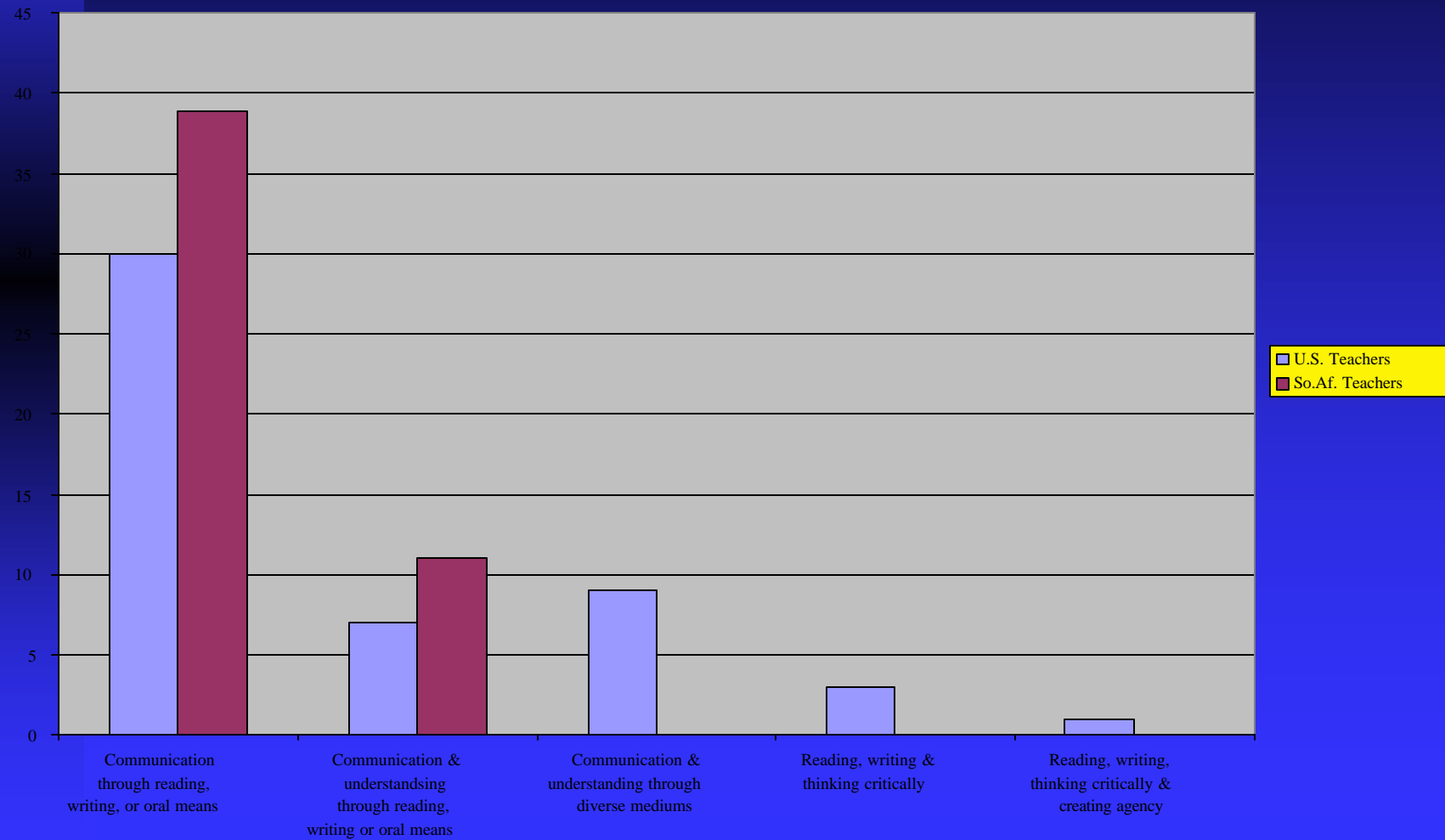
Data Collection

- Autobiographies of their early literacy experiences
- Narratives essays of memorable learning experiences
- Reflective writing and critiques of theoretical readings
- Interview data
- Transcripts of small group discussions
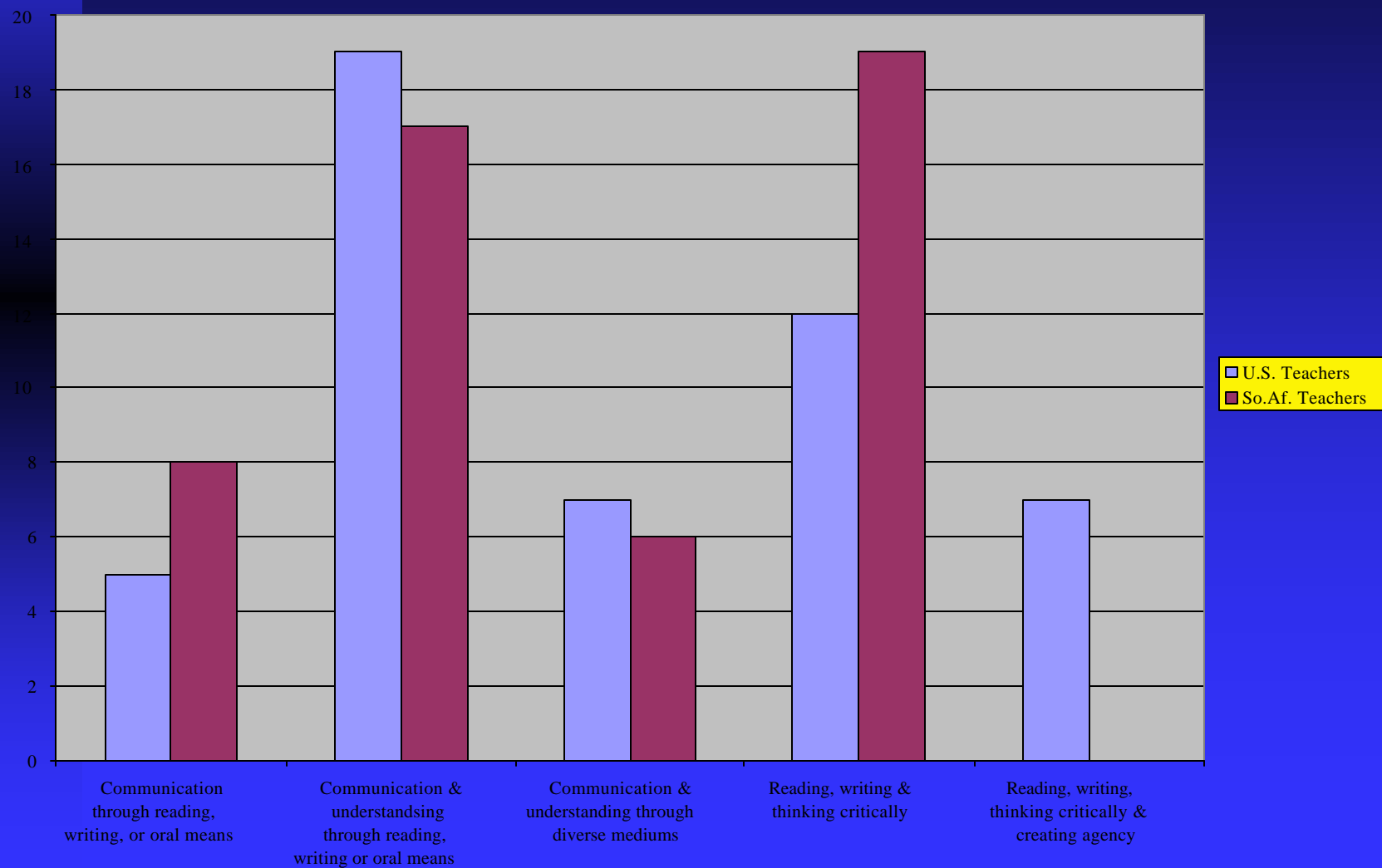- Video tapes of teaching experience

Results

Teachers' Initial Definitions Of Literacy

Legend:
- U.S. Teachers
- So.Af. Teachers

Categories (x-axis):
- Communication through reading, writing, or oral means
- Communication & understansing through reading, writing or oral means
- Communication & understanding through diverse mediums
- Reading, writing & thinking critically
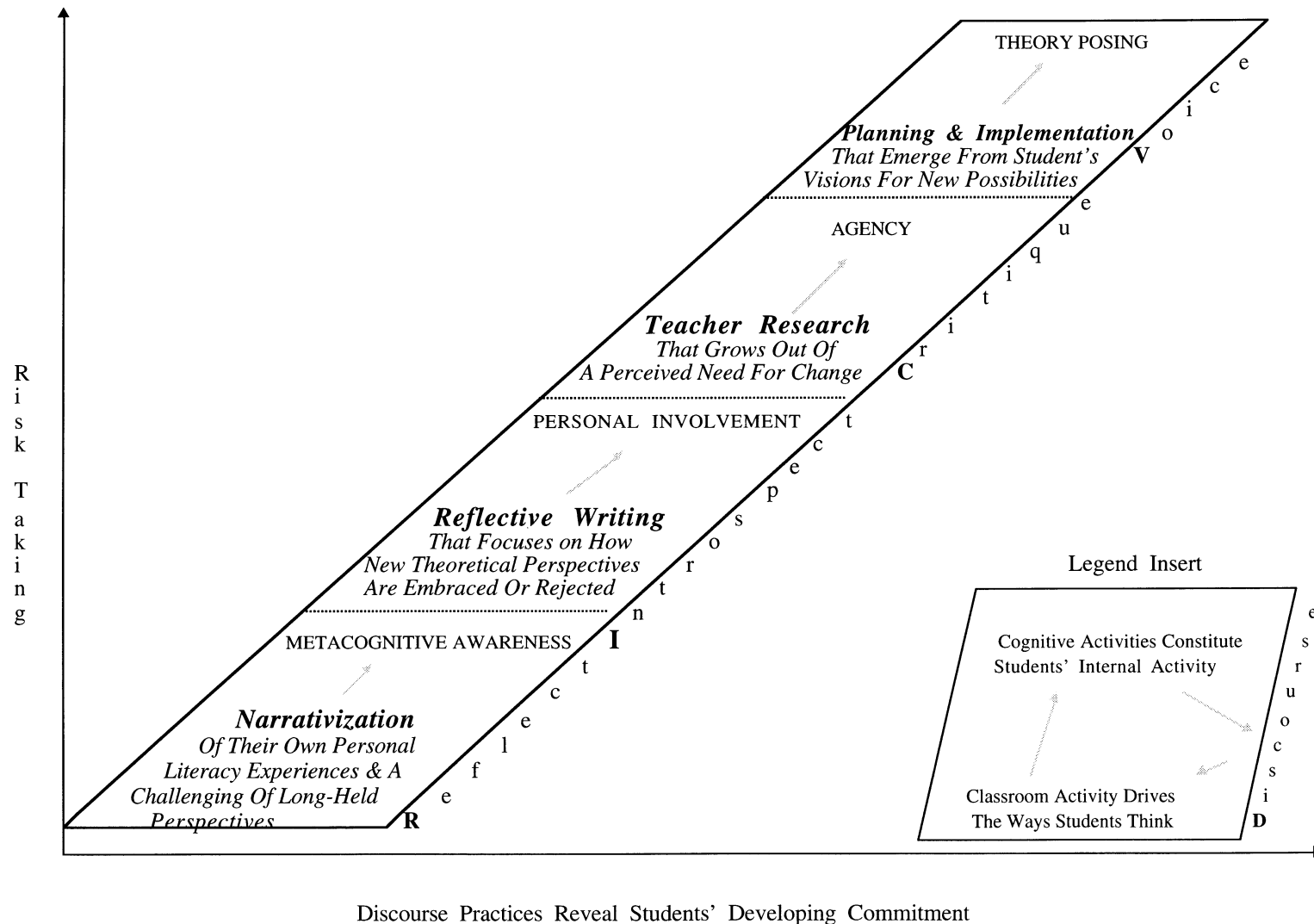- Reading, writing, thinking critically & creating agency

Results

Teachers' Post Definitions Of Literacy

Model of Changing Discourse

Figure 1. The Process Of Internalization Which Takes Place Within The Zone Of Proximal Development

THEORY POSING

Planning & Implementation
That Emerge From Student's
Visions For New Possibilities

AGENCY

Teacher Research
That Grows Out Of
A Perceived Need For Change

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

Reflective Writing
That Focuses on How
New Theoretical Perspectives
Are Embraced Or Rejected

METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS

Narrativization
Of Their Own Personal
Literacy Experiences & A
Challenging Of Long-Held
Perspectives

Risk Taking

Legend Insert

Cognitive Activities Constitute
Students' Internal Activity

Classroom Activity Drives
The Ways Students Think

Discourse Practices Reveal Students' Developing Commitment

Chris (A student who did become engaged in the activity system)
Anyon's findings on schools and social class did not surprise me. Anyone who has been exposed to schools in areas of varying class could tell you that the students in the wealthier schools will have higher aspirations, more parental support, and access to more facilities. However, I was initially shocked by how vast the differences were. Actually, I am not quite convinced that Anyon did not choose to select statements from students and teachers ... To illustrate the point that she was trying to make...

The other articles that I read this week did not sink in as much as I hoped. Again, I found most of them either rehashing old arguments, or cluttering my brain with technical theories that I found difficult to understand, impractical, and out of touch with my perceived role as a classroom teacher...

... Finally, the remaining readings, especially the Bakhtin article, failed to teach me anything. In fact, I read the article, attempted to summarize it, read it again, and could not remember a thing I read. Therefore, I will not bore you with the quotes from the article, since the point of this assignment, I assume, is to show understanding of the reading, which I have not gained... I feel extremely out of touch with the materials presented, and fail to see how it fits in with my teaching concept. I realize that my concept of teaching is my own, and it is probably not like that of the instructor or my classmates. I feel as though I am reading articles written by University professors who have lost touch with the common folks... I am having great difficulty motivating myself to read the materials, and when I do, I either fail to understand it fully because of the fact that I quickly loose interest, or I have to re-read to find the point of the article.

I believe that the current education system works well for most students, and I believe that is an optimal level. Education is not for everyone, and not every student will respond to the same style of teaching. Someone will always have something to say about a particular method, so reaching most students is an accomplishment in itself. There will always be a need for people who dig ditches and that sort of thing, so I don't really worry about those who "fall through the cracks" by the standards of today's academicians.

I will search for what works best for me, and what promotes students to find and develop their interests, while attempting to explain my "core" subject matter materials.

Jenn's Initial Perspectives

- Do I plan to seek a teaching position in an urban or inner-city environment? No. That is simply not an area that I plan to live in, nor would I be comfortable teaching there. I believe I will do best in an environment that I am familiar with. That does not include the inner-city. You could not pay me enough to teach there.

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Message Board Topics

Topics with Recent Msgs:

Jennifer- Kevin, Deborah

Find	9 Msgs	Post New
1 new 1 total	**hey question**	6:40pm
2 new 2 total	**hello**	2/9/99 2:40pm
3 new 3 total	**HI**	2/9/99 2:37pm
2 new 2 total	**hello!**	2/9/99 12:57pm
1 new 1 total	**Hangin' Out**	1/27/99 12:52am

Show More >>

Arnetha- Michael, Rashad

Find	6 Msgs	Post New
1 new 2 total	**hi**	2/9/99 11:08pm
1 new 4 total	**Hangin' Out**	2/9/99 10:36pm

Show More >>

Song- Amelia, Ciara

Find	6 Msgs	Post New
2 new 2 total	**hi**	2/9/99 4:52pm
2 new 2 total	**HELLO**	2/4/99 3:10pm

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MYOMORPHA- Pet Rat & Mouse Forum

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2/9

hello

	Message 30		
From: Kevin (COLD316)		To: **ALL**	1 of 2
Posted: 2/3/99 2:08 PM		Reply to: New Thread	Next

Hi my name is kevin and i am from Ypsilanti Mi.The things that i like to play football and basketball.The other stuff i like to do is to go hunting with my dad.I like to hunt for deer.I have two brothers and one sister, and i am 16 years old.Last year i mest a lot of school the reason that i mest a lot of school is that i never got cought.But i wish that never mest that much school.

Reply | Forward

Top of Page	Message 60		Previous
From: Jenn (JBARILL)		To: Kevin (COLD316) **UNREAD**	2 of 2
Posted: 2/9/99 2:40 PM		Reply to: 30	

Nice to meet you Kevin. My dad hunts too. I have never gone with him though. MY brother is 8, and he will probably start hunting soon too. We have a German short-hair pointer dog. His name is Copper. What did you do when you missed school? I only skipped school twice in high school and I got caught both times. Nobody is there to catch you skipping school in college, so you have to go to class on your own. Have you ever caught anything hunting? Write soon! Jenn

Reply | Forward

Jenn's Emerging Perspectives

- I guess it could be a possibility. Originally, I based where I want to teach on where I knew I would be living… I didn't really think of myself as teaching there.

- This class did open my mind to a less stereotypical view of inner-city schools.

Nike (A student who did become engaged in the activity system)

The article by Delpit (1988) was an extremely powerful article that challenged me personally and opened my eyes to the realities and possible struggles that I will potentially have in the future... Delpit concluded that, "it is possible to create a model for the good teacher without taking issues of culture and community context into account... I never realized to what extent this holds true until reading the examples of how interpretations of authority and empowerment were interpreted by blacks as opposed to whites. My thoughts about teaching in the inner-city have forced me to consider and think about how it is that I want to approach teaching and how my concept of effective teaching may have to be altered.

I came to this course arrogant and self assured. Critical thinking had always been my forte... I began with my personal essay about... "what I wanted to do for the rest of my life." I began the course with a love for literature, arrogance for acquired knowledge, and hope for a glorious future... Our class had engaging discussions on critical thinking, critical reading, communication with students, and lots of activities. And then I read an article that stated: "The life experiences of teachers stem from their beliefs and belief structures...those belief structures strongly affect the literacy practices a teacher may use..." I began to ask lots of questions... And from then my arrogance deflated. I began to realize my potential role within students' lives. I was introduced to things I had never considered...

... I am anxious about having been ignorant and insensitive to certain students... I am afraid to make the wrong moves just as I am excited to make the right ones. But in the end, I take my future position... As a privilege to have the opportunity to help mold the wet clay that will one day become fine art... I do not see myself as an English teacher, but as a teacher of life, an educator of human emotions, of human relationships, and human history. I believe the subject at question is not the literature but the many different students that I will be teaching. It is their minds that I am exploring and trying to expand.

Key Points For Teaching
And Further Research

- 1. The analysis of the data revealed differences in the teachers' pre and post definitions of literacies and how they are demonstrated

- 2. The research demonstrates that differences in teachers' developing perspectives and commitments depend on how the teachers engaged with the information and the activities planned

- 3. When teachers' discourse and their actions reveal that they have reached the stage of theorizing and the development of a personal voice, then these are indications that internalization is indeed occurring

Teachers reported that changes occurred in their considerations about literacy and their levels of commitment when they chose to actively engage in the activity system that the course offered and the social processes offered in the course which functioned as mediating mechanisms for psychological and cognitive change and development. Teachers should therefore be given an abundance of opportunities to engage in strategically designed activity system which included struggle with theory as well as the realities of implementing those theories through reflection, teacher research projects, classroom discourse that challenged preconceived notions, and classroom teaching/tutoring within a supportive yet challenging learning context.