



College of Education
and Human Development

Kentuckiana Metroversity Awards for Instructional Development Information

Engaging Students and Moving Past Labels Through a Writing Resiliency Project

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Title of Course: EDTP 311 Introduction to Reading/Language Arts, P-5 This is a course that I teach every fall semester. The *Writing Resiliency Project* is a component of EDTP 311 I have completed this project for the last three years and would like to do the project again in the Fall of 2012

Student Population: Undergraduate juniors and seniors obtaining teaching certification in grades K-5

Teacher and Learning Problem Addressed by Project: Many preservice teachers enter the teaching profession with assumptions and biases related to working with students in high poverty schools. Schultz, Neyhart, and Reck (1996) reported that 80% of the preservice teachers surveyed believed that “urban children” from a low socioeconomic status were lower in learning ability than other children or that their ability to learn was limited by personal dispositions or their environment. Zimpher (1989) completed an eight-year research study surveying prospective teachers and found that more than 85% preferred to teach in schools not located in urban areas. Other research shows that half the teachers who begin teaching in urban, high poverty schools leave within three to five years (Haberman, 2002; Howey, 2002).

One objective of this project was to counter-act these assumptions through a writing project that would allow my students to have conversations, and to share stories with their students that might dispel some of these assumptions. It is my hope that the project will evoke praxis in the preservice teachers, so they will engage in being advocates for their students. I want my students to become hopeful about teaching and view their future students not from a deficit perspective, but from a perspective of admiration.

I decided to focus on the theme of resiliency due to research I had read about related to the importance of promoting and fostering resiliency in students. Wolin and Wolin (1993) described resilient students as being strong and unbending. Benard (1991) and Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1997, 1998) describe resilience as the ability to triumph over difficult situations and riskfactors. 139). My research showed that the disposition of resiliency was the major factor that could help the 4th grade students be academically successfully.

A second purpose was to give my students the opportunity to have a hands on experience in teaching a group of students how to write. The course I teach has the main objective of teaching future teachers how to teach students how to write. As a college instructor, I wanted my students to observe an effective writing teacher in an authentic setting, participate in the writing process, and engage in student/teacher writing conferences. All of these goals also aligned with my aspiration to challenge my students’ pre-conceived ideas about working with students labeled as high risk due to being from a low social economic

status. In addition, this project gave my students the opportunity to learn how to teach students how to write.

Specific Objectives for U of L Undergraduate Students:

The purpose of this project is to engage 4th grade elementary students to write about someone who has demonstrated how to be resilient and to provide an authentic learning opportunity for language arts methods students to learn how to teach writing and conduct small and individualized writing conferences with elementary students.

Methodology

Preservice teachers who were enrolled in a language arts methods course were divided among the three classes. Each preservice student worked with a small group of students. The fourth-grade teachers in each classroom modeled how to teach an effective prewriting lesson using literature related to the theme of resiliency. These books were used to help the students connect to literature and see if their lives were similar to or different from the characters in the books. The preservice teachers worked with small groups of students to help them complete a graphic organizer that would help them organize their thinking

Three days later, the preservice teachers were again divided among the four fourth-grade classes. The fourth-grade teachers modeled how to teach a writing lesson that extended the prewriting activity to a rough draft, and again the lesson included literature related to resiliency. The preservice students stayed in the classroom and worked with the same small groups of students on that stage of the writing process.

One week later, the preservice teachers again worked with fourth-grade students focusing on revising and editing. The same process was followed with the fourth-grade teachers modeling how to teach an effective and engaging writing lesson related to revising and editing. Teachers used mentor texts that modeled the writing focus of the particular lesson. Preservice students were again divided among the four fourth-grade classes and worked with the students in small groups as well as conducted individual conferences to complete this stage of the writing process

During the next week, the fourth-grade teachers continued to work on editing and revising and putting the paper in a form suitable for publication.

The next major aspect of the project was to then help students put their written stories in a digital format. U of L students worked with the 4th grade students in using *Photo Story* to add pictures and music to the stories. The 4th grade students also recorded their stories using digital recorders. (A sample digital story is included in this application.)

As a group, we did not want the process to stop here. The final part of the project was for all the students to share their own stories. We scheduled an Author's Share event to be held at the school, and parents, teachers, and preservice students were all invited to attend. At this event, the fourth-grade students were able to share their stories of resiliency with an authentic audience. Students in other grades were invited to the event with hopes that these stories would inspire others to move forward despite obstacles in their lives.

Evaluation:

At the end of the project all preservice students were required to do the following:

1. Student products of the writing process (i.e., prewriting, drafts, and examples of formative writing with feedback from instructor from throughout the process, conferencing notes and/or questions addressed in conferencing, peer assessment, self reflection, etc.)
2. Conference notes
3. Final digital story
4. Reflection paper of process

Through these assignments, I was able to determine if my objectives were met. A sample student product of the Student Reflection (Attachment 2) and Conference Notes (Attachment 3) are included. The rubric I used to assess the work is also included. (Attachment 3)

Technology

U of L students worked with the 4th grade students using a free software program called *PhotoStory*. Students also used digital recorders to record 4th grade students reading their stories of resiliency.

Budget

For the last three years, I have completed this project with no funding. The 4th grade teachers and myself along with the technology department at U of L have worked together to make the project a success. Funds from this award could be used to get the following equipment so we can continue to use digital technology:

Items	Justification	Number/Price per item	Total Cost
Books related to resiliency and writing craft	A major component of this project is using quality children's literature to teach students how to write effectively. Books related to resiliency also help to foster the disposition and focus students on the writing task.	20 books at \$10 each	\$200
Digital Cameras	This year I borrowed 4 cameras from the University of Louisville. We would like to purchase 4 cameras so students could take pictures that could be used for their digital stories.	4 cameras at \$80 each	\$320
Audio Recorders	Digital recorders are needed so students can read their stories audibly and record them for the digital story.	15 Digital Records at \$20 each	\$300
Author's Share	At the end of the project. We have an Author's Share in which parents and community members		\$100

	are invited to hear the stories. Snacks and drinks could be served at this event.		
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Additionally Details:

Go to the following website to see a short video of pictures of the project.

Attachments include the following:

1. Sample Reflection by U of L student.
2. Sample Conference Notes by U of L student.
3. Rubric used to assess project
4. Sample digital story
5. A video with pictures of the project can be found at the following link:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2uNCo9HChY>

References

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