

August 22, 2005

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to ELAN 5390/7390, a class on the difficulties students encounter in literacy learning in elementary and middle schools. And as we all know, if our students are struggling to learn, we are struggling to teach. This class was designed in response to the pressing needs in Georgia schools to improve the quality of learning and opportunity for achievement by diverse learners. Our focusing question is, **How can we close the achievement gap that is all too present among diverse racial, linguistic, and economic groups?**

Learning Goals

I have several goals for the class; you will develop your personal and professional goals as well. My goals include that we

a) identify and address critical issues in teaching children who struggle as readers and writers in school;

b) become more effective teachers through exploring theory, research, and practices others have identified as useful, while at the same time developing local and personal practices;

c) examine social, cultural, and political influences on teaching and learning with special attention to how cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity affects the quality of education of children in Georgia; and

c) model as much as possible in our own class setting what you will be doing in your classrooms, including

(1) generating our own curriculum and action through Critical Inquiry and Agency projects;

(2) examining the role of culture in forming teaching/learning relationships through researching and writing Cultural Memoirs;

(3) creating teaching strategies and materials that will engage and inform diverse and disenfranchised learners, e.g., Critical Literacy Text Sets with Strategies for Engagement.

Learning from Each Other in Varied Class Structures

I have found several learning structures to be helpful; we'll modify these based on the needs of this learning community.

4:45-5:30 **Literacy Workshop:** we'll research, develop, revise, and share literacy including Cultural Memoirs, Critical Literacy Text Sets, and other projects

5:30-6:15 **Pedagogy Discussions:** we'll discuss shared readings in grade level groups, followed by whole class discussion of issues raised, and engagement with specific learning strategies; this may be longer when we have guest teachers

6:15-7:00 **Critical Inquiry & Advocacy** groups

7:00-7:15 class business; read aloud selection

Learning Through Reading and Discussion

Most of what you read this semester you will determine based on your own needs and interests in your CIA group, individually, and as a learning community.

- There's Room for Me Here by Janet Allen and Kyle Gonzalez
- A Classroom Teacher's guide to Struggling Readers Curt Dudley-Marling & Patricia Paugh
- Readings you select in your CIA group
- Other readings posted on WebCT - please check WebCT often! These will be posted when we determine as a group where we want to focus.

Learning Through Writing

Please keep a **Pedagogy Notebook**, either handwritten or on computer, that you bring to class each session. It is essential that each of us comes to class having read the common readings and the individual readings you have chosen. Record key points, and write questions about things you don't understand, statements you disagree with, connections you make to other readings and other classes, issues that make you think of your own learning, and especially, ideas that are relevant to your own teaching. These questions will be the core of our discussions, so please highlight them in your notes. Group members will help each other learn from the readings, and will raise issues for whole-class discussion. We'll also be doing professional writing in connection with the CIA projects, Cultural Memoir/Cultural Connections, and Critical Literacy Text Sets Strategies for Engagement.

Learning Through Inquiry & Advocacy

We will all be involved in an inquiry into a critical issue in literacy education affecting students who struggle in school - what the federal government is now calling "striving readers" at the secondary level. Your CIA focus might be making

connections among home, community and school; teaching English Language Learners; culturally relevant teaching, e.g., for Hispanic or African American students; tracking/ability grouping and remedial/special education, etc.). You will

- identify the issue you want to study in depth,
- form a group with 1-3 others interested in the same or similar issues,
- gather materials including print, technological, and talking with people
- design other appropriate ways of researching and gathering information - the best one I know is research in your classroom if you are teaching, or perhaps collaborative research if you pair up
- outline a group CIA schedule with a fair distribution of work,
- prepare and present individual Advocacy Actions; these may be related within your CIA, but each person will design and present his/her own based on identifying a specific group of stakeholders, what they count as persuasive evidence, and what forum is most appropriate (you may incorporate drama, technology, music, photography, etc.)
- design together an evaluation rubric for the CIA process and products

Learning Through Technology

If you have a laptop, please bring it to class. You may have your notes there, you may wish to write on the computer (I know I do!), and we'll be able to access websites, articles, and other information resources as needed. It's not a time to catch up on your email (I know the temptation all too well!) or surf the net.

Learning Through Dialogue

We'll talk about the difference between conversation and dialogue, dialogue and debate. There will be three group structures, your **Literacy Workshop Group** (self selected), **Pedagogy Group** (grade level), and **CIA Groups**. And sometimes we'll all dialogue together!

Learning Through Pursuing Personal Learning Goals and Experiences

I hope you'll find there is a great deal of choice of topic, design, and literacies in the projects we all do. You will design an additional 10 points (5390) or 20 points (7390) project as your Personal Learning Experience based on your learning goals.

- Critical Literacy Text Set - 25 points
- Cultural Memoir/Cultural Connections - 25 points
- Critical Inquiry & Advocacy Project - 40 points
- Personal Learning Experience - 10-20 points

Total points: 100 (5390) or 110 (7390)

5/7390 Difficulties in Literacy Teaching & Learning Fall 2005

Aug 22	Identifying and owning the difficulties	KWHL
Aug 29	Cultural Memoir, Literacy workshop, exploring CIA resources	<i>Room for Me</i> Ch 1-3 <i>Struggling</i> Ch 1 Bring CIA resources
Sept 12	Whole group reading strategies, culturally engaged teaching	<i>Room for Me</i> Ch 4 <i>Struggling</i> Ch 2-3
Sept 19	Independent reading; reading/writing connections	<i>Room for Me</i> Ch 5-6 <i>Struggling</i> Ch 5
Sept 26	Projects: Theme Immersion; creating critical literacy text sets with strategies for engagement	<i>Room for Me</i> Ch 8 <i>Struggling</i> Ch 6
Oct 3	Assessment that guides instruction; generating our own assessment process	<i>Room for Me</i> Ch 7, 9-10 <i>Struggling</i> Ch 4
Oct 10	Collaborating for students	<i>Room for Me</i> Ch 11-12 <i>Struggling</i> Ch 7-8
Oct 17	Exploring critical literacy text sets	Critical Literacy Text Sets (read texts/write strategies)
Oct 24	Exploring critical literacy text sets	Critical Literacy Text Sets (read texts/write strategies)
Oct 31	Inquiry & Advocacy: Stakeholders, Evidence, and Forums	
Nov 7	Dramatic potential	
Nov 14	Diverse families, welcoming schools, the power of partnerships	
Nov 21	Making a difference	Inquiry & Agency Presentations
Nov 28	Making a difference	Inquiry & Agency Presentations
Dec 5	Celebration Dinner	Sharing Cultural Memoirs, Cultural Connections

Here are some ideas for your Personal Learning Experiences:

1. Literacy Involvement with Children. We build our repertoire of teaching strategies child by child. The best way to learn how to meet the needs of students who struggle in school is to work with a variety of kids. Those of you who have

your own classrooms may want to focus on trying out and studying ideas we discuss in class. Others may volunteer in a classroom (possibly someone from this class), or tutor at Chase Street Elementary School (contact Karin Stubenbaum, Family Engagement Specialist, at 227-7843 or email her at stubenbaumk@clarke.k12.ga.us by Monday September 5).

Develop plans based on our readings. Then keep a teaching journal of each session, including what you planned, what actually happened (with the focus on specific child response, development, etc.), and what you learned. You can connect this to our class readings by trying strategies and discussing with your Pedagogy Group, to your CIA by applying what you are learning there or conducting an action research study of your classroom or one student that informs your CIA, or as a way of reflecting on your Cultural Memoir/Cultural Connects (one idea - you could have students write cultural memoirs). (10-20 pts. *5390 students: if you choose this option for 20 points, you can reduce one of the other projects by 10 points!*)

2. Graduate students: Mentoring of 5390 student - first, find one who wants to be mentored! Mentoring might include classroom visits, interviews, responding to and helping develop written work throughout semester, email support throughout the semester, etc. Log and brief reflection. (20 pts.)

3. Undergraduate students: Mentoring relationship with 7390 students (see above)
Log and brief reflection (10 pts.)

4. Your ideas...

Learning Contract: Goals and Learning Experiences

My goals for participating in ELAN 5/7390 are the following:

At the end of the semester, you'll evaluate your progress towards these goals, as well as the quality of your work and learning on the following:

<u>Points/Learning Activity and Plan</u>	<u>Due Dates</u>
___/25 1. Critical Literacy Text Set	10/10 or 10/17
___/25 2. Cultural memoir/cultural Connections	12/5
___/40 3. Critical Inquiry & Advocacy Project	11/21 or 11/28
___/10 (UG) or ___/20 (Grad) 4. Personal Learning Experience (what?)	any time thru 12/5

Total points: 100 (5390) or 110 (7390)

Grading scale: 91-100 A, 81-90 B, 71-80 C, 61-70 D, below 61 Yikes!

Note: please make every effort to attend each class session. Knowing that we all have busy lives and unanticipated circumstances, you will be allowed one *excused* absence - please notify me in advance. Because you are a vital member of the learning community, your grade would be reduced by 7 points (1/15th of the course) for every unexcused absence - but I know there won't be any!

I look forward to learning with each of you! My job is to help you learn as much as you can about what is most important to you. I'm available by email and sit-down-talk-about-it conferences that we can schedule before class on most Mondays. Please let me know how I can best support your learning. JoBeth