

Michelle Perria
Part B

The thing about this class was that I had no idea what it was about or what to expect. I thought maybe it would be a general, “this is your life: education”, but it wasn’t. There were many theories to read and different ideas to mull over. I have only been teaching for only three years and have yet to find a theory of education that I am comfortable with. I change my inquiry and my methods every semester. I also have to cater to what administration has set down for us to implement. I hoped all of my new graduate courses would bring new thinking and strategies into my classroom.

Coming from Eastern Michigan University I was excited to see Howard Gardner on the reading list. I was especially happy to read Gardner without the multiple intelligences. I was also curious how Billy Collins was going to fit into the inquiry aspect of the class. I was also grateful to start with John Dewey. I even remember the first time I heard about John Dewey; it was in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I actually had to look him up because what Jem Finch was saying made no sense.

Nothing we read contested anything I learned previously. I don’t have preconceived ideas about what is right and wrong about education. I feel like I have a broad background and a deep pool of information to draw from when I am making my plans. If anything, I am “annoyed” (in a good way) that I have even more to think about.

I did struggle with John Dewey, and I still have no solutions to this trouble. I am a high school English teacher and I still do not understand how to have the “hands on” teaching. I agree that students should be actively engaged in activity in order to learn. But the first thing that has to happen is the government or schools in general need to reevaluate what education should look like. The way education is set up now does not lend to active hands on learning. My vision as I read Dewey was the 30’s and 40’s when students learned a trade and went to work right out of high school. How does Dewey have a place in the 21st century? I see hands on computer and technology, but how to I insert that experience into a Literature classroom? What if the class is too big to implement any hands on experiences? What about the students who do not find value in what we are doing? These are the questions I struggle with in this model of education. I still do not come to a conclusion about what to do, so that will be a struggle I get to continue.

I completely loved the Vivian Paley inquiry. I addressed this in Part A. This is my challenge for the rest of this school year; to write a reflection every day after school. I do not feel ready enough to tape record. I also have more than 15 students a day. But, for me, a good start is writing the journal. From the reflection I can decide where to go the next day; what to review with them, when I can continue on to new material. Hopefully I can expand the reflection to include what behavior I noticed and what happened before and after. I really want to be able to change my response to student behavior, I am pretty sure that I am creating the problems just with my reactions.

I found useful the cultural observations of Bateson and then being able to apply it to a culture I had never experienced before was valuable. When I observe my students I always feel like I am in another culture. What they do and like is so much different. If I do the observations I will be able to put together a study of what students value and I can build relationships and curriculum to enhance education for my students.

Instead of coming to one set of inquiry, I am still left with many questions and not enough guidance. I am ok with this. Teaching is a journey and I am on the trail. I will try many things and I will discard many things, but it is important to me to keep questioning what I have learned, what others are trying and what is coming at us for other scholars.

I would have wished for more discussion about “at risk” students. I suppose that is another class at another time. This is the population I work with. I need more methods to use with them; too many are dropping out or are failing classes. I am most troubled by what to do with the apathetic student who thinks there is nothing for him/her at school.