

## **Scholarship Squared: What's Basic to Inducting Teachers into the Academy through Teacher Research in the Teaching of Writing**

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### **Abstract**

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*The purpose of this article is to identify methods used in a descriptive study to recognize, develop and support teachers' identity as researchers in the teaching of writing. Patmon provides the challenges, background context, and description of her 8-year study to develop grades K-12 teacher researchers in teaching composition. Herard and Moran contribute their teacher research odysseys with particular focus on their emergent role as researchers. Together the authors exemplify the nexus of K-12 teacher and university faculty as equally valued players contributing to the research community; and they demonstrate how teachers claim scholarship, their own and that of others, to promote healthy classroom practice in 21st century schools.*

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**Keywords:** student agency through writing; developing imagination; talking and writing connections; teacher inquiry/teachers as researchers; teaching emancipatory writing; teacher empowerment

### **Introduction**

Ever since the Bay Area Writing Project held its first summer institute in 1974 at the University of California Berkeley, the National Writing Project has brought teachers into the academy to be a part of a national conversation about the teaching and learning of writing. I remember my own initiation into the Boston Writing Project (BWP) as a neophyte middle school teacher of English. I desperately sought a safe space where I could explore with other teachers just what was going on in my classroom: my challenges, my beliefs, my dreams of being the best teacher possible for my promising urban, diverse students who had complex needs. Never had I considered the role of research and inquiry beyond my pre-service education, until my work with teachers in the BWP. I learned that I could collaborate with university professors and peers to examine equity literacy practices and I could dare to question and imagine what moves I might make in my own classroom to improve the learning environment without threat of chastisement from the "higher ups." After all, I was just a teacher and not a researcher! The purpose of this article is to demonstrate ways to recognize, develop and support teachers' identity as researchers, particularly in the teaching of writing for teacher empowerment.

## ***The Challenges***

In 21st century classrooms, making teachers' work visible to themselves and accessible to others is as essential today as it was when I first began my career. Now that I am a Teacher Educator, my early lessons as a teacher have influenced my current theorizing about the role of research for the K-12 teacher - university research collaboration in the teaching of writing. In 2010 I co-authored a Calderwood Teachers as Writers (CTW) grant and have been the principal investigator for this initiative designed to create change in writing and its instruction in K-12 classrooms in the Greater Boston area.

On June 19, 2018 three Calderwood teachers joined me to share this work at the Exploring Language Education: Global and Local Perspectives conference at Stockholm University, Sweden. Entitled, "Using Different Voices, Cultural Lens and Writing for Academic Achievement in Public School Classrooms in the U.S." our colloquium began with a question to attendees to find out the audience's curiosities. Note sample responses:

"I was interested in the collaboration between teachers and researchers, and also in the topic of writing. I am really impressed by the work you have done as teachers and researchers." (Norway)

"Interested to hear about your examples, your teamwork experiences and the context you work in." {Sweden}

"I selected the colloquium because I am interested in your work with researchers/teachers and want to learn more and get inspiration. In Finland, we're trying to adopt a similar writing research/education."

"My interest is in the learners' and teachers' views and perspectives - also getting to know the Boston context/learning about classroom practices from different contexts enhances understanding of Europeans' contexts (in my case Norway and Austria).Collaboration with teachers and innovative forms of teacher training are of great importance and I am happy to learn about your experiences."

Many wondered about the teacher-university research partnership process. These findings suggested that U.S. teachers were not alone in feeling the isolation of teaching literacy in confinement. How did classroom teachers become researchers and partners with university faculty to work together to improve literacy teaching and learning, specifically in writing?

## ***Program Method/Treatment***

Through a competitive application process, teachers participated in two 3-credit graduate courses which constituted the CTW program at UMASS Boston. The first was a summer institute entitled "Teaching Writing K-12," where teachers write, draft a publishable piece, investigate composition research and form a classroom-based inquiry project. The second course "Teacher Research," was the classroom based investigatory process, which ran the entire school year after the summer institute. Here teachers obtained qualitative and quantitative research skills in order to pursue their question. They conducted an individual study in hopes of making their findings public- if only to themselves- as well as share their knowledge with other teachers, teacher researchers, and university researchers.

Teaching writing is truly interdisciplinary. In an effort to break down silos, I welcomed applications from teachers from ALL disciplines/grade levels for the CTW program, creating a truly inclusive representation of educators throughout the Greater Boston area. I received submissions from urban and suburban public-school teachers, charter school teachers, independent school teachers, parochial school teachers, school librarians, and the like. After carefully reviewing each dossier (which consisted of a sample of one's writing, a possible inquiry question, why the program was appealing, and a resume), ten teachers were selected to constitute a cohort for the year's work together.

The CTW grant provided invited CTWs with: 1. \$1,000 they received after the successful completion of the one-year program; 2. course fees to pay for the two 3-credit graduate level courses; 3. books, supplies, and materials needed for the facilitation of their classroom-based research; 4. dinners during the school year Teacher Research course; and 5. other incidentals that emerged like support for CTW Fellows to attend conferences, travel, etc. After accepting the written offer to participate, I sent chosen CTWs the following message that communicated a spirit of shared dignity and respect that I envisioned for our future work together:

### ***Dear Fellow Educator-Researcher***

Welcome to this tremendous opportunity to empower yourself through self-directed research that is meaningful to you. As you develop your research question, I encourage you to begin thinking of an aspect of your teaching and learning that holds deep personal significance. Don't worry about having all the answers, and don't worry about showing up on the first day with a master plan. You are a part of an intellectual community of fellow teachers, researchers and learners, and we will be here to help you define, refine and shape your thinking into a plan that is feasible. Teacher Research cannot promise to be a silver bullet for the increasingly burnout-inducing state of education today, but it is the beginning of a process of refining your work and arming yourself with critical experience so that you become the professional you seek to be; one who is inoculated against stringent mandates that risk depriving educators of the love and purpose that brought them to this profession in the first place. It is a pleasure and an honor to embark on this journey with you, and I look forward to learning and sharing with you.

### ***The Work I: Summer Institute***

I began our summer course by having teachers write their individual stories to help us form a collective. Valuing individual multicultural identities of the selected teachers, specific literacy backgrounds and internal voices that are sometimes not in English as a first language became the primary order of business. This stance that recognizes diversity as a strength is a model that is evident in CTWs' classrooms as well.

Once personal narratives are shared and have been reworked and revised and we revealed ourselves to each other, we read published scholarship in composition published in Miller's Norton Anthology. CTWs determined what was relevant to their classrooms after pouring through what is suggested in the research community. They chose a group of readings from the Anthology, wrote and reflected on theoretical frameworks presented. At the conclusion of their reading time and critical analyses, each CTW shared his/her reflections framed around Kuhn's paradigm, "Is the teaching of composition in the midst of a paradigm shift?"

CTWs decide what is important to know about the theories they chose to study, what continues to be important in the field, what continues to be important to the particular culturally diverse language needs of the students in their classrooms and finally, whether or not the field of composition was in the midst of a paradigm shift. Their sense of professionalism flourished when they presented their literature research reviews to the summer institute collective. It is from this position of knowing the research that teachers then linked their classroom practice to their individual research inquiry. Teachers embraced the power of knowing.

In our current educational environment in the U.S. where outside forces emphasize privatization and standardization of the profession, it is necessary for teachers to spend undistracted time studying theory from a critical analysis perspective in order to find their own stance and voice even if they were not graduate students in the academy. It is from this position that they contributed to the existing intellectual community to which they began to feel a sense of belonging. By the end of the 1-week summer institute CTW Fellows were expected to produce: 1. an auto ethnography 2. a book review on the teaching of writing 3. A critical review of article(s) 4. attendance and active participation in all class sessions, and 5. A draft proposal for their yearlong classroom inquiry project/research proposal.

### ***The Work II: Fall/Spring Yearlong Follow-Up Course***

The Teacher Research course involved recursive, reflexive thinking and constant reflection. Teachers honed their research question and carefully designed their study for classroom-based investigation. The presence of real students' faces in their classrooms and perhaps a changed curriculum or new school at the start of the new academic year can dramatically change a study. We met as a class once a month on Friday nights where I provided a warm meal and spirits to deepen intellectual inquiry. CTWs trusted each other as a result of the summer institute, so relationships were solid and supportive.

The analytic memo as a researcher's tool was introduced as an unobtrusive tool for teachers to use in order to have conversations with the self during the research process about what it was they were seeing and monitoring in their classrooms. Limits were not placed on what genre or the "how" of documenting their thoughts but rather on recording behavior and observations in a scientific timely fashion. CTWs deemed this strategy to be teacher friendly and helped them to systematically document their study.

Another element to support the emergent teacher researcher was classroom visits and the introduction of the co-teacher researcher role. I visited each Teacher Researcher's classroom at least once during the yearlong study academic - not for evaluative purposes, but rather to serve as a thought partner at a time during their investigation that the teacher researcher determined to be most helpful. Mills (2000) suggests that co-research is a "systematic inquiry conducted by a teacher researcher or other stakeholder in the teaching/learning environment, to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment, and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved." In addition, each CTW was paired with someone else from the group, of their own choosing, who served as a participant-observer/co-researcher. Both of these perspectives, mine and the co-researcher's, helped the teacher inquirer deepen his/her investigation process and meaning making by discussing what these support individuals reported that they had witnessed. Again, this was not an evaluative experience.

What follows are two testimonials of how the above described teacher empowerment process worked for Dominique Herard and Kaitlin Moran. Their essays attest to the power of teacher research to inform instruction in order to make public emancipated students' voices.

### ***Sample Finding - Dominique Herard's Teacher Research Odyssey***

Teaching is hard. Your classroom can feel like an isolated space. Yes, I have kind colleagues with whom I can share lesson ideas. Yes, I always work with at least one other adult in the room. Yes, I work in a place where I feel like I have the autonomy to interpret curricular standards and expectations in ways that will most benefit my students. However, after teaching first grade for three years, I was beginning to feel a shift in how I felt about teaching. Physically, it was rare to have a moment alone. Emotionally, I had yet to identify a colleague who wanted to experience a similar professional journey as me, such as discussing educational articles and research as well as reflecting on how to bring more inclusive practices to our classrooms and schools beyond surface remedies.

When I was accepted into the CTW program in 2015, it seemed like a chance to meet like-minded educators who I could learn from and who could help challenge my own ways of thinking in a respectful, collaborative atmosphere. The previous summer, I was a participant in The Boston Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute, and this experience whetted my appetite for comparable connections within the educational community. I did not know just how much CTW would support, validate and encourage my practice, and I believe it is the reason I am still a teacher today. The collaborative passion, community, and understanding within this fellowship reminded me of why I came to teaching initially: to support young learners with being productive citizens of the world. CTWs met for an intensive week in the summertime and monthly on Friday nights throughout the school year. Not something every teacher would agree to do.

What I found in CTW was a support system which enabled me to dig deep into an inquiry project in my classroom. The community challenged me to think about the ways in which I wanted my teaching practice to transform and how to do so with research-proven pedagogy and strategies as support. In teaching, I hear my colleagues often talk about not "reinventing the wheel;" that is to say, we should not try to create something on our own when it has already been done for us because it is more difficult. Though I understand what this means, it is through the work of educators like the ones I know through CTW and the BWP who consistently remind me that re-inventing the wheel is exactly what we want to do as innovative educators, but it cannot be done without research and a community of support.

With the help of my colleagues in CTW and Dr. Patmon, I was able to critically examine my classroom practices and identify aspects that were ripe for change. I teach first grade in a town just outside of Boston. The town where I teach is a suburban area. Though known for a higher socioeconomic status, my school district has a wide variety of residents. Some families live below the poverty line; others live in mansions. With such a discrepancy within one classroom, I was noticing a need around me to reinvent the wheel around "Turn and Talks," a strategy of having students share ideas orally with someone who is sitting near them. The way strategies are shared is important to how students see themselves as learners. Usually, "Turn and Talks" are used to generate brainstorming ideas as a pre-writing activity. I wanted the talking that they already do so much of to contain more substance, guiding them to converse in meaningful ways. Of course, first graders need time to talk just for fun sometimes. Other times, talk can help organize and frame our thinking. I wanted first graders to practice the latter.

How could I move beyond the “Turn and Talks”? I realized then I wanted not only to have meaningful conversations but also invigorate a creative approach to problems and solutions that were severely lacking, already, in these young minds.

Finally, I hoped to connect these two ideas to something that the district was pushing but not always in authentic ways: writing. I came up with a research question that held all of these ideas:

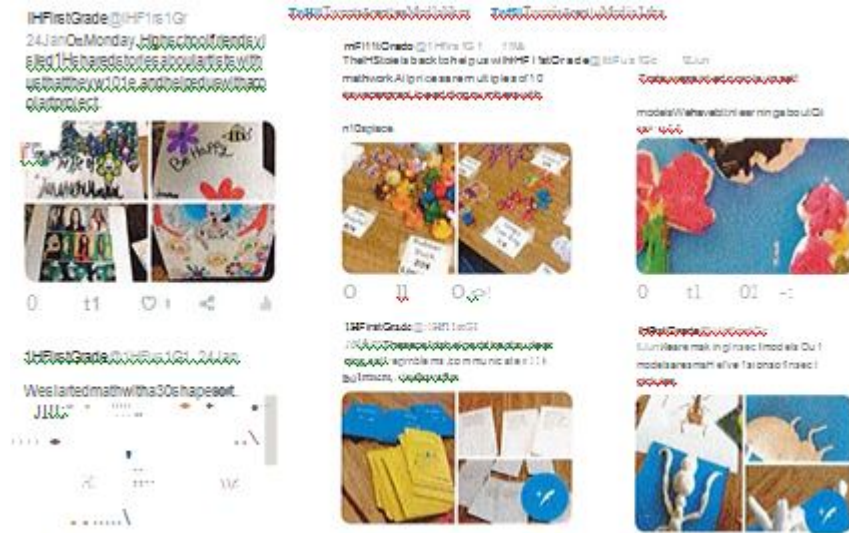
How does the relationship between talk and writing enhance imagination and written composition skills in first grade learners when explicit talk-based activities are included as a part of writing times?

Armed with a question, I needed to think intentionally about my methods finding its answer. In essence, how could I creatively answer a question about creativity? How could I structure my thinking, reinvent the wheel, to build an environment in which my students could support me in designing activities and conversations about imagination and writing? While striving to answer this question for myself, there is one work that resonated above all other texts and was the genuine starting line for my journey into alternative methods of teaching writing and my overall practice. It was Maxine Greene's *Releasing the Imagination*. To increase imagination, she writes, "storytelling helps...drawing helps; but we need to go further to create situations in which something new can be added each day to a learner's life" (Greene 41). Teachers are not just couriers of academic, standardized bits of information but ambassadors from a realm whose sole purpose is the positive effect on young love through joy in learning.

Imagination paves the way for unexpected discoveries and for processing a variety of perspectives, a way to build a bridge over the gaps between what is expected in schools and what should be a necessity. Based on the interest of my students and my readings on imagination and writing, there were three ideas for activities that presented themselves as ideals for building more imaginative and writing experiences into our routines, building empathy into our everyday experiences, and becoming more fluent in seeing the world as a story waiting to be told. The first idea involved students collaboratively building towns in small groups with a new Legos Education set. Students were separated into small groups of four or five. They worked together to build a town out of Legos. After a town was built, students in the group composed an oral story about their fictional town, which included the buildings and community helpers we studied. Each member contributed to the oral story. All of the stories were combined, typed up, and given to each member of the group.



The second idea involved students composing daily tweets about our days through our classroom Twitter account. It was a way to connect learning across different schools, states, and even countries. One of the classroom jobs is Class Historian. The Class Historian's task is to document the learning of the day in some way. It is usually one of the big learning takeaways from the day, and composing a "tweet" of 140 characters or less should explain this learning and create a message that can be understood by those who have no context for our work. For example, "We did science today. It was fun" is not a tweet that will help others understand what is happening in our classroom. However, "Today in science we used tuning forks to help us understand about sound and vibrations by putting them in water" will invite other classrooms or followers to better understand our work, ask questions, or make comments.



Finally, the third idea was using an explicit talking activity that was fun for students and helpful to discussing learning points specifically within our writing times. The activity served as a way to assess student comprehension and beliefs about our topic, as well as engaged them in practices to exhibit use of proper social skills and supportive interactions with peers. This happened in two ways: having time for students to tell stories aloud before they tell them in writing and having a talk show, on which students practiced empathy answering questions from the perspective of an actual person (social justice figure) or a literary character (from a book we have read).

All three ideas were built on the need for first graders to communicate and allowed flexibility for students who were learning English or not as comfortable in social settings because the expectations were not predetermined by an arbitrary rubric. Levels of participation varied and all were valued.

There are many feelings in life that carry such brightness and importance they cannot be described accurately with words. Being able to travel to Stockholm in June 2018 with fellow educators was certainly one of those moments. It does not get more meaningful than being able to travel to an international conference and share your work with educators from around the world who value and respect your opinions and methods. Of course, the more immediate validation of your students is crucial, and perhaps you may also want the validation of peers and bosses as well. However, there is a special kind of magic in being celebrated by people who do not know you or your work and still have an interest in learning from you. My attendance at the Exploring Language Education Conference not only re-ignited the flame for learning from these types of experiences but also broadened my understanding of the role of LI development in my classroom. One of the most valuable beliefs for me as an educator is never losing an interest in furthering my learning and feeling like I am more than just a teacher, someone whose opinions and experiences are reinforced by how I use them in my classroom. The conference helped to validate the importance of spreading teacher knowledge that builds in individual classrooms, turning what can be isolating and singular experiences into something from which all people can learn.

### ***Sample Finding - Kaitlin Moran's Teacher Research Odyssey***

At the outset of the CTW program I, along with the other people in my cohort read research on writing in the classroom, learned various techniques for teaching writing in the classroom, and wrote an auto-ethnography. These may seem like standard, graduate-level assignments, but for us, professional teachers, it was a unique opportunity to step outside our roles as educators and back into the role of student. Completing these assignments allowed us to discuss relevant, high-level text at length and write for both process and product multiple times per day. For me, a nine-year teaching veteran whose classrooms had always included high- needs populations, having just accepted a job at a new high school, this was a time of some uncertainty- who were my students, my leaders, my peers? Completing the summer intensive of the CTW Fellowship allowed me to put those questions into perspective and reconnect with my philosophy of teaching.

This was Summer 2017, and as a History teacher, and American citizen, I had watched President Donald Trump erode American values and demean American immigrants for his first six months in office. I decided to focus on developing individual agency in my classroom and how to use writing to develop agency in immigrant students.

One book review I completed during the summer intensive, *The Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Instructors in All Disciplines*, by K. Gottschalk and K. Hjortshoj (2004), helped re-center my purpose in the classroom in that it helped set up a new, more recursive writing structure for my upcoming classroom; one that would hold students to high expectations, but allow them to find their own voice and, ideally, develop agency.

As a cohort, we wrote our proposed research questions on giant pieces of chart paper. We wrote them about 50 times before that too, trying to finesse language, exact meaning, and narrow the scope. We, along with CTW Alumni, Professor Patmon, and expert teachers associated with the Fellowship walked around the room and gave feedback on the research question. This was nerve-wracking, yet supportive because all the ideas and suggestions for refinement or further questioning came from a place of deep curiosity. It was very uplifting.

We left the summer intensive, not knowing the exact wording of our question, but knowing in what direction we wanted to move. I left the summer intensive feeling less traumatized, very supported by my cohort, and surer of the importance of teaching than I had in a long time. One of the most unique aspects of the program was the partnership of a co-researcher. I was fortunate to be able to work with a Math teacher from another Boston school. He and I are very different thinkers from very different disciplines. This was one of the most rewarding parts of the summer, and, eventually, the year. My co-researcher and I bonded over our confusion, our thorough enjoyment, and our wonder that we were on this research journey together. It was a privilege to get to know another professional through their writing. In one activity, we had to have a silent conversation about research we had just read. We each wrote and "passed notes" back and forth to speak to each other. We both said later that we wanted our thoughts to be refined because we felt like the other had such a beautiful way of thinking. This encapsulates what it meant to have a co-researcher, both during the summer and throughout the subsequent school year—someone to encourage you to be better, to support you, and to deeply question and reflect with you on research and experiences. My summer at CTW not only allowed me to be a student, but it allowed me to process my professional transition deeply and enter my new position with fewer questions and a greater sense of assurance that I was a strong teacher and I was ready for my next challenge. It also allowed me meaningful, reflective space to use research to develop the norms and ideals for my new classroom. That space was unique and, without it, I probably would have re-worked old, familiar, and perhaps, worn, routines into my new classroom. Instead, I entered my new space with more vigor for teaching and learning than I had possessed for years.

During the 2017-2018 school year I conducted research in my multi-lingual American Government classroom at a Boston Public High School. Statistics of my urban school reveal that my students are high-needs, often vulnerable to exploitation, and in true need of a high-quality, rigorous education with supportive teachers.

In addition to conducting research in my classroom, I read academic research related to agency, writing, immigrant students, and language acquisition. Reading the research legitimized me as a professional, but also helped me improve my pedagogy. For example, when I read Stewart, *Writing with Power, Sharing their Immigrant Stories: Adult ESOL Students Find their Voices in Writing* she stated, "through writing with voice, they (adult ESOL students) took control to define themselves as immigrants in the United States and became empowered to share their stories to effect positive change" (269). This was the objective of my classroom and my research. It can feel rare as a teacher to feel like what you are doing is "correct" or impactful. However, seeing that similar work had been done in the past reassured me that I was on the right path, both for my research and for my students' learning. Similarly, in reading *Preparing for Citizenship: Immigrant High School Students' Curriculum and Socialization* by Callahan, Muller, and Schiller, I found data to support my exploration of agency. The authors conclude, "the informal realm of schooling provides the practice steps necessary during adolescence for active participation in adult civic society" (Callahan et al 11). One aspect of the CTW Fellowship that I most appreciated was this feeling of connection. Not only was the connection to our peers within the Fellowship deep, but also the exploration of the research broadened my feeling of unity to the wider education community. No matter the work that is done to help teachers feel less isolated, teaching is still an isolating profession. To have the time, space, and support to contextualize and connect my work to work happening all over the country made me feel like I was making a difference and doing a good job in a way that evaluations and local connections have never been able to do before.

My research rested on three big pillars- how to use Writing Response Groups, how to engage students to write for an authentic audience, and how to use current events- to build student agency.

I was introduced to Writing Response Groups during our summer intensive. When writing our auto-ethnography we read, shared, and revised with a small group to publish a final piece. I found this experience transformative- it opened me up to reading others' writing as a reader and not as an instructor. I wanted that same experience for my students because it developed my confidence and helped me find my voice. Each Friday my students worked on their long-term writing pieces. Our first piece was a personal essay on the questions Who am I? How do I belong in the United States? Since all of my students are recent immigrants I wanted them to be able to communicate how their past experiences influenced and defined their future hopes and goals. We started work on these pieces by creating an identity box- a cardboard box that represented who they were both inside and outside. Using my model, students then used their box as the basis for their writing, almost like a physical brainstorm. Students met with their assigned Writing Response Groups weekly. They blessed (said what they liked), pressed (asked clarifying questions), and addressed (corrected mistakes) for and with their partners. I did very little editing, but, instead, a lot of listening as a reader. This changed my perspective on student writing and helped me recognize the voice and theme rather than note the mistakes.

Throughout the year, students gained more confidence and comfort with their Writing Response Groups. Our class also wrote letters to the Mayor of Boston and speeches on how we wished to change the world. All of these writing pieces were completed over a period of six to eight weeks using Writing Response Groups. Students internalized the protocol and applied what they had learned in their English language classes to their writing. By far, this was one of the most successful aspects of increasing agency because Writing Response Group gave students validation in their voice as writers and it also allowed them to connect with other students as peers, editors, and questioners in collaboratively developing writing.

The second pillar of my research was how to engage students to write for an authentic audience. When I first told students they were going to have to read their personal narratives aloud, many were nervous. They were nervous about public speaking, nervous about their accents, and nervous about pronouncing English words correctly. We practiced a lot in my classroom. Some days students would have to stand up and introduce themselves. They would have to say their name loudly and clearly enough for everyone to hear. If it wasn't



Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh speaking to Brighton High students (Photo Courtesy of Boston Schools Twitter) loud or clear they would have to repeat it until everyone heard it. It was an easy exercise, but it emphasized the point that we were a community and we could build trust with each other. Over time, that community expanded. I invited other teachers in to hear them present their personal narratives. When it came time to write letters to the Mayor many students were skeptical that the Mayor would ever read them. Not only did he read them, but he



came to our school to meet with the students. By that point in the year, the students had gained confidence in their abilities to speak English publicly. They peppered the Mayor with questions ranging from his stance on immigration to when he would fix the potholes. He spoke to them for over an hour. This was the pinnacle of writing for an authentic audience. The students felt validated that he had heard their concerns. One student from Ethiopia wrote in their reflection,

"The experience was great I gained more confidence and I was so happy forsaking a questions I was kinda (kind of) shy when I talked because my voice wasn't loud so it was hard for me to speak am so glad that when he talk about immigrants and Donald Trump so it turns out his (he) doesn't agree with Donald Trump." Another student from Haiti wrote, "Of the experience of talking to the Mayor yesterday I think I learned a lot thing. One thing I want to remember is that when he talked about his life, his pass (past), when he said his mother was a housekeeper. This demonstrates if you have motivation you can attaint (attain) your objectives. To attaint (attain) this objective you have right to stay in school, working hard, go to the college and you can be what ever you want in the country. You can be mayor like Marty Walsh any everything else." Many students marked this as the part of their year they would remember most and that most helped them recognize their agency and capacity for making change.

Finally, my research centered on students reading and writing reflectively on the news. Each Monday, students came to class having read, summarized, and reflected on a current event. We spent class time sharing current events, asking questions, clarifying misconceptions, and wondering what this meant to us. In a year when the President of the United States said and did terrible things to the immigrant community, this was essential practice. Students created a space where they could feel comfortable with both knowing and not knowing. They created a space where it was normal and appropriate to ask questions that did not always have answers. They created a space where knowledge was respected and being informed was the expectation. Many students left the class saying they would continue to read the news because they felt it was important to be informed about what was happening because before they did not realize how much these policies impacted their lives. They found themselves situated in the United States and in a classroom understanding how the government was working for, and sometimes, against, them. They realized knowledge is power.

My research concluded that by writing students did feel more agentive. They felt more confident asking questions and expressing themselves in English. They also felt they had made connections to each other and the local community in a way that helped them know their rights in the United States and felt they could advocate for themselves more effectively than prior to my class. In a final reflection on their development of agency, one student wrote, "My agency changed because now I can speak in English without shame so I think my agency now is more powerful." To realize a student had experienced shame and finding their voice lessened that is an incredibly powerful idea, especially when the President of the United States tries to make immigrants feel shame for being from certain countries or characterizing them in certain ways. Another student wrote, "I feel more comfortable knowing my rights. Before this class I was afraid to use my voice against the world." This was the crux of the project.

Throughout the year, I was able to collect myriad examples of student writing, survey results, and interviews and I wrote a 108-page paper detailing my research, methods, and findings. As I wrote, balancing my professional and personal responsibilities, I felt a sense of justice to do right by the research, by CTW and by my students. It was an empowering and agentive experience for me as a professional and as an author. In June 2018, I along with two other CTW Alumni and Professor Patmon, were invited to present our work at the Exploring Language Education Conference at Stockholm University. To present original research at an international conference was surreal. I'm just a teacher. And, that's the problem. For too long, teachers in the U.S. have been relegated to a less-than profession. The CTW program proved to me, and I believe our presentation helped demonstrate to others, that teachers are capable of and willing to conduct original research that adds to the education conversation around the world. We should be part of the conversation and we should not always be the receivers of research- we should also be contributors.

### ***CTW Discussion/Future Considerations***

Evidenced through Herard's and Moran's descriptive studies, CTWs have found comfort in partnering as teacher researchers with university faculty and have embraced this emergent role. They have interrogated their particular

discipline/genre in the teaching of writing, intentionally applied their inquiry skills and instruction in a scientific way, theorized with their peers and made public their original research to help us in the academy see and see again that which we are all trying to improve - teaching and learning for all children, tomorrow's leaders. Teachers in this study inform the research community in 3 specific ways:

1. Who we are and how we see and write about ourselves - and our realities - have a tremendous impact on our relationships within and outside of our classrooms. Issues of identity, language development, power and professional dignity as demonstrated through writing are central to teachers as researchers. Through writing the auto-ethnography during the Summer Institute, CTW Fellows learned and practiced a rhetoric of dignity closely associated with emancipatory writing which can be transferred to the K-12 classroom - as described by Moran's use in her US Government ESL class. This vital activity provided a portal for teachers to examine their personal and professional lens through strength-based positionality.
2. There is a critical need for university researchers to co-present and bring classroom teachers (who are not graduate students in their programs) into both national and international conversations about teaching and learning writing through co-creating research. Teachers must be encouraged to share their knowledge with other teachers, teacher researchers, and university researchers. The three teachers who presented with me in Stockholm evidenced professionalism on a global scale. One stated, "I feel like I am professionalizing my school by presenting internationally. This has had a huge impact on my teaching career back home."
3. The process of becoming a teacher researcher involved providing teachers with not only the language, skills, and disposition to investigate, discuss and defend theory. Teachers must be welcomed into the academy as prospective co-creators of theory. Teachers in this study found that being able to read and debate the research to help them consider ways to structure their own practice and their evolving abilities to contribute to the field of writing, allowed them to begin to understand the importance of what they do in the classroom in new ways; internalizing a sense of professional self-worth.

To square something in math means to bring it to the power of. In our social scientist in-service teacher education context, it means to bring THE THING to its next iteration. In order to square something, you need to know what that something means. In my study, CTWs have read in-depth the scholarship of others, but who have also contributed to the field in a way that helps others see their classroom struggles and triumphs, and as such they have truly made their work public.

### ***Future Considerations and Limitations***

As support for Teachers as Researchers in the teaching of writing grows and expands, several issues will need to be addressed. What might be the best ways to harness and tap into the exhilaration and excitement teachers have at the end of the one-year experience many years out of the experience? Do first year CTW Alumni (i.e. 2010-2011) continue to conduct research about their practice in their classrooms, nine years out? Approximately one-tenth of the CTW Fellows have gone on to doctoral studies at institutions throughout the U.S. How have their initial CTW research and expository writing skills transferred into their formal dissertation investigations? What research skills do CTW Alumni use in their current teacher practice? What have they honed? How have they continued to make their research studies public?

Teachers and Teacher Educators continue to deepen partnerships locally, nationally, and globally. It is imperative to address the issue of the need for respect for both K-12 teachers and university professors to research together the challenges we face in today's COVID-19 reality in schools.

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