



2019

## Using Literacy Quadrants in Preparing Teachers of Writing: Reflective Tools for Identity, Agency, and Dialogue

Elsie Lindy Olan

*University of Central Florida, [elsie.olan@ucf.edu](mailto:elsie.olan@ucf.edu)*

Kia Jane Richmond

*Northern Michigan University, [krichmon@nmu.edu](mailto:krichmon@nmu.edu)*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte>



Part of the Educational Methods Commons, Language and Literacy Education Commons, and the Secondary Education and Teaching Commons

### Recommended Citation

Olan, Elsie Lindy and Richmond, Kia Jane (2019) "Using Literacy Quadrants in Preparing Teachers of Writing: Reflective Tools for Identity, Agency, and Dialogue," *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte/vol6/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).



## **Using Literacy Quadrants in Preparing Teachers of Writing: Reflective Tools for Identity, Agency, and Dialogue**

Elsie Lindy Olan, *University of Central Florida*

Kia Jane Richmond, *Northern Michigan University*

### **Objective/purpose**

In this paper, researchers posit that literacy quadrants and teacher narratives can be used as pedagogical tools with teacher candidates in methods courses to foster reflection about identity and agency as educators and improve dialogue about diverse populations and 21st century issues related to writing and writing instruction. Tapping into “teacher knowledge(s) and understandings” about teachers candidates’ “work and lives, autobiographies and personal or professional histories; thinking and decision-making; beliefs, conceptions and perspectives” researchers agree with Morgan & Pytash (2014, p. 27), who have identified a critical need for English Language Arts (ELA) pre-service teachers, also called teacher candidates (TCs), to enter the field with a strong pedagogical knowledge of how to teach writing to all students and with a sense of their own writing self-efficacy. Exhaustive research has not been successful to identify if/how quadrants have been used to support writing or writing instruction in different levels of education, apart from general use in the form of graphic organizers (Dye, 2000). However, Moline (2011) refers to the relationship existing between diagrams and graphs and texts. He sustains that texts can be portrayed visually, by using storyboards, tables or flowcharts, thus making visual explanations, reports or arguments more economical and memorable than written text. Researchers in this study use a combination of drawing, writing, and dialoguing about literacy quadrants to enable TCs to discover what they believe about themselves as writers and as teachers of writing, to make connections between their lived experiences and current writing curriculum, and to reflect on experiences they might have in the secondary schools (see Appendices A and B).

The research questions that guided this study are the following:

1. How does the implementation of literacy quadrants and narratives enhance teacher candidates' dialogue about their literacy experiences in a methods course?
2. How does the implementation of inquiry-driven activities enhance teacher candidates' opportunities to reflect and articulate their literacy experiences in a methods course?
3. How does the implementation of Colaizzi's (1978) methodology of data analysis enable analysis, description and interpretation of the teacher candidates' literacy experiences?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that informs this study of teachers' writing, writing instruction, and professional writing identity is visual discourse analysis that is evidenced in the drawings of literacy quadrants. According to Albers (2014), visual discourse analysis (VDA) is grounded in semiotics, a theory that explores the nature and function of signs as well as the systems and processes underlying signification, expression, representation, and communication" (p. 87). Semiotics affords writers a way of "thinking about meaning in which language and visual text work in concert, and in which language is not the primary source through which meaning is mediated and represented" (Albers, 2014). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain how visual discourse analysis focuses not only on how visual elements "relate within a text, but also for how language is used to communicate and acts as a force on viewers to encourage particular actions or beliefs" (p.87).

### **Methodology**

This study analyzed, described and interpreted teacher candidates' literacy and learning experiences with literacy quadrants and the development of narratives while attending a methods course. The researchers will present the results of literacy quadrant implementation with teacher candidates registered in secondary English Language Arts methods courses from two public universities. This study followed a phenomenological hermeneutic approach described by van Manen (1990) and Heidegger (1927, 1996) as a human science research approach using semiotics to develop an appropriate writing approach for the method of phenomenology and hermeneutics (van Manen, 1997). Additionally, researchers adapted and used Frayer's Model (1969), a graphic organizer that helps students form concepts and learn new vocabulary by using four quadrants on a chart to define examples, non-examples, characteristics, and non-characteristics of a word or concept.

Teacher candidates created a literacy quadrant by dividing a paper into four quadrants, numbered clockwise from 1 to 4. They drew four images that demonstrated writing memories and memorable moments as teachers; then they engaged in dialogue about their images through a guided (examine-predict-discuss) sequence. Finally, they were asked to write about how these two activities helped them reflect on their own assumptions about teaching writing and the writing profession and then drew images based on prompts regarding their experiences as writers and writing teachers.

Colaizzi's (1978) seven-stage data analysis procedure enabled researchers to analyze and describe data thoroughly, going through a specific seven-step analysis process described as follows:

- A. 1<sup>st</sup> Step involved reading participants' descriptions to obtain a preliminary meaning of the data (Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1989; Sanders, 2003)
- B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Step called "extracting significant statements" (Colaizzi, 1978) implied extracting phrases or sentences directly related to the experience. Researchers re-read data and re-wrote phrases and sentences using their own words reflecting the essential meanings of the experiences with the phenomenon shared by the participants (Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1989; Sanders, 2003)
- C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Step called "formulating meanings" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59; Sanders, 2003), enabled researchers to extract the meanings of the phenomenon contained in each significant statement and transition from participants' actual words to what was meant by those expressions
- D. 4<sup>th</sup> Step involved clustering independent themes into general themes (theme clusters) making sure that the final result shows the thematic findings of the study, i.e., the essential structural description of the phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978, Polkinghorne, 1989; Sanders, 2003)
- E. 5<sup>th</sup> Step involved an "exhaustive description" of the phenomenon, on the basis of the thematical analysis that had been carried out (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 61; Sanders, 2003).
- F. 6<sup>th</sup> Step involved the "formulation of the exhaustive description of the phenomenon under investigation," or the interpretation of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, in which the researchers identified and described the fundamental structure of the investigated phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 61; Sanders, 2003)
- G. 7<sup>th</sup> Step involved the researchers contacting participants to consult how the descriptive results compared with participants' experiences and if there were any aspects of the experience that had been left out of the description (Polkinghorne, 1989; Colaizzi, 1978; Sanders, 2003).

## Participants and Data Sources

All researchers received Institutional Review Board approval for this study. Researchers gathered data from literacy quadrants, narratives, interviews, group discussions, and reflections.

The group of participants (N=50) included pre-service secondary English language arts teachers who were in their last year of university study in the teacher education program. Participants were college students (ages from 18-65), in English Language Arts methods courses. Participants were from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, representing a wide variety of socioeconomic strands. Subject participation was voluntary and followed required institutional ethical guidelines. Teacher candidates in methods courses at two universities were invited to participate in this study. Both populations completed two iterations of the literacy quadrants activity and a cumulative reflection activity. No payment or compensation was given for participation.

The teacher candidates, the focus of this study, participated in the following ways:

- a) Semi-structured interviews. Interviews served to corroborate the themes identified in the reflections, life stories and histories participants submit as their written assignments.
- b) Written narrative reflections, journal entries and craft literacy quadrants during class time. These practices were considered part of students' reflective teacher education courses.
- c) Group discussions in which students shared their written reflections during class. These reflective sections were shared among cohort colleagues and the principal and co-investigator. All TCs corroborated transcribed data.
- d) Focus group discussions occurred as part of their reflective process.

## Colaizzi's Seven-Stages of Data Analysis

During data analysis, the researchers first read the participants' descriptions to obtain a preliminary meaning of the data, then extracted teacher candidates' phrases or sentences directly related to the experience, rewriting the phrases and sentences into the researchers' own words to reflect the essential meanings of the experiences. Next, the researchers formulated meanings, extracting meanings of the phenomenon contained in each significant statement, transitioning from the teacher candidates' actual words to what was meant by those statements. Finally, the researchers clustered independent themes into general themes (theme clusters) to make sure the final result demonstrates the thematic findings of the study, or the essential description of the phenomenon (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Essential Description of the Phenomenon**

Table 1 Data Analysis			
Participants	Extracting participants' statements	Formulating meanings	Thematic Clusters
Participant 1	<p>“Writing is a reflection of one’s thoughts, lived experiences, and opinions.”</p> <p>“I want my students to understand that writing is hard but also that the work it takes to produce writing is often times worth it.”</p> <p>“Writing is powerful and it can be impactful to everyone involved in the writing process from the writer to the reader.”</p> <p>“As for my four quadrants, I reflect on how writing is a process that is best learned when one enjoys what they are writing and why they are writing.”</p> <p>“Our role as a teacher of writing is to help students value writing, enjoy writing, and become writers.”</p>	<p>I read the quote            “A blank piece of paper is God’s way of telling us how hard it is to be God.”            and I noticed Participant 1 doesn’t use the word “paper” at all – Yet the student does use the word “hard-difficult” when relating to writing process.            after discussion with fellow researcher, I noticed he is revisiting what he learned about the writing <u>process</u> in methods not the product – he’s gone through writing workshop environment – he invested in writing process (empathetic to students-sharing that it’s okay that writing is hard but going through the process makes it worth it)            Teacher candidate can say this because his instructors tailor writing activities and assignments so they can be culturally relevant, giving a place for him to bring in his lived experience –            You enjoy writing when you have something to say.            Why are you writing what you are writing – metacognition – this is emphasized in education classes.            Teacher candidate in tune with dominant narrative – teacher’s job is to help students value writing – student is not attuned with the counter-narrative that it’s okay for teachers to feel uncomfortable with writing and not enjoy assessing writing. It seems like he has bought into the joyful part of teaching writing.</p>	<p>Teacher Candidate 1- does use the word “writing” in his paragraphs but does not refer to paper. He does draw images of people writing and squiggly lines in what seems to be a notebook/page....            Cyclical nature of writing is evident in his drawings (no arrows) – other quadrants, it’s about sharing and showcasing one’s writing and being active participant in the recursive process            Drawings display the happiness drawn from the act of thinking and writing and it ends in a place of joy – he states that our role is to help students enjoy the process and that joy involves other people (interaction/sharing writing).            Idealization of the teaching of writing as smooth sailing. Juxtaposition of joy in teaching writing and teaching writing for content.</p>
Participant 2	<p>“In one section of my writing journey, I showed how I learned to write as a child.”</p> <p>“In another, I show myself teaching basic grammar structures to a 40 year old student.”</p>	<p>I read the quote            “We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.”            Ernest Hemingway            In addition, I noticed teacher candidate 1 doesn’t use the</p>	<p>Teacher Candidate 2- does not use the concept “writing process” in her paragraphs but does refer to “writing journey”.            She does draw images of students evolving and going through stages-            “Growth mindset”</p>

	<p>“The age of the student means nothing.”</p> <p>“All students can grow and learn they just have to be given the opportunity.”</p> <p>“...it is so important to remind my students that I am not a perfect writer.”</p> <p>“I am still growing as a writer.”</p> <p>“The classroom is not simply a place where I get to teach writing.”</p> <p>“The classroom is a space in which I am able to continue my writing journey while helping my students through the different stages of writing.” (4)-</p> <p>“I can look at a student who is a ‘good’ writer and remind them that he writing journey never ends and there is still plenty of path left for them to tread.”</p> <p>“It only really ends once one decides to set down the pencil and never write another word.”</p> <p>“And I can also look at the ‘bad’ writers and remind them that.”</p> <p>“I would use the quadrants as an exercise to help students see how they can continue to grow as writers.”</p>	<p>word “apprentice” at all – Yet the student does use the concepts “experienced writers as a student and still have to learn”- when relating to writing.</p> <p>I noticed she recalls an incident where she is teaching grammar to a student that is twenty years her senior. She reminisces about all “traveling the writing path.</p> <p>She practices authenticity- which has been talked about throughout her methods course when she shares that “it is important to remind my students that I am not a perfect writer.”</p> <p>Teacher candidate can say this because her instructors tailor writing activities and assignments so they can identify, enact and model authenticity, empathy and ethics of care- giving a place for her to bring in his lived experience –</p> <p>I notice that for this teacher candidate writing is a journey and not necessarily a process. This student does mention phases and stages.</p> <p>Teacher candidate in tune with counter narrative – teachers’ plea about allocating time for writing-</p> <p>In students’ methods courses there is constant dialogue about how teachers know what is best for their students and how students’ writing journey should be honed during class time.</p> <p>Because teacher candidates have been exposed to culturally relevant pedagogy in their methods courses, this student references students as “good/ bad writers”</p> <p>I notice how this teacher candidate sees the exercise with literacy quadrants as a exercise that can help students with their writing journey-“can continue to grow as writers.”</p>	<p>Writer as an apprentice during the writing journey-</p> <p>She does draw images of people writing and squiggly lines in what seems to be a page...</p> <p>All squiggly writing moves from four to five lines-</p> <p>The more you write the better your writing-</p> <p>Students’ drawing in all quadrants have an image of student sharing and showcasing one’s writing and being active participant in the writing journey.</p> <p>-Sharing, celebrating and showcasing work is essential for a successful journey</p> <p>Drawings display the happiness, excitement and amazement-</p> <p>-drawn from the act of thinking and writing and it ends in a place of joy (interaction/sharing writing).</p> <p>Teacher candidates not necessarily apply all they have learned when talking about their pedagogical values or experiences</p>
--	---	---	---

<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“In one section of my writing journey, I showed how I learned to write as a child.”          “In another, I show myself teaching basic grammar structures to a 40 year old student.”          “The age of the student means nothing.”          “All students can grow and learn they just have to be given the opportunity.”          “... it is so important to remind my students that I am not a perfect writer.”          “I am still growing as a writer.”          “The classroom is not simply a place where I get to teach writing.”          “The classroom is a space in which I am able to continue my writing journey while helping my students through the different stages of writing.” (4)-          “I can look at a student who is a ‘good’ writer and remind them that he writing journey never ends and there is still plenty of path left for them to tread.”          “It only really ends once one decides to set down the pencil and never write another word.”          “And I can also look at the ‘bad’ writers and remind them that.”          “I would use the quadrants as an exercise to help students see how they can continue to grow as writers.”</p>	<p>I read the quote          “Life is not about reinventing the wheel;”          Ernest Hemingway          and I noticed Teacher candidate 1 doesn’t use the word “apprentice” at all – Yet the student does use the concepts “experienced writers as a student and still have to learn”- when relating to writing.          I noticed she recalls an incident where she is teaching grammar to a student that is twenty years her senior. She reminisces about all “traveling the writing path.          She practices authenticity- which has been talked about throughout her methods course when she shares that “it is important to remind my students that I am not a perfect writer.”          Teacher candidate can say this because her instructors tailor writing activities and assignments so they can identify, enact and model authenticity, empathy and ethics of care- giving a place for her to bring in his lived experience –talk about feelings evoke          I notice that for this Teacher candidate writing is a journey and not necessarily a process. This student does mention phases and stages.          Student in tune with counter narrative – teachers’ plea about allocating time for writing.          In teacher candidates methods courses there is constant dialogue about how teachers know what is best for their students and how students’ writing journey should be honed during class time.          Even though teacher candidates have been exposed to culturally relevant pedagogy in their methods courses, this teacher candidate references students as “good/ bad writers”          Support dominant narrative – internship/ personal experiences that label students.          I notice how this teacher candidate sees the exercise with literacy quadrants as an exercise that can help students with their writing journey-“can continue to grow as writers.”</p>	<p>Teacher candidates 3- does not use the concept “writing process” in her paragraphs but does refer to “writing journey”.          She does draw images of students evolving and going through stages- “Growth mindset”          Writer as an apprentice during the writing journey-          She does draw images of people writing and squiggly lines in what seems to be a page....          All squiggly writing moves from four to five lines-          The more you write the better your writing-          Students’ drawing in all quadrants have an image of student sharing and showcasing one’s writing and being active participant in the writing journey.          -Sharing, celebrating and showcasing work is essential for a successful journey          Drawings display the happiness, excitement and amazement- drawn from the act of thinking and writing and it ends in a place of joy (interaction/sharing writing).          Teacher candidates not necessarily apply all they have learned when talking about their pedagogical values or experiences.</p>
----------------------	--	--	--



<p>Participant 4</p>	<p>“When I offered to <u>help</u> him...his level of determination skyrocketed.”          “He was an older kid, a good kid to needed attention and caring – and he would act out. When I sat down with him, he knew.”</p> <p>“I know that when I’m nervous or frustrated, I turn to a caring individual for emotional and mental support. Why not do the same for my students”</p> <p>“I think that people can find happiness through writing and that self-reflection/expression can bring them peace.”</p> <p>“As a teacher I need to instill my students with self-worth and confidence. When students believe in and love themselves, they will find themselves more capable of learning.”</p>	<p>Teacher candidate 4 identifies helping as part of teaching          Also teacher-efficacy</p> <p>Teacher as caring; student as one who needs care.</p> <p>Empathizing with students; viewing teacher as caring.</p> <p>Writing brings happiness and peace.</p> <p>Teacher efficacy.          Student efficacy.</p>	<p>Teacher as helper and one who is able to affect students’ lives positively.</p> <p>Teacher as caring individual (buying into the dominant narrative about teachers)</p> <p>Teacher as empathetic and caring individual (buying into the dominant narrative about teachers)</p> <p>Teachers can help students to become better writers and gain self-confidence.</p>
<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“Working at an inner-city pool, I thought life would be all sun, good times, and money. Instead, I discovered the driving force in my life, <u>to help</u> the kids who need it the most.”</p> <p>“Throughout my years, I helped the kids by tutoring them, counseling them, &amp; simply being there for them when no one else was”</p> <p>“I helped children get out of extremely dangerous situations and into better places.”</p> <p>“That to me is the best way to live, for others.”</p> <p>“If you don’t leave yourself open and/or flexible, then you could miss out on so many magical moments. Like when the kids randomly started a writing workshop with me which grew into tutoring.”</p>	<p>Discovering desire to help children - especially those at-risk.</p> <p>Identifies teacher as helper and listener.</p> <p>Teacher as helper.</p>	<p>Teachers as helpers. Children who are at-risk need our help the most.</p> <p>Teacher as helper</p> <p>Teacher as helper</p>

		<p>Teacher lives for others.</p> <p>Flexibility and attending to individual needs is part of teaching writing.</p>	<p>Teachers are giving people who live their lives for their students (falls into dominant narrative).</p> <p>Teaching writing requires teachers to be flexible and meet students' needs.</p>
Participant 6	<p>"Censoring young adults in facets of their education is a giant disservice to them. They need to learn about tough subjects so they're equipped to handle life."          "...becoming a student of education really opened up my life."          "I started to feel like all the things I was doing actually mattered."</p>	<p>Teachers should not be censors.</p> <p>Teaching helps us find meaning in our lives.</p> <p>Teacher efficacy.</p>	<p>Teachers help students to learn the tough lessons about life.</p> <p>Teachers find meaning in their lives through their profession</p> <p>Teachers' jobs matter to the world.</p>

Continuing the data analysis following the Colaizzi method, the researchers completed an exhaustive description of the phenomenon based on the thematical analysis (theme clusters). Next, researchers interpreted the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, identifying and describing the fundamental structure of the investigated phenomenon (see Table 2.). Finally, upon completion of the data analysis, researchers contacted the research participants to consult how the results compared with their experiences and if there were any aspects that had been left out of the description.

**Table 2. Phenomenological Patterns and Phenomena**

Following data analysis, researchers interpreted the fundamental structures of the phenomenon through a rigorous process of extracting the themes from the participants' writing and drawings and researchers' field notes, and formulating meanings about the descriptions of their lived experiences. Researchers engaged in dialogic interaction where we developed thematic clusters, then engaged in

*T/W*

exhaustive description of the phenomena based on emergent themes. Finally, researchers sought out deep understanding of the description to identify the essential meanings of the participants' lived experiences, the phenomenon.

Researcher 1	Researcher 2	Phenomena Identified
<p>Teacher candidates in our study have internalized writing as a part of their teaching repertoire in every subject not just English also outside of the school walls.</p> <p>Teacher candidate is very clear of what teacher's role should be and the payback (return on investment).</p> <p>When we teach writing, it's not about the act of writing itself, it's about what writing can bring to the writer's (and perhaps reader's) life.</p> <p>Teacher candidates are invested in writing-as-process and the recursive nature of that process.</p> <p>Teacher candidates identify the writing process is difficult yet attainable and joyful.</p>	<p>Teacher candidates in our study have internalized writing as a part of their teaching repertoire in every subject not just English also outside of the school walls.</p> <p>When we teach writing, it's not about the act of writing itself, it's about what writing can bring to the writer's (and perhaps reader's) life.</p>	<p>Fostering Reflection:</p> <p>Teacher as helper (authentic, empathetic, caring, giving).</p> <p>Teacher as teacher-writer (writing as a journey, as a growth mindset, and as a difficult, recursive process - one that teachers and students alike go through).</p> <p>Teacher candidates reflecting on their own experiences and identifying their future secondary students' cultural and personal needs, identities, and backgrounds.</p> <p>Teaching writing is not solely about the act of writing itself but also what writing can bring to the writer's and reader's life.</p> <p>Teacher candidates have internalized writing as a part of their teaching repertoire in every subject (not just English) and see its value outside of the school walls (third space).</p>
<p>Teacher candidates in our study have internalized their writing as a journey that is part of their teaching repertoire.</p> <p>Teacher candidate is very clear that all students of writing deserve writing opportunities and through these they grow.</p> <p>Teachers need to be authentic and empathetic.</p> <p>When we teach writing, it's not about the act of writing itself, it's about what writing can bring to the writer's (and perhaps reader's) life---growth</p> <p>Teacher candidates are invested in the writing journey and the recursive nature of the phases.</p> <p>Teacher candidate identify writing as a journey with different stages. With no end...</p> <p>It is not easy, but it is attainable and joyful.</p>	<p>Teacher candidates in our study identify teacher as someone who helps students with emotional, social, and academic issues, problems.</p> <p>Teacher candidates see their role as a facilitator or helper.</p> <p>Expectations from society about teachers as helps.</p>	<p>Improving Dialogue about Diverse Democracies:</p> <p>Teacher candidates buying into the dominant narrative (of teacher as responsible caregiver and gatekeeper) while also questioning the dominant narrative because of developing an understanding of future students' cultural and personal needs, identities, backgrounds.</p> <p>Teacher candidates identify their own teacher efficacy (being able to make a difference in their students' lives) and state wanting to move toward teacher agency (making a difference in their students' lives and the lives of others in their diverse communities).</p>

<p>Drawing about writing or to encourage writing helps students navigate their writing journey and grow as writers.</p>		
<p>Teacher candidates in our study have internalized their writing as a journey that is part of their teaching repertoire.</p> <p>Teacher candidate is very clear that all students of writing deserve writing opportunities and through these they grow.</p> <p>Teacher candidates need to be authentic and empathetic.</p> <p>When we teach writing, it's not about the act of writing itself, it's about what writing can bring to the writer's (and perhaps reader's) life---growth</p> <p>Teacher candidates are invested in the writing journey and the recursive nature of the phases.</p> <p>Teacher candidates identify writing as a journey with different stages. With no end...</p> <p>It is not easy, but it is attainable and joyful.</p> <p>Drawing about writing or to encourage writing helps students navigate their writing journey and grow as writers.---Semiotics</p>	<p>Teacher candidates identify empathy as a key part of teaching writing.</p>	

## Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: How does the implementation of literacy quadrants and narratives enhance teacher candidates' dialogue about their literacy experiences in a methods course?

The data analysis shows that teacher candidates' use of literacy quadrants and narratives contributes to their ability to dialogue with each other about their literacy experiences in K-12 schools and in college courses. Some of the types of interactions that occurred during first and second iterations include

- Questioning each other regarding shared experiences
- Comparing and contrasting drawings and quotes with partners and others in the class

- Seeking approval of their own representations and of interpretations of others' drawings and writings
- Checking for understanding (which is a part of empathetic listening according to Rogers, 1961)
- Making philosophical points about the value of learning within the American education system
- Discussing current writing and literature assignments for their methods courses.

Research Question 2: How does the implementation of inquiry-driven activities enhance teacher candidates' opportunities to reflect and articulate their literacy experiences in a methods course?

The data analysis shows that teacher candidates' use of literacy quadrants and narratives contributes to their ability to reflect on their literacy experiences and to express ideas and emotions with others in a methods course. Various interactions that occurred during the first and second iterations include the following:

- Reminiscing about specific classes taken in K-12 schools and what kinds of assignments they completed for school and outside of school
- Relating narratives connected to the drawings and clarifying memories
- Referring to other education or English classes (or professors)
- Mulling over theories related to literacy instruction
- Referencing teaching-related activities such as tutoring, babysitting/nannying, looking after siblings, working with youth (lifeguarding, deejaying a dance, coaching, working at the YMCA daycare, etc.)
- Revisiting their own literacy quadrants and revising their drawings and writings to match ideas constructed through dialogue with partners
- Considering emotions related to past literacy events and future literacy instruction
- Reflecting on the value (or lack thereof) of grades within a writing classroom
- Contemplating accolades/awards received for writing, speaking, reading, etc.
- Reflecting on a shared experience of exchanging writing and drawings within an environment of acceptance.

Research Question 3: How does the implementation of Colaizzi's (1978) methodology of data analysis enable teacher analysis, description and interpretation of the teacher candidates' literacy experiences?

The implementation of inquiry-driven learning activities and the seven-steps of data analysis proposed by Colaizzi (1978) granted researchers the collection of valuable data and insight into TCs' literacy experiences about schooling and participation in different theoretical and practical learning settings. The detailed implementation of this data analysis process allowed the researchers to categorize findings from participants' experiences into five theme clusters. Additionally, researchers interpreted the fundamental structure of the phenomenon of teacher candidates' experiences with literacy quadrants and narratives in order to rationalize their discussions about diverse democracies. The five theme clusters are as follows:

- Literacy quadrants enhance teacher candidates' dialogue about their literacy experiences in a methods course
- Inquiry driven activities enhance teacher candidates' opportunities to reflect and articulate their literacy experiences in a methods course
- Narratives enhance teacher candidates' dialogue about their literacy experiences in a methods course
- Literacy quadrants allowed teacher candidates to reflect and become reflexive about their learning
- Colaizzi's (1978) methodology of data analysis enables the analysis, description and interpretation of the teacher candidates' literacy experiences.

By implementing inquiry-driven activities into the methods courses curriculum, the teacher educator researchers were better informed about TCs' writing, writing instruction, and pedagogical practices when working with diverse populations in formal secondary school settings and informal settings with PK-16 students. As a result, teacher educators became more acquainted with TCs' past experiences with writing as writers and as students in various public K-12 school settings. This allowed teacher educator researchers to help better prepare TCs for interaction with those with disparate and similar experiences in their future English Language Arts classrooms.

Through the implementation of literacy quadrants, TCs were able to revisit their memories about writing and writing instruction in diverse educational settings and analyze how their experiences were depicted in their visual representations. Moreover, TCs predicted how their own experiences (lived and vicarious) could affect their decisions as teachers of writing in diverse settings where they might find themselves employed.

Narratives created by TCs worked as an extension of the literacy quadrants activity, providing opportunities for metacognition and insight about TCs' thinking, pedagogical practices, and professional identities. In addition, the narratives helped the future teachers combine their lived experiences with information from the methods courses, including other TCs' experiences, to prepare for future classroom problems, reflect on students' individual and cultural needs, and identify potential solutions as writing instructors.

### **Conclusion**

By using Colaizzi's methodology of data analysis, researchers were able to categorize TCs' significant statements, formulate meanings, and create exhaustive descriptions of TCs' responses in narratives and literacy quadrants. This process allowed researchers to identify the phenomena (explained below) and to gain insight into TCs' learning experiences with literacy quadrants and narratives while attending methods courses in diverse institutional settings.

### **Phenomena Identified: Literacy Quadrants Fostering Reflective Tools for Identity, Agency, and Dialogue**

As a result of the data analysis, researchers identified two phenomena which permeated the teacher candidates' images and written responses during the literacy quadrants activity. The first was related to reflections on teacher identity and efficacy, as well as writing and writing instruction. The second was connected to issues of diversity and teacher agency. With regard to teacher identity and efficacy, teacher candidates in this study seemed to overwhelmingly identify "teacher" (that is, secondary English Language Arts teacher) as one who should be authentic, empathetic, caring, and giving. For example, one TC stated that "the best way to live" is to help others, noting, "Throughout my years, I helped the kids by tutoring them, counseling them, and simply being there for them when no one else was." Another said she wanted to provide "emotional and mental support" to students because that is what she looks for from teachers as a student herself. These teacher candidates' responses were not surprising to researchers due to the predominance of images and narratives in popular culture and educational culture depicting teachers as loving, caring listeners who live for their students' successes and who believe they can make a difference in their lives (Delamarter, 2015; Grumet, 1988; Shaw, 2005).



In their visual representations and narratives, TCs frequently referred to writing as a journey, one which is recursive (though at times, difficult), rather than as a product to be used to assess their learning of content. Teacher candidates in the study reflected positively on experiences with writing processes both as writers themselves and as writing instructors. One TC noted that the literacy quadrants activity facilitated her understanding of “how writing is a process that is best learned when one enjoys what they are writing and why they are writing.” Another stated, “Our role as a teacher of writing is to help students value writing, enjoy writing, and become writers.” A third TC also called writing a journey and drew images of students going through multiple stages of writing workshop, a common pedagogical approach used in teaching writing in the K-12 schools (Atwell, 2015) as well as in writing teacher education (Baker et. al., 2007). The same candidate included a quote from Ernest Hemingway which describes writers as “apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master”; she also referred to the writing classroom as a space in which she can continue her own “writing journey” while simultaneously helping “students through the different stages of writing” (see Appendices A and B). Teacher candidates in this study have internalized their writing as a journey that is part of their teaching repertoire and have self-identified as teachers-who-write, a position supported by scholars in writing instruction (Bishop, 1999; Brooks, 2007; Danielewicz, 2001; Locke, 2015, Murray, 1982).

This study additionally demonstrated the efficacy of using literacy quadrants as a tool to establish dialogic interactions where teacher candidates problematize how their students’ writing instruction is situated in classroom spaces and in third spaces, which are defined by Maniotes (2005) as any space in which students merge out-of-school knowledge and in-school knowledge. In the case of one TC, young adults in her afternoon swimming lesson group created their own tutoring groups, asking the TC to look at their writing and give them advice about improving their writing (see Appendix C). Another TC drew an image of her classmates and herself sharing their practice writings for the state teacher test while gathered at a local fast-food restaurant. In both of these cases, the teacher candidates found themselves engaged in writing practices outside the school walls where they do not typically expect to do so. Discussions of their narratives and drawings during the literacy quadrants activities allowed TCs to have a dialogic interaction in their methods courses about these experiences, making room for discussions of the impact of third space writing in their journeys as teacher candidates. Skerrett (2010) notes that “little research exists at the level of preservice teacher education about how these classrooms, too, might be conceived as third spaces where preservice teachers’ in- and out-of-school literacies are purposefully brought together to transform the nature of literacy education” (p. 68). In fact, “the discourses that an individual claims as hers are shaped by broader contexts and a variety of others with which she interacts”; additionally, they are “taken up by her from the array of

available discourses situated within the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which she lives” (Skerrett, 2010, p. 70).

Through data analysis, researchers found that via the implementation of literacy quadrants, teacher candidates improved their dialogue about diverse democracies and their efficacy and agency as future teachers of English Language Arts. Teacher candidates’ responses to the literacy quadrants showed their acceptance of the dominant narrative (of the teacher as responsible caregiver and gatekeeper) while also questioning the dominant narrative through developing an understanding of future students’ cultural and personal needs, identities, and backgrounds.

Teacher education researchers also found in this study that teacher candidates identified their own “teacher efficacy,” defined as “teachers’ confidence in their ability to promote students’ learning” (Hoy, 2000). One teacher candidate included in her literacy quadrants the following quote from Terry Orlick: “The heart of human excellence often begins to beat when you discover a pursuit that absorbs you, frees you, challenges you, or gives you a sense of meaning, joy, or passion.” She commented on the quote in her narrative, stating, “This quote applies to my quadrant because becoming a student of education really opened up my life - I started to feel like all the things I was doing actually mattered.”

Additionally, researchers noticed some TCs’ desires to move toward teacher agency, which is the “capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues” (Calvert, 2016, p. 4). For example, one TC illustrated her experiences working at an “inner-city pool.” In her narrative writing, she included a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson that states, “To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded” (see Appendix D). The TC noted that while she first thought that the job would include “[nothing but] sun, good times, and money”; she later “discovered the driving force” in her life was to “help the kids who need it the most,” like those who asked her to help them with their writing while at the pool. In her discussion with her classmates, the TC reflected on differences in socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds of the students and the lifeguards, which were not identical.

In addition, the TC shared that she believed that because the young adults knew that she was becoming a teacher, they approached her to ask for assistance with writing even though she was not in the role of teacher at the pool. She entered the position of lifeguard (and the position of teacher) with a commonly idealized view of what would happen, informed by the many popular cultural representations of lifeguard/teacher as illustrated by television, media, and film characters whose lives are filled with sunshine and happiness and helping, and very few problems or responsibilities. However, when she reflected and interacted with her TC

colleagues upon this issue through the literacy quadrants activity, she developed a more nuanced understanding of her positionality. She also engaged her methods classmates in considerations of the teacher's agency with regard to meeting students' individual needs. Moreover, this TC's reflections sparked conversations about intersections between the private and public lives of teachers, and of diverse populations and their expectations for teachers and others in positions of leadership. During these interactions and discussions, TCs formulated meanings about their experiences with youth in and out of the writing classroom.

Furthermore, discussions of students' socioemotional, cognitive, and cultural needs are part of the benefit of employing the literacy quadrants activity. The literacy quadrants activity is an additional way that English teacher educators can facilitate discussions of diverse educational and personal experiences.

Teacher candidates in this study seem to identify many opposing standpoints: e.g., teacher as caregiver and teacher as gatekeeper; teacher as spiritual being and as professional educator of all students, etc.

Researchers identified that some TCs referenced their spiritual/belief systems while discussing their experiences during the literacy quadrants exercises. One TC writes, "A blank piece of paper is God's way of telling us how hard it is to be God" (see Appendix E). This preservice teacher infuses his belief system with his understanding of teaching writing, that a blank page offers the writer the same challenge that God must experience when considering the act of creation. This teacher is intricately weaving his faith system with his beliefs about teaching writing.

Another TC speaks about her own positioning as a writer-in-progress. She writes,

In one section of my writing journey, I showed how I learned to write as a child. In another, I show myself teaching basic grammar structures to a 40-year-old student. The age of the student means nothing. All students can grow and learn; they just have to be given the opportunity... it is so important to remind my students that I am not a perfect writer I am still growing as a writer. The classroom is not simply a place where I get to teach writing. The classroom is a space in which I am able to continue my writing journey while helping my students through the different stages of writing.

In this statement, researchers notice that the TC is acknowledging her positionality as a developing writer herself. She is growing in her writing skills while her students are doing so. She is not removed from the experience of being a writer, which sometimes can be the role that writing instructors find themselves cast into. Additionally, the TC identifies the writing process as a common journey amongst teachers and students. It is not a destination; it is a series of excursions that

sometimes overlap despite having started out toward a different goal. The teacher – as a writer – takes multiple stances the writing classroom; as both the one who leads and the one who can be led, the one who helps and the one who needs help. This is a complex ideological stance that is being described by a teacher candidate who hasn't researched composition theory and writing curriculum.

Teacher educators encountering this type of connected knowing that informs writing instruction should take the opportunity to initiate conversations where TCs consider how such a stance (of feeling vulnerable as a writer, as overwhelming and bigger-than-life, of being the writer and the teacher) might influence his/her pedagogical choices. Researchers note that establishing these conversations and connections that disrupt and problematize TCs' pedagogical practices, values, and beliefs (as they encounter diverse democracies) help them become active agents of teaching writing. Each time teacher educators provide TCs with an opportunity for reflection upon their beliefs, actions, identities, and pedagogical stances, they enhance TCs' potentials for the development of their agency within the writing classroom (Lasky, 2005). This includes when TCs bring up issues related to their own belief systems, as the examples illustrated above, as well as when they bring in other cultural sensitivities related to background, nationality, ethnicity/race, environmental situatedness (e.g., urban, suburban, or rural setting), generation, family dynamics, social group (e.g., being a student while enacting the position of teacher or intern), etc.

### **Scientific or Scholarly Significance of the Study**

Exhaustive research has not demonstrated how literacy quadrants have been used to support teacher candidates' literacy and writing instruction experiences apart from general use in the form of graphic organizers as discussed above. The implementation of inquiry-driven learning activities, literacy quadrants as pedagogical tools in methods courses, and the seven-steps of data analysis proposed by Colaizzi (1978) will:

- a. better inform education programs, policy makers and teacher educators about teacher candidates' literacy experiences, which can inform their decisions as critically conscious writing instructors
- b. provide rationale for the implementation of literacy quadrants which can be used as reflective and reflexive tools in teacher education programs
- c. establish relationships that exist between diagrams/drawings (visual depictions), written texts (narratives), and subtextual or implicit meanings or themes which may not be voiced within methods courses in (which are frequently hegemonic) teacher education programs.

- d. interpret the phenomenon of ELA teacher candidates' literacy and writing experiences like those in this study, which could inform teacher education program developers and instructors to design curriculum, instruction and assessment to prepare TCs to teach all students.

This study analyzed, described and interpreted teacher candidates' literacy and learning experiences with literacy quadrants and the development of narratives while attending English Language Arts methods courses at two different universities. Researchers identified two phenomena within the teacher candidates' images and written responses to literacy quadrants activities. One focused on reflections related to teacher identity and efficacy, while the other brought forth issues of diversity and teacher agency. Results from this study are not generalizable to all teacher education programs. However, researchers hope that results will inform teacher education programs to better prepare competent and confident teachers of English Language Arts. As the Conference on English Education (CEE, now known as ELATE) position statement on the role of methods courses (2005) states, effective teacher education programs in English Language Arts include instruction that “infuses core principles of content, pedagogy, and professionalism and provides opportunities for practice, reflection, and growth,” “emphasizes that teaching and learning are social practices influenced by specific contexts,” and “fosters understanding of the teacher candidate’s shift of role from student to teacher.” Furthermore, researchers hope that this study will help teacher educators better create non-threatening spaces in their methods courses where teacher candidates can engage in discussions of diversity, teacher efficacy, and teacher agency; and where they can, through reflection and dialogue,

- a. formulate meanings from their prior experiences as writers and learners
- b. inform their teaching identity through dialogic interactions
- c. problematize their writing journeys
- d. (re)consider their beliefs about teaching and the place of writing in and out of school.

## References

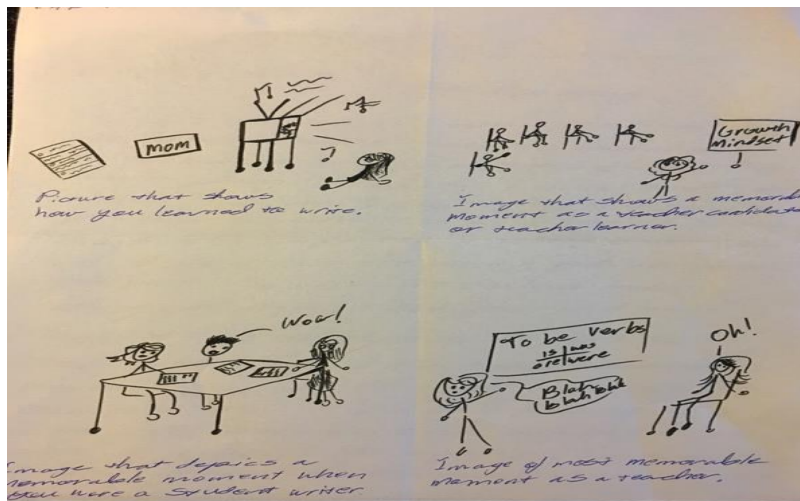
- Albers, P. (2014) Visual discourse analysis. In P. Albers, T. Holbrook, & A.S. Flint (Eds). *New methods of literacy research*. (pp. 85-97). New York: Routledge.
- Atwell, N. (2015). *In the middle: A lifetime of learning about writing, reading, and adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Baker, W. D., Brockman, E., Bush, J., & Richmond, K.J. (2007). Composition studies/English education connections. *The Writing Instructor*.  
[www.writinginstructor.com/cseeconnections](http://www.writinginstructor.com/cseeconnections)
- Bishop, W. (1999). Places to stand: the reflective writer-teacher-writer in composition. *College Composition and Communication* (51): 9-31.
- Brooks, G. W. (2007) Teachers as readers and writers and teachers of reading and writing, *The Journal of Educational Research*. 100 (3): 177 – 191.
- Calvert, L. (2016). Moving from compliance to agency: What teachers need to make professional learning work. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward and NCTAF.
- Colaizzi, P.F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R.S. Valle & M. King (Eds), *Existential-phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48-71). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Conference on English Education Position Statement. (2005). What do we know and believe about the roles of methods courses and field experiences in English Education? <http://www.ncte.org/cee/positions/roleofmethodsinee>
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves: Identity, pedagogy, and teacher education*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Delamarter, J. (2015). Avoiding Practice Shock: Using Teacher Movies to Realign Pre-Service Teachers' Expectations of Teaching. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(2), n2.
- Dye, G. A. (2000). Graphic organizers to the rescue! Helping students link and remember information. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32(3), 72-76.
- Freyer, D., Frederick, W. C., and Klausmeier, H. J. (1969). *A Schema for Testing the Level of Cognitive Mastery*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research.
- Grumet, M. (1988). *Bitter milk: women and teaching*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and time: A translation of Sein und Zeit*. SUNY Press: Albany, NY.



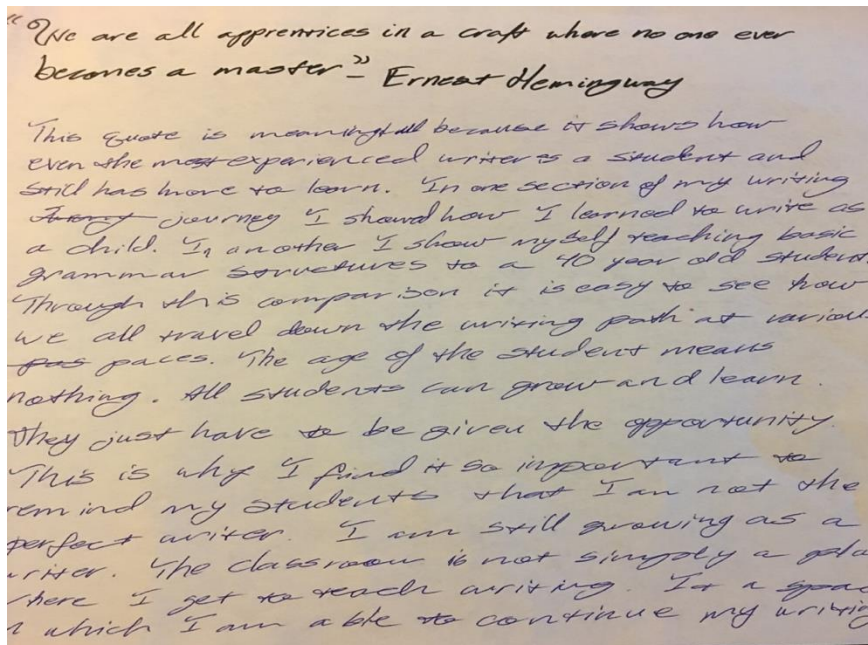
- Hoy, A. W. (2000) Changes in teacher efficacy during the early years of teaching. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lasky, S. A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21 (8), pp. 899-916.
- Locke, T. (2015). *Developing writing teachers: practical ways for teacher-writers to transform their classroom practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Maniotes, L. (2005). "The Transformative Power of Literary Third Space." Ph.D. dissertation, School of Education, University of Colorado, Boulder.
- Moline, S. (2011). *I see what you mean: Visual literacy K-8*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Morgan, D. N. & Pytash, K. E. (2014). Preparing preservice teachers to become teachers of writing: A 20 year review of the research literature. *English Education* 47(1), 6-37.
- Murray, D. (1982). Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader. *College Composition and Communication*, 33(2), 140-147.
- Polkinghorne D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In Valle R.S., Halling S. (Eds.) *Existential-phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology* (pp. 41–60). New York: Plenum.
- Rogers, C.R. (1961). *On becoming a person*. Oxford, England: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sanders, C. (2003) Application of Colaizzi's method: Interpretation of an auditable decision trail by a novice researcher. *Contemporary Nurse* 14 (3), 292-302.
- Shaw, C. C., & Nederhouser, D. D. (2005). Reel teachers: References for reflection for real teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, 27(3), 85-94.
- Skerrett, A. (2010). Lolita, Facebook, and the third space of literacy teacher education. *Educational Studies*, 46(1), 67-84.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

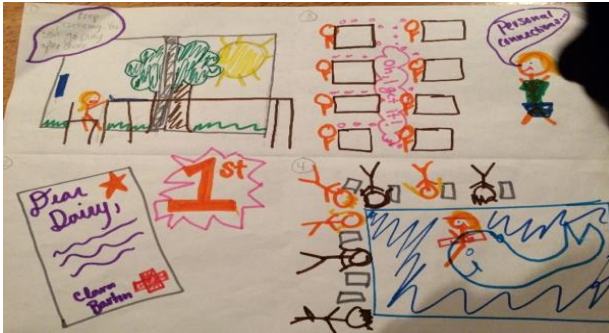


### Appendix B

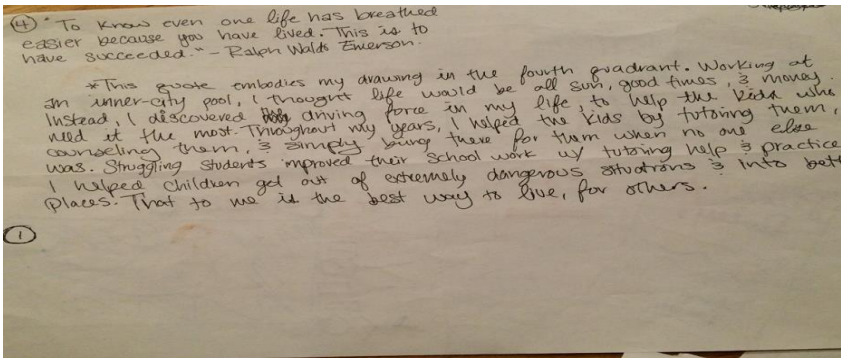




## Appendix C



## Appendix D



## Appendix E

