



Volume 3

Article 31

2022

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Recommended Citation

Schirling, Dalton (2022). "From the Classroom to the Community: Pedagogy in the Presence of Disconnect." *The Macksey Journal*: Volume 3, Article 31.

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Published by JHU Macksey Journal, 2022

From the Classroom to the Community: Pedagogy in the Presence of Disconnect

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Abstract

In my time as a teacher-in-training in the English Education Program at the University of Delaware (2018-2022), I've observed an immense disconnect between the world of academia and the world of our secondary schools. The academy stresses racial literacy in theory, but in practice, the efforts amount to studies that are about, Black and Brown people, as opposed to studies in conversation with them — treating them as fixed subjects of identity investigation as opposed to the fluid, unfixed, and complex human beings that they are. Through my experiences as a student teacher at William Penn High School, I've noted a strong apathy from the student body towards the work presented to them, and in some cases, an even stronger apathy on the educator's part in regards to their students' struggle. This paper details a pedagogical framework aimed to respond more effectively to those struggles. This framework suggests it is dependent on the school's faculty (teachers and administration) to get to the root of their students' issues via direct communication and involvement with their students and their loved ones to facilitate the most advantageous decisions possible. Additionally, the curriculum itself must take into consideration conditions affecting students outside of the academy by diving directly into their lives. Simply put, in order to get the students to the levels educators want students to be at, educators have to meet their students where they are: in their homes, their selves, and their communities all while demonstrating patience, love, and care throughout the entire educational process.

Keywords: Education, Pedagogy, Social Justice, anti-racist, Africana Studies, English

Literature Review

Since Boykin and Cunningham's work, titled "The effects of movement expressiveness in story content and learning content on the analogical reasoning performance of African-American children," also referred to as Motivation Theory, found that students perform better with high movement expression and examples, the structure of lessons using Connection Pedagogy emphasize motion, student movement, and the use of both the classroom and the school itself as an interactive learning environment.

Connection Pedagogy, in this study, strides away from the Banking Model Paulo Freire describes, where the teacher is a narrator and the students are passive receptors of information, and instead, incorporates the lived experiences, ideas, and funds of knowledge that students possess into the curriculum in order to directly assess the needs of the community that the school represents.

As influenced by Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, Connection Pedagogy ensures students have the opportunity to perform tasks that appeal to different types of intelligence. Designing assignments that appeal to students' various types of intelligence makes coursework more accessible to the diverse learning profiles of their students, which could potentially boost overall student proficiency.

Since Oakes' work, titled "Two Cities' Tracking and Within-School Segregation," also referred to as Teacher Expectations Theory, found that the teacher's expectations of their students significantly impact the students' access to opportunities and educational development. To counter this barrier to student success, Connection Pedagogy contends that every staff member involved in the educational process must accept the belief that **ALL STUDENTS ARE CAPABLE OF LEARNING**. Further in this belief, the staff members must act as a surrogate parent for their students — operating on a daily basis with love and compassion at the forefront of their instruction. Otherwise, students, primarily those of color, fall victim to racially-biased views of their intellectual capacity, which provides them with nothing but "restricted educational opportunities and outcomes" (1).

Using Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, collaborative learning, modeling (I-Do-We-Do-You-Do), discourse, and student interaction are dominant features of lessons designed with Connection Pedagogy in mind.

Methodology

One of the five theories used in this study is Boykin and Cunningham's Motivation Theory, which details how the amount of motion between learning environments can affect student performance. Boykin and Cunningham found that the "highest performance was demonstrated when the HME [High Movement Expression] context was coupled with [high movement examples]," such as vigorous motions like walking and jumping (72). So, if students are not performing or retaining information at a proficient level, then Motivation Theory dictates increased motion and (inter)activity will result in increased performance.

The second is Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, which reconceptualizes the traditional idea of a standardized form of intelligence, breaking intelligence down into eight categories: Verbal-Linguistic, Mathematical-Logical, Visual-Spatial (Art), Intrapersonal Intelligence (Self-Smart), Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, Interpersonal (People-Smart), Naturalist Intelligence (Nature Smart), and Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence. The current problems

related to student achievement often stem from an adherence to a standardized, singular form of intelligence in the presence of a diverse student body.

The third of the five theories, Oakes' Teacher Expectation Theory, reveals evidence of an ethnographic discrepancy present in the tracking systems of various American school districts. Oakes found that "schools far more often judge African-American and Latino students to have learning deficits and limited potential," compared to their white counterparts (1). This preconceived notion results in students of color being disproportionately placed in low-track and remedial programs that significantly inhibit their access to opportunity, their support from teachers, and their esteem towards learning, which ultimately prevents these students from being able to gain the subject proficiencies that are necessary to their success in school and beyond.

The fourth theory is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which, in practice, emphasizes social and peer interaction as playing a "fundamental role in the development of cognition" (1). In the way the present American education system administers its instruction, there is often a very strict deemphasizing of interaction amongst peer groups in the classroom. This set-up was evident in the classroom I co-taught in at William Penn High School over the first five weeks of UD's Spring 2022 semester. In the 10th Grade English classroom I was in, the students across all six periods were hardly ever granted the opportunity to work together as a group. Though the mention of partnering up was mentioned, the vast majority of the students weren't socially engaged during their schoolwork. And their submission rates indicated a lack of engagement as well.

The last theory featured in this study is Friere's Banking Model concept, which states that the present educational model resembles the relationship between student and teacher is monologic, involving "a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students)," in which the onus of obedience and ignorance are placed onto the student, and that of authority and all-knowing wisdom is placed on the educator (1). Keeping in theme with the Banking metaphor, Friere notes that information is simply deposited from the teacher into the student in such a manner that devalues any social interaction. On the topic of this dynamic, he states "the more completely [the teacher] fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is," and, conversely, "the more meekly the receptacles [the students] permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are," (1). Friere's remedy to this model of education rests in a praxis-oriented, community-fixated, and physically-interactive model: Problem Posing Education. In the Problem-Posing Model, the relationship between teacher and student is dialogic; and the coursework is aimed towards the real lives of the students and the world that they and their teachers inhabit together. Connection Pedagogy frames itself in the Problem Posing mold, and seeks to address current academic challenges by integrating the educators' and students' experiences in the curriculum itself as well as its dissemination.

As a methodology, this research has been curated through information drawn from a variety of primary and secondary sources. In the context of this paper, secondary sources constitute both local and global examples of the Banking Model's lack of success in building student proficiency, drawn from two organizations presenting educational data: DelawareReportCard.com and the Pew Research Center. The term secondary sources also constitutes the usage of a Principal Akbar Cook interview from TAPintoTV's Youtube channel

titled “Newark High School Principal Akbar Cook Discusses His Mission to Improve Student Lives”.

The data from Delaware Report Card, presented by the Delaware Department of Education, details various statistics, such as enrollment, graduation rates, proficiency in ELA, Mathematics, and college and/or career readiness. This information was used in this study to showcase evidence of the Banking Model’s detriment to students’ proficiency. The Pew Research Center data showcases the United States of America’s barely-average global educational ranking in mathematics, reading, and science according to the 71 countries who had 15-year-olds take the 2015 Program for International Student Assessment (**See Fig. 1**). To illustrate this point, the OECD average scores for Science and Reading are 493, in which the US scored 496 and 497 respectively. However, a more serious issue can be detected based on the mathematics scores. The reported OECD average for mathematics is 490; and America’s mathematics score filters around 470, notably below average (DeSilver, 2017).

The information found in the Principal Cook interview showcases the exemplary model of the characteristics that comprise the ideals of Connection Pedagogy: love, compassion, and dedication to improving the lives of their students. In the interview, Cook discusses the truancy problem he identified amongst his student population. In response, he and his staff made phone calls and went door-to-door in the community to inquire about why kids weren’t coming to school. The Westside High staff found out their students weren’t attending school because they had no clean clothes to come to school in. Thus, in response to the needs of the community (students, families, etc.), Principal Cook campaigned to get a laundromat set up in the school, which the students were encouraged to make use of. Around the two-minute mark of the interview, Cook states this laundromat boosted his attendance by 10%, which indicates an effectiveness in his approach to education not currently present in the American Education System. Additionally, Cook discusses his school’s Lights Out Program, an after-school event held to give his students a place to hang out, do school work, play video games, and, simply, to have the space and freedom to be kids; he states his attendance is regularly in the 300s

Primary sources, in this context, refer to data and information that this author collected through anecdotal experience during Student Teaching at William Penn High School in the Spring 2022 semester and survey questionnaires administered to 10th Grade common placement English courses. Both qualitative and quantitative research and analysis has been conducted using the data from the questionnaire (**See Fig. 3**).

Evidence of the Disconnect

Based on the research, explained further in this paper, there is a long-standing issue affecting the success of student populations in American schools. The evidence for the detriment of this model manifests itself in the lack of proficiency American students exhibit in the presence of the Banking Model classroom. Student needs and proficiency levels in the most prominent subject areas (ELA, Math, Science) and skill sets (College and Career Readiness) are simply not being met by the present pedagogy that exists in Western education.

As for the individual rankings for ELA, Mathematics, and Science proficiency in relation to other countries, Pew Research Center found that America lands in the following positions:

Subject	Ranking (out of 71 countries)
Science	24th
Mathematics	38th
Reading	24th

Figure 1: Pew Research Center Global Educational Results

Based on the data from Figure 1, the American Education system is, at best, just at the precipice of average in preparing its students with proficiency skills in core subjects. Additionally, given the existential toll education can have on the students' quality of life as they progress through school on their way to inherit their own society, average rankings are a lot more disastrous than they may initially appear.

This educational insufficiency becomes even more alarming when further investigations are conducted on student proficiency on more pointed, local school populations, which can be seen in the Delaware Report Card data displayed in Figure 2.

Entity	Enrollment	Graduation Rates	% ELA Proficient	% Math Proficient	% College/Career Ready
State of Delaware	140,263	87.7%	42.18%	26.59%	58.59%
William Penn High School	2,270	85.48%	31.45%	16.25%	36.43%

Figure 2: Delaware Report Card Data

Implications of Delaware Report Card and Pew Research Center Data

Now, what is most significant about this data is the disparity between high graduation rates and low proficiencies/skill readiness upon graduation. Statistics, however, do not take into account the human impact that these statistics indicate. Breaking the data down into the number of students, of real, live children helps to better conceptualize the sheer detrimental effects the present education model has on not only their subject proficiency, but their overall quality of life.

Take the percentages of proficiency in the state of Delaware, for instance. There are 140,263 students enrolled in the state, but only 42% of those students are proficient in ELA. That amounts to over 81,000 students who are considered not proficient in English Language Arts. Of the 140, 263 students enrolled in Delaware schools, 102,967 are not considered proficient in Math. Moreover, there are 58,000 students who are neither college nor career

ready, which in conjunction with low ELA and Math proficiency, can only prepare students to struggle amongst the world they will inevitably inhabit.

Even the seemingly optimistic graduation rates, upon further investigation, reveal even more troubling inefficiencies present in the American education system. Sure, 87.7% of students in Delaware graduate, but how many reach graduation proficient in ELA, Math, and college/career skills? The aforementioned data reveals the number of unprepared students is substantial, even if the majority of them make it to their graduation. We must also consider what becomes of the 12.3% of students that don't make it to graduation. That percentage amounts to nearly 17,000 Delaware students who do not even graduate. It is evident from this data that how classrooms operate is inherently ineffective to overall student achievement, which stems from the West's educational system's philosophical grounding in the Banking Model.

Portrait of a Traditional/Banking Model Classroom

The Traditional Classroom follows Friere's Banking Model quite closely. This educational model can be most succinctly described with four key characteristics; they are as follows:

- 1. Row Seating**
 - a. Discourages social interaction and classroom motion
- 2. No Social Component**
 - a. Work is individual
 - b. Work is unresponsive to multiple intelligences and diverse student body
- 3. Narration**
 - a. The teacher talks; students are "passive entities" who are but receptacles of the teacher's information (Friere, pg. 4).
- 4. Vacuum**
 - a. Reality is spoken about, but not interacted with, abstracted inside the classroom setting.

A setting mirroring these characteristics was on full display in the classroom I student taught in. The row seating disallowed groups and partnerships from forming, resulting in students who barely even talked to one another; some class periods regularly didn't speak at all. Also, the vast majority of the work assigned at William Penn was meant to be completed individually, consisting solely of completing Google Docs from the confines of their seats. For the majority of my lessons taught in Penn, I found that my lessons followed a narrative structure where I deposited information to passive subjects before me. The class and I were not approaching any new discovery. We spoke about recent history, like the Civil Rights Movement, for instance, as if it were ancient history that had no bearing on the modern day. Taking this setting into account, coupled with the alarmingly low proficiencies produced by Penn (**See Fig. 2**), the lack of positive influence this model has on the student population is inarguable. The traditional model is simply ineffective, and its ineffectiveness necessitates a different approach to classroom education.

The Schirling Model: The 4 Cs of Connection Pedagogy

To develop an accurate portrait of what pedagogical approaches could remedy the lack of proficiency, a philosophical shift must occur in the approach educators take in their classrooms and schools. The disconnect is known; and the remedy for reconnection lies within the 4Cs of Connection Pedagogy, a series of pedagogical approaches aimed to increase student proficiency by instructing them in ways that they respond well to. The 4Cs are as follows:

1. Connection
2. Communication
3. Community
4. Creation

Connection

At its core, teaching is purely relational. The extent to which a student can develop academically is contingent on the relationships, experiences, and attitudes they have with their teachers. In the face of such educational insufficiency as America's present model produces, fostering a stable, perceptive, understanding, and empowering relationship with students should be at the philosophical forefront of all educational faculty. As Oakes' article illustrates, low teacher expectations breed low student proficiency. With this information in mind, two things become essential for maintaining the Connection aspect of Connection Pedagogy:

1. The classroom teacher, and all school faculty, must accept the fact that each student is highly capable of growth and development academically, professionally, socially, etc.
2. The teacher must prioritize active interaction with their students. Teachers must get to know their students, their desires, the ins-and-outs of their work ethic, their learning style, the state of their outside life, and their various strengths and weaknesses in order to build up a positive relationship with the students, which will undoubtedly benefit student performance.

Here is a list showcasing some examples of how Connection can manifest in CP-informed-instruction:

- The teacher should be among the students as much as possible. They should be amongst the students' desks and not at their own.
- Teachers should stand outside of their door and greet students positively as they walk into the classroom every day.
- Warm-Ups/Exit Tickets can serve as a gateway to ask more-personal questions, which gives students a chance to write about themselves. Over time, as more information is generated, it will only improve the teacher's ability to relate to, and effectively teach, the student.
 - For example, a student who always appeared to be in a foul mood created a doodle on one of the Exit Tickets I administered to him. Days later, I went up to him and asked him if I could tape his doodle on my desk because I enjoyed the art so much. He smiled, chuckled, and told me that I could decorate my desk with it. From that point on, I found that the foul mood I perceived had dissipated; and the dynamic of the relationship improved significantly as a result.

Communication

The relationship between student and teacher must be dialogic; they are on the same team intellectually and must be in active partnership to generate transformative educational results.

To make this shift, students must be conceptualized with the same nuances and emotions as the teacher. Students are not objects in the classroom, but components of it. Beyond the confines of the schools; students are active participants in society and such low proficiency stems from the traditional educational model neglecting that fact and inhibiting the development of critical thinking skills necessary for improving quality of life.

Next, it is crucial that student behavior must not be assumed to be immediately negative. In wake of the automatic assumption of something negative, an inquiry approach must be taken. Just as Principal Akbar Cook identified the problem behavior of attendance in his school (TAPintoTV, 2019). If he were a traditional educator, operating under the Banking Model, he would most likely dismiss those behaviors as being problems themselves as opposed to addressing the factors causing the students to display that problem behavior in the first place. Instead, Principal Cook reached out to the students and their families to inquire about what was causing the absences, which eventually led to the removal of barriers to Principal Cook's students' education.

I too have an experience like this. In one of my classes at William Penn, there was a student who, for weeks, wasn't doing any work and habitually had their head down in class. Being trained by a traditionalist academy, I assumed this student was a problem and, upon reflection, this influenced me to not aid them, opting to just let them not do anything. But a phone call home revealed to us that the student's grandmother, whom she was really close to, had recently passed away. Knowing such information, teachers can then adapt and collaborate with student, parent, and other faculty with a more complete, and more sensitive understanding of that student's particular learning situation. Without that phone call home, I would have continued to assume trouble of this student, resulting in lower expectations and, therefore, lower educational opportunity for this student.

Taking both aforementioned examples, intimate and frequent conversation between school (faculty, teachers, etc.) and home (students and their loved ones/families) must be heavily emphasized to undo the disconnects present in the American educational model.

Community

Perhaps the biggest flaw with the Banking Concept of Education is that students are assumed to be knowledge-less beings that came into the classroom/school as empty vessels. This notion could not be further from the truth as students arrive in the classroom with a wealth of knowledge and lived experience. Assuming student ignorance, in conjunction with Oakes' Teacher Expectations Theory, will often produce a student body who's convinced that they themselves are without knowledge, history, nor community.

It is for these reasons that the work done in the classroom must first be directed towards the intimate makeup of the school community. A Connected Educator asks the following questions actively, and especially in planning out their lessons, units, and curriculums:

- What is going on in the community? Who are the people that make it up? What are the characteristics of the community?

- What skills/actions do the students/community members have? What do they need? What are their strengths? How can we use their strengths to improve their weaknesses?
- What problems is the community facing? How can we work to solve the problems? How can we work to bring the community together?

Students come into the classroom with funds of knowledge from their families' lived experiences and their own lived experiences growing up in the same society together, and meeting all at once in the classroom environment. These funds are an immense and invaluable resource to base curriculum around; and they must be utilized in order to unite the community. There may be no greater location to bring people together than that of a school, and taking into account Akbar Cook's Lights Out Program, the rapid success of such programs and community outreach becomes much more feasible than it has traditionally been perceived.

Creation

In order to connect students to the work they can be so disengaged with, student work should always be rooted in the creation, genesis, or synthesis of some new material. Whether it be a brochure, online portfolio of poems, self-designed presentations of arguments, art-infused assignments, petitions and letters to local or federal representatives, etc., the final product of their work should be based on something concrete that the students can use to transform the society, or the way they think about the society, in which they live.

One of the main parts of the disconnect rests in the fact that the work the students do is so disconnected from their daily lives. To remedy this disconnect, education cannot exist in a vacuum; the reality of the student's social situation must not be ignored; the schoolwork must be aimed towards improving the social situation of the students that inhabit the school. Any other method results in mediocrity on a global scale, and poor proficiency percentages on a local scale (**See Figs. 1 & 2**). The specific details of Connection Pedagogy in practice will be disclosed in the following section of this paper.

Connection Pedagogy in Practice: Social Justice Project and Student Survey

In preparing to take over the teaching duties of six English II classes at William Penn High School, I was tasked with instructing the students on the creation of a Social Justice Project in which the students would be tasked with picking a Social Justice issue and designing an argumentative research project based on their issue. To foster an understanding of what instruction would best suit my students, I turned to them for ideas about their interests.

In order to better frame my instructional decisions, I gave my Period 8 a survey that consisted of a number of questions, all directed towards their interests, preferences, and life outside of the classroom; these questions were as follows:

What is your favorite (and least favorite) academic subject in school? Why?

Do you have a job after school? If so, where and how often do you work?

What kind of job or profession do you want when you graduate?

When you have a chance, what do you most like to talk about? Why?

However, perhaps the most essential question asked of them on the survey was this one:

What kind of projects would you be interested in doing? Do you prefer things like essays

or would you rather have an assignment with more creativity involved? Like a video assignment? Something art related?

My Period 8 class responded in the following way:

Points scored

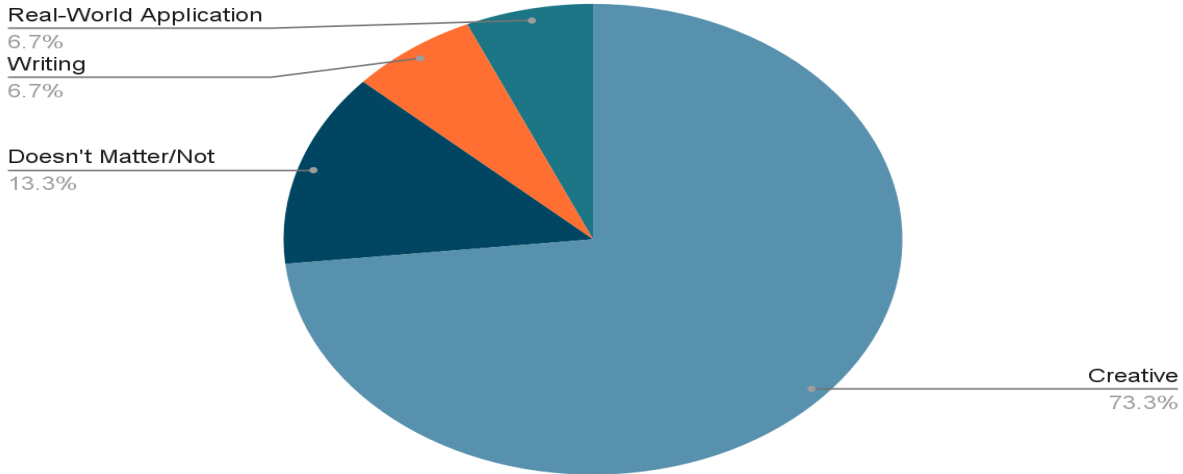


Figure 3: Student Survey Results

Of the fifteen responses, an overwhelming majority of eleven students disclosed an interest in doing something Creative (art, presentation, video assignment, etc.) One student opted for Writing, two had no preference/interest in the specific mediums they wanted to pursue. In addition to these responses, one specific student offered particularly enlightening insight. He wrote the following response:

“Projects that involve real-world application are of my interest”

This student then went on to give examples of some learning scenarios that have real-world applicability:

“I would much rather develop skills that are applicable to the real-world, for instance, constructing my resume, writing letter to an employer”

So with this information I solicited from my students in mind, I designed lessons surrounding the Social Justice Project that took on the following aspects in order to best address the strengths, needs, and preferences of my students:

- **Real-World Applicability**
 - Delivery of Social Justice Project to specific audience (local representative, CEO, nonprofits, etc)
- **Student Choice and Creative Liberty**
 - The Social Justice Project’s topic and medium of delivery are completely up to the student, which can serve to increase both their engagement and performance in the task-at-hand.
- **Social Interaction**
 - Following Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, social interaction is treated as the paramount method of increasing cognitive ability

- **High Demand, High Support, and High Expectations**

- As Oakes' Teacher Expectations Theory dictates, it is essential that the Connected educator demands high cognitive work from their students; the Connected Educator must also believe that their students are capable of performing these cognitive tasks proficiently; and the Connected Educator must absolutely be eager to provide them with all the love and support their students need to develop academically, socially, etc.

Of course, the information found in this survey was to a very limited sample size (one subject; one class; fifteen responses). So, it is essential to highlight the profound necessity of continued, exhaustive research and data collection surrounding the preferences, likes, dislikes, personalities, etc. of the student body so that teachers across all subject areas can make their instructional decisions more responsive and connected to the students and their real-life lived experiences' both inside and outside of the classroom.

In the following section, it will be revealed how impactful those fifteen student responses were in informing the instructional decisions the author of this paper made as they designed lessons for the students' upcoming unit: the Social Justice Project.

Connection Pedagogy in Practice: Gallery Walk Lesson Plan

After surveying my students on their interests and preferences, I found myself more prepared as their instructor to design lessons that resonated with them not only on a personal level, but I also found myself more prepared to include instructional segments and pedagogical strategies that have been research-proven to increase student academic performance as it pertains to the various learning styles of my student body.

The lesson included in this paper centered around the idea of a Gallery Walk where students rotate through stations and are asked to perform a rhetorical analysis (that was the topic of the last unit of the class that my lesson would have featured in) on the meaning, impact, and rhetorical devices each artist uses across seven different examples of protest art that all appeal to different pressing social issues (such as minimum wage, police brutality, and climate change).

However, the introductory section of this lesson features a writing exercise that draws on the students' own lived experiences about what bothers them about the place they live in. Several prompting questions will guide student thought towards issues of social justice. Time will be provided both for them to write their own thoughts down and share their thoughts out as part of a larger class discussion. The opening section of the lesson plan in question is as follows:

Activities/Tasks, with timing

- **Warm-Up - Social Justice Project Writing Heuristic (10 Mins)**
 - Upon entry, students will be greeted with a Do-Now Warm-Up that asks them prompting questions about things that upset them or things they dislike about the world, the country, the state etc.
 - Since the theme of this lesson is protest art and topic selection, this Heuristic is meant to get the students in the cognitive setting for selecting a topic for their Social Justice Projects
- **Class Discussion of the Writing Heuristic (10 mins)**
 - After the students have seemed to exhaust their writing in the Heuristic, the teacher will bring the class together and prompt students for their responses
 - The teacher will write out the various responses on a big sheet of poster paper that will be hung up in the classroom for the remainder of this unit to serve as a reminder of potential topics for the Social Justice Project.

By structuring the lesson in this manner, several facets of Connection Pedagogy are present. For this opening specifically, the following tenets are addressed:

- **Rooted in the Real-World Lived Experiences of Students**
 - By inquiring about their thoughts with the Heuristic, this lesson connects the academy to the community by directly involving student experience at the forefront of the exercise.
 - Through my experiences Student Teaching at William Penn High School, I have found students oftentimes write the most freely and easily when they are given the chance to open up about their own thoughts, so I made sure to include more opportunity for that in these lessons.
- **Social Interaction is Integral to Comprehension**
 - The class discussion is inspired by the dialogue that Problem-Posing Education encourages as well as the tremendous benefits social interaction has on cognitive development according to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory
- **Discussion Can Build Trust and Rapport with Students**
 - Such activities are opportunities to build rapport and trust with your students as the class navigates these discussions together. By listening to them, hearing their thoughts, and responding in a thoughtful manner, the paternalistic relationship between student and teacher can gradually sprout over time. In my experience at Penn, the first two weeks only a few kids in my Period 8 class would volunteer to speak out when I asked them questions amidst discussion. However, with repeated instances of class discussion, the tension can begin to dissipate. Especially if these discussions are conducted through operating with a calm,

warm, and impassioned demeanor. With both of these in continuous effect throughout my classes, by the end of the fourth week, I rarely had difficulty soliciting a volunteer in my Period 8 and we often laughed aloud as a class amidst the more-academic discussion.

Now, the core of this lesson centers around performing rhetorical analyses on seven different pieces of protest art that would be taped on the classroom (or hallway, depending on space) walls. Students will be assigned a number (1-7) that corresponds to one of the pieces of protest art. Students will be instructed, in their groups, to take seven minutes at each station, discuss the piece of artwork, and conduct a rhetorical analysis of the art. As an aside, in execution, the students will have already been well-versed with the process of performing rhetorical analysis, so they should be at a point where they can conduct these tasks effectively in a group. After rotating through all seven stations, the class will then host a discussion in which each group will elect a leader to share out and discuss the rhetorical analysis for the station they started at. In addition to their sharing-out, room for multiple volunteer groups should be made to increase discourse amongst the students.

The Gallery Walk section of the lesson plan is as follows:

- **Gallery Walk and Rhetorical Analyses of Protest Art (49 Minutes)**
 - Next, the main activity for this lesson will be a Gallery Walk of various forms of Protest Art that the students will need to conduct a Rhetorical Analysis on each of the seven examples in the Gallery Walk
 - There will be seven stations around the classroom where multiple examples of protest art will be found.
 - [Environment/Climate Change Protest Art](#)
 - [Me Too Protest Art](#)
 - [LGBTQIA+ Protest Art](#)
 - [BLM Protest Art](#)
 - [Mass Incarceration Protest Art](#)
 - [Immigration Reform/ Migrant Protest Art](#)
 - [Minimum Wage Protest Art](#)
 - Students will be given numbers (1-7) and, in those groups, they will have roughly 7 minutes to conduct a Rhetorical Analysis and address instances and impact of Rhetorical Appeals that they observe in the Protest Art.
 - Students will be told to elect a leader from each group to explain the Analyses and Appeals found in the Protest Art Example that they started at

- **Appeals to Multiple Intelligences (Visual-Spatial, Interpersonal, and Intrapersonal)**
 - In following Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, the cognitive tasks asked of the students differ from a singular, standardized form of intelligence display and, instead, showcases several different intelligences,
 - Visual-Spatial – the analysis of protest art
 - Interpersonal – the peer interaction and group dynamics
 - Intrapersonal – the work the student does on their in analyzing and determining the rhetoric used in the protest art
- **Encourages Social Interaction**
 - The group work and group discussion is present as a means to appeal to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory
- **Motion-Oriented Activity**
 - Based on Boykin and Cunningham's findings, the Gallery Walk emphasizes motion through the seven different stations students rotate through during the activity
- **Subject Matter Addresses the Real-World That Both Student and Teacher Inhabit**
 - This activity brings many of the pressing issues of American society, that many students experience directly and indirectly, into the classroom. By creating this environment, the students and the teacher(s) can navigate discussions of these issues together. Specifically, the teacher is able to scaffold these lessons to support the students in getting them on the trajectory of praxis-oriented, synthesis-based, and real-world-applicable cognitive development.
- **Responsive to Student Make-Up**
 - William Penn High School has very large Hispanic/Latino and Black/African-American student populations. Additionally, there are also a lot of LGBTQIA+ students present in the school. There are also sizable populations of low-income and immigrant/second-generation American students as well. Based on the make-up of the students I had in my class, I tailored the topics of the art I showed them in class to their experiences in efforts to potentially increase engagement with the activity. Though, as a slight aside, it is essential to note that educators must not only investigate the issues that your students go through. Creating space for students to celebrate themselves, their family, and their heritage must be implemented as well. I tailored the art to these potentially-traumatizing issues due to the nature of the project that I was assigned to teach.

How We Can Reconnect & Implications for the Future

In conclusion, the traditional educational model follows strict principles of Freire's Banking Model. It is this model that dominates American education and, subsequently, produces a profound lack of proficiency amongst those the system educates. The cold characteristics of the Banking Model spawn a disconnect between the academy and the community; and such a disconnect prohibits society from moving forward by suffocating the development of critical thought in students; and, instead, is in favor of offering them a version of reality that is discussed as if it is in a fixed position and not belonging to them.

Whereas the Banking Model features strict power structures and children as passive listeners, Connection Pedagogy makes teachers and students cohorts in investigating the larger questions of the society that both parties inhabit. Where the Banking Model sees a problem behavior, blames the child, and allows the cause of that behavior to continue, the Connected Educator is one like Principal Akbar Cook, who demonstrates immense tenacity and compassion in the fight to remove barriers to his student's educational and personal success.

With an emphasis on Connection, Communication, Community, and Creation being at the forefront of one's educational philosophy and pedagogical decisions, the traditional dichotomy can eventually give way to a community of love and learning where collaboration is rampant and synthesis is the common standard.

Looking to the future, the most essential facet of this project rests on continued exhaustive research in a variety of many different forms. First, I think replicating the studies featured in Oakes' and Boykin and Cunningham's research on a wide-scale (school-by-school, K-12) would be greatly beneficial for getting a higher quantity of results that are more recent than the original study. In addition, putting Connection Pedagogy into practice in actual classroom settings, then assessing and reflecting on the results to further develop the framework is a logical next step in determining the validity of Connection Pedagogy.

Aside from these two things, continued research into best practices and perpetual research are constantly in flux in the realm of education. So, there will always be new activities to try, articles to read, studies to collect data from, etc. For an educator, the job of ensuring proficiency is one that cannot rest, because each adolescent only has a finite amount of time to become prepared for the real world that awaits them. Time isn't a privilege that teacher and student have with each other; and the detriment to student success is too great in the presence of disconnect for these issues to continue to be blissfully ignored. Presently, American adolescents aren't learning at proficient levels; and all it takes is researching best practice, connecting to the students, and displaying active interest and compassion towards their lives to cause change in the educational landscape. It will not be a simple, clean, or easy task, but it is the role of the educator to love and support their students perpetually throughout the educational process and beyond, extending into and building up the community that makes up the school itself.

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