

(RE)-AUTHORING THE STUDENT: AN EXPLORATION INTO FIGURED  
WORLDS, IDENTITY FORMATION, GENRE, PUBLICS, AND HOW POWER  
RELATIONS IMPACT CHILDREN'S WRITING

by

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## ABSTRACT

ANTHONY E. IANNONE. (Re)-authoring the student: An exploration into figured worlds, identity formation, genre, publics and how power relations impact children's writing. (Under the direction of DR. LILIAN BRANNON)

As digital media makes its way into elementary school classrooms, urban school culture moves slowly to join in. The move to integrate new technologies into schools is both enabled and constrained by factors such as the need for students and teachers to be seen as people who are "successful" in both public and social terms. The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the complexities for elementary children learning to write in the digital age. I used a case study approach, examining the language choices of eight third and fourth grade students (4 girls and 4 boys) who attended an urban elementary school in a large southeastern city in the United States. I analyzed how the students' language choices contributed to the construction/negotiation of their writer identities and the degree to which these constructs/negotiations were enabled/constrained by what the participants imagined was/not possible from their positions as students while composing with varying technologies. I conclude that it is not only the young writers who imagine what is/not possible from their position as students, it is also those who guide, or "authorize" student writing, including teachers, administrators, and parents. This constructing/negotiating, authorizing/guiding all take place as students seek to maintain membership (textually) within their school world while endeavoring to cultivate new memberships within expanses or publics that coexist alongside their schools. The young writers highlighted in this study, working against from within the school district's accountability and efficiency agenda show that being a "successful" student writer can mean more than their merely reproducing what is expected of them.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation and the curiosity I have regarding young children writing in school is dedicated to my wife Stephanie. She has supported me throughout the course of this journey in ways that mere words on a page cannot communicate. While creating a virtual "bubble" around me that enabled the work this dissertation represents to unfold she never once asked from me as a husband, lover and life long friend more than what she knew I would be able to handle; permitting me to remain focused in my efforts from start to finish. She tolerated my tirades when I got feedback that sent me into a tailspin. She listened to endless iterations of the chapters that follow. She lent me her shoulder to cry on when things just did not seem to be working out. Her selflessness defines what it means to sacrifice and I can only hope that sacrifice will be matched by the impact this work seeks to have on the conversation regarding young children writing in school.

Thank you Stephanie!

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My committee; your ability to see within me something worthy of your time and attention still humbles me. Brian Kissel...you've seen me at the ground level, in the midst of my "day job" as an elementary school teacher negotiating the same complexities that I highlight here with Stephanie, Jennifer and their students. We have written together, had conversations about the act of teaching and your reading of my work has enabled my teacherly voice to coexist with my developing scholarly voice. Cy Knoblauch and Tony Scott...even when I had convinced myself (the first time I met you both) that I could never be your equals intellectually you treated me as such...whether it was in the classes I took from you during my coursework, the face-to-face meetings we had regarding my writing or the well thought out comments that came with your generous, close reads.

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The first line in Constantine Cavafy's Ithaka states, "When you set out for Ithaka ask that your way be long, full of adventure, full of instruction." I thank each of you for helping me on this journey!

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“The more developed a person’s social imagination, the higher their level of social cooperation, the larger their social network...” Peter Johnston, *Opening Minds*, (p. 73)

“When I enter a classroom I should be someone who is open to new ideas, open to questions, and open to the curiosities of the students...” Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, (p. 49)

“Adults, then, cannot ‘give’ children freedom by turning them loose with paper and pencil, any more than they can by turning them loose in the wild. But they can challenge children, helping them sense social and textual possibilities beyond their current borders.” Anne Haas Dyson, *Writing Superheroes*, (p. 166)

Within these words, Johnston, Freire, and Dyson think of both teachers and students as inquirers, negotiators of knowledge and meaning making—fully aware of the importance of their respective journeys as well as that which enables and/or constrains them. These are inquirers of a unique kind, drawing upon their imagination and curiosities—producing actions that simultaneously seek to solidify ongoing membership within existing communities of practice while endeavoring to establish new memberships in alternate communities. These social actions, grounded in talk and the written word contribute to the construction of identities on the part of teachers and students—ways of being that both inhabit and perform within the world of school. Language is the medium

that teachers and students use to construct these identities and their worlds. Dyson (1995) argues that while using language to construct identities and our worlds, "...we are not only interacting with others; we are also using others' words to represent our own meanings" (Conceptual Tools for Re-envisioning Literacy Development para. 6) as we struggle to figure out our position within the worlds we inhabit. As new technologies begin to make their way more and more into these worlds they bring with them complex and complicated decisions that students must negotiate via language choices as they participate in what Dyson calls, "...culturally valued activities" (Conceptual Tools for Re-envisioning Literacy Development para. 1). These decisions, negotiations impact the formation of identities, the construction of the school world and the position students hold within that world. In the process, these decisions and negotiations muddy what it means to be a literate student, redefine what literate practices are acceptable, and present a thought-provoking scene for inquiry. This study inquired into how elementary school children and teachers negotiated this changing scene and how the language choices young writers made contributed to the formation/negotiation of identities and their position as students in the school world as they composed with old and new technologies during literacy instruction.

Consider, for a moment, the following classroom scene:

The youngsters in Stephanie's 3rd grade class have just settled into their assigned tasks for an hour of literate activity in the classroom. Morgan brings both her composition notebook and energy to write to an empty chair, sits down in front of a computer, and logs into Kidblog—a social media site for young children. Like the imaginary characters that explore the beautiful landscapes she creates in her writing,

Morgan enthusiastically embarks upon, via keystrokes on the keyboard, a journey; searching the terrain of her blog, looking to see who has responded to her latest efforts. Ten minutes into her quest she stops, fixated on the words of Fred, a fellow classmate. His comment reads, *“That is a lot. Who is the main character? Good job!”* She smiles, looks to the left for inspiration, then clicks the reply button which opens up a text field. She proceeds to type the following, *“If you had read it carefully you will find it out.”* Satisfied with what she has written, she clicks send and moves on with her quest.

So begins an event in which Stephanie (a teacher whose curiosity about new media has led to recent shifts in her classroom practice) is interested in making possible for students like Morgan and Fred, the opportunity to compose stories and respond to each other's writing while using social networking sites. This classroom story, though, is full of twists and turns. The participants involved (teachers and students) are attempting through assigned tasks and through composition and the textual response focused on that composing, to figure out ways that old, accepted literate practices can be borrowed from and connect to composing in new media. Morgan's work with her composition notebook prior to coming to the computer to write on the blog highlights the complex and complicated nature of figuring out such connections.

It is customary within the school world for teachers and students to both compliment and question what is created textually within technologies like the composition notebook. Complications come about as students like Morgan and Fred, under Stephanie's guidance, attempt to negotiate within their community of practice what it means to communicate with one another in new spaces like the blog. Fred's response seems harmless enough: two compliments and a question. Why then does Morgan's reply

back sound so authoritative? Did she imagine someone other than Fred involved in the negotiation as reading her reply? If so, what does this reply to Fred afford Morgan with regards to that negotiation: her position as student, her future writing on the blog, and/or her writing in other mediums? What about Fred; how is he seen as a result of his interactions with Morgan? Was he in fact himself imagining someone other than Morgan when he responded the way he did? What does this textual encounter mean for his future writing prospects? It is this very point of negotiation and transfer of information that the introduction of new technologies during literacy instruction makes visible. New technologies also complicate the decisions each student makes while participating in these “culturally valued” activities, decisions that impact the formation of identities, the construction of the school world and students positions (who each can be) within that world. Prior to replying to Fred, Morgan spent several minutes responding quite positively to another classmate, Stacey, because she had provided Morgan with something she requested from all of her readers, a summary. After replying to Fred, Morgan glanced over but did not respond to a reply from yet another classmate, Luke, seemingly because she was uncertain as to what do to with his thoughts. Her response to all three classmates, analyzed in great detail in Chapter 6, contributes to the formation of a student identity that positions her within the larger elementary school narrative—a narrative where students do as their teacher directs them. Morgan's interwoven actions with her notebook and the blog also contribute to the muddiness of what it means to be a literate student as well as the potential redefinition of what becomes an acceptable literate practice.

The example above, taken from data I collected over the course of my study, begins to show the interplay between young writers guided by their teacher. The example also constructs a problem, one that I touch briefly upon here and explore in depth in Chapters 6 and 7. Schools are currently undergoing a transition—moving from using old technologies solely to integrating new ones into the daily practice within the classroom. Digital media, a relatively new technology with regards to its implementation in elementary school classrooms, offers the promise of collaboration and new audiences for student work. The narrative above gives a glimpse of what is possible as digital media makes its way into elementary school classrooms. Urban school culture is moving slowly to join in—but this transition, briefly witnessed in the narrative above is constrained by factors such as the need for students and teachers to be seen as people who are "successful" in both public and social terms. Publicly, teachers are charged with adding value onto each of their students in the form of their students doing well on high stakes writing tests and meeting quarterly benchmarks. Socially, there is a desire for students to seek new memberships within alternate spaces, writing about things that matter to them. Though there were points of participatory writing and thinking in the above narrative, moments where Morgan and Fred's position within the school world could be seen as something other than what is traditionally expected of them, I show, later in Chapter 6 that the majority of time was authorized/guided in such a way that both students were constrained—engaged in a collaborative struggle that focused more on what it meant for each to be successful in that moment. Hence, the public and social terms outlined above and examined fully in chapters 4 through 6 are just a sample of what makes problematic



the formation of identities as students compose with old and new technologies, the construction of their school world and as a result, their position within that world.

As schools continue to “tip the balance,” transitioning from the sole usage of older technologies during literacy instruction to an integration of newer ones, they need to consider what this transition will mean for students as writers in terms of the language practices they will engage in. These language practices will inevitably be borrowing from older, accepted ones but in what ways will the borrowing lead to newer and eventually accepted literate practices? Schools will also need to consider how these newly accepted literate practices will impact the position of the student. How participants within the school world re-imagine the position of student will determine the registers and multimodal possibilities for students composing with old technologies and in new media.

I have constructed a case study that explores the complexity of learning to write in the digital age within urban elementary school classrooms which are enabled and constrained by public and social factors. In order to better understand this complexity, I explore how the language choices elementary school students made are complicated by the decisions that contribute to the construction/negotiation of their writer identities, the figured world of school and their position within that world while composing with old and new technologies during literacy instruction.

In the following chapter, I begin to weave an argument for the further study of such complexities. I begin with a review of the theoretical frameworks that ground this study—Holland et al.'s notions of figured worlds, James Paul Gee's work with identity, Bazerman's ideas about genre and Warner's understanding of publics. I then move into a comprehensive look at the body of work in the field of literacy instruction—exploring

how children write and how new media impacts that composing. I also look at children's literacy learning; specifically how teachers and students interact during literacy instruction. From there, I expand my focus to urban schools; where high stakes testing in writing both enables and constrains children's writing. Finally, I look at how literacy instruction in urban schools is related to issues of urban school reform; specifically the issue of efficiency; a core belief of the neoliberal political agenda.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter I review the theoretical framework that informs this study as it pertains to children's writing in schools at this time of transition from solely writing with older technologies (pen and paper) to integrating writing with digital technologies, particularly with social media. I then consider the body of work in literacy instruction that reviews how children learn to write and the impact of new media on their composing. I will also explore children's literacy learning in schools and ways that children and their teachers interact in literacy instruction. I will then expand my focus to urban schools, in that this research was conducted in a school where significant portion of children are of poverty. In this school and throughout the district that houses similar schools there is a strong emphasis on high stakes testing, and writing is one area in which children are tested. I explore the literature pertaining to how writing is both enabled and constrained by high stakes testing, particularly now with the impact of new media in the schools. Finally, I look at how literacy instruction in urban schools is situated in issues related to urban school reform. One particular issue of interest is instructional efficiency—one of the core beliefs associated with a neoliberal political and economic agenda that is driving educational policy. I show how the literature on literacy instruction situates students and teachers within narratives of efficiency and accountability that impact what is possible in urban literacy classrooms.

## Figured Worlds, Identities, Genres, Publics

Holland et al. (1998) give literacy researchers an anthropological way of understanding the complicated set of issues related to children's writing in schools. Holland et al. have developed the concept of figured worlds, which are spaces where characters (contributors/participants) act, importance/relevance is placed on these acts and value judgments are given to the outcomes produced from these acts. Figured worlds are produced and reproduced, formed and reformed, not by any one particular act, event, everyday occurrence or expectation related to the former but via an abstraction, “an extraction carried out under guidance” (p. 53). They are spaces constructed under negotiated terms. Identities are formed and reformed through the implementation of artifacts/tools as participants engage in these negotiated acts. School is an example of a figured world.

The concept of figured worlds is integral to my study. It foregrounds the social and interactive nature of the production of “selves” (identities), which is at the heart of my proposed study. As part of their argument Holland et al. develop the concept of positional identities. These identities include one’s choices about language, “...dialect, register...” and “...genre.” These choices are not, “...socially neutral” they are, “...decisions [that] participate in powerful systems that construct social relationships between speaker and hearer” (pp. 126-127) relationships where participants are not only interacting with others they are also using others’ words to represent their own meanings as well as attempt to figure out their position in the world they inhabit and perform within.

Gee observes that there are four stands, perspectives or identities that are, “...present and woven together as a given person acts (in the case of this study--makes language choices) within a given context” (p. 101). Students language choices are not socially neutral and they contribute to the formation of school, the production of identities (‘social relationships’) and position one holds within the school world. Language choices are also impacted by spaces or mediums for writing. These spaces/mediums have the potential to move the language choices of students outside the school world via new media sites like blogs. Bawarshi (2003) and Bazerman (1997) would call these spaces/mediums genres; “rhetorical ways of acting in recurring situations” (p. 11), “forms of life, ways of being...frames of social action” (p. 2). According to Holland et al. these spaces/mediums “...imbue and are imbued by the kind of persons who frequent them” through the “dialect we speak...the deeds we do...” and “...the emotions we express” (p. 127). In other words, our ways of being—represented via language choices in the spaces/mediums we inhabit locate us; contributing to the production of our “selves”—becoming indicators that help identify our position within these spaces mediated by various tools (paper, digital technologies).

Holland et al also develop the concept of relational identities, the spaces people co-construct with others. James Paul Gee would describe the relational identity as a D-Identity, an identity comprised of individual traits that others “see” in human actors for it is these traits that allow us to identify ourselves in relation to others. He goes on to explain that these identities come from, “...the discourse or dialogue of other people” (p. 103). As Gee states, the source of power that determines a trait like “tech-savviness” comes from the discourse and dialogue of others as these people, treat, talk about and

interact (textually) with other individuals. Warner (2002) provides us with another way of conceptualizing “where” the discourse and dialogue of others “takes place.” He calls this space a public. As is true with figured worlds and genres, publics are spaces that can neither be touched nor avoided. Warner defines publics as, “...frameworks for understanding text against an organized background of the circulation of other texts...” (p. 16). We belong to publics by default and, at times seek membership into others. By extension our membership within these publics can come as the result of the text we create. That text is what gets recognized as having “individual traits” allowing us to be seen as certain kinds of people by others within these spaces. Tardy (2012), validates this thinking stating that, “...when a text conforms to expected genre conventions of a community, readers are likely to construct the author as a fairly ‘typical’ member of that community” making it easier for the writer to maintain membership within her community. She goes on to say that, “...deviations from the norm...become salient to readers and often cause them to build impressions of the author;” (p. 67) impressions that may jeopardize the writer's ability to maintain membership within her community and seek new memberships within alternate communities. Consequently, our position (see below) within the worlds we inhabit could be in effect authorized/guided equally from what others “see” in us as much as what we “see” in ourselves. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism is also important here. Starting with the fact that no human action occurs in isolation, people coexist, act socially and are produced through dialogue with others. It follows, then that a student becoming recognized or (taking on the D-Identity) of being “tech-savvy” as well as her position is dependent upon social interactions.

I also explore Holland et al.'s concept of positional identities, "the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance—with the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the lived world" (p. 127). Gee considers positional identities as I-Identities—positions human actors hold within the worlds they inhabit. The source of the (to borrow a term from Holland et al.) 'power systems' that determine these identities is institutional, what would Gee call, "...authorization;" a set of language based, "...laws, rules, traditions, or principles [that] allow[s] the authorities to 'author' the position" (p. 102) within the worlds we inhabit. One way of looking at I-Identities is through the authorship of student. Being a student within the figured world of school is a position. The position is not socially neutral, nor is it produced by nature or accomplished in isolation. The source of the position—the power that determines (produces) it is a set of social relations that are encribed through various authorities, licensure of teachers, state boards of education, local school district boards of education to name a few. Tardy supports Gee's thinking stating that, "The overall impression [position] that a reader forms of an author is not tied to just one feature but is instead a cumulative effect of many features that are noticed" (p. 67). These authorities—through laws, rules, traditions, and the 'cumulative effect of many features' they notice essentially produce the position of student in relation to teacher as well as the rights and responsibilities that come with the position. Hence, as Dyson (1995) puts it, "...we do indeed invent-or-write" (para. 2) the student. The "we" in Dyson's quote includes the students themselves as much as the other participants within the school world, teachers, administrators, parents, etc. For this study, I explored how these participants "authored" the positional identities of the student; produced through the day-

to-day operations within the figured world of school as it pertained to their understandings of student writer, what student writer meant, and how that position was enabled and constrained through the student's language choices while composing with old and new technologies.

Holland et al. and Gee's notions of identities and the language and relationships that produce them has correlations with positioning theory, a theory that; according to Harre et al. via Andreouli (2009) is, "...concerned with revealing the explicit and implicit patterns of reasoning that are realized in the ways that people act towards others" (p. 14.5). By examining the language choices made by student writers I was able to describe ways in which these writers 'acted towards' each other (relational identities). Luberdá (2000) further explains that positioning, "typically takes place in a conversation; we explain our positions, defend them, alter them" we "...often try to position others" and "...these positions tend to be taken up according to an unfolding narrative" (para. 4). In chapter 1 I describe a scene between Morgan and Fred that illustrates the point Luberdá makes here. Each student; through their textual conversation on the class blog positioned themselves and unknowingly positioned each other. Bakhtin, through Dyson reminds us here that when, "...we enter into [these] contexts as speaking subjects, we are expected to adopt certain words, or to maintain certain silences, given our social place as...students or teachers" (Conceptual Tools for Re-envisioning Literacy Development para. 6). In chapter 6, while analyzing the interaction between Morgan and Fred, I describe how writing is both enabled and constrained as a result of the adoption of "certain words," and the maintenance of "certain silences." The 'unfolding narrative' (context) in my study is the socialization within the figured world of school as students compose with old and



new media. Composition notebooks constitute old media in this study and I rationalize that designation in chapter 4. The Twitter Door is an “in between” media which I explain in chapter 5. The social media site Twitter and the class blog hosted by Kidblog are what constitute new media in this study, which I explain fully in chapter 6. As I have inferred in chapter 1 and briefly here, within each of these spaces the young writers I met in this study ‘adopted certain words,’ and ‘maintained certain silences.’ They did all of this while attempting, under guidance to ‘explain,’ ‘defend,’ ‘position others,’ and potentially ‘alter’ their own positions, making and remaking what it means to be writers in school. This study documented that process.

### Children’s Writing

There is a body of work in the field of literacy instruction that has reviewed how children learn to write and the impact new media has on that composing—specifically ways that new media enables the act of composing. Luke's (2003) work with multimodal experiences reveals that the use of various interfaces to create and transfer ideas and knowledge impacts children’s writing in enabling ways. These multimodal experiences provide a variety of opportunities for teachers and students to compose and circulate ideas within and around the classroom. There is a tendency however to equate the term multimodal with another term—digital. Multimodal need not always imply the use of digital tools. Educators, Luke argues, should be willing to expand their image of the term multimodal, opening it up to include the use of artifacts/tools such as composition notebooks and the capacity this old technology has relevant to both helping create interactions and cultivate relationships between students and teachers with new technologies. Not remaining open to an expanded image of the term multimodal can only

limit or constrain the potential for interactions and relationships between teachers and students in the classroom. Luke acknowledges the importance of re-visioning the multimodal experience stating that, "...complex blends of 'new' and 'old' media are central to the experience of the everyday cultures of childhood..." warning educators however that, "...the classroom is one of the few places where formal taxonomic categories (curriculum) and the official partitioning of time and space are often used to discourage both teachers and children from blending, mixing, and matching knowledge drawn from diverse textual sources and communications media" (p. 398). One way to fend off the constraining elements of formal taxonomic categories is to see multimodal experiences as moments that provide teachers and students space to interact, collaborate and engage critically in each other's "expert knowledges." Luke observes that one of the potential effects of embracing this complex blend of 'new' and 'old' media is that it:

...locates knowledge and learning, rather than technology, at the center of pedagogy. Notebooks, computers and connectivity are but a few of the resources among a platform of knowledge and communication sources that support, rather than drive, a critical, learner-centered constructivist pedagogy. (p. 399)

Freedman and Delp, writing about the creation of unique, grand dialogic zones, suggest that such whole-class spaces, "...connote for us the energy of a collective space..." where, "...students participate in the classroom..." where that participation, "...focuses our attention squarely on learning as it transpires within the interweaving activities..." as students, "...come together, interact, and change across time" (pp. 260-261) spaces where a 'learner-centered pedagogy' can thrive.

In the same way, there are other scholars that too have recognized the importance of thinking about the enabling potential of blending “new” and “old” media in the classroom and the impact this blending has on children's writing. Hansen and Kissel (2010) direct their attention on the, “...younger generation” of writers and how they “...are redefining who [they] are as literacy creators and users” (p. 271) within new media. They understand that these opportunities are not socially neutral and that this creating and redefining allows young writers the opportunity to form identities while simultaneously connecting with others and attempting to figure their place on sites such as blogs. In short, they “write students” as literacy learners capable of blending “new” and “old” media in the classroom. Recognizing the importance and “writing students” as capable of this unique form of blending, Hansen and Kissel clear a path for other scholars to make more clear what this blending could look like and the implications for the participants involved.

Boling, Castek, Zawilinski, Barton and Nierlich's (2008) work with collaborative literacies may in fact provide teachers and students ways to think about interacting within “old” and “new” media. They write about teachers who embrace their student’s “expert knowledge,” co-constructing spaces within new media (Google docs and blogging) where relevant stakeholders can engage in different kinds of conversations about the novels they are reading by commenting and/or chatting in the margins. Curwood (2013), adds to this stating that because students, “...have an authentic audience who reads and responds to their work” (p. 420) they are often more motivated than when engaged in more traditional writing experiences. Through these different kinds of conversations, teachers and students come to see the potential of working collaboratively using their existing “expert

knowledge” to circulate new ideas and knowledge (in this case poetry created as a form of response to the shared reading of the novel). Luke and Boling et al are making a case for—old, accepted literate practices being borrowed from, not abandoned in order to connect to composing in new media. It follows then that time must be spent exploring the body of work in literacy instruction that describes children’s literacy learning in schools and ways that children and teachers interact in literacy instruction. An exploration of this sort provides context—a way to think about how children and teachers have interacted in order to project what that interaction may entail as both stakeholders compose more in new media during literacy instruction.

Children’s literacy learning; how literacy functions within the classroom community--has gone through several iterations. Graves' (1975) work (impacting how literacy functions throughout the 1980's) centered around the notion that, “There was more to a writing episode than the children's act of composing and writing down words” (p. 230). His research set out to describe what was happening when focus was placed on the 3 distinct phases, prewriting, composing and post-writing and what this meant for writing in formal environments. Graves noted that drawing, talk and the making of sound effects were common actions taken by the writer (namely boys) during the prewriting phase. The composing phase typically started right after the drawing was completed. Graves' research reveals that one of the behaviors attributed to the composing phase included copying from the dictionary with pen and paper. The post-writing phase usually involved the student putting her/his work away. At no point in this study did Graves explore the problematic nature of copying from the dictionary (a practice common place in elementary classrooms in the 1980's that still persists today). He merely concludes that

at, “any given point in a writing episode, many variables, most of them unknown...contribute to the writing process” and as a result lead the writer to, “...employ highly individual composing strategies” (p. 237). Graves' work is situated prior to the social turn focused exclusively on individual writers composing without considering the social interactions that produce these writers. This focus comes from significance placed on the singular linguistic developmental growth of the student which bring with it implications that teacher is the expert in the room as it relates to children’s literacy learning. Graves and others’ early work has been critiqued by later scholars as having focused primarily on white privileged students and their privileged dialects, overlooking students of color, the knowledge they possess as language learners, and their stigmatized dialects. Lisa Delpit (2006) for example argues that teachers not be, “...the only expert in the classroom” that to “...deny students their own expert knowledge is to disempower them” (p. 32). She goes on to state that teachers, “...need to support the language that students bring to school, provide them input from...additional code[s], and give them the opportunity to use the new code[s]” (p. 53) in nonthreatening ways. This way of 'authoring' the student would not come for some time as scholars would continue to focus their efforts on other issues.

Glenda Bissex’s (1980) work, contemporary to Graves continued the exploration of how children learn to write. Her work is primarily concerned with emergent literacy and the way in which young writers learn to represent words—specifically through the patterns she witnessed in her son’s writing. Literacy to Bissex emerges through a child’s subdividing (differentiating) of what was earlier a diffuse whole into parts with more specialized forms and functions” (p. 198). This definition is used to frame what the reader

comes to learn about Paul, the subject of her work, and the moves he makes as a writer. Paul initially uses letter-like forms as a representation of words—in an attempt to communicate with Bissex. He then moves to understanding that letters represent sounds and begins to spell accordingly. As he continued to develop a desire to communicate, his spelling decisions became more sophisticated—trying to spell words based on sounds he did not hear in letter names. Under Bissex's guidance, Paul learned about spacing between words and over time, armed with his understandings Paul composed in a variety of forms mostly with pen and paper and occasionally on the typewriter. Bissex details the many and varied forms that Paul wrote within including, “...signs, labels and captions” (p. 198) just to name a few. And—while Bissex writes about how for Paul form initially outweighed function, his signs and labels slowly grew in functionality; informing his reading of the, “...sales and performances he was putting on” (p. 199). While this work begins to help the reader better understand what is happening “on the page” relative to the writer's developmental growth, Bissex remains very close to the individual writing. She does not take into account notions of children's differentiation— notions that Dyson argues should be more attentive to the child's, “...own possibilities for participating in the social world in particular ways” (On Development and Oral Language para. 7). We stand to learn more when our focus is widened—widened to include an exploration of how elements of relational identity and positional identity are considered relevant to their contributions to the construction of these social worlds as well as the possibilities for writers like Paul participating within them.

Calkins' (1994) image of writing begins to move thinking about children's literacy closer to the possibilities mentioned above. She writes about how she saw, in an

earlier version of her work, writing, “...as a process of choosing a topic, turning that topic [a seed idea]...into the best possible draft, sharing that draft with friends, then revising it” (p. 8). She goes on to say that she has re-imagined her notions of writing—seeing them to be more than just acts of recording but something closer to developing; developing that moves further away from the writing itself towards wonderings, questions. It is her understanding that if writing “starts here” there is a better chance for it (the writing) to grow—be successful. While Calkins’ ideas appear to move our thinking about children’s literacy away from the individual and her own writing (sharing with friends, starting with questions), it now becomes a process that includes a quest (not for choosing a topic but) for finding ‘significance’ through questions—a process that ‘authors’ the student as one who is in pursuit of significance and when she has found it, she has succeeded (a concept explored later in this chapter) as a writer.

Routman (1988), builds on the work of her contemporary Calkins by outlining specifically the ‘significance’ that young writers are looking for—reasons and an audience for their writing. She writes that as young writers figure out these reasons and audiences they, “...learn to use writing to communicate for varied purposes”--purposes that take the form of, “...notes to each other...invitations to parents...cards for special occasions, holidays, and get well cards” (p. 93) just to name a few. While these actions appear to echo and uphold Delpit’s concern for ‘the need to support the language that children bring to school’ it in fact does the opposite. Routman states that for students lacking “...letter knowledge...we write for them under their pictures” (p. 93) and by writing for them ‘author’ the position of student as one whose only hope for success comes when their writing is accepted in the form of privileged codes.

Rhodes and Dudley-Marling's (1988) work provides a lens with which to better understand how notions of success, through accepted/privileged language acts on the part of young writers, came into existence. These well meaning scholars, working with disabled and remedial students centered their attention on matters of fluency as it relates to language learning. They claim that the, "...lack of fluency in writing can be traced to...student's fear of taking risks in the process...and the student's store of knowledge about (in this case) writing as language" (p. 98). They continue by warning their audience (teachers) that the making of meaning cannot be achieved if the writer focuses on things like spelling, and letter formation and that "...writing behavior may become more effective more quickly" (p. 99) if student perceptions about writing are addressed during their process. It is here where Rhodes and Dudley-Marling's thinking falls right into line with Calkins and Routman. 'authoring' students as remedial, claiming that their perceptions of writing and lack of knowledge are what stands in the way of their own success—becoming effective communicators quickly echos back images of Routman's classroom where the teachers 'write for them;' narrowing the focus of children's literacy.

There are scholars whose work in the field of literacy instruction widens the focus of child literacy. Florio and Clark's (1982) work with writing in the elementary school classroom begins to shift the focus from what is happening with pen and paper towards student and teacher perspectives related to writing as well as its communicative functions. Relevant to this study, they sought to better understand the social contexts and conventions for writing in school by looking at questions like, "How do students come to differentiate among the functions of writing and the forms appropriate to them" (p. 116). In order to answer their question it was necessary for them to examine the language



choices made by both teachers and students during literacy instruction. The work of Florio and Clark is grounded in an understanding that a study of language should not focus on the acquisition of skills but rather an exploration of how language (in this case writing) functions as a cultural tool by members within the school community regardless of the medium its members write within. Florio and Clark's critique of schools' narrow definitions of, "...literacy's functions and skills" its "...formal language register and [regimented] activities" creating an environment that "...limits children's opportunities" (p. 117) points to a need for further exploration into the functions of writing that offer enabling opportunities and present constraints for both teachers and students. It is Florio and Clark's thinking about the following 2 functions of writing within the school world that are relevant to this study; 1) writing that is self-generated and transactional, and 2) the usefulness of writing in everyday life.

In their study, Florio and Clark witnessed writing to participate in community take the form of setting and enforcing rules. They describe how the composition of the rules was collaborative, with the students, "framing and negotiating rules orally...with one another with guidance from the teacher...the scribe in this activity" (p. 121). Creating the rules enabled participation of all members of the community. Conversely, when Florio and Clark looked at instances when students wrote to get to know themselves and others better (through diary writing) these experiences were complicated and eventually constrained by competing factors. Buck (2012) would call these factors, scripts. In her research, she argues that, "Technologies are accompanied with scripts about their use, which enable and constrain certain actions and users can align with these scripts or resist them..." (p. 32). Florio and Clark note that diary writing was initiated by the teacher, who

wanted students to feel free to write however they saw fit with no intended audience in mind yet the imposed expectations onto the act (one being that sharing was optional) which seemed to contradict that the writing was to remain private. The diary writing was simultaneously a school activity and a personal one, causing confusion and concern on the students' part as Florio and Clark document. This writing was removed from the daily schedule in the classroom it had started in. The significance of Florio and Clark's work is not in identifying individual classroom actions as either enabling or constraining to teachers and students as much as it is in forwarding a broadened understanding of child literacy. From this understanding comes a description of how relational and positional identity formations are constructed as students and teachers align with or resist certain scripts participating textually within a community of practice, getting to know one another better as they simultaneously negotiate and construct their school world.

Dyson's (1997) work sets out to accomplish the aforementioned task situating children as active contributors to an ever evolving community, their classroom. This view of child literacy is consistent with thinking dating back to the mid 1980's—where Dyson et al. (1987) suggests seeing, “...learning and instruction for people of all ages...[as] only be[ing] understood within the complexities of the communicative environments in which those processes naturally occur” (para. 3). The communicative environment she turns her gaze on for understanding in the 90's (a third grade classroom) is negotiated between a teacher and her students. Within this community Dyson explores identity and agency formation/construction, showing what is possible when students have the space to, through their writing—grapple with complicated social and ideological issues. Specifically, these issues include boyfriends and girlfriends. The students appropriate

from media, a developing understanding of differing cultural constructions, one being romance, and we can recognize those constructs through “kid humor,” children's composing of stories and talk around these stories. The teacher's valuing of her student's appropriations are juxtaposed with the tension of teaching in the high pressure atmosphere of large urban schools. The teacher's willingness to engage in such issues points to the sort of negotiation that she herself is involved in relative to the competing roles she has in the classroom. The first role is to socialize; the teacher has a responsibility for introducing her students, in this case—via literacy instruction, into the ways of accepted school literacy practices. The second though is not the liberator but the one who makes transparent moments of negotiation, when she is socializing, when her students are appropriating, and how in this case the multimodal appropriation of media helped lead to the creation of interactions between students and teachers. Identity is being enacted all of the time. This enactment is made visible because there appears to be the possibility of agency in those moments; agency in the form of kids appropriating from the media. It is in these moments, echoing back to Boling et al.'s work which places emphasis on the teacher embracing their student's 'expert knowledge' we begin to better understand how students and teachers interact during literacy instruction as the teacher and student's notions of school are made visible through collaborative literacies. These collaborative literacies (within old or new media) depend on all stakeholders valuing what Dyson describes as the language choices writers make—choices that reflect and/or build upon , “...past writing experiences...active interpretation of the ongoing one...the knowledge they bring to writing” and “...the options they possess and entertain” (p. 2). I see a connection here between Dyson's work and the work of Florio and Clark as it

relates to collaborative literacies. Collaborative literacies are a form of writing to participate (securing old memberships as well as initiating new ones) in community—as such they rely on the language choices writers make that Dyson highlights above. Collaborative literacies function also as writing to know oneself and others focusing on how identities (both relational and positional) are being constructed. Children are negotiating and constructing their position as student and the school world through these practices regardless of the medium they work within.

Other scholars too focused on the importance of exploring the linkage between what children do with their everyday literacy (specifically the language choices they make as writers and how these choices contribute to who they are...their identity) and how they have been historically engaged in literate practices. Luke and Carrington (2002), for example look at these issues in their study. They argue that the current state of literacy instruction is based on a deficit model and that in order to develop teacher practice and re-see student learning, and more importantly the position of the student, literacy instruction should be based on a broader curriculum and cultural contexts. Basing child literacy on a broader curriculum and cultural contexts implies that writing be seen as a social act—one in which people come to understand their world(s); academic, private, public, etc. through such actions. Luke and Carrington shape their argument by claiming that the linkage between children's everyday literacy and the way they have been engaged in literate practices historically is, “shaped in relation to the contexts of varied projects of 'selfhood' and cultural identity” (Introduction, para. 3).

Luke and Carrington unpack their notion of literacy as curriculum practice, explaining that it is a move away from seeing literacy as merely a pursuit of basic skills

and accountability towards a more critical literacy, cultivating student identity and agency across a variety of social fields as they enter into and learn to negotiate different discourse communities or what Warner would call publics. I want to extend their argument. I want to broaden the focus to include an exploration of the ongoing negotiated acts between teachers and students. My study seeks to examine and describe how these negotiated acts contribute to the formation of identities leading to a re-imagination of the position of student. Dewayani (2013) citing Brunner, writing about the process of self-construction, provides an image of what this re-imagination might entail textually observing, "...that narratives can describe the self as becoming an 'active agent...'" (p. 375- 376).

#### Writing in Urban Schools

Because my study takes place in an urban school that is subject to various school reforms, the urban school reform literature, particularly that which underscores the testing of writing, needed to be explored. Alvermann (2008) argues that there is much to learn if teachers and students can work together to navigate the high stakes that constrain children's writing—transitioning towards the more enabling possibilities that come with the promise of collaboration that a balance of multimodal and digital media offers. She writes about the, "...merit in studying how learning is accomplished in a participatory culture" (p. 10) and that having, "...a space in which to interact around remixed texts with an appreciative audience" (p. 11) through, "...multimodal self-representations in online social networking sites" (p. 12) can provide young people, "...opportunities...to write, read, and speak their worlds into existence" thus "...reinvent[ing] themselves" (p. 13) and their position within the school world. In their work on the influence of blogging

with elementary school students, McGrail and Davis (2010) identify, “Standardized testing associated with the No Child Left Behind Act” as an obstacle that “pushes teachers into a culture [and practice] of formulaic writing” (p. 417). They argue that standardized testing interferes with the, “social practices engendered” by academic blogging—namely “communication and interaction” between teachers and students as well as the development of “...literacy processes” such as “...critical thinking and reflection” (p. 416). Dutro's (2009) work with third grade children aligns nicely with McGrail and Davis' thinking arguing that, “...social class based assumptions...” embedded within the formulaic writing that teachers are pushed into shows little regard for the, “...lived experiences...” of the students they work alongside. Whether in digital spaces like Google docs and blogs or more conventional spaces like composition notebooks, the whole notion of ideas and knowledge circulating within these spaces is a complex and complicated process that standardized testing threatens to constrain as teachers and students interact over students composing within both mediums.

Scholars have also contributed to a body of work within the field of literacy instruction focused on matters of teaching in the age of accountability. Freedman and Delp's (2007) work urges us to consider the complexities teachers face managing, “...a whole-class space” of diverse learners “...creat[ing] opportunities for meaningful interactions for their students” with both “old” and “new” media while simultaneously accounting for “the coming together of many voices...orchestrating how those voices can support one another” (p. 259-260). This complexity is too realized within Dyson's (2008) work with elementary school aged children. Her work suggests that the transformative potential existent within, “...the interplay between official literacy practices” and

“...unofficial practices” becomes compromised when teachers feel the pressure of a “basics-driven curriculum” (p. 308)—one that focuses on conventions, spelling, periods and capital letter usage. In her study she describes the challenges teachers and students face when the unofficial talk (and drawing) around official writing experiences inhabit the same space. On one hand Dyson observes that as, “children remix their resources in a productive space” (p. 310) that remix (in this case the topic of war coming up via talk and drawing) can contribute to enabling possibilities when it comes to children's writing. However, Dyson is clear that these moments can lead teachers to become wary and dismiss what they are experiencing in the classroom to the dominant ideological view that (in the case of her study) talking and drawing about war is “part of being a boy” while simultaneously attempting (through verbal re-direction) to re-gain control of the classroom situation. Deferring to the dominant ideological view while attempting to re-gain a felt sense of control results in a positioning of the student that constrains/limits what is possible from that position.

Within urban school reform, the teaching of writing (literacy) is often coupled with instructional efficiency—one of the core beliefs associated with a neoliberal agenda that is driving educational policy. Dutro (2009) argues that such beliefs are, “...built and sustained through systems, such as capitalism, in which those with access to wealth and the power that it affords will attempt to maintain structures and institutions that ensure their continued dominance” (p. 89). In urban schools, teachers and students face daily struggles as a result of such beliefs. One such struggle involves the high stakes that come with children and teachers having to be "successful" in public terms and in other social terms. At the classroom level, these high stakes take the form of having successful writers

who can pass end of the year writing tests with teachers that add "value" onto each student. These struggles have a past—a history. This history has come about through a neoliberal agenda that is driving educational policy.

Gallagher (2011) defines neoliberalism as, "...a form of cultural politics and a set of economic principles, policies and practices devoted to handing over as much of social life as possible to private interests" (p. 453). He goes on to highlight a set of core beliefs associated with neoliberalism including privatization, efficiency and competition. This set of beliefs fuels schools dependence on standardized remotely developed literacy materials, operating from what Dutton argues are, "...assumptions about students and what they do, can, and should know" (p. 91) monitored by a "leveled" understanding of "growth" and "improvement." Children's writing in the standardized model, which is based on functionalism, as Gallagher points out, "...serves as a lever for competition; it requires technical knowledge that only private vendors can provide," "it promotes standardization and therefore (purportedly) efficiency" (p. 454) constraining children and teachers—forcing them to strive for success in the public terms and other social terms highlighted above. Gallas' (1998) thinking about gender, silence and the larger cultural school narratives curated by the neoliberal political and economic agenda points out that, this striving to succeed, for both teachers and students, is often mistakenly placed solely in the hands of the teacher. With attention diverted towards being successful teachers and students lose sight of the fact their struggle to speak and be heard in different ways actually, "...resides within the social dynamics of the classroom community" (p. 54).

Allington (1995) provides a brief historical context for how notions of efficiency made their way directly into American schools and as a result has brought about



privatization in an effort to remain competitive as our economy experienced a transformation at the turn of the century. He states that, "...as the nation shifted from an agrarian to a manufacturing economy" the need for "assembly lines for efficient mass production of consumer goods" had arisen. The "efficiency movement" simultaneously impacted the design of American schools; from the creation of "whole classrooms...filled with children of a similar age (grade levels)" to "standardized tests of achievement" that allowed for the "efficient sorting of children" (p. 3) based on their literate (in)-abilities. The seeds had been planted early on that, as American schools implemented "efficiencies" and standardized tests, the result was that there would always be a need for the position of student to be 'authorized/guided' towards being a certain kind of person within the school world; successful in public and social terms, terminally seen as failing—in perpetual need of materials to remediate their deficiencies on the path towards that success. Calkins (1998) extends this argument by showing that historically U.S. children have been constructed as, "failing...in new and dramatic ways" (p. 35). She points to multiple and "reputable" sources from the media as contributors to what could be called a fabricated literacy crisis. Calkins makes clear that while this claim is in fact false it did come from valid research about declining verbal SAT scores between the years of 1955 and 1996. She reports that while, "...researchers have since shown that the decline in SAT scores doesn't demonstrate a...crisis" (p. 36) by the time this research was made public, the current iteration of a literacy crisis had taken on a life of its own. As the myth continued to grow, so too did the perceived need for materials to combat the crisis and new standardized tests to "measure" whether the materials were in fact working and teachers and students were—succeeding. There is a body of knowledge, in the field of

literacy instruction that has gained some voice in opposition to the constraining elements of the manufactured literacy crisis—scholarship that has become more critical.

Johnston (1997) argues that the measurement of growth and improvement through standardized tests is “restrictive” and falsely indicates that the act of literacy is “nonreactive and linear” (p. 2). Allington (2002) adds that if these “...narrowly conceived schemes and scripted (recycled) materials didn't work in the 1970s” they “won't work now” (p. vii). Kelly Gallagher (2008) warns that if we fail to recognize Allington's claim and continue the uncritical implementation of these materials and tests, it sets up the conditions for what he terms “readicide,” a condition where a student's ability to read is juxtaposed with her choice not to participate in the act willingly resulting in, “the systematic killing of the love of reading” (Location 124-27). This systematic killing of the love of reading has implications for children's writing in that they are often asked to either transfer ideas they have read from one medium to another, use ideas they have read while producing/composing original content, and as new media becomes more and more a part of their daily practice, read and respond to the writing of others.

### Conclusion

Before I outline the next chapter of this study I feel that I must explain how I see my work advancing the scholarly work I've reviewed in this chapter. In order to do this, I must address the concept of chronotopes. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) define chronotopes as, “...‘logics of inquiry’...organizing trope[s]...” that; among other things, “...describe the lines of force that locate, distribute and connect...practices, effects, goals, and groups of actors” (pp. 24-25). They go on to further define chronotopes as ways of seeing the worlds, knowledge, the people that inhabit worlds, language and meaning. The

chronotopes are named and numbered primarily to trace a historical line of trajectory relevant to how viewing these worlds, knowledge, human subjects, language and meaning has evolved (within the world of qualitative inquiry) over time. The work of each scholar I have reviewed can be situated within one of these four chronotopes and by doing so—provides my readers with an understanding of where I see my own research and how it moves the conversation of children’s writing; forward.

Situated within chronotope II (Reading & Interpretation) we find the work of Graves, Bissex, Calkins, Routman, Rhodes and Dudley-Marling. These are scholars who see knowledge as socially constructed but value neutral. Their understanding of subjects (in this case students) objects (in this case writing) and language are separate but mutually constitutive—a part of each other. Seeing the world in this fashion 'authors' the student in problematic ways. Her contributions to any type of world building get complicated. Complications come when the knowledge (via language acts) she brings to that world is not valued and the perspective that the student and her writing are separate. Consequently, the conversational aspect of writing becomes next to impossible; limiting any space available for both the teacher and the student to 'author' the student into her world in ways that extend beyond her current position.

Situated within chronotope III (Skepticism, Conscientization & Praxis) we find the work of Dyson. She understands that knowledge is socially constructed and linked to power relations and that language constitutes thought and is a function of existent power relations. Seeing the world this way moves an exploration of children’s writing forward through notions of praxis, a concept that Kamberelis and Dimitriadis define as, “...what people do in relation to each other to enhance their respective lives” and by doing so

“...make the world a better place to live in for all people” (p. 40). However, being situated within this chronotope, holding on to notions from chronotope II that subjects and objects are separate but mutually constitutive makes it difficult for this scholar to see how true praxis can be realized and as a result; does not move the exploration of children’s writing or the re-imagination of the position of student forward enough.

My study is situated within chronotope IV (Power/Knowledge & Defamiliarization). My research makes the argument that we re-imagine the subject (the student) and her connection to the object (writing) by realizing that both are produced within existent relations of power. By looking at the language choices students make—choices that contribute to the formation of relational and positional identities—identities students inhabit while simultaneously contributing to the construction of the figured world of school, my study is situated to move the exploration of children’s writing and their position within the school world forward. This forward movement comes from an understanding of how existent power relations contribute to the production of the student, her writing and the ability of *all relevant participants* to 'author' her into her world; where the possibility of true praxis can be realized.

In the next chapter, I will provide a context for my study, describe who my participants were, and describe my methodology. Specifically, I will nominate case study as my primary approach for my methodology. Dyson and Genishi (2005) help answer the question “why a case study?” In short, a case study allowed me to look at local particulars and social phenomenon (which I will elaborate on in the next chapter). The use of a case study methodology enabled me to describe the teachers, students and classrooms where students compose with old and new technologies. Studying the details

of what happened when children composed in both mediums has, through a case study methodology (as I mention above) moved the exploration of children's writing and the position of these children forward. I gained insights into what is currently happening in literacy classrooms regarding the impact of existent power relations and their contributions to the production and socialization of students as writers and their writing. The methodology includes an analysis of data that is thematic, using Holland et al.'s concept of figured worlds focusing on significant language acts on the part of students using Gee's notions of I-identities, Bazerman's thinking on genre, and Warner's ideas about publics. Holland et al.'s concepts of figured worlds helped me think deeply about the complicated nature of identity formation within the school world. Gee's notions of I-identities allowed me (as mentioned earlier in the chapter) to look simultaneously at (via students language choices) how the school world is built and the positions its participants hold within these worlds. Bazerman's thinking on genre allowed me to think conceptually about the varying mediums in which the student's language choices textually took place. Warner's ideas about publics helped me understand the intertextual frameworks the student's writing was situated within as they sought to maintain membership in their default public while simultaneously endeavored to gain membership in alternate publics.

This review of literature recognizes that most of the work cited within it has been qualitative. However, it was constructed to forward an argument—that currently within the field of literacy instruction the body of knowledge focused on the impact existent power relations has on the production of both the subject and the object and the formation of relational and positional identities via the language choices that teachers and children make while using old and new technologies during literacy instruction, in elementary

school classrooms is limited. It was also constructed to illuminate the ‘messy complexity of human experience’ that is literacy instruction that has transpired over the past 30 years. By providing a rich data analysis in chapters 4 through 6 I illustrate why case study is the preferred approach, how my study maps in new ways the impact existent power relations has on the production of both the subject and the object, and how relational and positional identities that students and teachers are constructing via language acts simultaneously construct the world of school thus adding to that body of knowledge.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study into how the language choices elementary school students make contributes to the construction/negotiation of their writer identities within the figured world of school and the degree to which these constructs/negotiations are enabled and/or constrained, while composing with old and new technologies during literacy instruction, is situated within a constructivist epistemology—one that understands meaning is dependent upon engagement among characters (contributors/participants) with their world. Engagement among characters implies social relations—individuals acting, doing, speaking, being with each other within their world. These social relations contribute to the construction of individual identities—identities that a specific type of character (children) inhabit and perform within a specific sort of world—for this study, school. By inhabiting and performing these identities, children are simultaneously negotiating and contributing to both the creation of their position and their world. Accordingly, Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) state that qualitative research, “aims to demonstrate the complexity, texture, and nuance involved in how individuals and groups experience themselves and their worlds” (p. 17).

Language is the medium used to construct worlds—for this study, the world of school. Gee (2001) states that, “At any moment we are using language we must say or write the right thing in the right way while playing the right social role and (appearing) to hold the right values, beliefs, and attitudes” (p. 526). Gee calls the unique combination of

saying, doing, being, valuing and believing, Discourses—ways of being in the world. Warner “locates” the site at where these ways of being can be framed textually as publics. The Discourse of children’s writing with pen and paper and in new media makes visible what saying and writing the 'right thing' means to elementary aged school children during literacy instruction. I examined what it means to inhabit and perform the 'right social role' of student. Based on the students’ interaction, I also examine the ways in which children attempt to come to terms with cultural narratives. I will show how, the values, beliefs and attitudes that are associated with these cultural narratives enabled and/or constrained the student’s construction of who they are and their position as literacy learners negotiating and creating their school world.

I used a case study approach to gain a deeper understanding of children's writing. I looked at how the language choices of 8 children in two elementary school classrooms contributed to the construction/negotiation of their writer identities within the figured world of school. I examined and analyzed the degree to which these constructs/negotiations were enabled and/or constrained, based on what the participants within the school world imagined were/not possible from the position of student while composing with old and new technologies during literacy instruction. Dyson and Genishi (2005) offer case study as a model for researching the, “local particulars of some abstract social phenomenon” (p. 3). The 'local particulars' I inquired into involved examining children's composing with old and new technologies during literacy instruction, situated within an elementary school. These 'local particulars' are performed with teachers who co-inhabit this world with student writers. The ways in which both students and teachers interacted allowed the children to construct certain kinds of identities while composing in



a variety of mediums. The young writers also had to come to terms with cultural narratives that impacted what identities seemed possible to perform as a student in the classroom.

Using a case study methodology, I describe the teachers, students and classrooms where students compose with pen and paper and in new media. This case study is not, as Dyson and Genishi remind us, the phenomenon itself. Rather I describe the 'messy complexity of human experience'—of particular people engaged in particular kinds of practices within particular kinds of classrooms. Studying the details of what happened when children composed in both mediums through a case study methodology allowed me to move the exploration of children's writing and the position of these children, as they wrote forward. Use of a case study methodology enabled me to gain insights into what is currently happening in literacy classrooms regarding the impact of existent power relations and their contributions to the production and socialization of students as writers and their writing. I used a variety of strategies, practices and procedures to develop this case study as described below.

#### Description of Site and Participants

The study was conducted in 1 elementary school in a large metropolitan urban school district located in the southeastern section of the United States. This school serves a high needs population of students yet is situated, geographically, within a community that is socioeconomically upper middle class. As such, this school, which I will refer to as Sallie Walker Stockard Elementary School too serves a distinct upper middle income population. The school has a very active PTA which affords all of its students opportunities that are not available in other schools with less active parent organizations.

Several of the teachers at Sallie Walker Stockard Elementary School are interested in using new media during their literacy instruction and students who are equally interested in bringing their own knowledge of new media into classroom situations in an attempt to establish unique connections with the larger scale audiences that are potentially available, through the use of certain new media platforms. I chose Sallie Walker Stockard Elementary School after spending, with IRB approval, 2 weeks at a summer writing camp the school hosted. It was during these 2 weeks that I decided on both the site and the two focal teachers for this study. I selected both teachers because of their innovative use of digital technologies. Both Stephanie and Jennifer are white females teaching in predominately racially mixed school—a commonplace in this particular school district. However, the dynamics of each of their classrooms did not emulate the district norm. In Stephanie's class, two-thirds of her students were Caucasian and only one-third were minorities. In Jennifer's class, 65% of her students were Caucasian and 35% were minorities. Over the course of the actual study I spent a total of 23 school days, over a period of 3 months, observing at Sallie Walker Stockard Elementary School. That 3-month span of time began on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and ended on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

#### Description of Participants

After my pilot study, during the Fall of 2011, I had the opportunity to meet with both teachers and talk with them informally about their teaching. Stephanie, a 3rd grade teacher has taught at Sallie Walker Stockard Elementary for 8 years. Stephanie is a dynamic, child-centered teacher, constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance her classroom practice. An opportunity presented itself to her when her school became a

partnership school with a local site of the National Writing Project about 4 years ago. She was working and still continues to work with the National Writing Project.

The second teacher, Jennifer has been teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Sallie Walker Stockard Elementary for 3 years. While not as experienced as Stephanie, Jennifer was and still is a child-centered teacher who enthusiastically pursues ways in which to implement digital technologies in her classroom with her students. Like Stephanie, she too has affiliation with the National Writing Project where she serves as a teacher consultant. Jennifer shares with Stephanie a common pedagogy, one that recognizes writing as an act of participating in community, maintaining membership within that community while simultaneously seeking membership in alternate communities as the writer uses writing to learn more about his or herself and others within/outside of these communities. Both teachers shared a desire to inquire themselves as well as with me into what happened when new media was implemented during their literacy instruction and it is for this reason that I decided to invite them to join me in this inquiry.

#### Student Participant Selection

During the first 2 weeks of my field work I went to both classrooms each day over a 3 hour period. I participated fully during that 10 day period. My participation included a quick introduction of who I was and why I was going to be coming in and out of each classroom. From that initial introduction, I went right into observing both teachers working with their students during their literacy block of instruction. I had informal conversations with a variety of students in both classrooms as well as both teachers. I took notes as well as photographs of students writing. I even helped with the daily routines of each class when appropriate. Between both classrooms I had direct

conversations with a total of approximately 30 students. This initial group was very diverse both racially and socioeconomically. As I moved past the first 10 days into the second phase of observations, my attention remained on the classroom as a whole but I began to narrow my focus. My attention narrowed due to significant language acts that I noticed in the written work and conversations with children in both classes. I had decided that the base field of students was going to range from 2-8—1 to 4 students from each of the 2 teachers. In the end, after I had collected all of the data; photographs of student work, reflections of my own field notes, and transcribed conversations, I chose 8 students, 6 from Stephanie's class and 2 from Jennifer's class. Each of these 8 students was Caucasian.

#### Morgan

Morgan was a student in Stephanie's classroom. She was quiet yet easily approachable. I found her always willing to share her writing and thoughts about the work happening around her, a great ambassador of the classroom. If she wasn't at her seat writing in her composition notebook or paying close attention to Stephanie's instruction, she could be found at the computer writing on the class blog or composing a post for the Twitter Door. Morgan was chosen because of her work on the Twitter Door and the class blog.

#### Gregory

Gregory was a student in Stephanie's classroom. Like Morgan, he was a rule follower...to a point. When he knew he was being watched he could easily be characterized as a model student; he sat properly, listened attentively, had all the right answers whenever he was called upon. However, when the teacher's gaze was not

focused on him, he would distract others eliciting quick conversations or dig into his desk to play with something he most likely brought in from home. I found this behavior interesting, particularly since I was an extra adult in the room. Did he not think I was watching? Ultimately, he was chosen because of his work in his composition notebook.

#### Fred

Fred was a student in Stephanie's classroom. He was a quiet young man. He seemed to stay quietly in his seat, never venturing to more than one place during class time. He was not hard to find, just easy to miss if one were not paying close attention to him. He was very focused on his writing regardless of where he positioned himself in the classroom. He was not as easy to approach as Morgan but willing to share his thoughts when prompted. Fred was chosen for his work in his composition notebook and his interactions with Morgan on the class blog.

#### Luke

Luke was a student in Stephanie's classroom. He was outgoing, often more interested in what I was doing in the classroom than what Stephanie was doing. He sought my attention whenever he had a sense that I was looking for someone to talk to. If he was not trying to make eye contact with me during instruction or seeking me out as I walked around the room, I found him frequently staring off, lost in thought. His mannerisms intrigued me and I often found myself drawn to him, wondering what was on his mind. He always took great pride in sharing his work and ideas about writing with me, going out of his way to describe what was happening in his notebook. No detail was spared in his explanations. Luke was chosen for his work in his composition notebook as well as his interactions with Morgan on the class blog.

### Stacey

Like Morgan, Stacey could easily take on the role of class ambassador. Sitting quietly, both hands folded properly on her desk, and remembering to make eye contact with Stephanie whenever she spoke came as naturally to her as knowing exactly what to say to Stephanie or a classmate upon command. Behind this seemingly well manicured young lady hid an opinionated rebel in the making offering a critique to what was happening, not afraid to share (albeit in hushed tones) with me why she did or did not like what was being asked of her at any given moment during my conversations with her. Stacey was chosen for her interactions with Morgan on the class blog.

### Erika

Erika, like her classmate Stacey was well versed in how a student should present herself on the surface of the classroom. She knew when to speak and chose her words very carefully. Erika never sought me out willingly to share her ideas about writing but was very respectful, gracious even, whenever I asked her to talk to me about what she was doing. Erika was chosen for her work on the Twitter Door.

### Cameron

Cameron was a student in Jennifer's classroom. I witnessed him to be a thinker more than a speaker. He would comply with Jennifer and answer questions when prompted but would much rather be alone with his composition notebook, a pencil and his thoughts, a fact that Jennifer respected. Cameron could be found in one of two places during the class literacy block, either on the floor next to or under a desk or on the rug. Initially, I thought it would be difficult to approach him and at times I felt myself resisting the urge to interrupt his thinking. However, I found out quickly that a gentle,

polite “Excuse me Cameron, can I talk to you for a moment” was all that was needed. He was more than willing to “let me in” to his thinking. Cameron was chosen for his work in his composition notebook.

### Sophia

Sophia, a classmate of Cameron's was very quiet. Like Stephanie's student Fred, she worked hard at being present without presence. When Jennifer released the students from the rug in the afternoons to write, Sophia hurriedly, yet without a trace, made her way from the rug to her desired space to write located in between two desks. Once settled into that space, she went about the task of writing in a way that exuded purpose and meaning, something that others would benefit from greatly if presented the opportunity to share. Whenever I approached her, I did so in a way that made sure her presence was not intruded upon. She spoke with me willingly and openly. Sophia was chosen for her work in her composition notebook.

### Data Collection Methods

The overarching question for this study was:

How do the language choices elementary school students make contribute to the construction/negotiation of their writer identities and the figured world of school while composing with old and new technologies during literacy instruction?

In the first phase of my data collection, I was interested in inquiring into the overarching question via the following sub-questions:

Question 1: How do students describe who listens to and reads what they compose on pen and paper and in new media? How do they describe their purposes in both mediums?

Question 2: What happens when teachers and students interact over students writing with pen and paper and with new media?

In order to answer each sub-question, I spoke with a variety of students. I audiotaped and transcribed these interactions. These interactions usually started with a question like, “Can you talk to me a little bit about what you are doing right now?” For a list of protocol questions I asked, (See Appendix A). My field notes were set up in a double-entry format where (on the left side of the page) I documented the “replay” of what was happening in the classroom and (on the right side of the page) I speculated, questioned, and commented on that “replay.” Here is a brief example (taken from a typical day I worked, in the field, during the study) of what my notes looked like...

The “replay...”

Cameron logged into Kidblog to comment on someone’s post

Speculations/Questions/Comments

I wonder why he decided to respond to Erika. I should ask him.

Data Collected

Over the three-month course of the study I collected audiotapes of conversations with students and the two teachers during the classes I observed. I took photographs of student written work as I talked to students about it both from their composition notebooks as well as their work on the computer. I collected teacher handouts that were given to the students. I also took field notes as I observed the class as described above.

Data Analysis Methods

As I collected my data, I reflected on what I was seeing. If there appeared to be a significant encounter with a student, I transcribed the audiotape. I thematized and



categorized the transcriptions according to what they were saying about themselves as writers as well as the different kinds of writing that took place. After the focal students were selected, I pulled out their work as well as the conversations with me and analyzed them using Critical Discourse Analysis described below.

#### Micro-Analysis

For the analysis of student work and the conversations, I used James Paul Gee's critical discourse analysis. Gee (2010) states that, "Whenever we speak or write, we always (often simultaneously) construct or build seven things or seven areas of 'reality'" (p. 17). He calls these areas of reality building tasks. These tasks include significance, practices, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge. When considering significance, a discourse analyst thinks about how language is used to make things important or not and in what ways. Gee's thoughts about practice include an envisioning of the social, institutional and/or, "...culturally supported endeavor[s] that usually involve sequencing or combining actions in certain specified ways" (p. 17). When considering notions of identity, relevant to CDA, Gee is focuses on how people use language to get noticed as taking on a particular identity or role that is being enacted. Gee's understanding of relationships is meant for the analyst to think about how language signifies the type of relationships, "...we have, want to have, or are trying to have with our listener(s), reader(s) or other people" (p.18). The building task known as Politics focuses on how language is projecting a perspective on social goods—specifically what is taken to be normal, right, good, correct proper, appropriate and; relevant to this study, the way thing ought to be. The connections building task is concerned with how language both connects and disconnects things, distinguishing in the process what is/not relevant.

Finally, the building task “sign and knowledge systems” seeks to better understand how a piece of language privileges or dis-privileges certain sign systems like, “..technical language vs. everyday language” (p. 20).

In order to illustrate Gee's CDA system below is some language taken from my study. Morgan's conversation with me about composing in new media caught my attention for several reasons. I was interested in hearing from her about how she was working on the class blog. Below is an excerpt from my conversation with Morgan where she talks about the work she is doing on the blog and the comments she is receiving as a result of her efforts. I chose this piece of the interview because of how she constructs her world, from her position as a student writing and reading comments on the class blog. In this interview, I was trying to understand the connection between her writing and the comments she was receiving. I was also attempting to establish a rapport with Morgan having only worked with her briefly at this point. The following is a portion of the transcript.

T: “I was wondering if you could take a moment and think about the chapter that you posted and the comments that you got afterwards and talk to me about how you see both of them as the same?”

M: “So...ok so my chapter is similar to the comments because one when I asked them for a summary that summary is about the chapter so of course they'd be similar. But then also I added this place called Baconland and Stacey commented about it. And then she started talking little bit about that and said it was my famous...my famous restaurant.”

Gee argues that before beginning critical discourse analysis, one should break the language down into lines. Breaking the transcription down in this way isolates the language in more detail. The lines are then grouped into stanzas, which are then named based on the main themes present. This process (re)-presents the language in a poetic fashion yet its purpose is to assist in the analysis. What follows is the transcript, broken down into stanzas for analysis.

Stanza I: I asked for it, I got it

Interviewer: I was wondering if you could take a moment and think about the chapter that you posted and the comments that you got afterwards and talk to me about how you see both of them as the same?

M: 1 So...ok so my chapter is similar to the comments

2-because one when I asked them for a summary that summary is about the chapter

3-so of course they'd be similar.

4 But then also I added this place called Baconland

5-and Stacey commented about it.

6-And then she started talking little bit about that and said

7-it was my famous...my famous restaurant.

The building tasks that are most significant in this chunk of language are relationships, connections, and social goods. Morgan says that she asks for a summary and her readers say more or less the same thing, except for Stacey who notices the place that she has added. So when Stacey, as Morgan's reader mentions the place Morgan's language shifts. The summaries of her story were very similar to her story, and in this portion of the transcript the readers are not differentiated. But Morgan notices that Stacey

“comments” and “starts talking little bit,” becoming a different kind of reader of Morgan’s work. In this language, Morgan recognizes a different kind of relationship being built between she and Stacey; one where writer and reader can engage textually in a conversation that includes more than what is expected of either of them. She makes a connection between what she did, “I added this place called Baconland” and what Stacey, her classmate did, “...commented about it.” The connection highlights the dialogic relationship Morgan imagines for her desired reader, placing relevance on what has transpired, the circulation and acknowledgement of information between writer and reader. The connection also communicates, on Morgan's part a perspective regarding the social good of getting feedback from those who read her writing. Morgan values a reader (like Stacey) who responds to her writing by noticing what she added rather than merely summarizing, even though summary is what she asks for.

Performing critical discourse analysis on data contributed to the development of certain themes that were derived from my 2 sub-questions. These themes centered around the writer’s identity being constructed in school across mediums. One such theme is that writers are makers of things. This theme can be seen in Morgan's language, specifically, “I added this place called Baconland.” Another theme that stands out is that writers understand their work can be seen by others via publishing. This theme is apparent in Morgan's words, “...and Stacey commented about it.” Another theme, explored in great detail in chapters 4-6, and here in Morgan's language, “I asked them for a summary that summary is about the chapter so of course they'd be similar” is writers learn how to tell the right story. Telling the right story here includes summarizing what one reads as much as asking for a summary of what one writes. In their figured world, this is an important

literate activity that children are called upon to do daily, part of the routine of schooling. Asking for and providing “the right story” are what gets children recognized and accepted as successful writers as they learn how to literally say back what they have read.

#### Thematic Analysis

I derived my themes as a result of performing critical discourse analysis on the focal students’ language, from their written work and conversations about that work. Performing critical discourse analysis while keeping my 2 sub-questions in mind led me to the following overarching themes: identity, genre, and audience. As these themes emerged, I categorized them within the mediums that the students wrote in—the composition notebook, the Twitter Door, Twitter and the class blog.

Holland et al. (1998) give literacy researchers a theoretical orientation into the first theme listed above, the complicated ways people perform identities. Drawing on the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, Holland et al. argue that identities are formed within and against various cultural narratives or “figured worlds.” One such cultural narrative, explored later in this study, impresses upon young children that if they seek out the advice of older, wiser adults that these adults will help solve their problems, if the children listen to them and act on the advice. Figured worlds are spaces where characters (contributors/participants) act, importance/relevance is placed on these acts and value judgments are given to the outcomes produced from these acts. Figured worlds are produced and reproduced, formed and reformed not by any one particular act, event, everyday occurrence or expectation related to the former but via an abstraction, “an extraction carried out under guidance” (p. 53). The abstraction is formed by elements of significant acts, events, everyday occurrences and expectations—a collage of practices

carried out under the guidance of those with a nuanced understanding of the ways of being within that realm. Those participants with nuanced understandings “guide” explicitly and implicitly the activities of others and can be identified based on the manner in which they themselves act within a given figured world.

Figured worlds are therefore spaces constructed through social interaction and negotiated through the activities of the participants. School is a figured world. Its actors include teachers and students among others. Within school there are teachers and students that have more experience acting than others--these actors guide the activities of others so they, over time come to understand what it means “to be” (act) in school. The figured world of school is (re)-produced and (re)-formed not by any one act in isolation but through the social interaction of all of the actors in real time under the guidance of those with nuanced understandings of that particular world. The manner in which these participants are guided is consistent with another concept of identity that helped me with my analysis, what Gee refers to as I-identities.

Holland et al. gave me a lens with which to see the world that the students in this study inhabit. Gee's work with I-identities sharpened the lens, providing me with a way to see and understand the positions that are capable of being held within these worlds. For example, one way of looking at the young writers in this study participating within a variety of mediums is that they are students in an elementary school classroom. That position is determined by what Gee calls, “a set of authorities,” or what Holland et al. would refer to as guides—teachers, administrators, parents, and at times, the students themselves. Gee would insist that the source of the authorities’ power comes directly from the school they inhabit. He would go on to name the process through which the

power/authority works as “authorization,” a process that Holland et al. name guidance. This authorization or guidance comes in different forms; “rules, traditions, and principles” that both Gee and Holland et al. would argue allow “the authorities” to 'author' or 'guide' the position of student. Gee's work relates to my study because in order to describe what happens when teachers and students interact over students writing, I have to have a way of understanding not only the positions being held by all of the 'authorities' but the source(s) of their “authorization.” Gee's work gives me a way of seeing that, given their position, it is a student's responsibility to act and or be seen in certain ways as they participate within different mediums.

Bazerman (1997) gave me a way of seeing the student's work within, genres. These genres add another dimension to consider when thinking about how student writers see themselves and how that perception stems from what they imagine is/not possible from the position they hold within the classroom. Bazerman defines genres as, “forms of life, ways of being...frames of social action...environments for learning...locations” where “...meaning is constructed” (p. 2). Within the written work and language of these young writers that I feature throughout the analysis chapters I describe how these genres or “frames of social action” can be thought of as “locations” through which the students in Stephanie and Jennifer's classes act. Bazerman's work connects with Holland et al. and Gee in that these “locations” represent an “environment for learning” within the school world where, from the position of student, the young writers in both classrooms communicate and “construct meaning.”

By using the mediums at their disposal, the students featured in this study sought textually the third theme that emerged during my study—an audience. Warner's (2002)

construct of publics helps me better understand who the students thought read and or listened to their writing. The notion of publics also connects nicely to Holland et al.'s figured worlds, Gee's I-identities, and Bazerman's notions of genre. Within the school world, from the position of student working within a variety of genres, the students in both classes attempted to maintain (immediate) membership within their school public and (over time) endeavored to cultivate membership in alternate publics, spaces similar in construct to that of figured worlds or genres; spaces that Warner states are inclusive of, "...frameworks for understanding text against an organized background of the circulation of other texts..." (p. 16).

In the following 3 chapters, I trace the slightly nuanced work and words of the students in both Stephanie and Jennifer's classrooms. Their work, their words tell a story about authority, guidance and the positions held within the school in ways that enable varying kinds of memberships within school publics and those that coexist alongside them.



## CHAPTER 4: COMPOSITION NOTEBOOKS

One medium the students in Stephanie and Jennifer's classroom wrote within was the marbled black-and-white covered composition notebook. The students used these notebooks for a variety of reasons during their literacy instruction and in other content areas. The composition notebook was integral to what went on daily in the classroom. In each of the two classrooms I did my research, over 95% of the activity I witnessed taking place in these notebooks was teacher directed. The activities the students engaged in can best be classified as a rehearsal, practice for what would be asked of them when their writing was deemed good enough to come out of the notebook. These rehearsals took place everywhere, on the floor writing their favorite words or phrases during story time, sitting near the front door jotting down whatever was grabbing their attention, waiting to post ideas within other mediums, or outside in the courtyard writing about the weather. It is important to point out that the composition notebook affords many other possibilities as a tool for writing. Notebooks such as this can be a space for student generated writing. However, that is not what I witnessed nor is what I witnessed an indictment on the teachers who opened their classrooms up to me. Both Stephanie and Jennifer's interpretation of what the notebook should be used for in their respective classrooms is as pragmatic a move as say another teacher's choice to use 3-ring binders and loose-leaf paper or 5-subject notebooks. For Stephanie and Jennifer it was practical for their students to perform their rehearsals in the composition notebook before moving their

writing into other, public spaces. These notebooks were durable, strong enough to withstand a lot of activity from 9 and 10 year olds as well as elegant whereas the 3-ringbinders and 5-subject notebooks are big, bulky and more apt to have pages either fall out or easily to torn out. Understanding the teacher's rationale for choosing the composition notebook and how it would be used during instruction one comes to realize that not having the notebook at the ready in either of these classes was the equivalent of not having the latest, flagship mobile device—it just was not cool.

Is it the Medium?

My curiosity with regards to the composition notebook's impact on student writing comes from an interest in how the students see themselves as writers while composing within this medium, the ways in which they describe who listens to and reads what they are composing, and what transpires when teachers and students interact over student writing with this traditional pen and paper technology. Because writing with pen and paper technologies is so pervasive in schools, I decided to begin my analysis with a deep examination of this medium and the interview data that I collected in order to acquire a cogent understanding of the research questions that brought me to this work.

The Writer Identity, Duty First!

Several aspects of student identity were made transparent through an analysis of what was happening in student composition notebooks and the ways in which they talk about their writing. An overarching identity, one that had to be in place in order to be recognized as a writer in both classrooms was that of dutiful student. A dutiful student, and by default, a writer in both Stephanie and Jennifer's classrooms is one who behaves, sits in her seat and, among other things follows directions. Gregory's writing and thoughts

about his experiences as a writer illustrate clearly what it means to be a dutiful student. Gregory was instructed to use his notebook to compose poetry while implementing a note-taking technique he had learned from his teacher to generate sensory details during an experiential event involving apples during the class literacy block (See *Appendix B*). I asked Gregory to talk to me about how he used his chart to help him create his picture poem. He responded that, “Well...we had to feel the apple, we had to hear it, we had to taste it...luckily. We had to smell it and see it. First we had to see what the apple looked like. And so we had this chart and we had to create it...so if we need to add detail...you can just like put that in...look at your chart...see which one I like the best or look...like a couple of words I like best and put them onto your apple.” Gregory's language signifies the complexities young writers have to negotiate during the act of composing as they attempt to figure out the difference between writing for their teacher and more public audiences. The phrase “we had to” is prominent in his words, granting the act of compliant participation (dutifulness) a social good; revealing an understanding that he was expected to “feel, hear, taste, smell” and “see” the apple as well as create the chart, and that this writing was for his teacher. Use of the phrase “we had to” simultaneously implies that “we did” and so can be seen, on Gregory's part an attempt to establish a dutiful relationship between himself and the teacher. Teacher expectation, the driving force behind almost all of the activity I witnessed taking place in the student notebooks compels the act of writing here not the medium. Gregory's language signals that he is someone that can be depended upon—to behave, sit in his seat, follow directions, and be a dutiful writer. Just as the expectation that pen and paper technologies on the part of some teachers be used to complete teacher generated activities is a pervasive mindset

within the school world so too is the performance of the dutiful identity on the part of students. If the examination stopped here, a deep and cogent interpretation of the research questions this body of work seeks to inquire in to would not be as complex as endeavoring to better understand how Gregory's work and talk about his efforts help us to see the way teacher expectations and dutifulness weigh on a young writer's identity and felt sense of agency. Holland et al. (1998), thinking about both identity and agency observe that, "Identities are a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them" and that while "Human agency may be frail, especially among those with little power, it happens daily and mundanely, and...deserves...attention" (p.5). I asked Gregory to talk to me about how he thought the chart helped him create his poem? He responded that it, "...makes my poem appropriate." I also asked him about what he planned to write next, after he finished the apple poem? He replied, "I was thinking about sports because I like sports...or a book because I like reading." Gregory's language, specifically "we had to," "we did," and "...makes my poem appropriate" shows that he cares "about and for what is going on around" him. It situates him as "frail" with "little" yet still a trace of power. He uses that trace of power to exercise agency towards his own purposes when he forecasts, "I was thinking about sports...or books." This forecast shows that Gregory is capable of taking what was expected of him by his teacher and apply it to future writing experiences that he himself is interested in initiating. The work and words of students like Gregory illuminate complicated aspects of the writerly identity. From this illumination we are able to better understand what is possible given the constraints faced by these students daily.

### Complexities within Teacher Prescribed and Student Nominated Formats

Language collected from an interview with Cameron, a student in Jennifer's class provides an example of what this looks like when young writers attempt to create in their composition notebooks. I observed him one day experimenting with design poetry. One convention (or feature) of design poetry, accepted by both writers and readers includes drawing designs of varying sizes and fitting language into those designs (See *Appendix C*). While teachers like Stephanie and Jennifer present these formats with the best of intentions we must remember that they are pushed to present them. The push comes from an objectivist mindset that pervades elementary schools. Guided by standardized testing and legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act this objectivist mindset complicates what is possible between teachers and students. These complications cause the teacher to manipulate the utilization of the notebook as a space for students to produce formulaic writing. This manipulation in turn limits the student's ability to think critically and reflect “in the moment” while composing within that space. The following sequence of interview data with Cameron, Gregory, and Luke provides insight into how these complications impact students differently.

I asked Cameron the following question, “What made you decide to write these? Can you talk to me about why you have them looking the way they are?” Cameron began talking to me as if we had already been engaged in a conversation. He explained that, “This one you can't really read because it's small...it's about books.” Cameron' language places significance on design, the visual image of a tiny book he created for his poem. He recognizes a limitation of the format he and his classmates are being asked to write within when he states that “...it's too small.” This realization coupled with his willingness

to share his poem builds a writerly identity that situates him, more than just a trace of power while exercising his agency. Cameron' language implies mindfulness in the sense that he understands while writers ought to follow certain expectations within formats it is also important to be critically reflective—recognizing the limitations a writer's work may encounter while attempting to imitate what is expected. He understood that he had to do what was expected of him while composing within the design poetry format. He knows this is important because his teacher has decided that “this is what writing must look like” within the pages of the notebook. While this performance conjures an image of Cameron merely just following directions his composing can also be seen as a staging moment—one where attempting to imitate follow “now” can result creative moments “later.” Cameron nominated the format not his teacher. Initially he felt that the design poem was the format through which he could best communicate his thinking so he created ideas about books within the design poem. As Cameron created his design poem he was simultaneously created; seen by his teacher as a student capable of following directions. What is more interesting though is what gets created next. The limitations of the format, as evidenced through Cameron' performance of the aforementioned expectations creates a young writer who reflects critically; communicating these limitations in a sensible manner, based on his thinking that the poem was not readable. Cameron, through this reflective moment during the interview is now capable of exercising agency in future writing if and when he chooses to nominate the form of poetry again regardless of the medium he writes within.

Gregory, a student in Stephanie's class was following procedural directions when he used the chart to compose his shape poem. These directions were being followed

because of Gregory's interpretation of his teacher's expectations echoed in his language from my interview with him, “we had to feel the apple, we had to hear it, we had to taste it...we had to smell it...we had this chart and we had to create it...so if we need to add detail...you can just like put that in...and...good things will happen.” The “we had to” mindset that Gregory's language projects contributes to both the creation of a student writer whose main concern is following the directions presented to him without question, without reflection and the perpetuation of school writing, regardless of the medium to be defined by the compliant actions of its subjects.

Luke, another student in Stephanie's class was using his notebook to collect and write information about the importance of his own physical activity, during science instruction. As I approached him to find out more about what was going on, I asked, “What are you doing in your daybook this afternoon?” He responded, “I'm doing a physical activity pyramid. I made...first I made a list of all the physical activities I usually do on a daily basis.” A physical activity pyramid is a graphic image whose purpose is to help people better understand the types of physical activity they should (not) engage in daily/weekly by encouraging the person to place their activities within predetermined tiers on the pyramid. Lists are a type of format meant to keep track and/or prioritize information. Symbols such as check marks are commonly used on lists to signify that an idea on the list has been thought about in some fashion. Luke's use of the phrase “first I made a list” helps create a writer(ly identity) that positions him closer to writers like Cameron. Luke's language implies an understanding that in order to do the work of a writer, you must (like Cameron) be mindful and, expanding what it means to think

critically, nominate formats through which your work can get done. Stopping the examination here would be premature.

I also noticed in his notebook entry (See *Appendix D*) that he used a check mark next to some of the items on his list. Curious, I asked him to talk to me about that. He replied that, “There's only check marks next to each on the ones I've already put on my actual pyramid.” A look back at his notebook verifies this, there are 5 items listed—“playing video games, wii sports, nature digging, swinging, and shooting hoops” each with a check mark next to them and, each item checked off, can be found “on” the pyramid. Luke grants the check mark (a a symbol used within the format he nominates) a social good (being functional). He qualifies their functionality using words and phrases like “only, next to, on the,” and “put on my actual pyramid.” The language also builds a writerly identity situating him as understanding, like Cameron that thinking critically while following directions regardless of the medium enables one's writing to be continuous; for Luke using the check marks to keep track of what he has placed on the pyramid, moving from one item to the next.

#### Writers Understand the Interplay between Meaning and Form

The writing and language used to describe the work of both Cameron and Gregory helps build an identity that situates writers as understanding the interplay between meaning and form. Cameron' language from the actual poem designed like a book begins to show how this particular writerly identity is built (See *Appendix C*).

Books

books teach you

all sorts of things



Almost everything

They teach you all about animals, food and other cool stuff

Cameron conveys through the language of his poem a specific perspective about books, one he would not have been able to communicate without an understanding of the interplay between *meaning* and *form*, revealing the value of books as a tool for learning. He accomplishes this by using a fairly formal register throughout, as witnessed through phrases like, “teach you,” “about animals,” and “food.” The power of the poem comes from his use of the word “cool” to describe the other “stuff” that books can “teach you.” “Cool” implies a shift in register moving from the implied, formal reader (his teacher) imagined at the beginning of the poem to a more informal, anticipated peer reader (his classmates, friends, family, etc.).

Gregory's understanding of the interplay between meaning and form is more localized than Cameron's and makes for both an interesting comparison and insight. Gregory is solely concerned with one person—his teacher. His language confirms this statement. A look back at his answer to my question of how he used the chart (form) to create his poem (meaning) yields the following “...And so we had this chart and we had to create it...so if we need to add detail...you can just like put that in...look at your chart...see which one I like the best or look...like a couple of words I like best and put them onto your apple.” His use of the word “I,” while explaining how he uses the chart shows that he understands that the interplay of meaning and form serve as a different means to an end; that Gregory is more likely to be seen as a capable writer, in his teacher's eyes, if he follows directions, using the chart to create his picture poem. With Cameron the reader can interpret his decisions (the use of the word cool for example) as

evidence that he understands the interplay of meaning and form is intended to project one's thinking outward to a more general public, namely his peers. While the impact of audience will be addressed separately later in this chapter, its intersection with writerly identities cannot be ignored here. The words of both Gregory and Cameron make transparent the fact that a writer's understanding of meaning and form is not influenced so much by the medium as it is by whom the writer think will listen to or read what it is s/he is composing.

#### Writers are Makers of Things

The students in Stephanie and Jennifer's classrooms were not content with merely following directions while negotiating the interplay between meaning and form. The work in their composition notebooks coupled with their talk about that work situates them as makers of things. I mentioned earlier that this making comes as a result of these writer's decisions to nominate forms along with an understanding of whom they think listens to and reads what they are composing regardless of the medium. Cameron's writing and talk about that writing provides one example to examine both how and why writers make. In his notebook, along with design Cameron experimented with font size. When I asked him to describe to me what was on the page he responded, "...this one's like big things, small things, wide things and then short things. And then tall things and then small things" (See *Appendix C*). I also asked Cameron what made him decide to write these poems differently—using shape poetry. He replied, "Well...in some of the poems we've been reading together as a class...we been using words like...up and down. They've been going up and down. And so I sort of was inspired by that. And so I made big...big and small...small and wide...wide. And then the short really close together. And tall is tall

and small is small.” Cameron points out the words he and his classmates have been reading as being unique features present within the format of shape poetry. He understands these features to be accepted by others when he points out that, “They've been going up and down.” His use of the phrase “And so,” signals a modest shift in thinking about writing, from what is accepted to what could be [accepted in the future]. Nominating the essence of what is accepted within the format, he goes on to state that, “I made big...big and small...small and wide...wide.” Cameron's language specifically, “I made” builds a writerly identity that recognizes nominating the essence of one or more accepted features within a format to be a part of what it means to “make.” Cameron's words construct his “if they can do it so can I” maker identity not because of the medium but is the result of what he imagines is possible within the notebook due to what is accepted by others within the shape poetry he and his classmates are reading.

#### Remaking Scenes from the Classroom

Sophia was a 4<sup>th</sup> grader in Jennifer's class. What drew me originally to Sophia was her level of engagement during writing time, following instruction. She would grab her notebook and move to a spot in the room where she could concentrate on her writing with a level of intensity not witnessed in many students. Her work and thinking about that writing provide an opportunity to better understand how students see themselves as writers while composing and how writers think about who listens to or reads their writing that is not present within the work and words of Gregory, Luke and Cameron. Her work and words bring to light how genres contribute to the creation of writers and how (un)-following conventions within antecedent genres, prescribed or self-nominated impact the adaptations a writer makes while coming to terms with her purposes for writing. Like

most of the children I spoke with, I approached Sophia, not wanting to disrupt the flow of her process yet extremely curious as to what she was doing.

Blurred lines: When (Un)-following Genre Conventions leads to (Re)-  
claiming Genre through Making through Motive

Before I explore the ways in which Sophia (un)-followed *genre conventions* both terms (*genre and conventions*) must be defined. Carolyn Miller, reporting via Bawarshi (2003) suggests that genres are, “typified rhetorical ways of acting in recurring situations” (p. 7) and that these genres take place, “..within what Bakhtin calls larger 'spheres of culture,’” (p. 11). Sophia's writing within her notebook (acting), during her daily literacy block of instruction (recurring situations), while in school; a 'sphere of culture' places her at the center of Miller's definition in that, like her male counterparts she invents within and is simultaneously invented by genres. If we are to accept the notions of genre mentioned above then it can be argued that a genre's conventions or accepted ways of acting within the genre that put it into a specific classification are the *scripts* within genres that guide the 'rhetorical ways of acting' performed by the writer. For instance making sure that in realistic fiction the story takes place in modern times and that the characters are involved in events that could really happen becomes a *script* of sorts, allowing others to determine that a piece of writing is following the genre's conventions. Adherence to these same conventions would seem to help a reader, “...locates a writer's motives to act...” (p. 11) within certain genres whether they be traditional or hybridized.

On this particular afternoon I asked Sophia, “Can you tell me the title of the piece?” She replied, “Cinnamon the Horse.” Stating that her story was about a horse

implies that Sophia, like “the boys” before her, understands that writers in elementary school classrooms follow genre conventions. For Sophia, the conventions followed come from an antecedent genre, animal fiction. I did not witness at any time during my research Sophia's teacher Jennifer encouraging her to read animal fiction. She does however hint at her experiences with this genre when I ask, “What made you decide to work on this story at this time?” She responded, “Um...because I think it's really creative and it's kind of a little different than what I read. I read more fiction than...this is sort of realistic fiction.” “I read more fiction” implies that Sophia may be mining her own readerly experiences with fiction to work on her own story. Her answer to the second question begins to set her work and thinking about that work apart from “the boys.” Sophia's language “...it's really creative” and “it's kind of a little different” begins to build a writerly identity that writers are makers of things—compared to the writing she has read.

Because Sophia claimed that her writing was “sort of realistic fiction,” I wanted to better understand why she felt that her writing followed the conventions of this genre so I asked, “Talk to me about how this piece is realistic fiction.” She responded, “It's kind of about a horse and she's having friend problems. Um...her best friend is getting stealed away. And so she goes to a goat for help and she ends up having a relationship with her friend.” Sophia's language “It's kind of about a horse” and “...she goes to a goat for help” adds to the writerly identity her words started to construct when I asked her about the title of her piece; that being her writing follows the conventions of an antecedent genre, animal fiction while simultaneously (un)-following (not conforming to) the conventions of realistic fiction. Wanting to understand more I asked, “Why do you think you're

writing this story? What's the purpose of it?" I realize that these questions point to another aspect of the writerly identity, one I will explore in further detail in the next section—that being that writers have motives. Each question however serves to illuminate an intersection that warrants attention. When Sophia replies that, “Because two years ago...this happened to me” her language makes the intersection transparent; that motive can influence a writer's decision to (un)-follow (or not conform to) traditional genre conventions. Her reply too enables us to see, like Bawarshi that, “...genres reveal and help us map part of what LeFevre calls the 'ecology of invention'...allowing us to locate a writer's motives to act...” (p. 11). So because of what happened to Sophia we come to understand the 'ecology of invention' that being her decision to write. Also, with this intersection comes an understanding of how Sophia came to define her work to be (real)-istic fiction—it was based on a lived experience. Sophia's definition also brings to light another intersection with an aspect of the writerly identity further revealing their interconnectedness as witnessed in the work and language of these young writers.

#### Motives and Making

Each of the students highlighted in this chapter understands differently that writers have motives or purposes for writing and that these motives influence their decisions as they *make*. For the three boys, more so than not, based on the work I have presented here, *making* means to be dutiful, following directions and procedures with fleeting moments of power and agency. Cameron shows the teacher that he is dutiful by using the mentor text “Up and Down” that the teacher gave him to construct his own “Big” and “Small”. Gregory uses the procedures that the teacher gave him, the chart, and followed the directions to create the apple poem. He did also forecast future writing for

his own purposes. Luke's motive, though, is to have his writing circulate beyond the teacher to his classmates. Wanting his writing to be seen by a wider audience becomes to driving force for Luke during this experience. I became aware of this when I asked, "Who do you think is going to be interested in finding out all of this stuff about you?" He responded, "My best friend Rory and my family." Luke's use of the singular 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun "my" is significant. It indicates his belief that he possesses an audience interested in his writing and as a result motive with regards to getting his writing out of the composition notebook. I pressed him, asking if he would actually seek out his friend and family to share the information. He replied, "Well...if it goes up on the bulletin board I might. Because otherwise it will go in my portfolio and I wouldn't be able to share it with them for a while." To sum up, Luke's language implies an understanding on his part that in order for his work to come out of his composition notebook and be placed in other (localized) spaces for others to see he has to *make*: follow directions and procedures.

For Sophia, *making* is something quite different: it means using her imagination and creativity. This conceptualization of *making* situates Sophia's work as being more purposeful when compared to "the boys." She is not content with keeping her story in her composition notebook or getting it posted onto the class bulletin board any more than she is interested in showing her teacher that she is a capable writer. The previous statement is in no way meant to downplay the significance of the motives witnessed in the work and words of "the boys" anymore than it is an attempt to deny intentionality on their part. Wanting to be seen as a good student capable of doing what is asked of you so your work can be shared with your peers is a very important part of a student's daily existence in the classroom. Sophia's motives come from a different place, from something that happened

to her personally. Viewing her work as a way to sort out what happened, Sophia *makes* as her language works to re-claim realistic-fiction, exploring lived experiences through creating a fictional story. Defining her work as (real)-istic fiction reveals a desire on the part of Sophia to share that experience with a more general audience—one she believes will benefit from reading her writing. In the next section, I explore how yet another aspect of the writerly identity intertwines with an understanding that writers have motives or purposes for writing. This aspect, when rooted in “the boys” understanding of what it means to *make* yields a story much different than when this particular aspect comes from another place, like the desire to use one's imagination and creativity.

#### Writers Understand the Importance of Telling the “Right Story”

A dutiful student understands the importance of telling the “right story.” What happens when motive intersects a writer's understanding of the importance of telling this story? When the motive is rooted in dutifulness, as it was with Cameron, Gregory, and Luke the result is each boy feeling compelled to show (*and tell*) their teacher that they “could do it,” for Cameron; make words in different sizes, for Gregory; use a chart to write a poem, and for Luke; create a physical activity pyramid worthy of being posted on a bulletin board. Yes, each boy created (*made*) his own version of the “right story” but that is all that happened. Cameron did nominate the design poetry format himself but could only imagine making “big...big.” Gregory, while forecasting future writing for his own purposes did so only because his teacher nominated the chart and shape poetry to complete an assignment she had generated first. Luke, while wanting his writing to be seen by others knows that it does not stand a chance if he does not follow directions. When the motive to write comes from another place, the desire to re-articulate one's lived



experiences, as it did with Sophia the result is a story that pushes the boundaries of what it means to be “right.”

#### The “Right story” at the “Right Time” via Publishing

Knowing the importance of telling *the* “right story” entails another aspect of the writerly identity—an understanding that one's work can be seen by others via publishing. Sophia's language shows an appreciation for how both aspects can work with one another in her response to me asking how she was using her notebook. She replied, “I wrote um...this piece I wrote a few months ago and I wrote it and was planning on publishing it...but then I decided to do another piece so I never got to publish it and so I wanted to publish this so I decided to do it at this time.” Sophia's use of the pronoun “I” coupled with the verbs “wrote” and “decided” builds an identity that situates her as having agency with regards to her actions with “this piece” at this time. As these actions transpire, Sophia's language connects intentions “...was planning on publishing it” and new interests “...I decided to do another piece” with missed opportunities “I never got to publish it.” Her use of the phrase “and so,” grants being reflective a social good, one she perceives as being the way things ought to be when using one's composition notebook. Reflecting on the missed opportunity, Sophia's language makes one last connection; because she “...wanted to publish it,” she “decided” to come back and “do it at this (right) time.”

#### Telling the Story “Right”

After talking to Sophia about her writing and seeing why she had decided to come back to this piece at this time, I wanted to look at Sophia's actual notebook entry to see what it revealed. As stated previously, Sophia's story is about a horse, Cinnamon, who is

having friendship problems. Her language points to an understanding that in order for *this* story to be told “right,” there needs to be some kind of problem. The problem arises, for the reader, on page 2, during a race, when, in an attempt, from line 6, “...to get Cinnamon fired up again” her trainer, Bella, whispers to Cinnamon that, “She (Charlotte; a competitor in the race) might be stealing her (Twinkie; friend to Cinnamon)” and that, “You might not be friends anymore” (See *Appendix E*). Sophia uses language, specifically the word “might” in her notebook to connect a potential relational treat “She might be stealing her” to a potential loss “You might not be friends anymore.” This information does fire Cinnamon up and she pulls ahead of Charlotte, winning the race. Afterwards, Cinnamon sees her friend Twinkie talking to Charlotte. It is at this point in the story, that Sophia begins to reveal her perceptions of friendship along with an understanding that once a problem is presented in a story the “right” way for that story to move forward is for that problem to be resolved by seeking out advice from others as Cinnamon, fearful that she is in fact going to lose her friend, accompanied by two other friends, runs up a hill, to seek advice from an older goat.

Sophia describes the goat, on page 3, line 12, as “mysterious.” Her use of the word is significant in that it builds an identity for adults, represented in Sophia's story through the goat; situating them as being enigmatic when sought out for advice. That said, she also reveals, prior to her description of the goat, on lines 1-3, through her character Bella, the trainer, that, “...the goat...could grant your wishes” (See *Appendix F*). Sophia's language continues to build an identity for adults situating them, through her use of the word “could,” as potentially capable of granting younger children that which they seek while simultaneously building an identity for the young that situates them as

incapable of getting what they want without having to seek help from others that are older than they are. Constructing these identities, Sophia's language in turn builds the “right” storyline through a relationship between her main character and the goat, one that communicates the value in seeking the advice adults have to offer the young even if they are “mysterious.” The actions of her main character confirm the previous statement. Through her writing, Sophia has Cinnamon consult the goat, in lines 16-18, “So there's this girl named Charlotte. She's kinda stealing my friend. Please help.” Within these 2 sentences Sophia's writing connects the character “Charlotte” with a relational threat “...stealing my friend” to what the goat potentially has to offer when the main character requests “Please help.” “Please help” has the same effect as the word “could” communicating the value of a social good, advice from adults while building a dependent relationship between young children and adults grounded in identities that situate the young as incapable of solving their own problems and adults being capable through the advice they give. Further evidence of this claim comes as the goat replies, in lines 20-23, “Okay, the one that speaks is the one that gets. Tomorrow, at exactly 9:00, go and stand at the stables.” The phrase “...the one that speaks” connects up with Sophia's previous writing “your wishes” while “the one that gets” and “Tomorrow, at exactly 9:00, go and stand at the stables” connect up with “could grant.” Each of these connections make transparent both the “right” identities and relationships between adults and the young that Sophia's language constructs earlier in the story.

On page 4 the reader finds Sophia continuing to tell the story “right” when we learn that Charlotte has moved—the problem, solved. Later in the day Cinnamon, appropriately or “rightly” so goes back up the hill, presumably to thank the goat. She

finds a note instead, written by the goat. It reads, in cursive script, which is different than the manuscript style Sophia's used in her notebook, up to this point, lines 10-13... “Dear Cinnamon, There is no need to thank me. I have done my job. Have fun with Twinkie” (See *Appendix G*). Words and phrases like “Dear,” “no need to thank me,” “I,” and “my job” all build a relationship between the older, wiser goat and the younger horse that is informal with regards to what the goat has done and what is not expected of the horse in return. “I” and “my job” too build recurring identities for both adults, situating them as taking on the role of problem solver and the young as solution seekers. The language highlighted in the previous 2 sentences reveals an “inner rightness” being told through the goat, by Sophia—that being that adults are supposed to solve the problems of the young with “no need” for thanking the adult. The sentence, “I have done my job” affirms the previous statement as it connects up with the previous words of the goat “...the one that speaks is the one that gets” implying that if you seek help it will be given. The sentence “There is no need to thank me” dismisses further the uniqueness of what has transpired communicating that seeking (and getting) advice from older, wiser adults is the way things ought to be. The last sentence connects the goats' efforts “my job” with the potential benefits of seeking help “...fun with Twinkie” which in turn connects with an earlier phrase “the goat...could grant your wishes.” So, Sophia is showing her reader that if you let adults help you when you have problems, you will get what you want.

#### Sophia's Evolved Sense of Audience

While Sophia's language implies that she has an evolved sense of audience she is no different than “the boys” in that before her writing reaches her reader, it must pass one very important person, a gateway—her teacher. The teacher becomes the default reader

for student writing through the lessons she presents, the assignments she gives her students to complete and the feedback she gives related to student writing. Student writing has a greater chance of “passing the gateway” when the young writer is recognized as being dutiful. It was very easy to “see” this “passage” with the writing and language of “the boys” because each of their “moves” was transparent, solely targeted at showing the teacher, as previously mentioned that they “could do it.” Sophia on the other hand *does* implicitly for her teacher what “the boys” explicitly *show* through their writing and *tell* through their talk about that writing. Whether passage is achieved implicitly, like Sophia or explicitly, like “the boys,” student writing has to pass through the teacher before reaching other anticipated audiences. Knowing this to be true, I will in the next section explore further who (besides the teacher) the audience is for the work of these young writers as they compose in their composition notebooks.

Beyond the Gateway: Who is the Composition Notebook for and Who is (are) the Audience(s) for the Rehearsals found within?

Within the context of the elementary school classroom, the site from which each of these students writes, the composition notebook is first and foremost for the teacher. As this chapter has shown, through the work and words of these young writers, the space in between the marbled black-and-white covered notebook is mostly used for rehearsal. The rehearsals include performances of several aspects of the writerly identity; intertwined and in most instances simultaneously *acted out* on the pages of the notebooks and in the language of each of the young writers I interviewed.

The first audience for the writing in these notebooks is the student. Each of the young writers I interviewed used the composition notebook to work out their teacher's

assignments. To that point, the space to rehearse can be seen as a “staging ground” where these young writers inevitably will contemplate (or be told) that their writing will remain in the notebook or come out in some form. It is in these moments that the students must share their rehearsals with a second audience, their teacher. In the previous section, I detail the teacher's role as a gateway and how each of these young writer's work has to pass through the gateway.

Some writers can only see their work reaching “the gate” remaining within the rehearsal space of the notebook for only their teacher to see. Cameron and Gregory reveal this when they say, “we had to.” Still other writers imagine that once the teacher has deemed their writing “appropriate” or “good” it stands a better chance of appearing in more public spaces. Luke specifically, through his work and talk about that work imagines an audience “my best friend Rory and my family” as well as spaces outside of the notebook “up on the bulletin board” where his classmates might read his work. Finally, Sophia exemplifies elementary writers who can see their work circulating beyond the teacher. She imagines a general public reader, and this reader is made possible because of Sophia’s writerly identity: being dutiful, of course, but also exemplifying other aspects documented in detail throughout this chapter.

In the next chapter I will look at the Twitter Door—another medium like the composition notebook.

## CHAPTER 5: THE TWITTER DOOR

In this chapter I will focus on another medium that I witnessed Stephanie's students writing within. The class referred to this medium as the Twitter Door. A cleverly designed sign titled: "Twitter Door" including an attractive pink bird invites passersby to "follow our class @IB\_MsS." Under the sign visitors will find plastic laminated sentence strips with sticky-notes placed to the lefthand side. The sticky-notes, borrowing from the new media platform Twitter, reveal student usernames like "@wolves\_n\_bacon" or "@Catgirl\_prrrr." The plastic laminated sentence strips borrow both from old technologies and new media. From old technologies, the sentence strip represents a "tried and true" alternative to the notebook that students use frequently in elementary school classrooms. In Stephanie's class, the sentence strip takes on new media features as it represents the 140 character limit of microblogging platforms like Twitter that each student used to post their thoughts on—with dry erase makers. Writing on the Twitter Door was an option during the students' literacy block of instruction. I never witnessed any formal direction on the part of Stephanie with regards to what students could post onto the Twitter Door. If a student were interested in posting to the Twitter Door, s/he had to sit on the floor and wait for space to write. Students typically sat on the floor with their notebooks and a pencil jotting ideas down as they waited to post on the Twitter Door. I witnessed students using ideas from their notebooks to post ideas on the Twitter

Door as much as I saw them close the notebook and just write whatever was on their mind—in that moment.

Is it the Medium?

Like the notebook, my curiosity with regards to the Twitter Door's impact on student writing comes from an interest in how the students see themselves as writers while composing within this medium and the ways in which they describe who listens to and reads what they are composing. Because the Twitter Door seemed to situate itself in between notebook writing and writing on Twitter; blurring aspects of each conceptualization, I decided to continue my analysis with a deep examination of this medium and the interview data that I collected in order to further explore the research questions. I was curious as to whether or not the writing on the Twitter Door was functioning differently than the sort of ritualistic, completed assignments found 5 feet away on the hallway bulletin board.

Duty: Following Directions as a Gateway to Exploring New Writerly Spaces

Just like the “goings on” in the student notebooks, several aspects of student identity were made transparent through an analysis of what was happening on the Twitter Door and the ways in which the students talked about their writing. Some of the aspects were similar. As witnessed with the “goings on” in the student notebooks, the identity of being dutiful is present within the work on the Twitter Door and should not be ignored. Being dutiful is a pervasive, cultural value in elementary schools. This is evidenced when students “in class” writing makes its way onto the bulletin board just outside the classroom; a celebration of complying with what is expected. So much of this writing is uniform, based on the same topic and is formulaic. The topics resonate in the bulletin



board titles: “We are learning about the Solar System,” or “What did you do over Spring Break?” The form is evident with a casual glance; 3 facts, 2 interesting details and 1 question about the Solar System and 5 perfectly indented paragraphs detailing what happened during the spring vacation. Students are socialized daily to write or say exactly what is happening “in the moment” through such acts as copying assignments from the board or during the course of a morning routine, saying the school's pledge. While the ideas represented may vary, the formulaic, routinized nature is what contributes to dutifulness existing within these assignments. This sort of dutiful reporting out of what is happening in the moment can be seen on the Twitter Door.

I observed Erika completing a Twitter Door post one afternoon. As she left the door, passing 3 of her classmates who were sitting and waiting for their turn to write I asked if she could talk to me about what she had just written. She replied, “I wrote that we are researching crops from different countries. And I was researching oats.” I asked, “Why did you choose to write about what you are researching when you could have written anything you wanted on the Twitter Door?” Her response, “Because it's about what we were doing right now in class and it was really interesting.” Luke, a classmate of Erika's was the next young writer I wanted to talk to. I asked him too to talk to me about what he had just written on the Twitter Door.” He replied, “I just wrote we are starting a book called *Finding Sasha*. We finished *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* so I'm telling people that we're starting a new book.” I asked, “Why do you want people to know that?” He responded, “Because it's just kind of exciting news.” The language from both students implies that each is performing a dutiful identity while being constructed as being a dutiful student as they rehearse a convention followed in the Twitter-verse, one I

will explore further in the next chapter—that being it is customary to use social media to inform the reader about something interesting that is happening in the writer's world, at that moment. Specifically, Erika supports this statement when she says, “...it's about what we were doing right now” and “...it was really interesting.” Luke too supports the statement when he says, “...it's just kind of exciting news.” Both students, through their rehearsal of the above mentioned convention enters into a broader conversation affording them the opportunity to let others construct them as dutiful. As this conversation unfolds another aspect of the writerly identity intersects with a convention inherent within the Twitter-verse, enabling us to better understand how these young writers describe who listens to and reads what they are composing.

#### The Right Story: This is What is Happening Here at School

Classroom research and a love of literature are not the only things these young writers find interesting and exciting enough to post onto the Twitter Door. There is a wide range of topics and events being written about on any given day (See *Appendix H*). Ideas range from testing, “We had a formative test,” to science, “We are learning about body parts,” to report cards, “Ready for report cards. I know I am.” By following the Twitter-like convention of informing others about interesting and exciting things that are happening in the writer's world right now focusing solely on school-based information the writers in Stephanie's classroom bring to light two intersecting aspects of the writerly identity—understanding the importance of telling the right story and that writers have motives. The right story within the context of their classroom is, “this is what is happening here at school.” The right story represents the dutifulness built in to the act of posting onto the Twitter Door. Telling the right story represents a ritual, one prescribed

order of performing that is part of a larger performance taken on daily by these young writers. Gee (2001) would explain that the student's performance on the Twitter Door is in line with a perspective on identity he calls I-Identities. One way of looking at who Erika, Luke and later Morgan is that they are students in an elementary school. That is their position. Their position is determined by what Gee calls, "...a set of authorities" namely the administration at their school, their teachers and parents. The source of this power/authority comes directly from the school they attend. Gee would also say that the process through which this power/authority works, "...is authorization" a combination of "...rules, traditions, or principles" that allow "...the authorities to 'author' the position" of the student hence the student's understanding that, given their position it is their responsibility to, among other things, tell the right story on the Twitter Door.

Holland et al. (1998), provide another lens with which to look at "what is happening here at school." Writing about the making of alternative worlds they describe the Tij Festival and that on Tij Day, "...activities within the religious observances—fasting, performing puja, and ritual bathing...call for an emulation of ideals..." that women, "...ritually bathing on the day of Rishi Pancami...act to absolve themselves of sins associated with menstruation" (p. 254). They go on to state that some of the behaviors expected of women at the time of this festival are the exact opposite of what is "authorized" of them by the men in their village at any other time of year. It is important to keep in mind that the rituals Holland et al. describe during the Tij Festival, like the understanding of telling the right story on the Twitter Door documented here, represents an isolated yet important aspect of what it means to perform within a given position. While the behaviors expected of these students are not necessarily contrary to what is

“authorized” of them at other times during the year, the Tij Festival story, like the Twitter Door story become microcosms. In the Twitter Door story it is understood that Erika and Luke engage in similar ritualistic activities. These activities “emulate” the conventional behaviors/rules inherent in school assignments—following directions that position them as students. Remaining stable within this position “absolves” them of any potential scrutiny from their authorities and who they imagine might listen to and/or read their posts on the Twitter Door due to their choice not to perform the ritual dutifully.

I asked both Erika and Luke to talk to me about who they imagined looks at the writing on the Twitter Door. Erika told me that, “Mostly people coming down these hallways.” When I asked her who else might be interested she replied, “Maybe people that are writing [her classmates] waiting for to write to write their things on the Twitter Door.” Luke reported that, “Pretty much everyone who walks in this hallway or that hallway” would read what was on the Twitter Door. Their language specifically, “...people coming down these hallways,” “...people that are writing waiting to write their things on the Twitter Door,” and “...everyone who walks in this hallway” constructs a general reader, someone who is a member of the school community, someone who is likely to understand the significance of telling the right story in time and space. The construction of a general knowledgeable reader coupled with a dutiful performance that in turn enables the general reader to construct students like Erika and Luke as dutiful leaves little room for either student to improvise—using any range of composing practices that immersion in new writerly spaces could allow. If this is the case, then imagining the Twitter Door itself as being situated in between notebook writing and writing on Twitter seems to miss the mark.

### Author(ization) of the Student on the Twitter Door

Still interested in how Erika and her classmates constructed who might read the Twitter Door posts and how unique the space actual was, I asked how the Twitter Door and Twitter were different. She replied, "...well...the whole school can see the Twitter Door and some visitors. But the whole world cannot see the Twitter Door." Next I asked Erika to tell me if any of those people ever talked to her about what they saw on the Twitter Door? Her answer was a brief yet telling "No." I then asked Erika to talk about how the Twitter Door and Twitter were alike. She said, "...you're talking about a lot of people can see it [the Twitter Door] and you're talking about what you are doing and we usually post that on Twitter." Erika's language "the whole school can see the Twitter Door" and "...you're talking about what you are doing" indicates a belief that there is potential for a wide audience to read and possibly respond to the student's "in the moment" Twitter-like rehearsals. However, since "No" one ever responded to their posts the potentially wide audience ends up being the same general reader that passes by the class bulletin board without ever commenting on what is posted. In the end the Twitter Door becomes a space where authorities can author the position of the student by looking at how ritualistic behaviors, mainly acts of dutifulness are sustained.

### Morgan's Slight Improvisation on the Twitter Door

Morgan, another student in Stephanie's class provides a slightly nuanced look at the Twitter Door situating the writing that gets posted ever so slightly in between notebook writing and writing on Twitter. My first encounter with Morgan happened shortly after she had posted something onto the Twitter Door during the class literacy block. I asked, "Could you talk to me about what you just tweeted?" She had just

tweeted, “Our class loves graphic novels! Donate some to us!” (See *Appendix I*). Morgan replied, “Well since I know that our class really loves graphic novels, I wanted to talk to the world since nobody really knew it. Since nobody had posted it. And I wanted something kind of different 'cause it's fun to have more different tweets 'cause maybe then more people would want to read it. And then...I decided to write "donate..."

Morgan's words “...I know our class loves graphic novels” reveal the genesis of the first sentence in her Twitter Door post. Her words too follow the same conventions of Erika and Luke for the most part. Specifically, her words coupled with the first sentence of the “tweet” enact a positional, I-Identity. Holland et al. (1998) refer to this positional identity as, “...a person's apprehension of her social position in a lived world: that is, depending on the others present, of her greater or lesser access to spaces, activities...” and through these spaces and activities, “...any voice at all” (p. 128). If her Twitter Door post had stopped with just that dutiful statement it would have succumbed to her the apprehensions attributed to her position blending in with the other ritualistic posts informing the school community of what was happening “in the moment.” However Morgan uses her position, within the “tweet” along with the language she uses to annotate it offering a moment of possibility in the form of making something with her words simultaneously being made different by them—becoming more than dutiful, becoming active!

Morgan accomplishes this with a slight improvisation. Holland et al., writing about varying perspectives on identity, provide a framework from which Morgan's actions can be viewed. They describe an incident that occurred in Naudada, a site in Nepal involving people from different caste/ethnic groups who were being interviewed

during one of their small research projects. The interviewees were asked to come to the house of one of the researchers. However, for a number of reasons, "...persons of lower caste were usually prohibited from entering the houses of those of higher caste" (p. 9). The researcher represented a higher caste than some of the interviewees so it went without saying that the lower-caste people should not enter the researcher's house. This did not stop the researcher from routinely inviting lower-caste people to enter her house anyway which did not settle well with the residences of the small hill town. As the story goes, one day, a lower-caste women came to the house for an interview, noticed that the interview was to take place on the second floor balcony of the house and, after being "called up" to the balcony by the researcher, understanding that the researcher was ok with her getting to the balcony by entering the house still "...took a different route...scal[ing] the outside of the house...craw[ling] up the vertical wall" making her way to "the balcony" (p. 10). In that moment the woman identified her position relative to the researcher's and was mediated by the constraint of entering into the researcher's house. Holland et al. mark the incident as, "...a spectacular improvisation in the face of a problematic situation" one where the woman realized that the space of the researcher's house belonged to someone of a higher-caste and as such "...at least in the usual circumstances of community life"—felt imbued not to enter. Gee (2001) would add to this, claiming that the woman was enacting certain aspects of her D-Identity; that she is a problem-solver, a person of action. Understanding that she needed "...to get to the second-floor balcony" and wanting to keep the "dutiful" aspect of her relational identity in tact she "...devised the solution of climbing up the outside of the house" (p. 15). While Morgan's "tweet" is by no means as spectacular as the solution devised by the lower-

caste resident of Naudada it is relatively equal in its significance with regards to what is possible when writing within constrained spaces.

Morgan's language reveals her motives making a case that her post does slightly more than just tell the right story when she states that "...I wanted to talk to the world..." Her reasons for composing her post come primarily from how she identifies her own position comparatively with others, specifically her classmates and who she imagines might listen to and/or read her posts. She wants her writing to extend outward past the ritualistic performances of her classmates to an anticipated audience. When she says that "nobody really knew it" she imagines that audience to extend just beyond "the balcony" of immediate stakeholders who inhabit the school community whose primary purpose through consumption of the right story is to keep writers like Morgan in their place, "outside of the house"—dutiful. Morgan's language "Since nobody posted it" and "And I wanted something kind of different" begins to reveal aspects of her D-Identity. Her language shows that she is comfortable yet constrained with regards to speaking outward to her anticipated audience thus situating her as understanding the "problematic situation" she faces as a writer "outside of the house." She realizes that in order for things to change while still retaining, in the eyes of those who author her, that important part of her relational identity that is dutiful she too must devise a solution, like the woman from Naudada, she must act. She forecasts the result of her impending actions claiming "...it's more fun to have more different tweets" and "...'cause maybe then more people would want to read it." Imagining that her anticipated audience may do something if asked, Morgan tells me she "...decided to write donate." Her decision to write "Donate some to us" is her "crawling up the vertical wall" moment. She demonstrates through her action



knowledge that outsiders can help and uses the space of the Twitter Door to be recognized as being more than just a student who is doing what she is told to do.

Morgan's agentive stance on the Twitter Door reveals an important moment, however slight of the possibility that space for action is possible while retaining other parts of our identity integral to our daily existence.

Is it the Medium?

Students see themselves as writers not because of the direct impact any one medium has on them as they write. For example, writers do not see themselves as constrained because they are writing in a notebook any more than they see themselves as enabled because they write in spaces like the Twitter Door. How a writer sees herself comes not only from what she imagines is/not possible from her position but what others in her community imagine is/not possible. She is authorized and guided by teachers, administrators and parents. At times, her position is authorized/guided by she and her classmates. In the previous chapter we learned that the notebook was first and foremost for the teacher because this particular teacher chose to have her literacy block assignments completed within this medium. This “rule” or expectation contributed to the authoring of students like Cameron, Gregory, Luke and as a result, the students remained positioned; never making it to the “second-floor balcony” as they were unable to imagine the notebook to be anything more than a rehearsal space to tell the right story. Their lack of imagination can be seen as a form of self-authorization, keeping their position as student stable. Sophia's making of realistic fiction while telling the right story was the “crawling up the vertical wall” moment in the previous chapter, showing that even in highly constrained spaces there is room for students to push beyond that which authors

them and as a result, re-imagine their position within the classroom. Because mediums like the composition notebook and Twitter Door are located within the school world, each necessitates a version of the right story to be told. Morgan's perceived expansion of who may read what is posted on the Twitter Door slightly “beyond the balcony” to members within the school community just beyond the 4 walls of the classroom complicated by the teacher's intention for what happens within the medium to remain structured presents a dilemma. The dilemma is solved when the writer's image of what is possible “outside of the house” moves past just telling the right story to something slightly more agentive, like attempting to persuade that “wider” membership to buy more books for the classroom.

In the next chapter I will look at Twitter and a class blog —mediums like the composition notebook and the Twitter Door.

## CHAPTER 6: TWITTER AND THE CLASS BLOG

The students in Stephanie's class wrote on two digital platforms. One was the social networking and microblogging site Twitter. The other was a class blog hosted by Kidblog. Creating both a Twitter account and blog for classrooms is a recent phenomenon in elementary schools and is partially what contributes to the technologies' "newness" when compared to pen and paper technologies like the composition notebook. Teachers who are interested in exploring these digital spaces with their students basically create an account, give it a name, and provide a description that informs potential followers that teachers and students will be posting and reading from within either platform. A search for Stephanie's class's Twitter feed results in being welcomed by a familiar icon; a picture of the same pink bird that rests atop the class's Twitter Door along with a description of who is tweeting, statistics like how many tweets have been posted, how many followers the feed (i.e. individual, group, organization) has, and how many feeds they themselves are following (See *Appendix J*). A search for their class blog results in a similar welcome only this time, the bird is blue and it rests upon a tree branch. Under the perched bird there are 4 columns that give the reader information like, the title of a blog post, the date posts were placed onto the blog, the author's name, and the number of comments the post has received (See *Appendix K*). The students wrote in both spaces during their literacy block of instruction. Participation was voluntary. The class devised a sign-up system to make it clear who was supposed to be at a computer, writing

on either the Twitter feed or the class blog. I witnessed the students bringing their notebooks to the computer, using ideas from within it to write on Twitter or the class blog as much as I saw them just go to the computer, without the notebook—to write. While students waited to write on the Twitter feed or class blog Stephanie encouraged them to work on other assignments or to use the time to meet with individuals, checking in on assignments that were in various stages of completion.

#### It is Not the Medium

My curiosities in this chapter concern how a student writer sees herself and how this perception stems from what s/he imagines is/not possible from the position s/he holds within the classroom. That classroom is part of a much larger space Holland et al. would refer to as the figured world of school; a space where participants (students, teachers, administrators, etc.) act. Figured worlds are produced and reproduced, formed and reformed, not by any one act in particular but via an abstraction, “an extraction carried out under guidance” (p. 53). Within the figured world of school, that guidance comes from teachers, administrators, parents and at times the students themselves. It is this guidance through which the extraction of actions is carried out that contributes to the positioning of these participants. The manner in which these participants are guided is consistent with a concept of identity Gee refers to as I-identities.

One way of looking at the young writers in this chapter, participating on Twitter and the class blog is that they are students in an elementary school classroom. That position is determined by what Gee calls, “a set of authorities,” or what Holland et al. would refer to as guides—teachers, administrators, parents, etc. Gee would insist that the source of the authorities’ power comes directly from the school they inhabit. He would

go on to name the process through which the power/authority works as “authorization,” a process that Holland et al. would name guidance. This authorization or guidance comes in the form of “rules, traditions, and principles” that both Gee and Holland et al. argue allow “the authorities” to 'author' or 'guide' the position of students. The students in turn understand that, given their position, it is their responsibility to act and or be seen in certain ways when they participate within different mediums.

The writing the students do in different mediums must conform to what Bazerman (1997) calls genres. Bazerman defines genres as, “forms of life, ways of being...frames of social action...environments for learning...locations” where “...meaning is constructed” (p. 2). In this chapter, the students’ writing on Twitter and the class blog are the genres, the “frames of social action,” the “locations” through which the students in Stephanie's class write to act. Like the composition notebook and the Twitter Door, examined in previous chapters, Twitter and the class blog will come to represent similar places in the current chapter, “environments for learning” where the students in Stephanie's class communicate to “construct meaning.” The writing on Twitter and the class blog will be seen as genres the students had at their disposal, genres they used to be seen in certain ways by those who authorize/guide their position as certain kinds of people within the school world.

Over time, regardless of the medium or genre, students become accustomed to composing there. As they compose they construct audiences for their work or what Warner's (2002) calls publics. Like figured worlds and genres, publics can best be described as sites of membership that cannot be touched, seen or avoided. Publics are imagined. Like figured worlds, we are members of publics by default while at times

seeking membership into others. That membership or performance can come through the text we create and contributes to us being seen as a full participant or outsider at this site. Warner states that publics can be thought of as, "...frameworks for understanding text against an organized background of the circulation of other texts..." (p. 16). Writing about how we speak to and imagine ourselves affiliated to publics, Warner states the following:

To address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one's disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain normative horizon, and to speak within a certain language ideology. (p. 10)

When looking at the class blog and Twitter, I was curious as to what sorts of writerly identities were possible within both mediums from the position of student. I was interested in examining the manner in which students were addressing publics they already belonged to by default and whether or not they, like Sophia and Morgan, imagined themselves capable of using the medium at their disposal to seek membership into other publics. I was equally interested in how the process of authorization/guidance worked within the publics these young writers inhabited while writing on the class blog.

#### Student Writers Constructing Identity on Twitter

More so than in any medium the students in Stephanie's class wrote within, student identity becomes generalized on the Twitter feed. Tweets were typically written from a first-person plural point of view as witnessed in the following;

Ms. S's Class @IB\_MsS 12 Apr

We made a video to share what we have been learning. Check it out @animoto - Sharing the Planet Reflection <http://animoto.com/play/50SogN8DBIL7T3m10bCA>. Tweets such

as this make it difficult to talk about who the students were individually as writers. We can, however, learn which aspects of writerly identities, from students found possible from the collective “we” present within the tweets.

#### Student Writers Making; Constrained by their Position

Just as the students in Stephanie's class have been recognized as makers of things with pen and paper technologies, these students maintain that identity in their work on the class Twitter feed. The “We made a video” tweet in the previous paragraph provides one example of how and why the young writers are constrained at times. The genre conventions of Twitter, of writers saying where they are and what they are doing, is evoked by the student writers. Gee's concept of I-identities (Institutional Identities) are very much present as students make their class's work public by including a record of what is learned and sharing that learning with others. Students are “authorized” or “guided” to adhere to these “traditions” as they write on Twitter. Placement of the phrase “Check it out @animoto-Sharing the Planet reflection” followed by the url “<http://animoto.com/play/50SogN8DBIL7TRm10bCA>” shows an understanding on the part of the collective “we” regarding how to expand the medium. Curwood (2013), writing about student engagement in digital spaces states that these young writers are, “...often motivated” because “...they have an authentic audience who reads and responds to their work” (p. 420). The word “authentic” implies that the writing posted via the class Twitter feed could potentially be directed towards members outside of their school implying that the students in Stephanie's classroom are in fact seeking membership in other publics via their tweets. While this particular tweet does not give any indication as to whom exactly the content was intended, we can infer via a quick check of the class

Twitter feed that an overwhelming majority of the 217 followers are members of their school or students' families. While response was possible, I did not see any to any of the tweets I present in this chapter.

#### Student Writers Enabled; Expanding Membership Outward...Inwardly

The students in Stephanie's class also used Twitter to seek membership in publics outside of the figured world of school. They accomplished this through use of the hashtag symbol “#.” On Twitter, using this symbol allows one to address members belonging to a wide range of publics interested in similar topics of discussion. In essence, the hashtag acts as an automated instruction that users can “follow” or chose not to “follow” when attempting to communicate. Note the use of the hashtag in the following tweet;

Ms. S's Class @IB\_MsS 1 Nov

To those affected by #Sandy, are you and your houses OK? What is the damage like? We hope you kept safe. Buck, writing about how to negotiate such conventions states that, “Technologies are accompanied with scripts about their use, which enable and constrain certain actions and users can align with these scripts or resist them...” (p. 32). The act of addressing a public via Twitter through use of the hashtag symbol enables the students in Stephanie's class to seek membership in other publics and share/circulate information with its members more easily. Admittedly this example is highly localized when compared to the “We made a video” tweet analyzed above. Accordingly, some readers may argue that little can be learned from the #Sandy tweet. Use of the hashtag symbol within the tweet enables these young writers to work from within their position as students outwardly. Use of the hashtag situates these young writers as being more than



students reporting out what is happening—it enables them to textually seek out other publics, where membership is potentially inclusive but not restricted by the teacher.

#### Authorization/Guidance and the Class Blog

An examination of one last medium, the class blog, coupled with conversational data I collected provided me the opportunity to explore how the process of authorization/guidance worked. And, because the students had actual membership within their school public through the reading and responding to their work by their fellow classmates, the class blog became the only medium I observed where the students were interacting over their writing. I became interested to see how the students' comments to each other were constraining or enabling membership in their school public or other publics they imagined.

#### Reproducing what is Asked for Leads to Praise

I approached Morgan one afternoon during the literacy block as she was looking over an extensive post she had recently placed on the blog. The post was a chapter to a book she was writing. Interested in what was happening I asked, “I was wondering if you could take a moment and think about the chapter that you posted and the comments that you got afterwards and talk to me about how you see both of them as the same?” She replied, “So...ok so my chapter is similar to the comments because one when I asked them for a summary that summary is about the chapter so of course they'd be similar. But then also I added this place called Baconland and Stacey commented about it. And then she started talking little bit about that and said it was my famous...my famous restaurant.” Morgan's language begins to show the impact authorization/guidance has on student interaction within the medium of the class blog. The phrase “...I asked them for a

summary...” echos “rules, traditions, and principles” like “when reading in school, it is important to articulate one's understanding of that reading via a summary.” Gee along with Holland et al. would argue that this kind of thinking allows authorities to 'author' or 'guide' the position of students. Morgan asks for and expects her classmates to say back to her what her story is about, a comprehension ritual that is repeated often in elementary reading instruction. Morgan expects her classmates' responses to conform to what she has written (Morgan says “...so of course they'd be similar”).

Morgan refers to two key moments in Stacey's response on the blog, “that summary,” “and Stacey comment about it,” referring to Stacey mentioning something about “Baconland.” Stacey's full response to Morgan, and Morgan's reply back (See *Appendix L*) show that authorization/guidance is not unidirectional, coming only from the teacher. Language from the blogposts shows that authorization/guidance can in fact be reinforced by the students themselves.

Stacey's response to Morgan's original post requesting a summary includes the following language, “Lathena is a good name for Athena’s child. If you just take the L off the name is Athena. There was a curse, Lathena Tyke and THALIA went on a little quest. They went to Morgan’s famous Backonland. They found there parents Zeus, Poseidon, and Athena. If Tyke is Zeus’ son, he is Lathena’s uncle!” Morgan replies back to Stacey saying, “Note to self: I got one risk-taker named Stacey. Stacey is a good person. My new story will have you as a main character since you where the first risk-taker.” Morgan's request for “a summary” is answered when Stacey states in her post, “There was a curse, Lathena Tyke and THALIA went on a little quest. They went to Morgan's famous Backonland. They found there parents Zeus, Poseidon, and Athena.” Like Morgan, the

language of Stacey's blogpost demonstrates an understanding that she is supposed to respond in the way she is asked to respond. Morgan praises Stacey, "I got one risk-taker named Stacey" and rewards her "My new story will have you as a main character..." in her response back. The cumulative effect of this interaction suggests that Morgan is ventriloquating the position of 'authority/guide' through her request for, and praise for, getting the summary that Stacey provided. Both acts secure each writer's position, for Stacey, being able to follow directions and summarize what she has read, and for Morgan to evaluate the response and praise the responder.

#### Perceived Inability to Follow Directions Leads to Guidance

Fred, a classmate of Morgan's was interested, like Stacey, in commenting on Morgan's original blogpost. He commented, "That is a lot. Who is the main character? Good job." Morgan replied, "If you read it carefully you will find it out." The interaction between Fred and Morgan provides another opportunity to examine the impact of authorization/guidance under a slightly different set of circumstances. Stacey's post indicated that she had read Morgan's original blogpost correctly which in turn "authorized" Morgan to praise her. Fred's question, "Who is the main character?" implies that he may not have read her post as correctly "guiding" Morgan's authoritative reply, "If you had read it carefully you will find it out." It could be argued that Fred's language is an act of ventriloquation as much as Morgan's. He provides Morgan with two compliments and a question, echoing "traditions" followed in other print mediums. Morgan's response, however, shows how complicated authorization/guidance is. Because she focuses solely on the question Fred asks, Morgan ventriloquates what an "authority/guide" would say if a student had not followed a set of directions correctly.

Her response to Fred secures her position as one who understands the importance of reading a text carefully and comprehending it, so as not to ask questions that imply otherwise. Like her response to Stacey, Morgan's response to Fred is seen as only right or wrong.

#### Uniqueness Leads to Silence

Like his classmates Stacey and Fred, Luke was also interested in commenting on Morgan's original blogpost. He commented, "I like how you took the Percy Jackson series and kind of turned it upside down." Luke's comment to Morgan shows his understanding of how writers draw upon other writer's work. Yet Luke's post was met with silence from Morgan. This was due in part because Morgan's experiences on the class blog fell into one of two categories; posts that emulated "rightness" like Stacey's or posts that revealed "wrongness" like Fred's. Luke's post appeared as one unlike the others. Luke was ventriloquating an experienced reader's evaluation and praise of Morgan's story and was offering to Morgan a different kind of conversation between writers and readers. Yet because Luke's response was not within the frame that Morgan found worthy of a textual response, she kept silent. This moment says as much about the writerly identities of students like Morgan and Luke as it does about how evaluation works within the school world. Praising Morgan's blogpost, ventriloquating an experienced reader--one who is expected to comprehend fully what he reads--Luke can be seen as constructing a dutiful student identity. His comment also arguably highlights the problematic nature of evaluative comments with regards to student writing. Whether coming from a teacher, a customary practice when students work within "older" mediums like the composition notebook or here, on the "newer" medium of the blog,

ventriloquated through the words of her classmates, this moment reveals that when a writer hears evaluative comments from her reader, even positive ones, the results can constrain the writer to the point where she is not quite sure what to do moving forward. Not knowing what to do, remaining silent keeps the writer dependent on further instruction and her position as a student stable.

What transpires between the two young writers illuminates how they can be simultaneously working within and against the accountability and efficiency agenda which, in part, contributes to the authorization and guidance directing their textual interactions. Luke's knowledgeable, readerly (teacherly) response to Morgan's blogpost is exactly what is expected of students who are emulating what the teacher expects *within* the classroom. Morgan's silence can arguably be seen as the most efficient "response" a writer could give back to a authoritative teacherly reader, harnessing all that she has come to learn working *within* the parameters of that which is expected of her. One might argue that Luke is constructing a response to a writer that can be interpreted as something other than "right" or "wrong," a response that enables the writer to respond back in conversation. From this vantage point, Luke's response to Morgan can be seen as working against the accountability and efficiency agenda by inviting dialogue rather than stopping dialogue through evaluation. Morgan's non-response can too be seen as an act against the accountability and efficiency agenda. Rather than compose a quick response that keeps both her position and Luke's position as students stable, Morgan's silence can arguably be seen as a contemplative moment, thinking inwardly about what has transpired, reserving the right to respond (or not) on her own terms. The uniqueness of Luke's response to Morgan and Morgan's silence is taken up further in the next chapter. I

conclude the study thinking through moments like this one and the others described and analyzed in this study that may serve as more than just an opportunity to better understand what is currently possible with regards to writing in schools. I explore in the conclusions how writing as seen from the position of student might offer possibilities for constructing new relationships and identities in the classroom.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

This study centered initially on the impact different mediums had on student writing in elementary schools during literacy instruction. I wanted to know if the medium influenced how the students saw themselves as writers while composing. I was interested in the ways in which students described who listened to and read what they composed. Finally, I wanted to describe what transpired when teachers and students interacted over student writing with traditional pen and paper technologies as well as technologies deemed “newer,” specifically, technologies that included a social media component where a textual interaction between writer and reader was inevitable. The trajectory of my inquiry was motivated equally by the pervasiveness of both technologies as well as the complexities associated with membership in a school public that both teachers and students negotiated on a daily basis. On one hand, pen and paper technologies have been the dominant means of circulation of ideas and information within schools. Contemporaneously, as the internet has become more and more a tool integral in the daily instruction of young children, “newer,” and arguably more social technologies have made their way into elementary school classrooms thanks largely in part to teachers like Stephanie and Jennifer. Both teachers represent a growing number of educators who understand the importance of providing their children the opportunity to explore in different ways, under guidance, what it means to circulate ideas and information with

both “old” and “newer” technologies. Currently the sort of exploration encouraged in classrooms like Stephanie and Jennifer's is complicated by the way schools are structured. Their school, like most United States public schools, is structured for children to be dutiful. When students are dutiful, they are following directions willingly, doing what is asked of them in a seemingly cheerful way. This work makes instruction appear efficient, which is part of the neoliberal political agenda for education. As a part of this education, teachers teach children to write quickly so students learn how to write by following directions and filling in the blanks—writing a topic sentence, giving 2 examples that support the topic sentence, then ending with a concluding thought. This sort of curricular activity is held in place by the testing mandates of both the state and federal government. The children and teachers in this study worked within this system. The children and teachers in this study also worked against the accountability and efficiency agenda. Working against from within this system, the children were able to imagine new publics for their writing.

#### Authorizing Writers

The children in this study imagined new publics for their writing from their social positions as students. That position was authorized/guided by other participants in the school world-- teachers, administrators, parents and at times, the young writers themselves. It is not only writers who imagine what is and is not possible, but it is also those who authorize and guide the writing who imagine what is and is not possible for students to write.



### Dutiful Student

The teachers and students in this study see the position of student first and foremost as one who behaves, sits in her/his seat and follows directions. This position was manifested and maintained across all mediums through the work and words of students as they responded textually to what was expected of them during their literacy instruction. That manifestation and maintenance is not necessarily good or bad, right or wrong, but is a consequence of the expected behavior in this classroom. I would argue that it is also a part of the figured world of school, which is (re)-produced and (re)-formed every day throughout the United States.

The United States neoliberal political educational agenda sets as a core belief instructional efficiency. Efficiency means that teachers and students need to be quick and successful in the implementation (by the teacher) and subsequent learning (by the student) of what will be tested by the state or federal government. Writing is one area that children are tested on in schools. Core beliefs like instructional efficiency are what help establish a “tradition,” of following “rules and principles” just as they must follow the behavioral rules of the classroom. Accordingly, “traditions” like teaching formats for writing that children fill in with ideas or children filling in the blanks of an acrostic poem are a part of that tradition of following directions and putting information into the blanks of tests. Students in this study not only did this work, showing those who authorize/guide them that they belonged to their school public, they also pursued alternative membership in other publics using the dutiful student position as their starting place.

## Composition Notebook Conclusions and Implications

The students in both classes understood that being seen as a certain kind of person—a dutiful student—within their school public was to be seen as a successful writer. Gregory's feeling of compliance in statements like “we -had-to” exemplified the dutiful mindset. Cameron's decisions with design poetry also illuminate how an expectation of success can impact the act of writing. Their actions were in alignment with the dutiful student following directions, the traditional way of seeing the position of successful student. This kind of socialization, though, constrains the act of writing to a reproduction of what is expected and limits what is possible regarding student membership within the school and other publics.

These same students nonetheless realized that being successful could mean other things. From a Freirean perspective Stephanie's student Gregory who dutifully did what was asked of him could be seen as docile and his writing limited by what he produced in the chart. Yet Gregory, by constructing an identity that was dutiful, was able to then construct other publics beyond the teacher for his writing. When students are recognized by their teachers as dutiful, students are, in turn, accepted as being capable and knowledgeable, deserving of continued membership within the school public. With acceptance comes opportunity, opportunity to extend one's membership, *the* re-imagination of what it means to be a student within the school public, participating in the creation of different writing, for Gregory “thinking about sports...or books” as possible topics for future writing within both “old” and alternately “newer” mediums and publics. This trajectory, from recognition to acceptance to opportunity, is more enabling than it is constraining, providing students like Gregory the occasion to experience a different kind

of success. The writing in their composition notebooks becomes a rehearsal for future writing in both evaluative and communicative activities where writers adhere to formal rules and informal expectations.

Jennifer's student Cameron wanted to be in control of his experiences. His experimentation with shape (the poem about books) that he wrote in his composition book not only shows that young writers deserve the opportunity to have a felt sense of control over what they write, it shows that they deserve the opportunity to determine for whom their writing is intended. His experimentation with letter size (varying length, width, etc.) shows that young writers are capable of thinking in unconventional ways within traditional mediums. Use of the composition notebook to cultivate a felt sense of ownership in process as well as a place to think in unconventional ways comes when what transpires between teacher and student pushes the boundaries of what it means to be successful. Here, Jennifer recognizes and accepts Cameron as being a competent member within their school public. Recognition and acceptance lead to an opportunity for Cameron to experiment with shape and letter size. Like Gregory, this re-imagination can contribute to a re-definition of what it means to be a successful writer in school, one where the writer rehearses for writing that is both evaluative and exploratory in nature.

#### Twitter Door Conclusions and Implications

While teachers do post student work on bulletin boards within the classroom as well as in hallways outside, that writing is vetted, and approved by the teacher as successful and ready for "others." This form of sharing is typically unidirectional, intended to be seen, not commented on. This form of sharing keeps stable the routinized position of student. The Twitter Door represented an attempt to move away from what

traditionally happens in most elementary school classrooms. The Twitter Door provided readers a glimpse of what students are already doing in their composition notebooks, thinking about and responding to the world around them. The Twitter Door is unique because it projects student work outward, to members within the school community yet outside of the classroom, members who could potentially, just like the comparatively large scale platforms of Twitter and blogs, interact, respond and as a result, seek membership with the writer. In short, the Twitter Door shows how a successful student writer can be re-imagined providing opportunities for young writers to potentially maintain membership within their school public as well as seek out new memberships with alternate publics.

Stephanie's student Morgan uses the Twitter Door beyond the localized event that other children imagined the door to be. Morgan's post, "Our class loves graphic novels! Donate some to us!" simultaneously seeks to maintain membership within her school public while reaching out to alternate publics. By seeking to maintain membership within her school public Morgan can be seen as working within the accountability and efficiency agenda. Her post constructs "successful student writer;" capitalization, spelling and punctuation are all implemented properly. Grammatically, both exclamations are correct. It is these aspects of the "successful student writer" that situate Morgan as capable, having received the efficient instruction from her teacher; she is ready to perform in a similar way on required state/federal assessments. Morgan realizes, at the classroom level, that she and her classmates are in need of more graphic novels. She understands that there is an opportunity to get more books if she and her classmates act—attempting to seek membership with others within the school community who walk by the class

Twitter Door. Seeking membership with others, reaching out to alternate publics, potentially engaging in conversation that does not originate directly from classroom instruction or lead to performing proficiently on state/federal assessments situates Morgan and her writing as working against the accountability and efficiency agenda. The image she creates textually is of her class as successful learners. Dewayani (2013), citing Bruner, writing about the process of self-construction, states "...that narratives can describe the self as becoming an 'active agent' ...in...narrated events" (p. 375-376). Stephanie's recognition and acceptance of Morgan as a writer and Morgan's understanding of the importance of being seen as a dutiful student within her school community is what affords she and her classmates the opportunity implied within this post—to work against from within the accountability and efficiency agenda. The post makes it possible, through Morgan's 'self-construction' not only for her to seek membership with others but for others to become familiar, connected with Morgan and her classmates textually. Her post provides the opportunity for information, the local concern of wanting more books for the classroom, to circulate, to become known in the larger school community not previously considered. Finally, her post provides an opportunity for her to seek membership with others as much as it provides an opportunity for others to seek membership with Morgan and her classmates. It also makes transparent a sobering fact that we live in an era where schools like Morgan's, even though they are situated within communities that are socioeconomically well off, do not have the resources necessary for teachers and students to explore novels that they are interested in. The post *is* the re-imagination of the student position as an 'active agent' working against from within, coexisting alongside the more docile student image narrativized in most

evaluative performances. The post also lays the groundwork for the work on the Twitter Door to serve as a rehearsal for future writing on digital platforms like Twitter and blogs, where students seek to maintain membership within their school public while seeking new memberships with alternate publics.

### Writing in New Media

Bazerman argues that genres are “frames of social action” (p. 2). Sophia, Jennifer’s student, uses her writing in her composition notebook and revised for the blog to explore a cultural narrative that she is learning to live within. As detailed in chapter 4, Sophia wrote a story about a horse, Cinnamon, who had friendship troubles with another horse. This story was loosely based upon friendship troubles that Sophia herself was having in her own life with one of her classmates. Using the animal children’s book genre as both a “frame of social action” and “environment for learning,” Sophia creates an older, wiser character, the goat, to help her main character, Cinnamon, with her problems. Sophia’s creation of the goat within her story is a textual performance within a performance as she writes her piece for her classmates. Not only does Sophia perform the role of dutiful student, completing the assigned task for her teacher, she too performs the role of dutiful child, ventriloquating a cultural narrative through the words of her characters. This ventriloquation or what Warner would call “addressing a public,” explicitly shows that young writers like Sophia very much want to belong to publics. The ventriloquation also shows that “motivated by a certain normative horizon,” such as believing in this cultural narrative, Sophia was capable of “speaking within a certain language ideology;” namely, that if children trust and value what older, wiser adults have to say, the adults will make things better. The dutifulness captured within the pages of

Sophia's composition notebook can be simultaneously enabling and constraining.

Sophia's dutifulness of recapitulating the cultural narrative was enabling; it allowed for the creation of a story in which a character in need was helped by an older, wiser character. That same dutifulness can also be seen as a constraint, creating a girl's dependency on adults to solve her problems for her.

#### Twitter/Class Blog Conclusions and Implications

Stephanie's student's use of social media, specifically Twitter, further reveals how being seen as something other than a dutiful student requires being recognized and accepted as dutiful by those who author/guide them within the school world. When the class tweeted things like, "we did Gymnastics" or "We made a video," the reader imagines these young writers being dutiful, reporting out what happens daily within their school. It is critical that this particular work takes place on the part of the student. Tweets that report out what is happening daily are what get the students recognized and accepted as being capable, successful writers. While this particular kind of work constrains the writer and her position momentarily, the constraint is what enables Stephanie's students to (be) re-author(ed) themselves. Being seen (recognized and accepted) as a certain kind of person--a dutiful, successful student writer--is *the current* path to a re-imagination of the student position and what it means to succeed differently from that position. For Stephanie's class, the opportunity to succeed differently on Twitter comes with the posting of the #Sandy tweet. Like Morgan's Twitter Door post about graphic novels, the #Sandy tweet *is* the re-imagination of the student position. From this re-imagined position the students can be seen as more than dutiful, successfully working against from within their position, using Twitter beyond the localized event implied in the "we did

Gymnastics” and “We made a video” tweets that others imagine the platform to be. Working from within their position, they can maintain their school public membership while seeking membership in alternate publics concerned about the welfare of survivors of the severe weather event they read about on Twitter.

Being recognized and accepted as a successful student writer was no less complicated on the class blog. Like the composition notebook, Twitter Door and the social media site Twitter, the students in Stephanie's class had to be dutiful on the blog. Being dutiful meant that they had to listen to, read and interpret directions from their teacher. After being instructed, they had to figure out what to say, how to say it, and to whom, all in a way that satisfied expectations placed upon them. These negotiations complicated, constrained and enabled what was possible on the class blog between Morgan and her classmates. Writing about the way in which children are controlled by institutions, McCarthey and Moje observe that these, “...young people invent ways—using literacies in the process—to manipulate and reshape the controls placed on them,” that “in the process, they develop new literacies, literacies of attention, navigation and critique, that are unique to...technologized world[s]” (p. 236). The development of these new literacies and the potential membership in alternate publics that result can occur only after the teacher has recognized and accepted the student as a dutiful, successful student writer.

Stephanie's student Stacey figured out what to say, how to say it and to whom in a way that satisfied expectations placed upon her. Her response to Morgan's blogpost, a well crafted summary, helped Stacey get recognized and accepted as a dutiful, successful student writer on the class blog. Fred too figured out what to say and to whom, giving



Morgan 2 compliments. However, his question, “*Who is the main character*” calls his membership within the school public into question because it implies he is not as dutiful as his classmate Stacey. Morgan, wanting to maintain her membership within the school public ventriloquates what a teacher would say to her student, indicating as much when she replies back, “*If you had read it carefully you will find it out.*” The interactions between Morgan and Stacey and Morgan and Fred are constrained and limiting.

However, like the localized events taking place in the composition notebooks, on the Twitter Door and Twitter, the interactions described here are currently necessary steps on the path towards the re-imagination of the student position, where students 'invent ways—using literacies in the process—to...reshape the controls placed on them.' This reshaping and subsequent re-imagination of the student position can be seen in Luke's interaction with Morgan.

Luke's response to Morgan is deserving of one last look. He writes, “*I like how you took the Percy Jackson series and kind of turned it upside down.*” Like Morgan's graphic novel post, Luke's blogpost has perfect spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. His grammar is correct. By mentioning the “Percy Jackson” series Luke's comments could be interpreted as ventriloquating a knowledgeable teacher/reader, referring to a series that both have read. Morgan's non-response could be taken as a non-verbal nod of sorts, recognizing that to reply textually to such positive judgment would be, redundant. If interpreted this way then Morgan and Luke are merely reproducing roles expected of them within their school world. Consequently, recognized and accepted for their attention to these details, Morgan and Luke can both be seen as dutiful, successful school writers. The blogpost's content can also be seen as reaching beyond the localized interactions and

expectations Morgan, Stacey, Fred, and Luke must navigate within the accountability and efficiency agenda, to alternate publics interested too in knowledgeable engaged conversation about adventure fiction. Seeing the blogpost's content in this way *is* what makes *it* potentially the re-imagination of the student position—one where students do not have to be seen as certain kinds of defacto “authorities/guides” working with their adult counterparts to keep the position of student stable or recapitulating what judgment is within the school world.

### Recommendations

The work and words of Stephanie and Jennifer's students has shown that being seen (recognized and accepted) as a certain kind of person, the dutiful, successful student writer, is the current path towards the re-imagination of the student position and what it means to succeed differently from that position. That re-imagination is itself constrained, limited if the path highlighted here is merely promoted. The work and words of the students in this study has created an opening in the conversation that is currently taking place regarding writing in school. Seen most prominently in the previous section; Morgan's silence to Luke presents a moment to better understand what is possible from the position of student within the school world. Children work with the large socialization agenda that schools operate to reproduce and still manage moments to create different identities and textual possibilities for themselves. In order for these moments to become something more than what this study has revealed, a nuanced shift in pedagogy, from the top-down as well as at the classroom level must take place. The shift would require that all members within the school community recognize, accept, and embrace the importance of maintaining memberships with our school publics while simultaneously allowing for

alternate memberships with publics out and alongside the school world to be sought after. The shift would also necessitate a conscious allowance for this re-imaging to occur textually via varying kinds of writing. This writing most likely will be similar yet distinctly different when compared to the work witnessed and analyzed in this study, work capable of not just coexisting alongside the evaluative performance that permeates currently within the school world but work that calls into question, without running the risk of losing membership within the school public, the priority placed on both the evaluative performance and the manner in which schools are currently structured for children. Work such as this will be *the* re-imagined position of the successful student writer. Children writing from this position will maintain a different sort of membership within their school public while endeavoring to seek membership in alternate publics.

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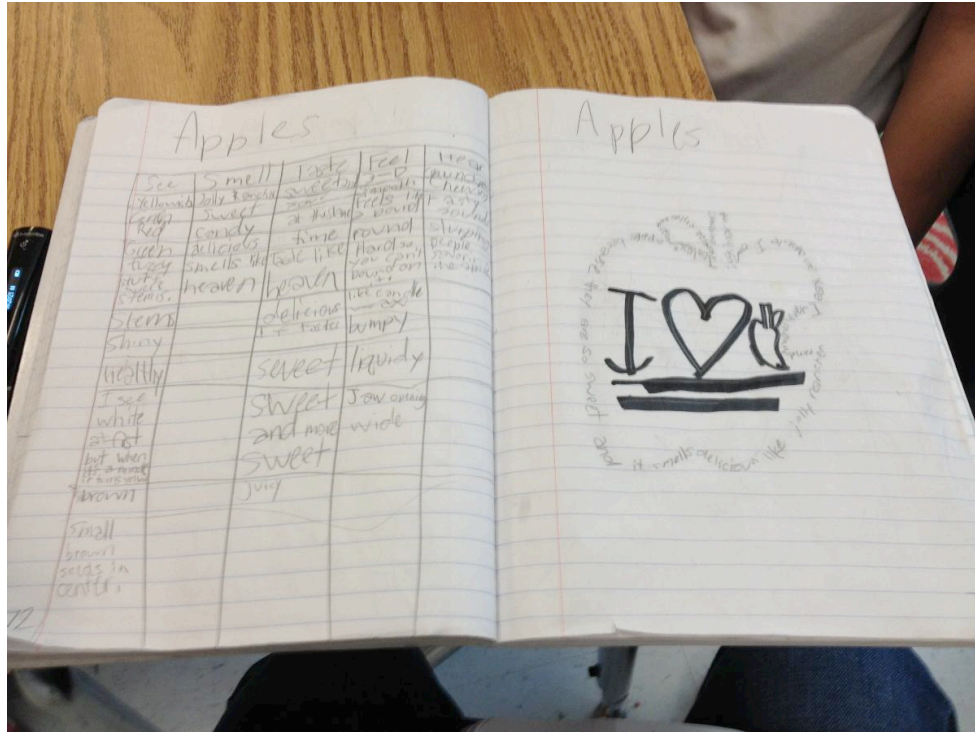


## APPENDIX A: PROTOCOL QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

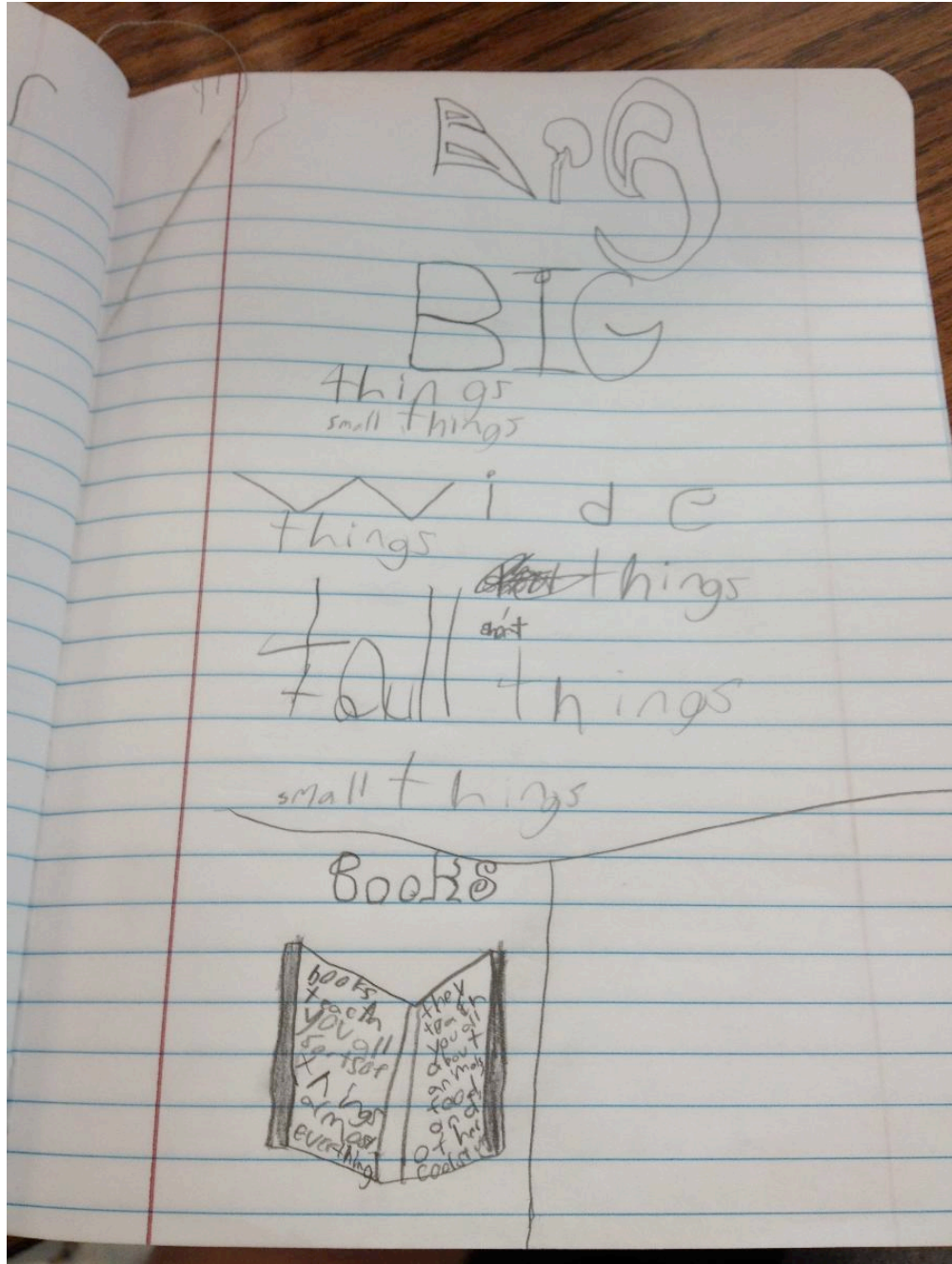
Protocol question for Q 1...”Why and to whom are you writing (insert specific pen/paper and/or new media assignment)?”

Protocol questions for Q 2...I will ask the following protocol question during these interviews—“Talk to me about what happened earlier when...” Asking the question in this way allows both teachers and students to describe (from their own perspectives) the interactions taking place during instruction.

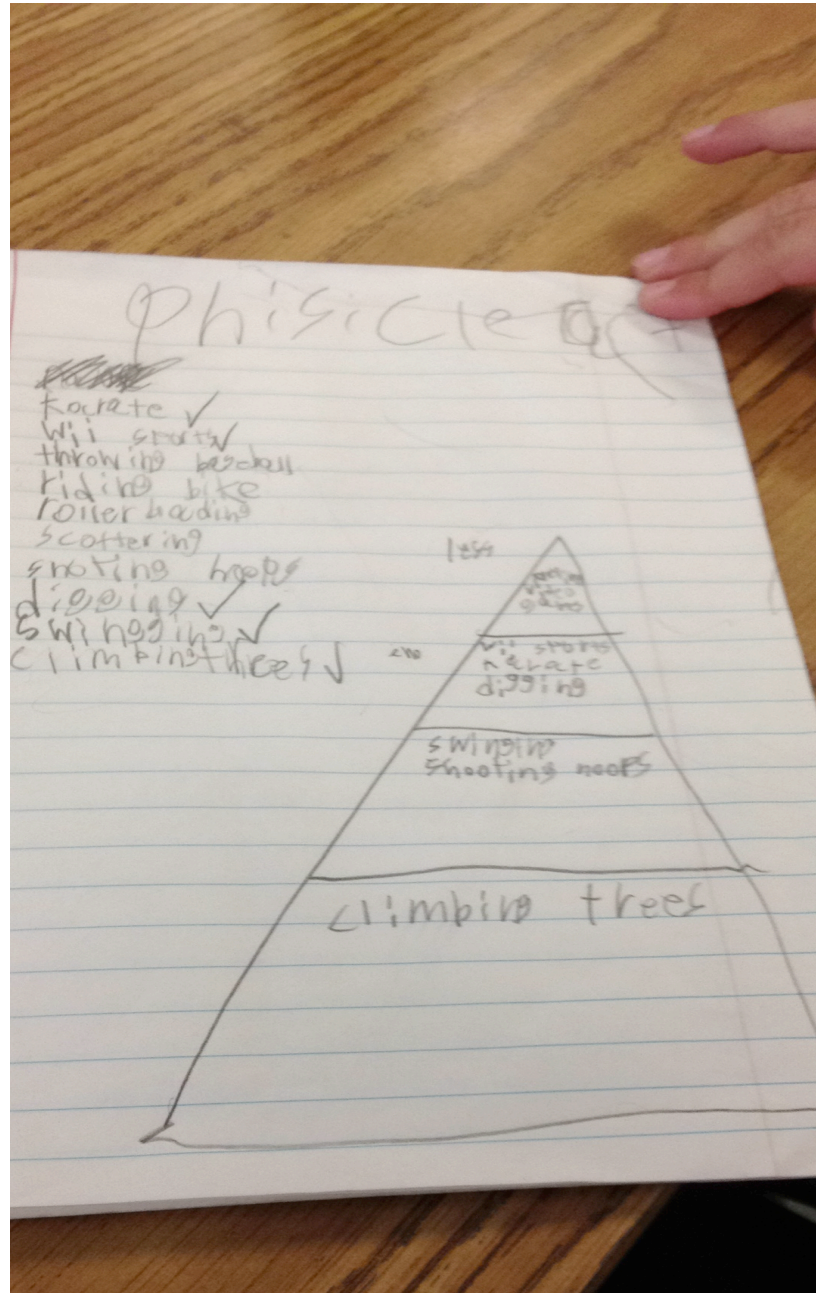
APPENDIX B: GREGORY'S CHART AND PICTURE POEM



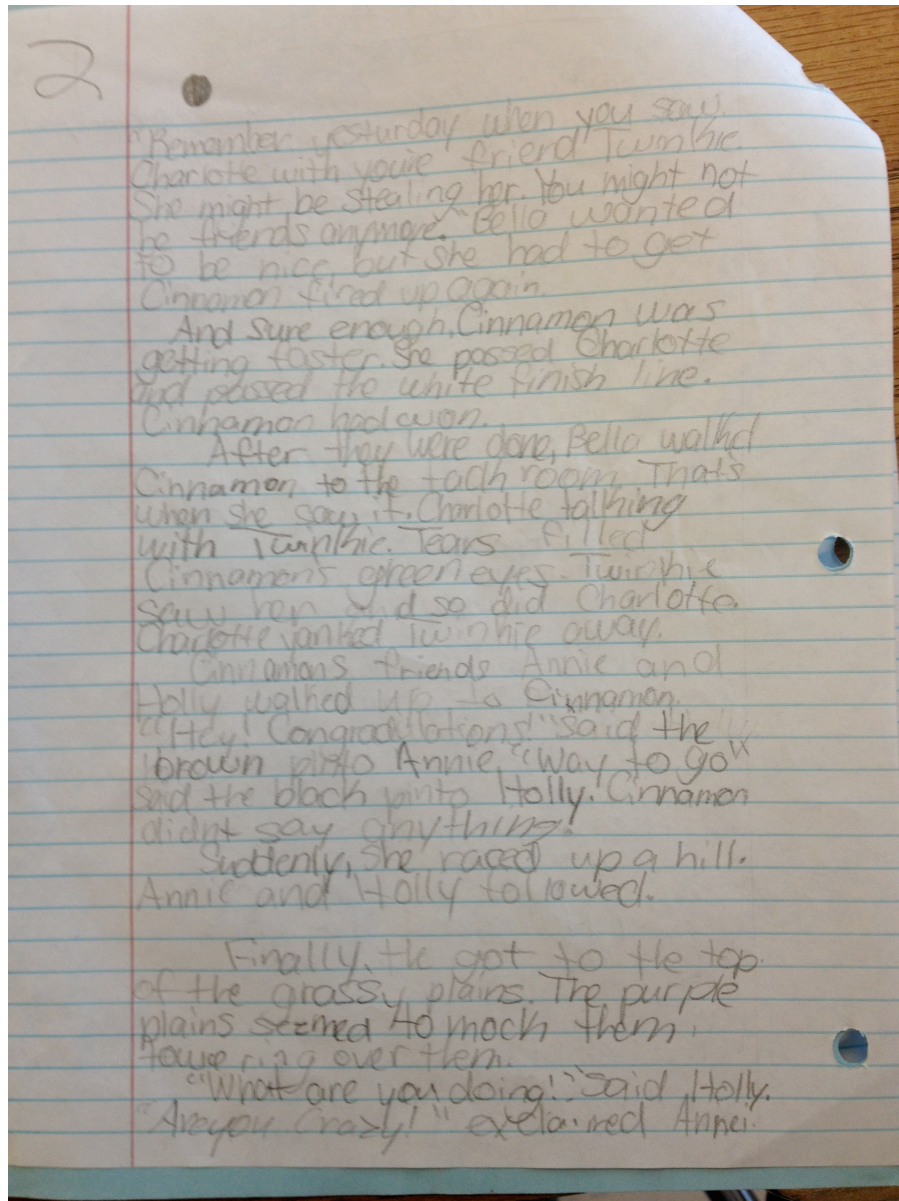
APPENDIX C: CAMERON'S EXPERIMENTING WITH FONT AND DESIGN



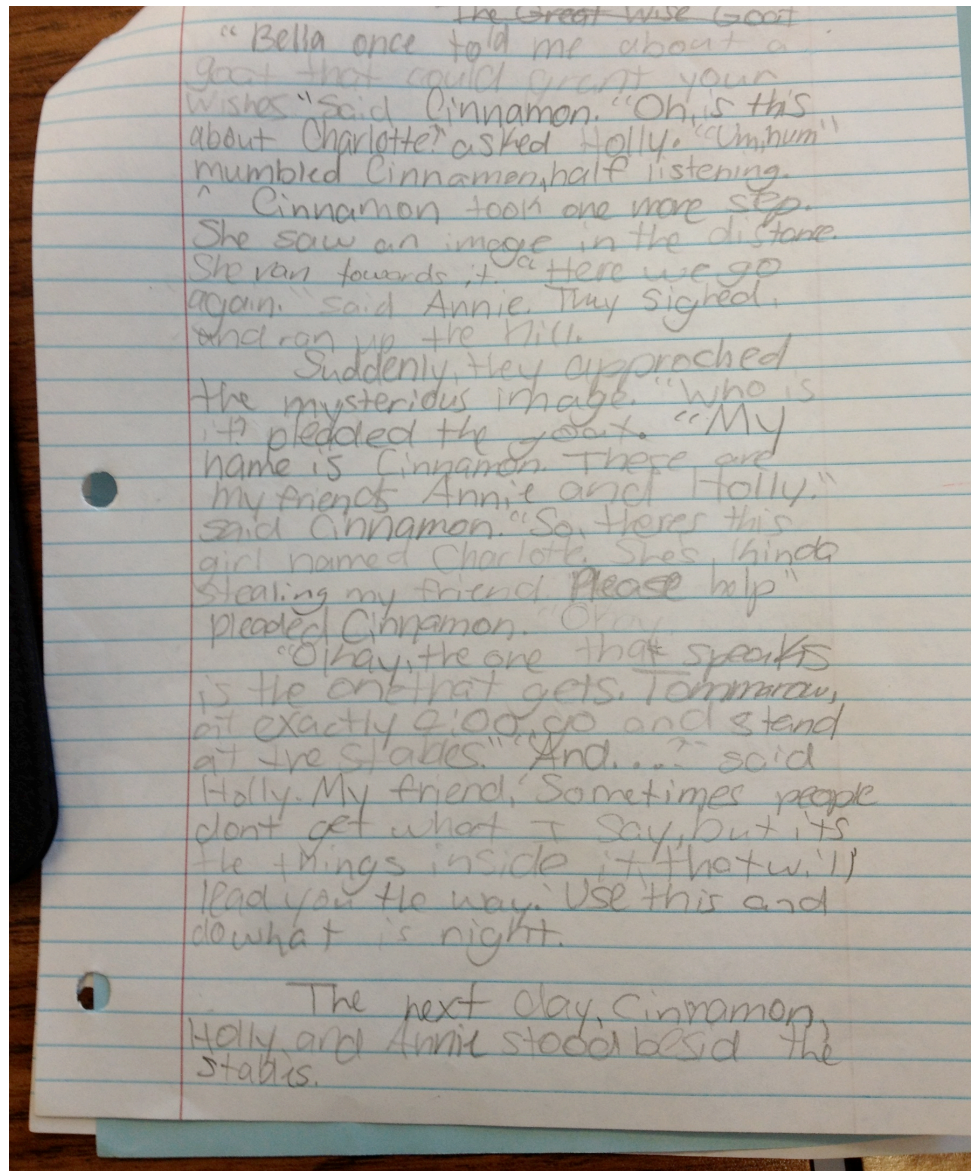
APPENDIX D: LUKE'S DAYBOOK ENTRY/SCIENCE PYRAMID



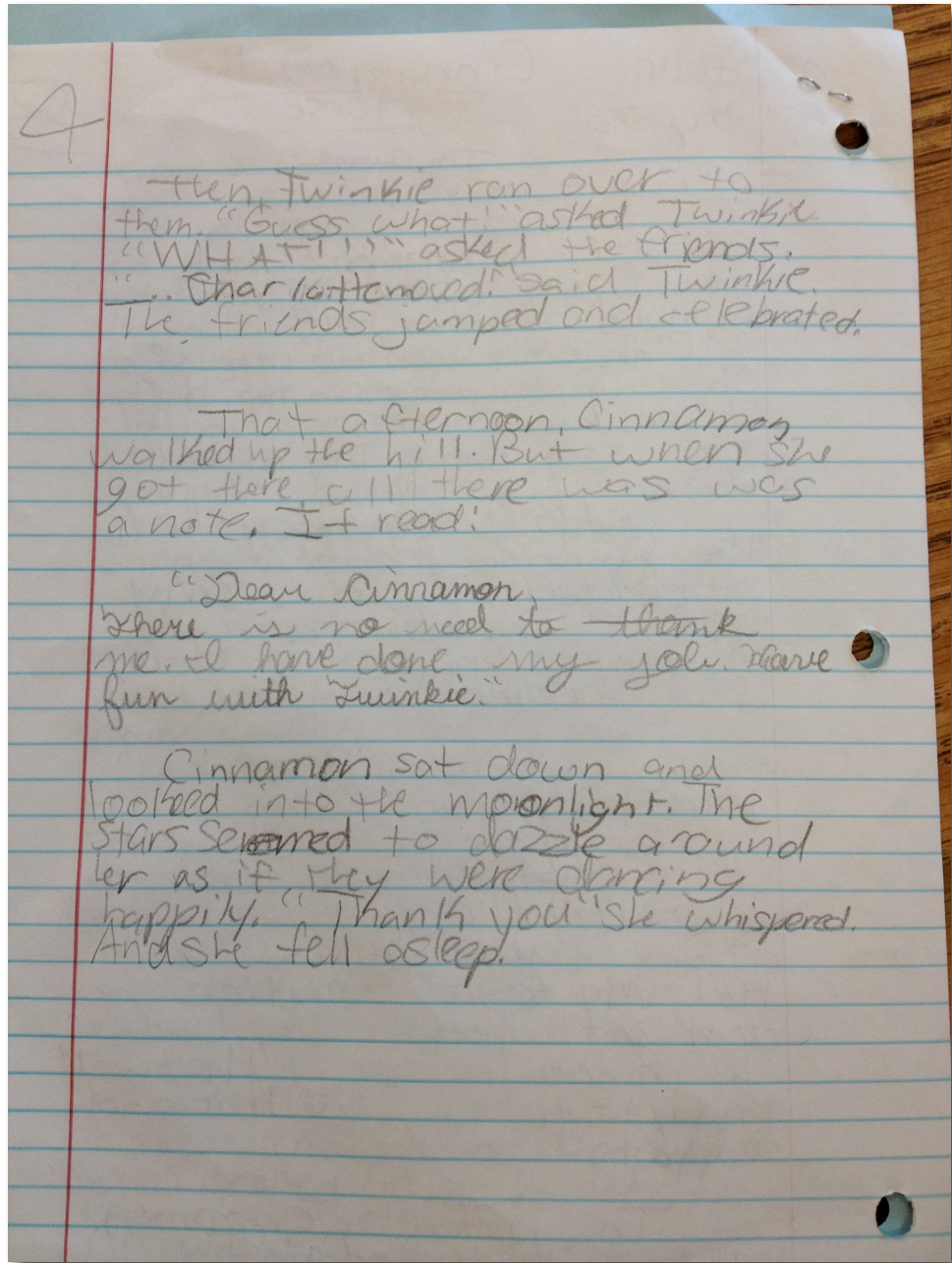
## APPENDIX E: SOPHIA'S STORY-PAGE 2



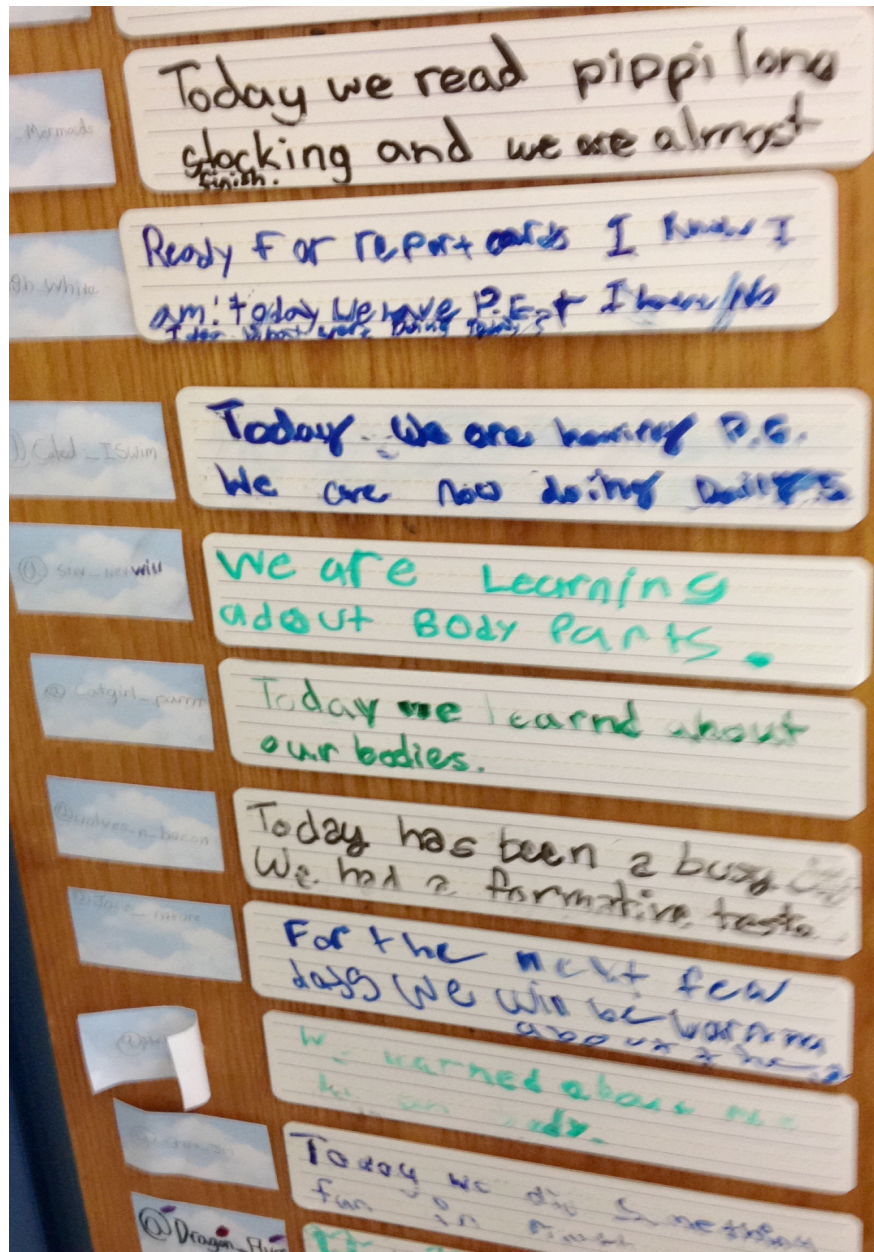
## APPENDIX F: SOPHIA'S STORY-PAGE 3



## APPENDIX G: SOPHIA'S STORY-PAGE 4

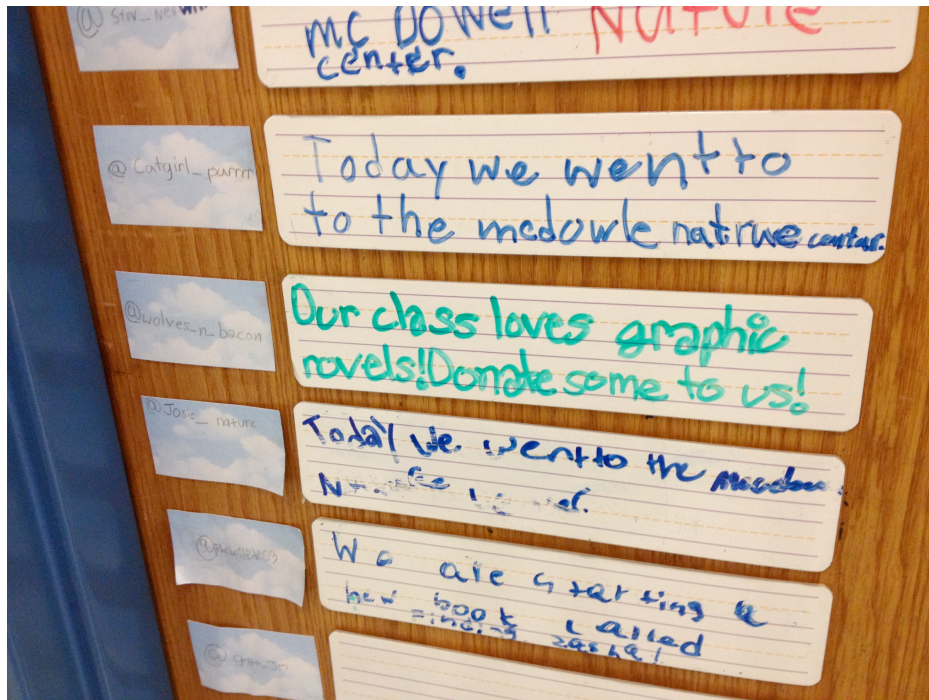


APPENDIX H: TWITTER DOOR 2





APPENDIX I: TWITTER DOOR 3



### APPENDIX J: CLASS TWITTER FEED



The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter profile page. At the top, there is a profile picture of a colorful pinwheel with a gear in the center. Below the picture, the name of the account is partially obscured by a white box, with the word "Class" visible. The handle is also partially obscured by a white box. The bio text reads: "3rd graders excited to connect with people and classes around the world! Check out our blogs at kidb [redacted] [redacted] ibmsb.v [redacted]". Below the bio, there are statistics: TWEETS 242, FOLLOWING 126, and FOLLOWERS 217. To the right of these statistics is a "Follow" button with a plus icon and a gear icon. Below the statistics, the word "Tweets" is displayed. The first tweet is from the profile picture, dated Nov 1, and says "I just updated mv Weebly website. [redacted].com via @weebly".

## APPENDIX K: CLASS BLOG-FRONT PAGE



Recent Posts Show  posts from

Title	Date	Author	Comments
<a href="#">What I'm Gonna Do At Summer</a>	Feb. 20		0

## APPENDIX L: CLASS BLOG-STUDENT TEXT

Morgan's Blog post...

Title: Greek Wolves One: The Curse

One

The World Changes

It was midnight. It was the deepest black the night had ever been. Then a white beam of light flashed. That beam of light changed the world. The greek gods, goddesses, and demigods were sleeping peacefully. Nobody noticed the curse, not even the wise Athena who I thought would of noticed. If you are wondering who I am, I am the brave demigod daughter of Athena, I am Lathena. My dad was a strange officeman who is rich and probably lives in Manhattan. Well, let's stop talking about my dad. He is pretty boring. Then as I was saying the sun rose and I woke up. I walked toward my mirror. I shrieked! I had been changed into a wolf overnight! I ran to my best friends rooms Tyke and Thalia. I saw that they were wolves too! This was a problem. Thalia said "This is very strange. How come we are wolves?" "Lathena, did you curse us with your wisdom?" said Tyke in a stern voice. "No! I promise I didn't do it!" I said. "Okay then, but we need to find out this guilty person." said Thalia. "Why don't we ride our pegasuses Mount Olympus and ask the gods and goddesses what is going on!" I said excited. We trotted out of our cabin. The moon was still shining and it was very misty. We walked up to the pegasus stable, but there were wolf-pegasuses. The large wolves with wings knelt down to each of their owners. Mine was the blueish gray of my mom and I eye's. Thalia's was a deep black while Tyke's was a dark gray. We hopped up one our wolf- pegasuses. They

flew us quickly through the dark. Tyke started to moan “I’m hungry.” I didn’t really know where Tyke was because we blended into our wolf-pegasuses. Our wolf-pegasuses lowered to the ground, then walked us to the nearest restaurant. The old broken sign said Baconland. I started to drool. Thalia and Tyke did the same. we walked into Baconland and everyone there also had been turned into wolves. It was crowded and making a lot of business. A waitress wolf walked up to us and said “Follow me to your table.” She lead us to a booth. Then she left us and a new wolf waitress came. She said “My name is Mallela. I will be your waitress today. Today’s special is ten pieces of bacon. What is your drink order?” “I will have water.” said Thalia. “Me too.” I said. “Same with me.” said Tyke. Then she left to get our drinks. While waiting we were talking. “I can’t wait to finally meet my dad Zeus!” said Tyke. “Well, I can’t wait to meet my dad Posiden.” said Thalia. “I wonder what my mom Athena will plan to use our wise mind skills.” I said. Then Mallela came back with our waters on her back. They were carefully balanced. We took our drinks and then Mallela nicely asked “What would you like to eat today?” I responded in a hungry voice “We all would like today’s special.” Mallela ran into the kitchen and brought back our bacon. In my purse I fished out five dollars and payed for our breakfast. We quickly gobbled up our bacon. Then we left Baconland and walked up to our wolf-pegasuses. I hopped onto Athena, Thalia hopped onto Shadow, and Tyke hopped onto Shaggers. We lifted up into the air. It was very cloudy so the wolf-pegasuses kept making weird turns. Then for some strange reason our wolf-pegasuses started to lower to the ground. Their stomachs started to growl and they were resting. I saw a caribou and immediately killed it. I gave it to the wolf-pegasuses and they ate quickly. Thalia, Tyke, and I started to rest by our wolf-pegasuses. We were hanging out and

hunting deer to eat. Then it was the deep black of night and we drifted off to sleep. Then we woke up early. A cyclops wolf dodged at us. We jumped onto our wolf-pegasuses and flew away as the angry wolf cyclops chased us. The wolf-pegasuses flew so fast that after two hours of flying we arrived to Mount. Olympus. "Lathena! You are here! We need you and were expecting you!" shouted Athena excitedly. Posiden and Zeus were also at the pegasus stable. "Zeus, meet one of your demigod sons Tyke." I said. I also said "Posiden meet a demigod daughter of yours, Thalia." "Dad!" yelled both Thalia and Tyke at the same time. Then Athena said seriously "Let's get to the meeting part. So yesterday night there was a beam of white light. When most things woke up they were wolves. I have no idea who made the curse. Now dear Lathena, did you notice anything?" "No." I replied. "This is really bad. We will have to make many quests until we find out the guilty curse maker." responded Athena. Then Thalia, Tyke, and I walked into the big cabin or palace of gods and goddesses. Athena trotted in and told us "You all can sleep in my room. Lathena will show you around." We all walked into Athena's room and unpacked our bags that appeared from a magical appearing thing in the main room. "We are finally at Mount. Olympus!" shouted Thalia excitedly. We all were resting in our beds, but then Athena came walking in. She told me "Lathena tomorrow we are going to compete in a contest about wiseness." "Okay." I replied. Then I decided to ask "Mom could we have some nectar?" "Okay. I was just about to ask if you guys wanted some. I will come with nectar soon, but then I will have a meeting with the Graces." she replied. "This is awesome!" shouted Tyke once Athena was gone. "I think you guys would love nectar." I told Thalia and Tyke. Then Athena came running in with our nectar. "Here is your nectar." said Athena in a rush. Then she also said "Lathena I found a book I think

you would like.” It was later dinnertime. We walked to the dining room and there were all the greek gods and goddesses besides Hades who was in the underworld. We all sat down and the feast of ambrosia began. We had a great feast and we walked with Athena to her bedroom. We slipped into our beds and fell asleep as the stars started to show. I woke up the next morning and all the gods and goddesses were asleep. Tyke and Thalia were also asleep. I quickly crept to the pegasus stables. I walked toward my wolf-pegasus Athena. I gave her caribou and I started to pet her. Then I dashed back into my mom’s room. They were all awake. Athena barked “You need to get quickly dressed in the bathroom! Our contest is in one hour!” She was already dressed. I got changed and ran to the dining table. I was the last person to sit down. Then everybody started to gobble down bacon and ambrosia. Athena and I ran out to our wolf-pegasuses. We climbed onto them quickly and flew to the contest. We arrived quickly and then Zeus and Tyke came. Were they going to be against us or cheering?

#### Comments

Fred-That is a lot. Who is the main character? Good job.

Morgan-If you read it carefully you will find it out.

Stacey-Lathena is a good name for Athena’s child. If you just take the L off the name is Athena. There was a curse, Lathena Tyke and THALIA went on a little quest. They went to Morgan’s famous Backonland. They found there parents Zeus, Poseidon, and Athena. If Tyke is Zeus’ son, he is Lathena’s uncle!

Morgan-Note to self: I got one risk-taker named Stacey. Stacey is a good person. My new story will have you as a main character since you where the first risk-taker.

Luke: I like how you took the Percy Jackson series and kind of turned it upside down.