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TEACHING, LEARNING, AND
CURRICULUM STUDIES

IMPLICATIONS OF CLASSROOM WRITING INSTRUCTION EMPHASIZING
IMAGINATION, CREATIVITY, AND DIALOGUE: A CASE STUDY (240 pp.)

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When we consider the role of writing in our language arts classrooms today, I would argue that the vast majority of it is framed by Freire's (1984) banking model of education, wherein we have a teacher who knows how to pass a standardized writing test and tries to deposit that information into the learner who knows nothing. In fact, to extend the metaphor, the only withdrawal that seems important to either the teacher or the student is what product the student creates at the time of the test.

Somehow, we language arts teachers have found ourselves in the unfavorable position of having betrayed our own knowledge and expertise. Essentially, the problem that this study seeks to address is the surrendering of effective, creative, and imaginative writing strategies to the narrow scope of writing as evidence of understanding and standardized test preparation.

The purpose of this study was to inform three primary questions: 1. What are students' perceptions of the use of the arts as a tool for writing and making meaning? 2. How would a deliberate, honest, and authentic approach to increasing and facilitating dialogue and communication in the language arts classroom affect students' writing and/or their writing process? 3. What effect does using empathic literature selections have on students' writing?

The study was a naturalistic case study that led to several findings. Of the arts, the study revealed that students demonstrated increased confidence in their writing and began to value the process of writing over the product. Further, students perceived this writing approach as new and freeing. Of dialogue, the study revealed that dialogue is a dynamic convention, one that constantly changes and rarely looks the same in different contexts, and that an honest, deliberate, authentic approach to increasing dialogue creates a comfort and familiarity that encourages writing as well as sharing. Finally, the use of empathic texts allowed students to demonstrate greater clarity and organization in their writing. Students also developed a new approach to voice and audience, and empathic texts fostered empathy within students' writing.