Editorial Introduction: Educator Inquiry into Authentic Learning

Suzanne Porath
sporath@ksu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://newprairiepress.org/networks

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Elementary Education and Teaching Commons, Higher Education and Teaching Commons, Junior High, Intermediate, Middle School Education and Teaching Commons, Other Education Commons, Other Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons, Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons

Recommended Citation

As a term, authentic learning continues to permeate educational discussions. It is sometimes called real-world learning, project-based learning, or inquiry-based learning, but at its core, authentic learning experiences involves: 1) activities that reflect work done in the world; 2) inquiry of complex problems through critical thinking and reflection; 3) social discourse and collaboration; and 4) choice (Rule, 2006). This issue of *Networks* highlights the inquiries of educators across grade levels and subject areas as they implement authentic learning experiences for students.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of modern education as educators collaborate in grade-level or disciplinary teams and across levels and subject areas. **Mark S. Montgomery** and **Adam Akerson** sought to support pre-service teacher candidates in learning how to collaborate through a co-teaching model in field placements. They found that not only was the co-teaching model beneficial for the pre-service teachers, it also supported serving the needs of the students in the field placement classrooms.

Advocates for constructivist teaching, **Tami B. Morton** and **Agnes Stryker** examined their own coursework for areas in which they could provide more choice for their pre-service teachers. Each approached implementing choice in different ways, including a gradual release of responsibility model. By having more choice, the pre-service teachers thought more critically, synthesized content and ideas in creative ways, and were more engaged in learning.

Close-reading is a taken-for-granted English language arts pedagogy that gets a deeper look as **Sharonica Nelson** examined how her students tended to focus on the strategies she was teaching and not the texts. Through her inquiry, Nelson recognized that through over-reliance on strategies, the students were dependent on teacher direction and less engaged in authentic reading of texts. By providing students more independence, spiraling instruction, and differentiating

instruction, the students increased their focus on building meaning from texts and less on demonstrating strategy use.

It has been well-documented that some elementary students develop negative attitudes towards mathematics which can lead to poor performance in the subject. One fifth-grade teacher decided to investigate the use of games to teach mathematical concepts with the intent to also increase students' desire to learn math. **Kyli White** and **Leah P. McCoy** demonstrate how a game-based approach to teaching math can positively influence students' attitudes, increase problem solving through collaboration, and enhance students' engagement in math.

A Chinese proverb indicates that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The educator inquiry projects in this issue of *Networks* illustrate how teaching and learning can be impacted by small steps into authentic learning. What steps might you take next?

References:

Rule, A. C. (2006). The components of authentic learning. *Journal of Authentic Learning*, *3*(1), 1-10.