

Chapter 14

Stretching Toward Multimodality: The Evolution and Development of a Teacher Educator

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Abstract Changes in classrooms begin with changes in teachers. Infusing multimodal conceptions of literacy into the early childhood classroom depends upon developing teachers who understand, value, and can nurture multimodal ways of making meaning in young children, but teacher development is the purview of teacher education. This chapter explores the role teacher educators play in preparing preservice teachers to create classrooms that support multimodal literacy development. It describes the decade-long evolution of a teacher educator striving to promote multimodal literacy in preservice and in-service teachers, including barriers teacher educators face and approaches to overcoming these challenges.

Keywords Teacher education • Multimodal • Multiliteracies • Meaning making • Reflection • Preservice teachers • In-service teachers • Arts integration

My first school memory is sitting in the kindergarten classroom staring at an extra large sheet of manila-colored construction paper on which I was to write the numbers 1 through 100 in order. The paper is filled to about number 75 with a gaping empty space between this number and the 100 written in the bottom right hand corner. My stomach aches because I am afraid I will make a mistake and the teacher will know yet again that I am not as smart as my classmates. My next memory is also from kindergarten, but we have a substitute teacher on this day and get to color an Easter bunny so big that he has to be printed on two sheets of paper, which we cut and paste at his waist to make a large rabbit. I love to draw and add extra details such as yellow and purple stripes on his plain trousers and coat with spring flowers at his bunny feet. The substitute teacher praises my rabbit so generously that the memory engraves into my young mind as the only time I have been good at something that matters to a teacher.

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Teachers set the tone for student's learning experiences at school. These recollections are my only memories from kindergarten, and while they have implications for appropriate assessment in early childhood, teacher disposition, and other factors, they also speak to the role teachers play in nurturing and acknowledging young children's meaning making. My earliest years in public school were difficult. I was among the youngest in my class and struggled with much of the academic work, feeling insecure and worthless as I compared myself to my higher-achieving peers. The arts were the only place I excelled and became an early refuge. Fortunately, I had wise parents who recognized my needs, valued artistic expression, and provided me with out-of-school experiences that helped me to develop skills in the arts and confidence that eventually led to success, even in things that mattered at school. It is my goal, as a teacher educator, to prepare teachers who also recognize the multiliteracy needs of young children, value artistic learning, and expand what counts as meaning making in school and the world.

This chapter explores the teacher educator's role in preparing preservice teachers to create classrooms that support multimodal literacy development and meaning making for young children. The discussion is framed through my reflections over a more than decade-long evolution as a teacher educator striving to promote multimodal literacy in preservice and in-service teachers. I describe this journey, including my questions, struggles, and the understandings I have developed along the way as I attempted to infuse multimodality into the teacher education classroom. This chapter uses a chronological structure to explore my voyage of infusing multimodality into my practice as a teacher educator. I begin with a brief explanation of why multimodal literacy should be included in teacher education and describe my path to teacher educator. Next, I elaborate on five phases of my development as a teacher educator striving to include multiliteracies in the teacher education classroom. While this chapter outlines my development as a teacher educator, I am an unfinished work. Indeed, the fields constituting multiliteracies are varied and complex so that a life of learning and growing does not result in completion so much as it is an endless journey.

Why Multimodal Literacy in Teacher Education?

Teachers play a crucial role in helping children to develop the skills of making and sharing meaning. Despite trends to bridge school and society, children do not necessarily connect their out-of-school lives with what happens in school. While educators lament this disconnect when it comes to themes such as inspiring children to complete homework or valuing the mastery of math facts, educators can be just as guilty as children in not considering the connection between the world outside school and learning priorities in the school setting. In short, the divide between school and culture may be built by teachers as well as children.

How meaning is created and communicated is rapidly changing with the expansion of technology and the figurative shrinking of the world. However, the world has always been multimodal, and adults and children alike are confronted with multi-

modal texts (Serafini, 2014; Siegel, 2012). From medieval cathedrals with their stained glass windows, holy music, sermons, and religious rituals to ancient traditions with storytellers, dancers, masks, and costumes, children have been challenged to find and make meaning beyond the literal interpretation of texts, events, and rituals surrounding them. While some members of contemporary society may believe that the multimodal texts of the past are ancient relics, the necessity of multimodal understanding is increasing. Children live in a world in which the ways that people make and share meaning are expanding exponentially. Popular and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter facilitate blending modes to broadly share multimodal understandings in ways that earlier generations could not fathom. Serafini argues that children “encounter visual images accompanied by written language and design elements throughout their daily lives. To be successful, they need to expand their repertoire of strategies for making sense of these complex, multimodal ensembles” (p. 2). Schools ought to be places where children learn sense-making and meaning-making strategies. Children need teachers to prepare them to make meaning of the world and its complexity, and teachers need teacher educators who can groom them to meet these challenges.

My Path to Teacher Education

The choices we make in life are a consequence of our previous experiences. My decision to become a theater artist and then a teacher educator is no exception. I fell in love with theater in my elementary school cafeteria. My rural elementary school was one of the stops for a traveling children’s theater company that came once a year to put on a performance for the entire school. The children gathered into the cafeteria and sat cross-legged in classroom groups on the cold linoleum floor for each play. I still remember the magic of those performances with colored lights and brightly costumed actors making the cinder block walls of the cafeteria fade into a fairy tale forest. While I do not remember the plot of the stories they told or the substance of the plays, their performances engaged every aspect of my mind and body so that I became part of the drama.

My excitement over theater continued such that my parents enrolled me in a community children’s theater program. My family lived a long distance from town, but my mother drove me to theater practice each week where I learned basic drama skills and performed in plays with other children. The theater program gave me confidence and was one of the reasons I eventually caught up in my studies and excelled in school. I continued classes at the children’s theater and participated there through high school. As a young adult, I earned two university degrees in theater and worked in the field, eventually directing a children’s theater company in another state that, like the performers that inspired my childhood, toured to local schools. Theater played a crucial role in my becoming a confident and accomplished adult rather than the melancholy child that pervades my kindergarten memories. Although it sounds dramatic, I believe I owe most of the accomplishments of my adult life at least in part to the confidence and skills I developed through participating in the arts.

After completing university training, I worked in children's theaters and community arts organizations teaching young children art and performance skills. My interest in teaching grew as I began teaching preschool and I wanted to be involved in school settings. As I transitioned into early childhood education, theater and the arts remained central to my goals and identity. In fact, I came to teacher education specifically because I wanted to contribute to keeping the arts in schools. I believed then, as I do now, that the demise of arts in education places society and individuals at risk. The arts help us to understand circumstances beyond our personal experience. They can nurture a sense of caring for ourselves and others, and for young children, like my kindergarten self, the arts are a way of making meaning and belonging in the world (Haggerty, 2010). I thought that becoming a teacher educator would allow me to work toward stemming the tide of the arts' demise from public school.

Eventually I enrolled in a doctoral program in teacher education. My mind was flooded with new learning in philosophy, pedagogy, research methods, and clinical approaches; however, the arts were not part of my experience. I found ways to incorporate artistic approaches into my studies, but despite the many connections I saw within education, learning, and the arts, the doctoral curriculum and the expectations of work and study in my program pushed artistic ways of thinking and learning aside. The arts remained important to me personally so I often pushed back, but the extent to which I used art as a way to understand the world diminished.

Teacher Educator Stage One: Barely Surviving

I started work as a teacher educator in the early 2000s and immersed myself in understanding my new role in teacher training and working toward tenure. I included the arts in most of my classes, but often their inclusion was hurried in my attempt to address a large body of content. The first year went by with my remembering that I wanted to encourage arts in education but not knowing how to go about doing it better. The stresses of being new university faculty got in the way as well: committee work, teaching new courses, long commutes to reach off-campus teaching assignments, adapting to a new campus culture, and the endless grading constantly demanded my time and pulled my focus. I lost sight of why I'd come into teacher education as I was overwhelmed by both professional responsibilities and the needs of supporting and nurturing my young family. Working toward tenure, finding affordable quality day care, and trying to publish were paramount concerns so that meaningful integration of the arts into my courses felt like an unreachable luxury.

A turning point for me came when I supervised student teachers in a district that was undergoing severe budget cuts, including eliminating all visual arts teachers from its elementary schools. Classroom teachers were expected to provide visual arts instruction once a week to meet state education guidelines, but most fulfilled this responsibility poorly or not at all, using the allotted time for additional instruction in reading, writing, or mathematics. Preparing preservice teachers to include

the arts in the classroom was the only way I knew to address this problem so I resolved to improve my teaching of visual arts skills in one of my courses. Mindful that many classroom teachers eliminated the arts when tasked with teaching them, I determined to model ways to integrate the arts into the curriculum that would address both art standards and standards in other content areas.

One of the challenges I faced was teaching a single course that was designed to address the entire spectrum of visual and performing arts with young children. Certification guidelines in my state required very little arts instruction for classroom teachers, and I was responsible to teach visual art, music, drama, and dance, as well as appreciation of aesthetic experiences: all in one three-credit course. The task seemed impossible. I divided the course into units focusing on each art form and tried to integrate art forms as much as possible: for example, having students draw a picture or create a mental image of how a piece of music made them feel. In retrospect, the beginnings of multimodal teaching are apparent in these early approaches, but my focus was mostly limited to the arts simply as a way to express emotions rather than a way to make meaning. Of course, expressing emotions is part of meaning making, but the activities in my class did not expound or expand upon multimodality; they were limited to brief expressions of feelings. After completing each emotive art activity, I moved on to something else.

Teacher Educator Stage Two: Introduction to Multimodality

Up to this point in my teaching, I had included the visual and performing arts in my instruction; however, I doubted the effectiveness of my teaching of visual art, dance, and music. My approach was to complete short art activities appropriate for the early childhood classroom as well as reading about and including some lecture on elements and principles of visual art. While my students were engaging in art processes through short in-class art activities, they were not applying what they learned about elements and principles of visual art to their art making or to the art making of their future students. My approach did not constitute teaching art. Likewise, as a theater artist, I knew the frustration I felt when a person untrained in my field unwittingly assumed that teaching creative drama to preservice teachers and young children did not require knowledge and skills but could be done by any person willing to implement a few theater exercises into the classroom. I began to feel hypocritical, even fraudulent, in teaching something I did not believe I clearly understood.

I struggled with knowing how to proceed. The first task seemed to be gaining expertise in every art's area, which for me meant studying visual art, music, and dance. Yet learning more about each art form invariably led me to understand that I knew even less than I thought. I felt hopeless to achieve consequential learning gains in all these content areas and despaired that if I worked really hard, I might feel proficient by the time I retired. Multimodality is based upon the premise that humans make meaning of the world in many different mediums or modes. A mode is a method of creating or expressing meaning (Serafini, 2014) and includes a myr-

riad of forms within and across cultures such as film, dance, or writing. Kress (2000) contends that each mode works in different ways and holds diverse communicative potential. Consequently, education should encourage development in many modes to give children and adults as many tools as possible to explore, experience, and share ideas. Although I was unaware of multiliteracies at this time, I recognized that meaningful teaching of content in any art form required knowledge of the skills, processes, and thinking inherent in that art form. Applied to my own life and professional development, this meant that I needed to develop skills in modes for which I lacked proficiency. I did everything I possibly could to increase my skills including attending workshops on integrating visual arts and dance into classrooms, securing a small grant to purchase music composition software suitable for young children, and singing in my church choir, but these efforts seemed miniscule in light of the enormity of the mission.

At times I was tempted to give up. Looking back, I can see that I had not begun to attempt good arts integration, let alone multimodal approaches; however, the task of increasing my expertise in the various art forms while also fulfilling my many other responsibilities overwhelmed me. I struggled to hold the long view that the only way to fail was to quit. If I could keep moving forward, even my small efforts would eventually grow to make big differences in my teaching and my students' learning. I remembered my earliest memories of schooling and how my participation in the arts gave me purpose and provided me with tools to express myself and even to learn. I drew resolve from these memories that other children needed the arts as much as I did. Like a conservationist would feel compelled to protect an endangered plant or animal, I felt compelled to preserve the arts in young children's educational experiences. This conviction moved me forward when the many demands on my time and the hopelessness that sometimes ensued conspired to hold me back. Butler (2007) describes how the poet, William Blake, evoked biblical imagery in naming the discouraging voice inside him as the "accuser." I struggled with my own inner accuser in the form of self-doubt that I wasn't talented enough to teach my students to make meaning through the various art forms. Like my kindergarten self, staring in anguish at my incomplete test paper, I feared failure and the resulting exposure to myself and others that I was not good enough to meet the task.

It was during this period of questioning my professional practice that I learned about multimodal literacy. The New London Group had met for the first time in 1996 (The New London Group, 1996) and coined the term multiliteracies. In the decade that followed, many researchers and educators were intrigued by the concept of multimodality and interest in this approach to understand and nurture literacy grew. However, little changed in how literacy was approached in school settings (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). It is easy to develop confusion about an approach that is newly formed, and I erroneously equated multimodality with arts integration, seeing it as another strategy for infusing the arts into the curriculum. Arts integration, arts education, arts-based learning, and other arts-focused initiatives are not the same as multimodal literacy, but the overlap between multimodality and the arts can seem so great that teacher educators may easily confuse and conflate the two.

Teacher Educator Stage Three: Early Attempts at Multiliteracies

My first large-scale attempt at multimodal literacy was a project addressing both history and art standards through a study of cave paintings. Paper replicas of cave paintings from around the world were created with the help of a student art major, and I created a scenario that placed my students into research teams composed of anthropologists and art historians who were tasked with analyzing four newly discovered cave paintings from different parts of the world. The student groups used their “expertise” as anthropologists to examine the painting for clues it provided about the life and culture of the people who made it. Visual arts “experts” guided an analysis of the use of elements and principles of visual art that had been presented in class. Anthropologist/artist teams noted similarities and differences in the cave paintings across cultures and then made connections between themselves and these ancient people by creating cave paintings recording phenomena important in their lives.

Throughout the activity we discussed how it could be adapted for use with young children and how an integrated curriculum is strongest when children engage in deep and sustained learning that focuses equally on all included content areas. My goal was curriculum integration, but I wanted my preservice teachers to experience how visual art can be used by children and adults both to interpret the world around them and to communicate ideas to others. Meaning making was not a term I used with my students at that time, but they were making meaning out of replicas of cave paintings and using their knowledge of world history and the elements and principles of visual art to create images designed to communicate their understandings.

First Attempt Successes and Failures

The learning outcomes were hopeful but mixed. Students did seem to understand what an integrated curriculum was and how it could result in children learning equally in both art and another content area. They also understood the way the perspectives of artist and anthropologist informed one another. These perceptions were evident in the preservice teachers’ discussion of the replicas of the cave paintings and what the paintings indicated about the lives of the people who had created them. The future teachers used art terms in talking about the paintings, noting the use of lines and colors, but they did not apply these principles by using them in designing their own paintings. Furthermore, they were limited in how they could express themselves through paint because they did not know how to use the medium. I felt helpless in this regard because I could not imagine where or how I could find the time to learn to paint. The project was a step in the right direction as far as showing how art could be integrated with other subjects and how images can be used for interpretation, but my students and I were limited by our lack of skills to manipulate

paint in conveying ideas. Resources were also an issue as I had no funds to purchase supplies and relied upon items I could get for free or with my own money.

I repeated this unit three times in subsequent semesters and tried several adaptations including using different sizes and types of brushes, having student groups use crayons rather than paint, and requiring students to devote more time to making their modern cave paintings within small groups. These adaptations did help the learning experience to run more smoothly. Providing more time for the groups to create their own paintings did encourage more focus on meaning making through art; however, students still struggled to apply principles of visual art to their own art making.

Beginning Approaches to Visual Literacy

I began incorporating visual literacy into other teacher education courses that did not have an arts focus. For example, students in my child development class looked through magazines designed for adolescents to discern the messages about body image, gender roles, and sexuality communicated through both the images and the words. Similarly, these preservice teachers were assigned to go to a toy store and evaluate toys in terms of their promotion of aggression and sexuality. Tasks related to visual literacy included how masculine, feminine, and androgynous toys are differentiated from each other, how color is used to segregate toys, and speculating as to why certain toys are placed at the ends of aisles or more prominently displayed in the store. While these activities did require preservice teachers to consider how meaning is communicated through visual images as well as the written word, my teaching did not include any instruction in how to read or respond through images. Rather, my teaching helped preservice teachers to notice images that had previously been taken for granted, but it did not teach skills beyond simply taking care to notice what is easily dismissed in daily living. The skill of noticing the obscure is worthwhile. Eisner (2002), Dewey (1934/1980), and Greene (1995) have written extensively about art's ability to help us notice what is often unseen and see differently what is taken for granted. However, my goal was to help preservice teachers make meaning by reading images and manipulating or creating images, a goal that was only partially fulfilled.

Teacher Educator Stage Four: Getting to Know Multimodality

At about the time I was puzzling over how to help my students both read and write with visual images, I came to realize that I unwittingly ignored the importance of visual learning and visual literacy in much of my own teaching. A typical classroom approach for me was mostly verbal and project based, rarely including visual images except in a superficial way. Pictures, diagrams, charts, graphs, or other visual

elements were largely absent unless the content of my lessons clearly suggested them. I co-taught a course with a colleague who, despite having no arts background, always included visual images. At first I thought her extensive use of visuals only satisfied her personal preferences, but I watched students' reactions to her teaching and noticed that preservice teachers often talked more about the pictures and images she used than other parts of the lesson. Moreover, my colleague not only used images to supplement text but often used images as text. Nearly 10 years later, I vividly remember some of the pictures she employed to convey concepts and ideas. Within a few months of teaching with her, I began to suspect that my exclusion of imagery not only neglected an important teaching tool, it devalued visual forms of learning. This suspicion was confirmed when I repeatedly witnessed the images she used in her teaching helping preservice and in-service teachers to make meaning. Clearly, I was missing out on a powerful tool.

Incorporating pictures, diagrams, and other images into my teaching became a goal. My initial attempts were both exciting and frustrating because I had to think about pictures and images as part of a social semiotic system including everything that makes meaning (Adami & Kress, 2014). It would usually take me a long time to find the right photograph or visual image to convey a concept, and I often fell short in preparing for classes. However, I did not give up. My circumstances were not ideal. Teaching loads at my university were heavy, and I had no opportunity of support for professional development. I focused on what I could do, and that was to make small changes, a little at a time. My teaching in all courses gradually grew to include at least some visual imagery as part of my meaning-making system. I adjusted my thinking so that I thought about each course as a long-term commitment, something I would teach year after year, even if I had no guarantee that I would teach the course again. Consequently, my goal was to make at least one major improvement to arts instruction each semester with the aim of eventually completely upgrading my skills as I revamped courses.

Teaching Visual Literacy Approaches

This change in attitude gave me hope that I could someday have the skills needed to help preservice and in-service teachers make meaning through the many modes of human learning and understanding. Hope became confidence to more explicitly teach visual literacy strategies in one of my courses. This first attempt was an exercise adapted from Molly Bang's (2000) *Picture This: How Pictures Work*, a book about how images are used in picture books to communicate meaning. Bang, picture book author and illustrator, discusses how visual images communicate ideas and elicit feelings in viewers. I adapted an example Bang uses throughout the book of creating illustrations for the familiar tale of Red Riding Hood. The activity was divided into two parts with the first part writing a poem and the second illustrating the poem through cutouts. The preservice teachers were divided into small groups, and each group was given a copy of the text from Little Red Riding Hood based on

a version by Charles Perrault (2009). Students were asked to write a short poem describing what they viewed as the essence of the Little Red Riding Hood story. They read their poems aloud to the group and then the group discussed the best liked parts of the poems and used these findings to write a group poem.

The next part had students illustrating the beginning, middle, and ending of their poem. Each illustration was to clearly communicate the emotive content of that section. I had previously taught elements and principles of composition by adapting examples from Bang's (2000) book and the way these elements work together to communicate feelings and ideas in visual images. While I had introduced students to elements and principles of visual composition in the cave painting experience, I had only told my students what these principles were, not how they worked to communicate meaning. The Red Riding Hood activity was my first attempt at teaching my students how visual images really worked. Groups worked within the parameters of using geometric or organic shapes and only three colors in addition to the background color. Each group was directed to follow a sequence that included experimentation, reflection, and revision before finalizing an image.

While students' illustrations indicated understanding of how images are used to elicit intellectual and emotional responses in viewers, students struggled with using geometric shapes, often failing to learn from the experience of critiquing and revising their illustrations because they spent so much time trying to create the perfect cutout of Red Riding Hood. Consequently, many groups did not complete all three illustrations and did not experience the contrast in how different compositional choices influence the feelings created by images. The desire to make a realistic Red Riding Hood hindered the group's ability to experiment with using lines, colors, and angles to elicit an emotional response and suggest meaning. Nevertheless, gains had been made, and it was the closest I had come to being satisfied with my teaching of visual literacy.

Making Meaning Through Tableau

I built on this success by developing an exercise using tableau, a theater method, to explore similarities and differences in themes of cross-cultural folk tales. Tableau uses frozen images created by small groups of people to communicate a single idea, moment, or action from an event or story (Kelin, 2005). This technique is not exclusive to creative drama but has its roots in Europe and the various performing and visual arts including painting, dance, photography, and theater so it is well suited for a multiliteracies approach. Preservice teachers were divided into groups and given a picture book based on a particular culture's version of a common folktale such as Cinderella. After providing instruction in tableau and various ways to communicate meaning through this medium, each group read its story and created a tableau to represent the beginning of the story, another for the middle, and a final tableau for the ending.

This activity required the preservice teachers to make interpretations based on their prior knowledge, cultural understanding, and analysis skills. They considered what values and experiences were reflected in the text as well as the values and experiences they held that facilitated particular interpretations of that text (Crumpler, 2006). Creating a tableau helped students explore key parts of the story and was a method to push their comprehension of the story to more sophisticated levels. These learning gains were due in part to tableau's requiring students to embody their understandings and think symbolically through building a tableau. Performing the tableaux inspired discussion on how various cultural groups had interpreted stories similarly and differently since each group had a version of the same story but from a different culture. Students declared afterward that they were amazed at how creating and analyzing the stories through tableau had pushed them to deeper understandings of the folk tales and the cultural values inherent in them.

Mistakes and Missed Opportunities

While this period of my teaching carried more success in including multimodality in the teacher education classroom, I still made many mistakes. First, while I had started using visual images extensively in my teaching, I rarely incorporated visual literacy into courses that did not include an arts focus. My understanding of multimodality in general and visual literacy in particular was growing, but I seemed to almost instinctively equate multimodality, particularly visual literacy, with art.

Additionally, missed opportunities resulted when I failed to see other ways that preservice teachers could and should make meaning in the classroom. For example, following a week-long study of infant development in my child development course, students worked in pairs to develop two pamphlets for new parents, one focusing on prenatal development and the other on infancy, outlining ways prospective parents can encourage optimal development in their child. In retrospect, I see this as a prime exercise for making meaning through both words and images. But I focused only on words and did not provide resources or encouragement to include visual information despite the many charts, graphs, and images I had used to teach these concepts to my students. Shifting away from bringing the arts into the classroom to bringing arts into multimodal literacy was a change in both my thinking and my practice.

Similarly, I had the opportunity to work with a professional artist as part of an artist residency with a co-teacher from another department. After years of struggling to develop my own visual arts skills, it felt like a blessing to have an artist in the classroom who could address visual art from a position of experience. The 10-week residency in abstract painting incorporated several arts projects, and preservice teachers learned a great deal about abstract art. Student reflections indicated improved attitudes toward art and painting in general and increased confidence incorporating visual art into the early childhood classroom. However, the residency did not emphasize visual literacy, and much of the meaning making the preservice teachers did through their art was not discussed through a multiliteracies lens.

I enjoyed working with the artist and learned much from her, but in looking back over the experience, I realize that a professional artist is an expert in his or her particular art form but not necessarily in multimodal literacy or in meaning making with young children. I depended too much on the expertise of the artist, again, equating multimodality with artistry, to help my preservice teachers develop multiliteracies.

Teacher Educator Stage Five: Developing Confidence

By 2015, I felt confident enough to include multimodal literacy as one of the major components in a graduate literacy course. The class included a mixed group of educators with backgrounds in basic and higher education. A text focused entirely on visual literacy (Serafini, 2014) was used. One of the major assignments in the course was to compose a philosophy of literacy in the form of a comic strip or short graphic novel. Students studied the Serafini text on reading the visual in preparation for this assignment with the main focus to fully use both graphic images and words to communicate the philosophy. The assignment was evaluated on the extent to which visuals were at least as important as text and the effectiveness with which students used design and visual composition elements and principles. This assignment was a stretch for me as a teacher educator and a huge leap for the students enrolled in the class. With only one exception, students spent a great deal of time on the assignment. Two individuals created intricate and original illustrations with pencil and ink drawings, several other students used web-based services to create cartoons using symbols and characters important to their philosophical approach, and one student created a short graphic novel.

I took great care in the course to engage students in discussion of how modes interact together to convey meaning. Scholars contend that discussion is essential to making multimodal concepts explicit and to learning deeply (Albers, Holbrook, & Harste, 2010; Andersen, Boeriis, Maagerø, & Tønnessen, 2015; Cazden & Beck, 2003; Siegel, 2012), and I had not included enough discussion in my previous attempts to infuse multimodality into my teaching. As we pored over the literacy philosophy assignment, students remarked on how difficult it had been to communicate through both words and images. Several students admitted that when they were first given the assignment, they thought it would be incredibly easy, almost a throwaway; however, in actuality, the task had been challenging, requiring several hours planning how to use visual images to convey concepts and ideas the students were used to portraying through words. Furthermore, the assignment was not simply an exercise in saying the same thing with a visual image that could be said with words; it was an exercise in thinking visually.

As we discussed each literacy philosophy, it was clear that using images resulted in some concepts being portrayed differently, and perhaps more strongly, than they would have been through words alone. Language is only one part of a social semiotic system through which we communicate (Jewitt, 2011) so there are many modes, or ways, to make meaning, and overlap exists between modes. Some things can be

“said” with one mode and not another, while other things are communicated through the synergy of modes working together (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Areas of overlap and dichotomy among modes were apparent in the students’ philosophy representations. The images evoked intense emotional responses such as a lone child standing in a trash-strewn hovel or suggested an intriguing nuance as in a student portraying himself as a superhero.

While the literacy philosophy helped students develop skills in creating a multimodal ensemble using both image and text, other aspects of multimodality were explored as well. In particular, we watched and analyzed the short documentary film, *Powerful Medicine: Simply Magic* (Spencer, Chacha, & Chacha, 2014). This film was selected for its high quality as evidenced by the many awards it had received and because its recent release made it unlikely that any of the students had already seen it. I introduced the film by describing it as a documentary and prompting the students to first focus on what was going on in the film and to try to avoid leaping directly to deep interpretation. After this initial viewing, we discussed the film and our impressions, moving into an exploration of specifically those things we had heard and seen in the film to give us those impressions. The questions I used were derived from Visual Thinking Strategies developed in conjunction with New York’s Museum of Modern Art (Yenawine, 2013) and introduced to me in an arts integration workshop I had attended years earlier through Gateway to the Arts, an organization that has since merged with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

Visual Thinking Strategies is a method for developing critical thought through observing, discussing, and analyzing art works (Yenawine, 2013). Originally developed for use with visual art, this approach can be adapted for other artworks including film. The method includes using three questions: “What is going on in this [film]? What do you [see/hear] that makes you say that? What else can you find?” (Visual Thinking Strategies, n.d.). Students are asked to closely observe the artwork and to support their comments with things they saw or heard in the film. The teacher or facilitator remains neutral during the discussion and rephrases student’s responses to demonstrate that each person is heard and understood (Visual Thinking Strategies, n.d.)

I challenged the students to deliberate the different modalities used in the film and how those modalities worked together to create a powerful text. We considered the use of sound, music, and image, first listening to part of the film without the visual images and next watching the film without the sound. Visual imagery was complex in this film with some portions in black and white and others in color. I began to think multimodally rather than as someone teaching visual art or even visual literacy and drew upon my background in theater and film. We discussed framing and placement of the subject within the frame and the influence of culture and Western writing conventions in our tendency to feel more settled when images move from left to right or are grounded in the frame. Throughout all the analysis activities, it was clear that the film was not merely a visual art form, an aural art form, or a performance art form but a multimodal text. While the students were aware that film is multimodal, most had not considered how the sum of the modali-

ties in film is more than its parts. These exercises in deconstructing the film and considering the various modalities in isolation from one another enriched the group's understanding of how those modalities work together to create and even manipulate meaning making.

The course concluded with literature circles in which two out of three groups focused on multimodal literacy. One circle centered on comics and graphic novels and read McCloud's (1993) book describing the visual design conventions of comics. Another group explored meaning making in the early childhood setting through Narey's (2009) book on multimodality. At the end of the course, when students revisited the definition of literacy they had prepared before our first class meeting, their views of what counts as literacy had expanded to include modes of meaning making beyond traditional reading and writing. In particular, they viewed images as an integral component of contemporary literacy.

I was pleased with the progress made in the course while recognizing areas for improvement. Modalities such as music and movement did need better exploration, but I had focused on meaning making beyond visual literacy and used my background in theater and film to make connections across disciplinary boundaries. Teacher educators can build upon their strengths in areas such as literature, writing, mathematics, or virtually any field to do the same.

Conclusion

Changes in classrooms begin with changes in teachers. One of the great challenges to establishing arts-based learning and multimodal conceptions of literacy in the early childhood classroom is preparing teachers with the skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to infuse high-quality arts instruction and experiences into classroom settings. This is a long road to travel. Ironically, my struggle to incorporate multimodality into the teacher education classroom is documented in this chapter through the conventional literacy approach of writing. Furthermore, this book's appeal to teachers, policy makers, and other stakeholders to embrace multimodal literacies as meaning-making approaches for young children is made through the written word. Conventional literacy approaches dominate teacher education, yet I do not suggest that these approaches should be replaced. The call for multiliteracies is an entreaty for a more inclusive conception of literacy, one that recognizes the many ways human beings make meaning in the world. This chapter is not a call to diminish reading and writing and change which literacies and people are left out of the mainstream. These traditional literacies have served me well. I am not alone.

Most teacher educators have been successful in a world, and specifically in a profession, that privileges the written word over other forms of communication. While this privileging does not mean teacher educators are hostile toward multimodality, it does suggest that a multimodal conception of literacy, one that welcomes images, sound, and gesture under the literacy umbrella, includes modes that teacher educators might not be comfortable using, modes that many of us have forgotten as

they have laid dormant since our childhoods, and modes that we have little developed. It is not a stretch for most early childhood educators to acknowledge that participation in the arts is developmentally appropriate and valuable for young children, but bringing multimodal conceptions of literacy into teacher education requires the bold leap of conceding that skills in visual, audio, tactile, gestural, and spatial representation are as essential to preservice teachers' meaning making as written and oral language.

The final goal described in my last stage of development as a teacher educator is the drive to "do more in the future." This goal highlights the extent to which my journey to incorporate multimodality into the teacher education classroom continues. As a new teacher educator, struggling to keep my head above water, my aim was to integrate the arts into the curriculum in a way that supported state standards. Later I focused on preserving the arts in young children's educational experiences and helping preservice teachers to understand how art can be used by adults and young children as a meaning-making activity. A friend recently pointed out that these goals demonstrate an underlying tension between the practical concerns of "how" and "what" with the more theoretical concern of "why." How to incorporate multimodality into the classroom and which aspects of multimodality to include often dominated my thinking, but running through it all was a constant pull to understand and articulate why multiliteracies matter. "Why" is the crux of the issue. My primary goal as a teacher educator is not to teach art or even to teach multimodality; it is to teach future teachers to develop the capacities of young children to make meaning. The disciplines and ideas of art and approaches of multimodality are essential to this purpose, but they are ultimately tools for making meaning.

The timid kindergarten child who started this chapter yearned for acknowledgment that her artistic ways of exploring and expressing her world held value. I see this yearning in children of the present and future who need access to the full range of human possibilities for knowing and shaping the world. My kindergarten self, the little girl who could not perform the tasks that school valued, started her school journey as a struggling learner. Like the children Narey (2016) describes, she cultivated different ways for making meaning in the world. Decades later, I identify as well with the struggling teacher who is challenged to understand and implement multimodal literacy into the teacher education classroom. Perhaps the better choice for myself and other teacher educators is to embrace how I am both a struggling learner and a struggling teacher and take up the quest toward making meaning in every possible way.

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