

JOY AND CURIOSITY IN THE ELEMENTARY WRITING WORKSHOP



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Abstract

As schools reopened in the fall of 2021, educators faced pressure to fill in learning gaps created by unfinished learning. Findings from a qualitative case study of elementary school teachers show that at times teachers felt constrained by the limitations of teaching writing in an online environment; therefore, they were excited about returning to the classroom where learning could be fun once again. Suggestions for restoring joy to the literacy classroom and our research findings align with the literature related to designing literacy learning for joy.

Keywords: joyful learning, literacy, COVID-19, online writing workshop

Most educators would agree that teaching is hard work and that shifting to online learning during the pandemic certainly amplified the challenges. As a year and a half of distance learning created by COVID-19-related school closures came to an end in 2021, we wanted to know how teachers managed the challenges of teaching writing online to elementary students and what lessons they learned when returning to their classrooms when schools reopened. Findings from our research taught us that designing student-centered writing instruction should feature joyful learning experiences, which may be key to moving through and beyond the challenges of interrupted learning.

Returning to School Following the COVID-19 Shutdown

As schools reopened for in-person learning in the fall of 2021, educators felt unprecedented pressure to fill in learning gaps, which Dorn et al. (2021) refer to as “unfinished learning” (p. 1) created by interrupted schooling during the pandemic. Following our study (Loewenstein et al., 2021) of a first-grade teacher’s experience transitioning her writing workshop to distance learning at the onset of COVID-19, we continued our exploration of online writing instruction in the elementary grades. In the summer of 2021, we interviewed additional elementary teachers to learn more about how they implemented process-oriented writing instruction using a writing workshop approach in an online environment. When we

asked how they might modify their teaching when resuming school in the fall, they alluded to themes of curiosity and joy. Our research shows that at times teachers felt constrained by the limitations of teaching writing in an online environment; therefore, they were excited about restoring fun learning experiences when school reopened in the fall. However, their enthusiasm and renewed resolve to teach in new and innovative ways was met with many challenges which reinforced their commitment to facilitate environments that promote joyful learning.

The teachers in our study joined a host of other educators returning to physical classrooms in the final days of the pandemic. Like many teachers who were forced to move their classes online because of COVID-19, they eagerly awaited returning to the face-to-face classroom with energy and expectation. Yet, as they opened their doors, they were met with new and even greater challenges emanating from school closures brought on by COVID-19 and other social and political challenges.

H.B. 4545 (An Act Relating to the Assessment of Public School Students, the Establishment of a Strong Foundations Grant Program, and Providing Accelerated Instruction for Students who Fail to Achieve Satisfactory Performance on Certain Assessment Instruments) was passed by the Texas Legislature (2021). This requires multiple intervention hours for students not passing STAAR and for those students who were performing well below grade level.

During the aftermath of COVID-19, schools saw an increase in negative behavior and a rise in social and emotional concerns which affected both teacher enthusiasm and student learning motivation (Gewertz, 2022; Shen-Berro, 2023; Williams, C.P., 2023). Educators rushed to implement targeted academic intervention experiences. Simultaneously, teachers worked to reestablish face-to-face school routines and procedures and to construct learning communities where students could begin to reconnect and regain a sense of belonging. The elevated demand of trying to return to *normal* left many teachers exhausted yet still wanting to build supportive and effective learning environments.

Despite these heavy demands, the teachers we interviewed expressed hopefulness through the positive attitudes, resilience, and forward-thinking. Although teaching basic literacy skills to elementary students through hybrid and distance learning was arduous, an analysis of the interview transcripts reveals patterns related to elements of joy. Their resolve to restore joy to teaching and learning inspired us to better understand what joyful learning might look like.

Understanding the Roots of Joyful Learning

Post-pandemic literature related to teaching and learning during COVID-19 primarily covered lessons learned from the pandemic. It also addressed closing the achievement gap created by interrupted learning from distance learning and school closures (Donnelly & Patrinos, 2022). Yet, some school administrators confronted these challenges by leading with joy in mind. Avis Williams (2022), the superintendent of Selma City Schools, recognized the importance of “agility and flexibility” (p. 30) when developing a new strategic plan to meet the impact of civil unrest and post-pandemic stresses in her district; she adopted a framework with joy at the center. She used “intentional but flexible” (Williams, A. 2022, p. 31) strategic planning, robust communication, and a focus on safety and health by supporting social emotional learning (SEL) and self-care for teachers. Williams also shared “morning joy” (p. 34) with stakeholders through a daily email containing encouraging quotes, funny cat memes, and specific information about self-care, health, and mindfulness.

DeCosta et al. (2022) described how a principal and two teachers reimagined education with four explicit solutions in a Harlem-area New York City elementary school after three years of pandemic-related schooling. Their solutions focused on building relationships across stakeholders and including them as design partners, social emotional learning, reimagining “ways to thrive by engaging in joyful, culturally affirming, culturally responsive, anti-racist learning experiences” (p. 78) and engaging in joyful learning experiences.

Sheeler (2021) described a partnership between Writopia Lab and PS 89, a Title 1 School in the Bronx (inner-city suburb of New York City), that explored using creative writing to invite joy into classroom writing instruction. Components central to the instructional framework for Writopia Lab include play, authenticity, listening, and giving feedback. Their goal in supporting post-pandemic interrupted learning at PS 89 was “to prepare these writers for academic advancement, while cultivating SEL [social and emotional learning] growth through creative writing” (Sheeler, 2021, p. 251).

Other literature replete with overtones of positivity included two books published before and just after the pandemic respectively. Cunningham (2019) shared years of research and classroom experiences related to what she describes as “the science of happiness with what we know about effective literacy instruction” (p. xvi). Gholdy Muhammad (2023) continued her focus on culturally responsive teaching with an emphasis on teaching with joy in mind. Although the manuscripts for these books may have already been underway before the shuttering of schools, interest in putting children’s happiness at the center of learning started years before teachers began experiencing the challenges and constraints of teaching and learning due to the 2020 pandemic.

Research in the field of positive psychology (Gray, 2010) and student well-being (Dijkstra, 2009) have identified growing trends in child depression since the 1960s. Teacher preparation coursework often includes topics designed to teach theories and strategies that support student happiness through engagement and social emotional learning, including self-actualization theory related to Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs (Pichère & Cadiat, 2015), Fredrickson’s (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), play theory (Elkind, 2007), and strategies that support SEL, such as brain breaks, mediation, optimism, empathy, mindfulness techniques, flexibility and connection.

Cunningham (2019) identified seven Happiness Pillars for promoting productive and happy students: connection, choice, challenge, play, story, discovery, and movement. Cunningham claims that literature related to happiness published within the past 20 years supports a “growing interest in happiness” (p. 6); the pandemic simply amplified already-present tensions in teaching and society.

For example, in our study of elementary teachers (Loewenstein et al., 2021), parental support was of concern prior to COVID-19, teachers felt pressure to improve reading and writing test scores, and educators had to confront difficult topics in schools and society (active shooter drills, school shootings, race-related killings, and a focus on equity and inclusion). Cunningham (2022) argued that student happiness and academics are central to helping children to thrive in school.

Muhammad (2023) also responded to social pressures and equity-related concerns in education with a “call for humanizing pedagogies that center the genius, justice, joy, love, and humanity of our children” (p. 21). In her book *Unearthing Joy*, she used a gardening metaphor to put joy at the center of learning. As professional development for teachers and education stakeholders,

it emphasized provocative, yet calming literacy experiences that feature literature discussion and self-reflection, supported by art, poetry, and music designed to “elevate meaning, reflection and joy” (p. 23). Intertextual, multimodal literacy experiences are key to making meaning and responding to texts through writing and coloring “to connect the mind and heart” (Muhammad, 2023, p. 23) in a call to dismantle structural constraints created by systemic racism and to cultivate conditions for joy and opportunity around a child’s genius.

Ralph Fletcher (2017) outlined conditions for joyful writing. Juxtaposing the idea of a joyful writing utopia against what he calls “Trouble in Writing Paradise” (p. 9), he confronted four faulty assumptions about teaching writing in a culture of accountability and strategies. Key ideas included the importance of play, freedom and support to develop a writing identity, authentic models of writing, sharing, and publishing in a low-stakes writing environment. Having a safe place to explore the writer’s craft through honing curiosity, developing critical thinking, and allowing time to free write are critical to joyful learning in a writer’s workshop and inquiry-based learning.

Harvey Daniels (2017) argued that a classroom built on student inquiry should tap into children’s curiosity, foster student choice, facilitate active and interactive investigation, and encourage exploration, rather than assign fabricated research projects handed down through textbooks and curriculum guides. In an inquiry classroom, the teacher learns, explores, and writes alongside students as the lead learner and facilitator of research. “Inquiry means children partner up to gather information, build knowledge, and then teach the world together” (Daniels, 2017, p. xi).

Defining Joy

In the context of education, the term *joyful learning* was described in the *Encyclopedia of the Science of Learning* as:

the positive intellectual and emotional state of the learner(s) ... achieved when an individual or group is deriving pleasure and a sense of satisfaction from the process of learning. Characteristics of joyful learning include being highly engaged in the task or experience while having a sense of wonder and curiosity. Typically, educators and their students both benefit from and feel synchronicity in the teaching/learning experience. There is a sense of shared interest and purpose. (Udvari-Solner, 2012, Joyful Learning section, para. 1)

Conditions for Joyful Learning

Student happiness is central to creating a more equitable and effective literacy learning environment, as opposed to preparing students to fill gaps and meet testing goals. Scullin (2019) described the importance of joyful reading experiences to create equity, access, and relevance in literacy learning, stating that teachers “must embrace and value student choice as well as believe in the power of reading beyond the traditional, one-size-fits-all definition” (para. 3).

To synthesize conditions for joyful learning found in the literature, we looked for patterns across Cunningham, Muhammad, Fletcher, and Daniel’s work. Table 1 lists themes related to joyful learning found in their models that support literacy instruction intentionally designed with student happiness in mind, aligned with the findings from our study that identified curiosity, choice, creativity, and empathy as important components.

Cunningham	Muhammad	Fletcher	Daniels (consolidated)
Connection	Identity Development	Choice	Curiosity
Choice	Skills Development	Engagement	Identity
Challenge	Intellectual Development	Sense of Ownership	Modeling Inquiry/Risking Taking
Play	Criticality Development	Audience	Questioning
Story		Intangibles	Put Play First
Discovery		Invention, Originality, and Voice	Follow the News
Movement			Hang Out with Experts, Partners, and Pioneers
			Facilitate Mini-Inquiries

Table 1. Themes From the Literature Describing Joyful Learning

A Case of Three Elementary Teachers Teaching Online During a Pandemic

To learn more about teachers’ implementation of teaching writing at various grade levels through online learning platforms and video conferencing, we purposely selected three elementary teachers to serve as participants in our exploratory research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Using a case study (Gustafsson, 2017) design allowed us to investigate the unique instructional and learning experiences of each teacher and their students.

Participants in our study included two experienced teachers who taught first grade completely online and another veteran teacher who taught sixth grade using a hybrid model. All three teachers understood the writing process of young writers and were experienced practitioners of the writing workshop approach. Our goal in this study was twofold. We wanted to investigate 1) how teachers created conditions for a successful writer’s workshop in a virtual setting, and we wanted to explore 2) lessons learned about teaching writing from teaching writing online.

In this case study, based on constructivist and social constructivist frameworks (Bertini, 2012), we used Zoom video conferencing to interview the teacher-participants individually. We followed an open-ended questioning protocol to invite discussion on the following topics: teacher background and teaching philosophy, teaching context, and online writing instruction procedures (tools, processes, resources, and the impact of online writing instruction).

Then, we developed focus group questions from the data collected during the initial interviews. The focus group prompts and questions addressed similar topics, and their interactive group responses provided us with clarification and deeper insight on how the online teaching experience impacted student achievement as well as future teaching practices and goals. The individual interviews allowed participants to reconstruct personal experiences, and the focus group allowed participants to socially co-construct new and shared understandings, perceptions, and ideas.

We analyzed interview and focus group transcripts using two types of coding (Saldaña, 2015): descriptive codes to identify main ideas across the transcripts and In Vivo codes that included verbatim words or phrases in the transcripts. We identified themes from the coding patterns, enabling us to answer our research questions and draw additional conclusions.

Our findings (Table 2) show that the teachers and students experienced periods of self-teaching and exploration during online teaching and learning. In the absence of professional development or training, teachers taught themselves how to use online platforms and digital tools to facilitate writing instruction and to work through the writing process. They were able to maintain most writing workshop routines, such as prewriting, drafting, publishing, and sharing student-made books and stories. Students chose and engaged in more authentic and self-driven research experiences. Parent-teacher partnerships were strengthened as teachers guided parents in ways to support student writing.

Findings	Description of the findings
Discovered new technology and uses	Through self-discovery and exploration, teachers discovered new digital tools to include in the writing workshop. Although teachers had been trained how to use Seesaw and Google Classroom before the pandemic, a complete dependence on using these platforms for distance learning pushed them to independently discover how to apply these and other digital resources, i.e., Book Weaver, to the writer's workshop.
Workshop routines maintained	Routines reinforce order and certainty during uncertain times. Using these platforms, teachers were able to transfer several writing workshop routines from their brick-and-mortar classrooms to their online classroom, including author's chair, individual and small group conferencing, providing specific feedback to student writing using typed and recorded messages, minilessons and teacher modeling of writing samples, and extended time to write.
Choice is engaging	Choice in a writing workshop keeps students engaged. Students maintained control of their writing while teachers continued to offer them choices in a workshop experience— including choice of writing topic, how to plan and organize their writing, how to illustrate or embed images and/or photographs into their writing, and how to present their published work.
Research and innovation are fun	Research is more fun when time to explore and freedom to innovate is made possible. Teachers discovered more innovative ways for students to experience research projects typically done in their face-to-face brick and mortar classrooms.
Forged parent partnerships	Empathy and coaching parents strengthened the parent-teacher partnership. Teachers partnered with parents more than they had initially done before the pandemic. Because parents were forced to become more involved with their children's schooling, teachers found it important to provide explicit instructions for supporting writing at home. Teachers delivered instructional supplies at students' homes as needed and coached parents on ways to allow students opportunities to write independently.

Table 2. Findings From Elementary Online Writing Instruction During the Pandemic

When we asked our teacher participants what they learned from this experience of teaching writing to elementary students through distance learning and what they would want to do differently, or what they would hold on to when returning to their classrooms when schools reopened, they unanimously agreed that they wanted to restore a sense of joy to teaching and learning.

For example, Michaela, a first-grade teacher, was ready to embrace teaching and learning from an inquiry stance when returning to her traditional classroom. She explained that, "As exhausted as I am, I am now looking at doing an inquiry classroom which I hadn't thought of before. ... I don't want kids to regurgitate stuff ... like drilling ... just get them to ask questions—make stuff, build stuff."

Tonya, a sixth-grade teacher who taught in a hybrid model, found herself reconsidering the notion of flexibility. Recognizing that teachers are learners, too, she realized that the grace she needed to teach during the pandemic should also be granted to students. This includes a sense of empathy and flexibility. Tonya explained, "This whole idea of being flexible ... [Positioning yourself as a learner]—I'm learning, just like you are. ... I have to give myself grace. I have to give everyone else grace."

Sarah described how she inspired writing by "reading a lot of books" and "modeling writing with the students." She explained, "We would begin the week with a brainstorm. ... I would have the kids make heart maps, share their ideas with each other." While students were in breakout groups, she would listen to their discussion about "the topics they're coming up with, and what they want to write about, what the writing is going to look like." After students discussed their stories with each other, they would write a first draft on paper and upload a picture of their writing on Seesaw for Sarah to revise and edit with students in individual conferences before publishing their books on Creator.

Discussion of the Findings

We understand that our teacher participants may not have felt joyful when working tirelessly to overcome the unusual challenges of teaching young children online and meeting with caregivers during after-school hours. However, the interview and focus group conversations revealed that Michaela, Tonya, and Sarah valiantly confronted the challenges of teaching online during the pandemic. Figure 1 depicts the four themes—curiosity, choice, play, and creativity—found in the data.

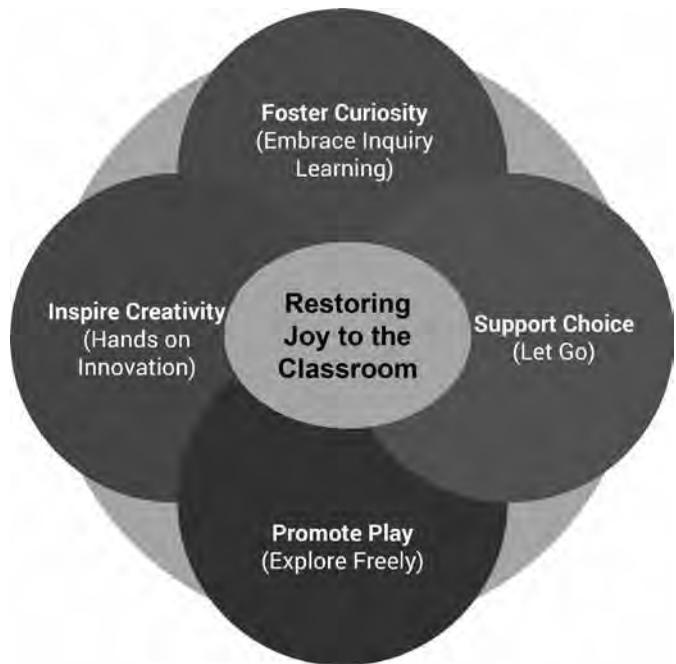


Figure 1. Themes in the Findings Related to Restoring Joy in the Classroom

The themes suggest elements of joy. It was evident that the participants' prior experience as classroom teachers and their commitment to best practices and to their students inspired joyful learning in the online writing environment. Their minimum influence over the online learning environment led them to adopt the notion of relinquishing control, subsequently prompting them to become more flexible and more willing to allow students to take risks. The teachers and students experienced unprecedented learning curves as they learned how to use Zoom, and other online resources, to maintain the routines of a writing workshop and organize lesson materials and content.

While teachers discovered new technology tools, such as Book Weaver and Creator, students were granted the time and opportunity to explore topics of interest in novel ways. For example, one first-grade student researched his topic of interest by using YouTube to teach himself how to play the drums during his independent work time and then wrote about the experience. In moments like this, curiosity, choice, play, and creativity became a very natural part of the virtual learning environment.

When Michaela told us that she wanted to restore joy to her face-to-face classroom once it resumed in the fall, we recognized that despite the tension she felt teaching online during the pandemic, she and the other two teachers found themselves witnessing more authentic instances of learning and engagement. Despite their own struggles to master the expectations of teaching through distance learning, they still facilitated joyful learning experiences, granting their students time to become autonomous, curious, creative, and playful learners. Based on their conversations during the interview and during the focus group, these were the conditions of learning that our study participants wanted to duplicate and expand on once face-to-face learning resumed in the fall.

In the next section, we synthesize the four big ideas from the findings of this study. We present these ideas to support classroom teachers seeking ways to intentionally plan literacy learning with children’s happiness at the core.

Suggestions for Restoring Joy to the Literacy Classroom

Plan for Joy! Plan Literacy Lessons With Curiosity, Choice, Play, and Creativity in Mind

As educators work to diminish the educational disparities (DeCosta et al., 2022) amplified by COVID-19, there remains a resounding call to prioritize joyful learning experiences in the classroom (Vlach et al., 2023), which does not happen by happenstance (Cunningham, 2022). Intentionally nurtured joy impacts both teacher and students (Vlach et al., 2023).

So, what is next? Most teachers have now returned to face-to-face learning and are now tasked with closing the achievement gap exacerbated by the pandemic. Based on our teacher participants’ wishes to integrate more joyful experiences in the face-to-face classroom, it is not surprising that other educators also share their resolve. Like our participants, many teachers wish to move beyond learning activities and interventions that primarily focus on remediating literacy skills.

Rather, these teachers are more inclined to consider how the *whole* child successfully learns and grows by designing and facilitating learning opportunities that promote curiosity, choice, play, and creativity. They choose to abandon one-dimensional literacy lessons and interventions that result in student disengagement and disinterest. We believe, and the literature asserts, that when teachers give themselves permission to center joy in their classrooms, they themselves become more invigorated, hopeful, and connected to their students. Improved dispositions increase morale, even amid heightened pressures to improve student literacy achievement. Table 3 lists a choice of literacy learning activities to support curiosity, choice, play, and creativity.

Curiosity

Curiosity primes the brain for learning and active engagement and makes subsequent learning a more rewarding experience (Gruber et al., 2014; Stenger, 2014). When curiosity drives student learning, students can more effectively process and retain new information, even information that initially may not be particularly interesting or important to them. Researchers discovered that neurologically, students

operating from a place of curiosity produce a *feel-good* chemical in the brain, making learning enjoyable (Gruber et al., 2014).

Choice

Choice permeates classrooms that are awash with joy (Ali, 2023; Cunningham, 2022; Joy, 2021). These classrooms center on children’s voices and identities and strengthen their abilities to make and express meaning in novel and in artistic ways (Labroo & Ehtasham, 2021). In these spaces, children feel unencumbered and free of adult impositions that may hinder their own curiosity and wonder. During joyful learning experiences, the brain is flooded with chemicals (dopamine and serotonin) which mitigate the stress response causing the brain to be more open to learning (Slaughter, 2021). Choice is an integral element of play, curiosity, and creativity. These engagements encourage flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), a state of being completely immersed in an activity or experience.

Play

When students engage in play, their core being is brightened (Brown, 2009). Scientifically speaking, it changes the brain’s structure and chemistry, producing emotions and physical health as well as resilience and improved well-being (Lester & Russell, 2008). These positive changes lead to increased cognitive development and social competence. When students engage in play, they are completely focused, often valuing and giving more attention to process rather than product (Van Hoorn et al., 2015). They are intrinsically motivated, naturally demonstrating abilities to communicate effectively, solve problems, and create.

Creativity

Creative thinking requires students to go beyond the known and beyond common or existing frameworks or information (Sawyer, 2019). It is a mental process scientifically proven to encourage deep thinking, imagination, and brain development (Riché, 2020). Engaging in creative activities develops students’ executive function, expanding crucial skills such as memory, flexibility, perseverance, and inhibition. Creative explorations give students permission to make mistakes and try again. It gives them outlets to build confidence and emotional stability.

Choice		
Play	Creativity	Curiosity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling • Slice of life challenge (Fletcher, 2017; Shubitz, 2023) • Classroom notebooks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Wonder notebooks › Popcorn & poetry Fridays › Impromptu shares › Spy notebooks › Writing workouts › Independent writing projects › “I’m trying to figure this out” writing • Writer’s notebook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Freewriting (Elbow, 1973) › Craft lessons • Choice boards • Creative writing • Multimodal projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book making • Multigenre research writing (Romano, 2000) • Goof-around writing (Fletcher, 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry circle (Daniels, 2017) • “Where I’m From” poem (Lyon, 1989) • Passion projects • Genius hour • Check out the news feeds • Know thyself and others (Daniels, 2017; Muhammad, 2020)

Table 3. Literacy Learning Activities That Support Choice: Play, Creativity, and Curiosity

Let Go! Embrace Inquiry-Based Learning and Independent Learning Opportunities

Although our research participants recognized that teaching writing online was not ideal for every young student and that some of them may have even fallen behind, they also acknowledged that some students benefited from the independent learning experiences afforded them during online reading and writing instruction during the pandemic. One first-grade student, for example, used YouTube while learning at home to teach himself how to play the drums. This opportunity may not have been possible during in-person learning. Our participants recognized the value in providing time to explore topics of their own choice. Another teacher engaged students in personal blogs that offered them a certain freedom of expression. These teachers realized the value of relinquishing control to students to advance their own learning. Therefore, they were excited about beginning a new school year that embraces an inquiry model.

Yet, letting go does not imply relinquishing control to a completely free and unguided classroom. One of the themes in our study reveals the importance of routines. Michaela, Tonya, and Sarah thrived on continuing the workshop routines they were accustomed to practicing in the face-to-face reading/writing workshops before the pandemic. Novice writers benefit from the relationships they develop with authors, teachers, and peers who mentor them through the writing process or with whom they collaborate on inquiry projects. Muhammad (2020) emphasized the importance of intentionally developing identity, intellect, and criticality to teach skills that address students' individual needs, rather than to fulfill requirements of a curriculum or standardized test.

Put Children's Happiness First! Design Literacy Lessons With Intention and Invitation

To meet students where they are today and to help them become proficient readers and writers, we must put children's happiness first. We, as researchers, recognize that as teachers approached face-to-face teaching in their classrooms in the fall of 2022, they were confronted with balancing the tension of remediating for potential learning loss and mediating writing instruction through joy and curiosity. Inspired by the hopefulness, expertise, and experiences of the teacher participants in our study, we have discovered that mediating learning gaps, despite post-pandemic stress, puts children's happiness first, which means changing the narrative from deficit learning (remediating learning loss) to asset learning (strengthening learning gained during interrupted schooling) (Chen & Krieger, 2022). Cunningham (2019) called for "fostering joyful learning by design in any setting" (p. 39), which involves presenting students with options and opportunities that invite children to the learning table through choices that are meaningful and authentic—fostering a sense of agency and ownership in their own learning goals.

Know Your Why! Identify the Conditions for Learning to Support Student Happiness

Teachers typically begin school excited to establish a warm and welcoming culture. Many people experienced lonely moments from being quarantined at home during the pandemic. Despite attending distance schooling through video conferencing, students felt isolated, disconnected from one another, and longed to talk with others outside of their home. For example, Michaela reported that when she opened a meeting time for students to seek help from the teacher, "a lot of times those kids would just come, and they just wanted to talk to someone." This example supports the importance of community, connection, and relationship-building. Distance learning can be isolating and takes deliberate effort to create a sense of community and belonging.

In our study, teachers wanted their classrooms to be filled with curiosity, choice, play, and creativity. Designing literacy learning with activities with students' happiness in mind requires intentional and deliberate planning for the type of community desired. Learning experiences that foster positive emotions, positive relationships, and meaningful activities may help students feel happy and thus successful (Seligman et al., 2009). Digital technology allows teachers to draw from copious numbers of resources today when planning lessons, as teachers often love to share. We urge teachers to consider whose agenda the lessons are designed to meet, i.e., curriculum goals, testing mandates, remediation, acceleration, or student happiness.

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