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***Arting and Writing to Transform Education: An Integrated Approach for Culturally and Ecologically Responsive Pedagogy***

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**Reviewer: Jane Spiro**

This beautifully illustrated book demonstrates a pedagogy in which deep learning about children's place, and place in the world is built through the intertwining of language and images. The journey is told by three educators of young learners, profoundly guided by their connection with Hawaiian spirituality and landscape. The Hawaiian closeness to nature is apparent in each activity, but there is a universality and urgency in the themes which make them appropriate for other settings.

The children learn about their surroundings and express this learning in ways that build on tradition, observation, and on linguistic and visual invention. What is interesting for the language teacher is that the topics, such as *where I live*, or *family trees*, focus on broad and holistic goals in which language is one medium amongst many. The book finds itself in a transformative view of learning, echoing theories of transformative learning developed by kindred thinkers such as Illeris (2013) and Mezirow (2009). It also foregrounds the role of culture in learning, offering a view of culture as intersecting layers from local to global. Implicit in the activities is the view that creativity is best generated through 'flow' – the capacity to be fully engaged in an activity without being bounded by time (Czikszentmihaly, 2014).

The authors' central originality is to bring together the process of 'arting', working with the visually tangible, and 'writing' – explaining and elaborating through words. Author/artist natural strategies are opened up to be shared by the children, such as the mapping of first ideas in a notebook, building up ideas to discard or develop, checking the responses of others, adding further layers of research and knowledge to the idea. These

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processes crucially return children to the intrinsic satisfaction of taking care, working slowly and painstakingly, returning and revising until the job is done to the best of one's capacity. This in itself is an important lesson for the modern world with its tendency for speed, soundbites and focus on apparently effortless achievement. The book, with its inspiring variety of activities, shows the journey is of equal interest to its completion. For example, we see self-portraits created at different stages of detail, with background and foreground gradually filled in – such as the child who adds a snorkel and background of the sea in the final version of her self-portrait.

What gives the book a unique perspective is its deep connection with Hawaiian spirituality. The authors show the significance of this in their own lives, and offer practical and lived examples of what it means for them. They create new language to explain Western concepts in Hawaiian terms: such as *hakuki'i* to mean 'visual composing', or *ikena'au* to mean 'creativity' in the way their Western reader might understand it (p. 62). They introduce Hawaiian dimensions to our own received knowledge, such as the sixth Hawaiian sense of 'intuition' alongside the five physical senses. The challenge of untranslatability is clear: the Hawaiian words *aina* (the land), *na'au* (intuition), *nana* (to see), are more deeply ways of experiencing and responding to place than their translations suggest. For example, the notion of *aina* leads to stories of ancestor legends, cosmology, sustainability and climate change, study of plants, birds and fish, and explorations into human interactions with the land such as fishing and paddling. Creative 'making' is done in a way that is congruent with landscape and traditions, such as the creation of origami birds, reef creature masks, life-size self-portraits, maps, illustrated stories and poems about sharks, jellyfish and turtles. Learning about history, biology, botany, literature and music happens concurrently with learning about their own landscape. In this learning, words and images are consistently intermingled and developed together, such as posters and their labels, paintings and an accompanying poem or song, self-portraits and the analysis of names. The book is structured clearly so the reader can track the teaching/learning journey from first principles through to useable lesson plans and units of work.

Part One establishes presiding values which inform the pedagogy throughout the book. **Transformation**, for example, is defined as 'where an individual or group is changed by the journey of learning, creating and knowing' (p. 31). The transformation traced by

these activities evokes the move from learning about nature, to a culture of ‘profound reverence and respect’ for nature (p. 29); and from acting in classroom settings, to self-expression that fosters self-esteem and self-knowledge. *Culture* is also a concept which suffuses the activities and which the authors recognise as complex. They set out the notion of ‘nested cultures’ which recognizes the interconnections between home, host/indigenous, local and global worlds making up a child’s identity (p. 38). The activities create an interplay between all of these levels, such as activities (p. 233) in which children represent their own identities with maps of the world marked with family members, paintings of creatures with which they identify (such as the Hawaiian bigeye fish), and analysis of their names in Hawaiian. The activities offer triggers which richly remind children of the multiple facets of their own existence.

Part Two maps out in detail seven key stages which take the artist/writer from first thoughts to publication: pre-arting/writing, envisioning, composing, revisioning, critiquing/editing and going public. The child is invited into the processes of ‘real’ writers and artists, who are not content with first drafts but return to, revise and build on their work, allowing it to incubate and develop, and to change in the light of knowledge and research. The illustrations show us children at work, fully absorbed in these processes, with papers, paints, pens, notebooks, objects of observation such as shells and fish charts, spread around them on the floor and on tables.

Part Three sets out activities that might help the reader bring these values and pedagogic principles into their own classrooms. Whilst the overarching environment described in each activity is Hawaiian, the generative possibilities of each activity are clear: for example, classification of leaves according to shape and colour (p. 150), researching genealogies, or painting self-portraits of future selves. The activities are classified according to age appropriacy, and the reader/teacher is given tips about preparation and assessment. The appendices provide resources – worksheets and templates – giving the reader a complete toolkit for their own arting/writing classrooms.

There are certain leaps of faith which the language teacher in urban settings might need to make. Language is not specifically scaffolded, but developed as integral to learning about the world. In this sense, language is developed through curriculum content, as in the CLIL approach (Marsh, 1994). The European project of CLIL (Content and Language

Integrated Learning) thoroughly endorses the view that language develops effectively when content knowledge and skills are the focus, rather than the language itself. In addition, the authors have been able to develop their holistic and joined-up pedagogy, in a setting that ideally suits it. It would be of much interest to trial these activities in settings where traditions, ancestral stories, and connection with the world are diminished or problematic. This is a highly topical challenge, and one that has been taken up by children as their most pressing cause, since Greta Thunberg's lone vigil outside the Swedish parliament became a global movement (Thunberg, 2019). The pedagogy of place expounded in this book entirely suits children's own sense of the preciousness and precariousness of the natural world. Thus, the authors have demonstrated a pedagogy which is of the moment, leading children not only into the creative flow of learning well, but also towards independent and rooted thinking for living well.

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