

2018

Using Multiliteracies to Engage and Empower Students with Complex Support Needs

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The University of San Francisco

USING MULTILITERACIES TO
ENGAGE AND EMPOWER STUDENTS
WITH COMPLEX SUPPORT NEEDS

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Learning & Instruction: Special Education

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Sudha Krishnan
San Francisco
May 2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
Dissertation Abstract

Using Multiliteracies to Engage and Empower Students with Complex Support Needs

This dissertation is comprised of two studies:

- Creating New Learning Spaces Using Multiliteracies with Students with Complex Support Needs
- Transforming Narrative Identity through Multiliteracies

Students with complex support needs (SCSN) are frequently denied access to meaningful and challenging literacy instruction. These studies explore how student-authored narratives in the individualized education plan (IEP), implemented during a multiliteracies curriculum, can simultaneously engage and empower SCSN. These studies are based on the qualitative research that I conducted from November 15, 2018 to February 11, 2018 at a special day class for SCSN in a public high school. I implemented a multiliteracies curriculum during student-authored narrative for use at the IEP meeting, which is typically held every year for students labeled with disabilities by the school system.

Creating New Learning Spaces Using Multiliteracies with Students with Complex Support Needs explores the new learning spaces that were created by multiliteracies in the areas of problem-solving, growing complexity in the use of language and tools, and self-knowledge. Further, this study suggests that multiliteracies created new patterns of teacher-student interactions, which led to student engagement, initiation, and joy of learning. This article describes the details of my qualitative research using grounded theory and is written for an academic journal for literacy scholars.

Transforming Narrative Identity through Multiliteracies relates the transformation of one student's narrative identity (stories told about the student by himself and others) during the study. Multiliteracies enabled student agency, and offered this student with complex support needs an opportunity to change his narrative identity from deficit to pride and competence. This case study tracks the changes in a) the cultural narrative and b) the social participation to determine changes in the narrative identity of the student. This article is narrative in style and written keeping in mind special educators and administrators. The purpose of the article is to alert special educators to hidden narratives in the IEP document and their classroom practices.

Keywords: disability, literacy, multiliteracies, identity, learning spaces

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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July 6, 2018

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Acknowledgements

To Dr. Nicola McClung, the chairperson of my committee for providing me with extensive guidance on research and writing for this study. I have grown so much thanks to your mentorship.

To Dr. Emily Nusbaum for challenging me to think outside the box and to try methods outside of my comfort zone.

To Dr. Susan Katz for providing me with valuable input into my research methodology and writing.

To all the faculty at the University of San Francisco with whom I have had the honor to work with during my tenure here. Especially to Dr. Robert Burns for being a great teacher and mentor. You taught me to value the rigor and discipline of research. To Dr. Hyun Park from San Jose State University who first suggested that I should consider a doctoral program.

To the students, parents, teacher, and para-educators who participated in the research. You helped me realize the reason I want to do scholarly research.

Dedication

To my dear son Santosh, whose autism led me toward this exciting field of education. To my dear son Sanjay, whose amazing intellect always inspires me and whose encouragement and counsel were invaluable to my efforts.

To my loving and supportive husband, Prakash, who patiently bore the responsibilities of the house while freeing me to spend my time in study. I have no words to thank you for your unending love. To my husband's parents for their support during these busy years.

To Mrs. Van, Shompa, Padma, Regina, and Mike at Cupertino Middle school. I could not have completed this study without your constant encouragement. To Karen, Christine, Yan, and Cornelia at USF for keeping me going when times were hard!

To my soul sisters, Gayatri, Jay, Latha, Nithya, and Vinutha for all the hugs over the years! I needed every one of them. To my dearest friends Jaya, Sophia and Chittu without whose daily level-headed advice I could not have survived.

To my mother and dear brother, Mohan for always pointing out what is really important in life.

To my father, whose love and guidance are with me in whatever I do. I would not have embarked on this project if it had not been for your unconditional support and encouragement in everything that I have done all these years. I dedicate this dissertation to you, Appa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
SIGNATURE PAGE	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
Article	Page
I. CREATING NEW LEARNING SPACES USING MULTILITERACIES WITH STUDENTS WITH COMPLEX SUPPORT NEEDS	1
Introduction	1
Theoretical Rationale and Related Literature	6
The Current Study	14
Method	17
Results	26
Discussion	53
References	59
II. TRANSFORMING NARRATIVE IDENTITY THROUGH MULTILITERACIES	65
Introduction	67
Theoretical Rationale and Related Literature	68
Method	74
Results	78
Discussion	94
References	97
APPENDIX A District and School Permission	98
APPENDIX B Consent Forms	100
APPENDIX C Interview Guide	109

List of Tables

Creating New Learning Spaces Using Multiliteracies with Students with Complex Support Needs

Table 1: Description of the Multiple Modes of Expression in Multiliteracies	7
Table 2: Inductively developed thematic, concept codes	23
Table 3: Inductive concept codes for student reactions developed during dynamic coding of instruction.....	24
Table 4: Inductive concept codes for teacher reactions developed during dynamic coding of instruction.....	25
Table 5: Inductive concept codes for teacher-student interactions developed during dynamic coding of instruction.....	26
Table 6: Excerpt from the transcript of John’s session showing problem-solving space, December 7, 2017.....	27
Table 7: Excerpt from the transcript of John’s session showing problem-solving, January 2, 2018.....	28
Table 8: Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan’s session, January 4, 2018.....	28
Table 9: Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan’s session, January 11, 2018.....	29
Table 10: Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan’s session showing complexity of usage, December 12, 2017.....	31
Table 11: Student-Identified Favorite Activities at the School	33
Table 12: Student Identification of their Strengths	34
Table 13: Excerpt from the transcript of John’s session, January 9, 2018	41
Table 14: Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan’s session, January 11, 2018.....	44
Table 15: Differences in language use of staff when watching videos of the same student in different instructional settings	47

List of Tables

Transforming Narrative Identity through Multiliteracies

Table 1: Designing Instruction Based on Multiliteracies	69
Table 2: John’s Favorite Activities at Home and School	82
Table 3: John’s Strengths Selected from a List of Activities.....	83
Table 4: Differences in language use of staff when watching videos of the same student in different instructional settings	90

List of Figures

Creating New Learning Spaces Using Multiliteracies with Students with Complex Support Needs

Figure 1: Identity charts created by the students.	32
Figure 2: Pathway to creation of new learning spaces.....	35
Figure 3: The instructional sequence for traditional instruction with John.	36
Figure 4: The instructional sequence for multiliteracies instruction with John.....	37
Figure 5: The instructional sequence in multiliteracies session with Ethan.	38
Figure 6: Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in traditional instruction in the classroom.	39
Figure 7: Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in multiliteracies instruction in the classroom.	40
Figure 8: Nested pedagogies including multiliteracies and ability responsive pedagogy.	52

List of Figures

Transforming Narrative Identity through Multiliteracies

Figure 1: The instructional sequence for traditional instruction with John.	79
Figure 2: Identity chart created by John.	81
Figure 3: The instructional sequence for multiliteracies instruction with John.	86
Figure 4: Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in traditional instruction in the classroom.	87
Figure 5: Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in multiliteracies instruction in the classroom.	88

Creating New Learning Spaces Using Multiliteracies with Students with Complex

Support Needs

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Abstract

Students with complex support needs (SCSN) are frequently denied access to meaningful and challenging literacy instruction. This study explores how student-authored narratives in the individualized education plan (IEP), implemented during a multiliteracies curriculum, can simultaneously engage and empower SCSN. This study suggests that the multiliteracies framework created new patterns of teacher-student interactions, which led to student engagement, initiation, and joy of learning. Furthermore, new learning spaces were created in the areas of problem-solving, growing complexity in the use of language and tools, and self-knowledge.

Keywords: disability, literacy, multiliteracies, identity, learning spaces

Traditional and normative literacy practices highlight deficiencies inside the brains of students with complex support needs (SSCN) to explain their struggles with learning and to justify denying them access to rich literacy experiences. By contrast, multiliteracies practices are thought to provide access to meaningful and challenging literacy instruction regardless of student support needs (Luke and Freebody, 1999; Kliever & Biklen, 2001). However, few studies have explored multiliteracies pedagogy with this population to see if this approach affords students more literacy opportunities than traditional approaches or whether research with this unique population and their teachers adds to the conversation on multiliteracies.

The traditional or autonomous model of literacy, privileged in U.S. K-12 schools, views literacy as a neutral, decontextualized set of skills related to the reading and writing of printed text that must be acquired in a particular developmental sequence (Street, 2003; Perry, 2012). For example, first students are expected to learn the alphabet, then to decode words, and once they recognize words accurately and fluently, they can finally move on to reading for understanding. When SSCN are unable to climb the required ladder of literacy, they are often excluded from the full range of literacy activities provided to their nondisabled peers across the United States and confined to low level literacy skills or functional skills (Katims, 2000; Kliever & Biklen, 2001; Conners, 2003; Mirenda, 2003; Foley & Staples, 2007; Kliever, 2008; Browder et al., 2009; Forts & Luckasson, 2011; Schnorr, 2011; Moretti & Frandell, 2013; Cologon & McNaught, 2014; Copeland, Keefe, & de Valenzuela, 2014).

By contrast, the pedagogy of multiliteracies frees the concept of literacy from the shackles of print-based reading and writing to a more expansive definition by including

oral, visual, audio, tactile, gestural, and spatial forms of meaning-making (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). By allowing all students to participate in literacy activities using the modes of expression that they are comfortable with, and validating both conventional and unconventional forms of grammatical usage, multiliteracies has opened up learning spaces for youth marginalized in educational settings because of their status as minorities, English Language Learners, or immigrants, and has given them a chance to demonstrate their competencies even if they are not fluent in the language expected at school (Street, 2003; Moje & Hinchman, 2004; Morrell, 2004; Leander & Lovvorn, 2006; Black, 2006; Blackburn, 2005, Blackburn, Clark, Kenney, & Smith, 2009; Blackburn & Clark, 2010).

However, applying the pedagogy of multiliteracies to SCSN requires further accommodation and strategies that are responsive to the unique characteristics of these students who may have vastly different ways of making meaning, designing narratives, and using signs and symbols for communication (Kliewer, 2008). This study investigated multiliteracies activities in a special day classroom, proposing they can be meaningful and empowering when designed to be responsive to the learning needs of SCSN. This study involved the creation of a student-authored multimodal book on a tablet, using text, images, audio, and video input, which was presented by two participating students, John and Ethan, (all names pseudonyms) as part of their input into their individualized education plan (IEP) meeting, typically held annually for all students with special needs in U.S. schools.

In the section that follows, first, I introduce the pedagogy of multiliteracies. Then, I show how the multimodal book project embodied the principles of multiliteracies.

Then, I discuss related research that has used multiliteracies with various marginalized

student populations. Finally, I develop an instructional design framework that is responsive to students with significant and complex support needs.

Theoretical Rationale and Related Literature

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

Drawing on the socio-cultural traditions of literacy, I argue that literacy practices are never neutral and different literacy practices can position students differently for failure or success at school (Luke & Freebody, 1999). The pedagogy of multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996; Serafini & Gee, 2017) challenges the traditional and normative models of literacy in several ways. While the autonomous model defines literacy as a single set of sequential skills in reading and writing of the print-based text, multiliteracies view literacies as being multiple and language as being ideologically and socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1962; Bakhtin, 1981; Serafini & Gee, 2017). Thus, multiliteracies can include various forms of representation and text, as shown in Table 1, including visual, audio, gestural, and spatial (Kress, 2000; Moje & Hinchman, 2004; Morrell, 2004; Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall & Tower, 2006; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). For example, multiliteracies include how people make meaning using the Internet, multimedia, social media, video games, and even children's pretend play (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). By rejecting the privileging of written and spoken language over other diverse modes of meaning-making, and acknowledging the potential and limitations of each mode, multiliteracies recognize the contribution and competence of meaning-makers who may not be "fluent" in the language—as determined by normative school standards (Cowan & Kress, 2017).

Table 1

Description of the Multiple Modes of Expression in Multiliteracies

Mode	Description and Examples
Written	Writing and reading (handwriting, the printed page, the screen)
Oral	Live or recorded speech, listening
Visual	Still or moving image (representing meaning to another); view, scene, perspective (representing meaning to oneself)
Audio	Music, ambient sounds, noises, alerts (representing meaning to another); hearing, listening (representing meaning to oneself)
Tactile	Touch, smell, taste, grasp, cooking and eating; Kinaesthesia, physical contact, skin sensations (heat/cold, texture, pressure), aromas; manipulable objects, artefacts
Gestural	Movements of hands and arms, dance, facial expressions, eye movements and gaze; demeanors of the body, gait; clothing and fashion, hair style, action sequences, timing, frequency, ceremony and ritual
Spatial	Proximity, spacing, layout, interpersonal distance, territoriality, architecture, building, streetscape, cityscape, landscape

Note. Adapted from “The What of Multiliteracies (2): Multimodality” by M. Kalantzis and B. Cope, 2018; see <http://newlearningonline.com/multiliteracies/theory>.

Additionally, multiliteracies include flexible functional grammar that appreciates cultural, national, institutional and social differences in language (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Serafini & Gee, 2017). For example, the texts and text structures used in social media are considered valid literacy texts, as would the various varieties of the English language used by different cultural groups around the world regardless of whether they are positioned as a dominant, standard dialect or a non-dominant, nonstandard dialect. That is, all modes of text, whether officially recognized and socially sanctioned (e.g., the Oxford English Dictionary) along with texts that are often unrecognized and devalued in traditional school settings (e.g., text messages, graffiti, nonverbal or non-written texts) are considered worthy of recognition, interpretation, analysis, critique, and production. Finally, multiliteracies transform the concept of the reader or writer to that of a designer,

implying that the producers and consumers of multimodal texts are not only making meaning from what is represented but also designing their experience of the text while interacting with it (Serafini and Gee, 2017).

The multimodal book project embodied the following four principles of multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis, 2015), including:

1. *Experiencing*, defined as meaning-making in the real-world context also known as *situated practice* (The New London Group, 1996), which was reflected in the project as being situated in students' lives and their experiences at school and home.
2. *Conceptualizing*, scaffolding and supporting students in the knowledge process through multiple modalities, also known as *overt instruction* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015), which was reflected in the project by the scaffolding of the instruction designed to meet student needs and modalities and the explicit instruction of the language of digital tools and critical analysis.
3. *Analyzing*, the process of critically exploring the socio-cultural contexts and purposes of learning, also known as *critical framing* (Mills, 2009), which was reflected in the way the project interrogated the existing deficit identity of the students.
4. *Applying*, producing texts and putting them to use in communicative action, or in other words *transformed practice* (Cope and Kalantzis, 2015), which was reflected in the use of the multimodal book in the IEP meeting as the students' input about their strengths and preferences.

Related Research

Scholars have used multiliteracies to develop new learning spaces with students who have struggled with traditional school-based literacy practices because of their

English language learner, immigrant, learning abilities, sexual orientation, or minority status (Morrell, 2004; Moje & Hinchman, 2004; Heron-Hruby, Wood, & Mraz, 2008; Bruce, 2008).

By challenging what traditionally counts as literature in schools and using diverse texts, such as rap music lyrics, popular movies (e.g., *The Godfather*), and documentaries (e.g., *The Killing Fields of America*), Morrell (2002, 2004, 2005) successfully engaged struggling minority students from two urban high schools in critical reading and writing, enabling them to produce work that is “reserved for the most elite prep schools in the country” (Morrell, 2008, p. 112).

Working with English language learners, Moje and Hinchman (2004) showed how teachers who moved away from traditional teaching methods and instead incorporated multiliterate and culturally responsive practices like using topics situated in the students’ lives to generate curriculum about concepts in mathematics (e.g., restaurant menus to teach percentages) and science (e.g., air quality in the community to teach chemistry, or common illnesses to teach communicable diseases) were successful in motivating previously unenthusiastic learners to engage in learning.

Similarly, Bruce (2008) found that students struggling with traditional print writing were able to show that they could use complex compositional strategies, including an extended process of planning, drafting, feedback, reflection, and revising, typically associated with skilled writers, when they were given an opportunity to make a video project on interpreting and responding to popular music video compositions. Despite these students’ apparent disinterest and low performance in traditional classroom

print literacy, they demonstrated their competencies as skilled media readers when they used multimodal learning, as in reading media texts, operating a video camera, and editing the images to create a complex music video.

In yet another study demonstrating that students perform differently in traditional literacy environments as compared to multimodal environments, Leander and Lovvorn (2006) showed that Brian, a middle schooler, who was labeled as a disorganized and disinterested student in his language arts and social studies classes, was actually an enthusiastic and active user when engaging in online multiuser games. He demonstrated his competence in activities like producing and sharing image files, reading discussion boards, chatting with other players, and sending bug reports to the game developers. The authors (Leander & Lovvorn, 2006) argued that literacy practices can be viewed as a dynamic, interactive experience, and while some literacy practices have limited potential for engagement, positive identity development, and agency due to their restricted routines, others provide students with more significant opportunities for success.

Similar to video games, online fanfiction writing, in which fans create new characters and storylines inspired from the stories of characters from books and movies, has shown the effectiveness of expansive literacy practices. Black (2006) shared the experiences of Nanako, an 11-year-old recent Chinese immigrant to Canada who spoke little English, had trouble making friends at school and struggled with a deficit identity in the classroom. However, when she got involved with a popular anime characters-based fanfiction website, she found that she could use her knowledge of Asian culture and history to write stories about the characters. Fanfiction writing enabled Nanako to develop her language skills by allowing her to express herself freely without being

constrained by the requirements of conventional English grammar, while actively interacting and getting support from the other writers in the community. Eventually, she became a popular fanfiction writer for anime-based characters posting her stories online and connecting with a large number of people on the website.

By using student-created dual language texts and multimodal projects (e.g., story-writing, movie making, quilt making, poetry writing, making picture books, powerpoint presentations) that were situated in the life experiences of the immigrant students in Canadian schools, Cummins and Early (2011) demonstrated that the students who had often been restricted to low-level classroom activities got an opportunity to show themselves to be “intelligent, imaginative and linguistically talented” (Cummins & Early, 2011, p. 4). These projects, referred to by the authors as *identity texts*, enabled students to express themselves freely in the language or mode of their choice and show their existing knowledge instead of being penalized for it.

While the research discussed above points to the potential of using multiliteracies with students who have been marginalized in schools (Black, 2006; Leander and Lovvorn, 2006; Cummins & Early, 2011), designing instruction specifically for SCSN requires strategies that are specifically responsive to their needs and preferred modalities. A more in-depth discussion of successfully using multiliteracies with students with significant and complex needs follows in the section below.

Designing multiliteracies instruction with SCSN.

While, to my knowledge, there is no research on multiliteracies with SCSN, a number of researchers have explored expansive literacy practices with this population

that can inform this study. Kilinic, Chapman, Kelley, Adams & Millinger (2016) found that when they used drama in literacy instruction in a pre-school, they opened up opportunities for many students with complex support needs to participate. The teachers, who initially had deficit views of the children with support needs based on their traditional literacy instruction, changed their opinions when they saw that these students were talking more, participating actively in the drama, remembering the stories even after several weeks, and showing problem-solving skills. In fact, one of the students who was determined as needing speech support in her IEP did not need it anymore after participating in the drama. The authors argued that because the students chose to participate in a way that they were most comfortable with, they were more motivated to participate, and the teachers got a better understanding of their capabilities (Kilinic, Chapman, Kelley, Adams & Millinger, 2016).

Similarly, Collins (2011) touted the role of drama in the transformation of Christopher, an 8-year old African-American boy who was struggling with reading and writing in his classes at school. Christopher, who had previously resisted participating in classroom activities or interactions with his peers, started to actively contribute when he was provided opportunities to choose his mode of participation in the staging of a student-written folktale from a variety of options including writing, set design, costume design, acting and directing. After he successfully designed three costumes for his friends, they encouraged him to become the lead set designer. By allowing for differential modes of expression and communication, the teacher had enabled Christopher to experience competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Even more encouraging was the fact that along with Christopher, his peers and his teacher changed their perceptions

of his abilities.

However, multimodality needs to be combined with the sensitivity to the specific ways a child communicates, as was demonstrated by a study with elementary school children by Koppenhaver, Erickson, and Skotko (2001). The authors argue for attribution of meaning to communicative efforts while using multimodal methods. A significant part of this study was to train caregivers to attribute meaning to their children's various communicative attempts however unclear or small they may be. For example, one mother was asked to take her daughter's loud noises when she saw particular pictures in a book, as a sign of interest, and involve her in conversations about it. The authors (Koppenhaver, Erickson, & Skotko, 2001) noted that the parent training resulted in an improvement in the children's frequency of labeling, commenting, and use of appropriate symbolic communication by the children.

Studies with older children have reported similar results. Kliever and Biklen (2001) described the change in an 11-year old student, Rebecca, a child labeled with autism along with severe speech impairments who did not demonstrate conventional literacy skills. After she was given opportunities for multimodal learning using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device and symbols, with help from her classmates in an inclusive classroom, she was able to prove her competence and participate in literacy activities. In the study, the researchers documented how in an interactive classroom activity in which they wrote and passed notes to each other, the students included Rebecca by passing and reading out the notes to her. The authors noted that Rebecca participated more enthusiastically when the classmates decided to guess what Rebecca's facial expressions could mean to figure out her response to their notes.

The activity eventually led to the creation of a set of symbols based on the classmates' interpretation of Rebecca's facial expressions, which she used to respond to her classmates on a regular basis. The results from this study suggest that a significant way to motivate SCSN to engage in communication and literacy is attributing meaning to all their communicative attempts.

Providing opportunities for success and believing in her competence played a vital role in the transformation of a 15-year old girl, Melinda, according to a study by Ryndak, Morrison, and Sommerstein, (1999). The authors described the tremendous literacy growth in Melinda over a seven-year period, after she was removed from a self-contained classroom and included with general education peers, with activities and assessments modified and designed to make her learning meaningful and accessible. For example, when the class was reading Shakespearean plays, Melinda was given the option of participating by using a variety of modes like reading, making posters, or watching a video. Her engagement in the class improved dramatically and so did her social skills. She became more comfortable in participating in a variety of social settings that she had resisted earlier. In fact, she went on to participate in an included college setting after high school, living in a dormitory with support, which the researchers attributed to opportunities for success in high school.

The Current Study

Drawing from the conditions which allowed for the successful literacy engagement with students with significant and complex support needs in the studies discussed above, I developed an ability responsive pedagogy for the instruction that

would take place during the multimodal book project. The principles of the ability responsive pedagogy were the following: (a) multimodality of expression (e.g., verbal, facial expression, gestures, body movement, images, videos), (b) attribution of meaning to all communicative attempts (e.g., when student waved hands excitedly at a particular image, it was assumed that he liked that image), (c) belief in student's competence (e.g., all selections of the student were considered to be meaningful and not random), and (d) opportunities for the student to feel successful (e.g., there were no wrong answers; students were given space to use the tablet and produce media on their own).

Situating the multimodal book project in the IEP. Following the lead of research done by Held, Thoma, and Thomas (2004), this study used the IEP meeting as a context for the authentic use of the multimodal book project. Held, Thoma and Thomas (2004) showed that a student-authored multimedia presentation at the IEP meeting helped a high school student with significant and complex support needs to take control of his IEP meeting. The authors (Held, Thoma, and Thomas, 2004) noted that after the student presentation, the IEP team members started talking with the student, including him in all the discussions, rather than talking about him. The teachers and therapists were amazed to learn of the student's hopes and dreams and volunteered to help him achieve them.

Research Questions

The central questions that foreshadowed my inquiry were the following:

- 1) What kind of new learning spaces were created by the implementation of the multimodal book project?
- 2) How did students define (re-define) themselves through their narratives?

- 3) What was the influence of the multiliteracies project on the students, teachers, and parents?

Method

Field Site

I did my research in a public high school special day class, located in Northern California. The cities served by the school district are racially diverse, (more than 50% of the population is of Asian and Hispanic descent) and the socio-economic status of the community can be considered as middle class with most of the parents of the students employed in the technology sector (Data USA, see www.datausa.io).

The special day class was one of two special day classes for students with moderate and severe disabilities situated at this school. The class had nine students and six para-educators. Four students used wheelchairs, and seven students used AAC devices. It was the teacher's second year of teaching this class, working as an intern while she was earning a teaching credential from a local university. John and Ethan, two students in the class, were selected by the teacher for the study. I obtained consent from the students to participate in the study while giving them the option to withdraw if they did not want to continue at any time.

The teacher was trained in the four basic principles of the ability responsive pedagogy (multimodality of expression, attribution of meaning to all communicative attempts, belief in student's competence, and opportunities for the student to feel successful) before the start of the project. The books were created using images, videos, audio recordings, and text on a tablet application called Book Creator (www.bookcreator.com). Toward the end of the project, the students shared these books as presentations in their IEP meetings.

The Multimodal Book Project

Over eight sessions for John and five sessions for Ethan lasting between 25 and

40 minutes, the teacher worked with the students to create digital, multimodal books on an online tablet application called Book Creator (www.bookcreator.com), that included the following:

1. Their favorite images of family and school.
2. Videos and images of their favorite activities at home and school (taken by them or staff through the duration of the project).
3. An identity chart with adjectives that best described them.
4. Activities that they identified as their strengths.
5. A transition plan describing what they wanted to do after school.

John and Ethan

John was a 15-year-old ninth grader who according to the school records is labeled with autism and visual impairment. Ethan was a 16-year-old tenth grader labeled with cerebral palsy. Both students were Caucasian-Americans from reasonably affluent families that were knowledgeable about special education services and actively advocated for their children.

John preferred to communicate verbally, and could read and write during classroom activities with teacher assistance. He lived at home with his mother, father and a dog. His parents had made sure that he received necessary services from the district and had worked with varied professionals to expose him to different therapies to improve his communication and academics.

Ethan used a motorized wheelchair and an AAC device. He lived with both his parents, an older brother and a dog. His parents were strong advocates for meeting his needs at school and provided with many social activities (theater, baseball, horse-riding)

outside of school. Ethan's input at school was provided entirely through the AAC device, use of touch screens on the computer or use of facial expressions and gestures.

Data Collection

The research was done over 60 hours of data collection at the site and in interviews with parents, teachers, and para-educators. The teacher selected the students for the study, keeping in mind the IEP meeting dates which corresponded to the duration of the study and their unique communication styles (Cresswell, 2013).

I followed a qualitative approach along the lines of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) for this study. Grounded theory is the discovery of emerging patterns in data and generating theories from this data (Glaser & Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory is founded on the belief that knowledge creation is dependent on the actual experience in the real world (Morrell, 2008). Constructivist grounded theory adds the following to the traditional notions: a social justice perspective; foregrounding multiple realities; positions and subjectivities of the researcher and the research participants; situated knowledge; and seeing data as partial and problematic.

The data used in the study included:

1. Interviews with parents, teachers, and para-educators.
2. Video recordings of the book project.
3. Ongoing conversations with teachers and aides (Merriam, 1998).
4. Field notes on observations of the classroom.
5. Multimodal work samples and documents from the book project.

Interviews. I interviewed parents, teachers, and para-educators before the start of the project. These interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. Further, I interviewed the parents at the end of the project by phone and recorded the conversation using a digital recorder. At the end of the project, the teacher preferred to provide written answers to my questions by email because she wanted time to think about the questions before she answered them. All my interviews were semi-structured and although I focused on specific topics, I used my questions flexibly without any predetermined wording or order (Merriam, 2009). During the in-person interviews, I wrote my observations of my interviews soon after, so that I could capture any of the body language not available in the audio recordings. While transcribing the interview, I took into consideration the situation, what was said, silences, my relationship with the person, as well as the verbal content of the interview (Charmaz, 2014).

Video recordings of the book project. All teacher-student interactions for the multiliteracies book project and three sessions of traditional classroom instruction were recorded using a digital video camera. The camera was set up on a desk near to the student and focused primarily on the student. I transcribed all the videos, taking care to record students' gestures, facial expressions, and emotions. I also wrote field notes during each session which included my reflections on the process of teacher-student interactions.

Ongoing conversations with teacher and para-educators. I had ongoing conversations with the teacher and para-educators every time I was in the classroom. These were not scheduled interviews; instead, they were casual conversations to understand their opinions about the abilities of the students in the classroom. I wrote

these in my field notes and used these to develop codes on staff perception of the students.

Field notes of observations. I wrote my field notes during the observation in the classrooms or immediately after the sessions. My notes were mostly reflective, including my feelings, reactions, and speculations (Merriam, 2009). Many of these field notes eventually morphed into the memos that helped develop the themes for the study.

Multimodal work samples and documents. The multimodal book created by the students on the tablet application Book Creator (2018) and the documents used in the instruction of the students were also examined in depth. I used the book to study the following: the student's intention; the process of making the book; the influence of the book on classroom staff and parents; and the use of the book in the IEP meeting (Prior, 2003).

In addition to the multiple sources of data, I used feedback from the teacher and para-educators to check my interpretation of the videos. I showed the classroom staff recordings of random clips of the videos to get their feedback so that I could compare it with my conclusions. When there was a consistent discrepancy in the interpretations (this happened in four incidents), I chose not to include it in my study. By triangulating the video transcripts, my field notes and the ongoing conversations with classroom staff, I developed my narrative of the learning spaces created in the classroom during the book project.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, I coded it in two phases. First, I analyzed broad patterns of learning spaces in the study. I started with open coding which primarily used active

codes or gerund-based phrases (Charmaz, 2014). Then, I did focused coding to select the codes that were meaningful to my study (Charmaz, 2014). Finally, during axial coding, I put together the data from the open codes, shown in Table 2, to form thematic codes (Cresswell, 2013). The transcripts for John's and Ethan's sessions resulted in 86 and 44 initial process codes respectively. These initial codes led to the formation of the following thematic codes: new learning spaces (3 concept codes); engagement (2 concept codes); initiation (2 concept codes); joy of learning (2 concept codes). During the process of axial coding, new learning spaces were identified as the central phenomenon, and the categories of engagement, initiation, and joy of learning were identified as causal conditions (Cresswell, 2013).

Table 2

Inductively developed thematic, concept codes

Thematic code	Concept code	Definition
New Learning Spaces	Problem-solving	Student defined the problem and persevered in finding a solution (e.g., when the program did not work, when the student made an error, and when the student could not find an image or video)
	Complexity of usage	Student grew in the use of the program or their language skills from the beginning of the project (e.g., using multi-step input functions, shooting and saving videos independently, changing font size or color independently, from one word comments to long sentences, and typing independently)
	Self-knowledge	Student showed awareness of preferences, abilities, and personal attributes (e.g., students pointed to what they wanted in their book, students selected words that described them, students selected activities that they liked at school)
Engagement	Attention	Student was looking carefully at the tablet or the teacher with absence of self-calming behaviors (e.g., “John looked closely at the tablet while the teacher was moving the text”, “Ethan looked for the picture of his mom on the page for 15 seconds”)
	Responses	Student responded to questions or directions using any modality including action, gestural, nod or shake, verbal, and AAC device (e.g., “John gives a fist bump”, “Yesterday, we were at Perk’s café cafeteria”, “Ethan nods”, “Ethan points to the tablet”.
Initiation	Conversation	Student engaged in spontaneous conversation in the form of question or comment (e.g., “ Ms. I., We are going to do journal”)
	Taking control of learning	Student changed the course of learning by verbally or gesturally indicating what they would like to do. (e.g., Ethan changed the direction of the lesson when he wanted to communicate his feelings to a peer)
Joy of learning	Visible expression of joy	Student smiled, laughed or waved his hands excitedly at the start of lesson or during an activity.
	Activity as the reward	Student required no external reward, or asked to look at the book as a reward.

In the second phase, as shown in Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5, I dynamically and sequentially coded the student-teacher interactions in each session with a constructivist perspective using symbolic interactionism (Charmaz, 2014) seeking to make visible hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity (Cresswell, 2013) by asking the following questions:

1. What is the student affect?
2. How does the student attend?
3. How does the student respond?
4. How does the teacher mirror student enthusiasm?
5. What do teacher's actions tell about her beliefs about the ability of the student?
6. How long are the student-teacher exchanges?
7. How does the teacher-student interaction affect the content and instruction?
8. Who is in control of instruction?

Table 3

Inductive concept codes for student reactions developed during dynamic coding of instruction.

Thematic Code	Concept code	Definition
Student affect	Joy	Student displayed joy at the material or activity through smiling, laughing or waving hands excitedly.
	Apathy	Student displayed no emotion at the material or activity as seen in body language or facial expression.
Student attention	Disinterested/Distracted	Student displayed distracted behaviors of looking around the room, body movements, talking about non-related topics, and yawning.
	Interested	Student displayed behaviors that show interest like looking carefully at the teacher or the material.
	Sustained attention	Student attended to material and/or teacher for longer than two exchanges
Student response	No response	Student did not respond to the teacher's questions or directions.
	Compliant/Not thoughtful	Student complied by repeating the answer the teacher had given or pointed to; followed directions with prompts; or nodded quickly to end interaction.
	Thoughtful	Student gave a meaningful response while focusing on the material and/or the teacher.

Table 4

Inductive concept codes for teacher reactions developed during dynamic coding of instruction.

Thematic Code	Concept code	Definition
Teacher reaction to student response	External reward	Teacher praised compliance and promised external reward; teacher reminded student of external reward for answering; teacher gave external reward after work; teacher gave external reward as a break from work
	Redirection	Teacher redirected the behavior of the student verbally; teacher reminded student of what they were doing; teacher reminded student of rules; teacher reminded student of how much more work there was left.
	Cessation	Teacher moved on to another student; teacher stopped asking questions
	Enthusiasm	Teacher responded enthusiastically to student response verbally or through body language/facial expression; teacher showed interest at the student response; teacher was surprised at the response and wanted more information.
Teacher beliefs seen through action/body language/facial expression	Incompetence	Teacher expected low-level responses; prompted student to repeat answer; pointed to the answer; or praised student for mere compliance
	Competence	Teacher encouraged student to explore higher level thinking (e.g., “How do you feel when you see this?” or “Which one of these pictures should go in your book?”); independent use of the tablet; attempted more complex tasks (e.g., three step sequences in taking and saving pictures; identifying words that describe themselves); asked these higher-level questions without prompting for answers.

Table 5

Inductive concept codes for teacher-student interactions developed during dynamic coding of instruction.

Thematic Code	Concept code	Definition
Control of Instruction	Teacher control of instruction	Teacher was in control of material produced for instruction. The teacher presented material and asks questions testing the understanding of the student.
	Student control of instruction	Student had control over the material produced for instruction. Student was able to direct the teacher-student interaction to areas of his interest.
Length of teacher-student exchange	One exchange	Teacher asked a question and student responded or did not respond.
	More than one exchange related to the topic	Teacher-student exchanges continued over several exchanges in conversation over the topic.
Content and material	Same level of instruction/content	Teacher presented the same content and instruction to the student over several sessions; teacher did not see mastery of content.
	Higher level of content and instruction	Teacher changed the content to make it more complex (e.g., teacher added new vocabulary to the task; teacher required student to type in more sentences; changing the font, size and color of text)

Results

New Learning Spaces

An analysis of the video transcriptions, field notes and interviews indicated that new learning spaces were created for John and Ethan particularly in the areas of (a) problem-solving, (b) complexity of usage in digital tools and language, and (c) self-knowledge. Many of the skills that were observed in the multiliteracies sessions of the book project had not been previously seen in students in the observations of traditional instruction in class or gathered from the interviews of staff.

Problem-solving. There were many opportunities for problem-solving throughout the project, especially when there was a problem with the tablet functioning. For example, there were incidents when the tablet did not respond to touch, the student moved an image out of the screen, or the student deleted an image or word in error. What

was interesting in all these incidents was the perseverance of the students in waiting for or actively finding a solution to the problem. Conversations with staff and observations of traditional classroom sessions had revealed earlier that perseverance was not a quality that described either student; indeed, staff had described the students as being easily frustrated, needing frequent breaks, needing lower cognitive load and a perfect working environment. However, during the multiliteracies project, they were sufficiently interested in attending to the problem to get what they wanted. In the session shown in Table 6, John showed that he could continue at a task when he wanted, in searching for a video that he had taken in the cafeteria.

Table 6

Excerpt from the transcript of John's session showing problem-solving space, December 7, 2017

- 51 Teacher: Keep looking for the cafeteria video.
John looks and presses different icons on the tablet.
- 52 Teacher: You know what, I think cafeteria video was day 2, so we have to go to a different book, right? I am going to help you, because, I think we have to go to a different book, I just have to double check.
John suddenly tries to press something.
- 53 Teacher: Go ahead press it.
- 54 John: This is the cafeteria video.

Another example of problem-solving can be seen in Table 7, when after several futile attempts of pressing down of the tablet to get it to work, John decided to do something he had seen his teacher do in an earlier session. He solved the problem by getting a pencil to press down on his tablet.

Table 7

Excerpt from the transcript of John's session showing problem-solving, January 2, 2018

34 John: Press play

John presses play. Nothing happens.

35 John: Okay, press play

John presses play again. Nothing happens.

36 Teacher: You may want to press it again. I don't think you started the video.

John presses it, but it does not work.

37 Teacher: Oh bummer, I think your fingers are cold, it is not feeling your finger. Press down, maybe that will help.

John reaches out, gets a pencil from the box, and uses the eraser tip of the pencil to press down on the tablet.

Ethan also experienced problems with the tablet functioning due to the high levels of movement in his hands and his desire to do things quickly. During one of the sessions, shown in Table 8, Ethan deleted an audio he had created but was willing to try again and do it right the second time.

Table 8

Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan's session, January 4, 2018

38 Teacher: Oooh, you deleted it, can we do it one more time? You recorded "please", but you pressed "no keep" so we have to do it one more time. Let's add sound, press the record.

Ethan presses 'add sound' and 'record'.

He smiles and then uses the AAC device to say "yes".

He presses 'use' this time to save the sound.

In another example shown in Table 9, that shows Ethan's perseverance, he had moved a picture out of the screen in error and then continued to move things on the tablet until he got it back. The teacher noted his persistence in trying to get the picture back in turn 90.

Table 9

Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan's session, January 11, 2018

88 Teacher: First, I think you skipped a page. (goes back to a page)

89 Teacher: You were here, and where did your Amazing Race picture go?
Ethan nods and moves pictures around.

90 Teacher: Yeah, that's right, you're looking for it (pointing to the tablet).
Ethan continues looking for the picture.

He moves other pictures around.

He finds the picture on the side of the screen and tries to bring it back to the screen.

91 Teacher: Do you want to move it back here or leave it here?

Ethan points to the place he wants it.

92 Teacher: Good, then move it here, (points)

Ethan moves the picture.

Complexity of language usage. Students grew in the complexity of their use of language and digital tools. While John and Ethan started out mostly observing the teacher work on the application during the first sessions, they quickly picked up the functions and started to operate them independently. They figured out many of the processes in the tablet intuitively. Conversations with staff, before the sessions, had constructed a narrative of John as resisting hard work. For example, the staff said that he would only copy sentences that had already been written down. John surprised the teacher and staff when in one of the sessions, he typed sentences by himself, attempted to spell words that were new and difficult, and corrected errors when he needed to. When John demonstrated that he could record and save videos by himself, the teacher acknowledged that “he learned it pretty fast.” Ethan was also observed in several sessions as being able to independently follow a sequence to input audio into the tablet from his AAC device while looking at the controls on a magnifier screen.

Both the students showed growth in the use of the computer application. Specifically, John and Ethan used the tablet to take photos and videos of self, friends, and staff; used the functions in the program to input text, images, and videos; used the digital pen to draw on the tablet; moved images, videos, audio, and text around on pages to create their pages; and selected the font, color, and size of their text. In one of the sessions, John showed that he could learn the sequence of changing the color, size, and font of his text with the teacher modeling it just once. I contrasted this with John's earlier traditional math session where the teacher labored over several turns to get him to count one dollar up or his traditional literacy session, where he would only respond by repeating the answer given to him by the teacher. Indeed, in the multiliteracies sessions, John demonstrated that he could learn and learn quickly.

Meanwhile, the expression of Ethan's competence in using the tablet looked different because of his specific motoric skills. Ethan enjoyed working with images and videos. He moved images around the page to create his individual style in the book. Ethan frequently turned images around to place them at an angle for artistic effect. As he worked on the book, Ethan was able to position his tablet and record exactly what he wanted. During an interview with the teacher, she remarked that not only was she amazed at his eagerness to perform the task but also his competence. In one of the early sessions, Ethan demonstrated his competence in using the tablet in taking videos and pictures, as is shown in Table 10, especially in turns 24, 25 and 26.

Table 10

Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan's session showing complexity of usage, December 12, 2017

22 Teacher: Here we go. I am going to set it up and you take it away... ready? 3, 2, 1, action!

Teacher hands over the tablet to Ethan.

23 Teacher: What do you want to record?
Ethan has the tablet and he is looking through it
Teacher moves out of the way.

24 Teacher: Do you want to move around? You can put it on your lap and move around. What do you want to record?
Ethan puts the tablet on his lap and moves around the room to go to his friend working. He skips one friend and goes to another friend further away. Ethan picks up the tablet and starts recording.

25 Teacher: Looks like you want to record your friend, C ____
Ethan is recording.

26 Teacher: Okay, are you done?
Ethan hands over the tablet.

27 Teacher: Let's press done to stop recording.

28 Teacher: Do you want to use this video?
Ethan nods.

29 Teacher: Okay, go ahead and press use video.
Ethan does it.

By contrast, in the traditional sessions, I had observed that Ethan's responses were either nods or pointing distractedly to one of the choices given. In those sessions, he did not have the opportunity to demonstrate that he could learn complex sequences of functions or showcase his artistic talent.

Self-knowledge. During the final interview, the teacher remarked that the students showed amazing self-awareness when they selected words that described them, their favorite activities, their strengths and provided input into the transition plan.

Identity charts. Students created identity charts, selecting words that best described them as shown in Figure 1. The teacher had a list of 50 identifiers, which she read out in batches of 10, explaining each vocabulary word with everyday examples (e.g., “independent means you like to do things by yourself, like picking your clothes, picking your lunch...”).

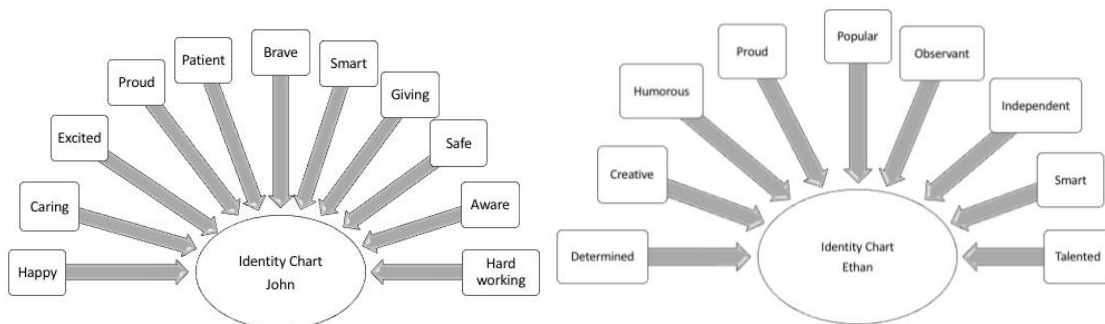


Figure 1. Identity charts created by the students.

John registered his choice by circling the words on a sheet of paper. After he had picked ten words, John wanted to add the word “safe” to the list. One of the para-educators felt that John was repeating what he had heard in the classroom, where staff often tell students to be safe, especially when they are anxious or agitated. Her remarks suggested John displayed a keen awareness of staff perception and staff narratives.

Ethan picked nine words out of a list of 50 words using his device to say “yes” or by placing a mark on the word with a dot marker.

Although the staff had not described the students using these words earlier, they generally agreed with the students’ self-description. For example, several staff members said that John was definitely “caring”, “happy”, and “giving”. They also felt that Ethan was “observant”, and “humorous”, just as he had described himself.

Favorite activities. When students selected their favorite activities at school, as shown in Table 11, the staff were surprised on two counts.

Table 11

Student-Identified Favorite Activities at the School

Location	John	Ethan
At Home	Sailing Holiday Go to beach with mom Walking in the backyard with friends Gym Class	Amazing Race ^a Wheel of Fortune ^b Being with my Dog Horse Riding
At School	Campus Jobs P.E with Mr. C ^c Money Math P’s Café ^d Cafeteria Brunch Yoga F. Buddies ^e Adaptive Physical Education Science	Drama Speech Eating at Restaurants F. Buddies ^e Adaptive Physical Education Science

^a The Amazing Race, show on TV. ^b The Wheel of Fortune, show on TV. ^c Mr. C is the P.E. teacher. ^d P’s Café is the school district café run by students in their special day programs. ^e F. Buddies is the buddy program where school peers hang out with students during lunch.

First, the staff was surprised to see activities on the list that they knew the students liked because earlier they did not think students were conscious of their preferences. One staff said, “It’s common knowledge, you know, that John loves to go to the cafeteria, and he loves his lunch buddy, Mary. Wow! He picked those.” At the IEP meeting, both sets of parents confirmed that the students had picked activities that they truly enjoyed at home.

Secondly, the teacher and staff were surprised to see academic subjects in the list (for example, science) and this shattered the stereotypical notions the staff had about students with disabilities of being disinterested in academics. The teacher was thrilled. “Hmm...,” she pondered, “I may need to do more units in science.”

Strengths. Additionally, the students displayed self-awareness when they selected activities they were good at, using a list from a commercial program that was used in classroom transition planning, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Student Identification of their Strengths

John	Ethan
Caring for the planet	Camping
Working in groups	Working by Myself
Building things	Reading and Writing
Science	Playing on the Computer
Making new friends	Being Creative
Helping with yard work	Working in Groups
Music	Being a Leader
Playing on the computer	Math
Math	Traveling
P.E.	Being Busy
Being busy	Watching your Doctor
Learning to be healthy	Making Important Choices
Following the rules	Working with Children
Making important choices	

The program displayed choices in the form of activities (e.g., camping, building, working in groups) from everyday lives of students at school and home. The teacher explained these choices with pictures and videos. While the teacher had felt before the lesson that these concepts would be hard to teach, she was pleasantly surprised at the “focus and co-operation” that the students showed.

What Were the Pathways to the New Learning Spaces?

Analysis of the data indicated a pathway to the creation of new learning. The multiliteracies framework used in the study created a noticeable shift in teacher-student interaction that resulted in engagement, initiation, and joy of learning, which was ultimately responsible for the creation of new learning spaces as shown in Figure 2.

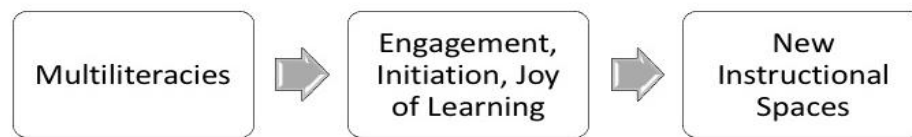


Figure 2. Pathway to creation of new learning spaces.

In the section below, I describe the analysis of the teacher-student interactions that fostered engagement, initiation, and joy of learning in the multiliteracies sessions. Figure 3 gives an example of the traditional literacy session in which John participates in reading a modified novel *Frankenstein* along with his class. John was only slightly engaged by the teacher-made material (by his brief glances at the screen), and he did not display much excitement or affect. The teacher asked mostly factual questions, testing student comprehension and recall, which got a limited response, with much prompting from the teacher. John showed that he was anxious and tried to show through his body language that he wanted to avoid participation. John's behaviors and engagement fed into the teacher's belief of student incompetence and when he did not respond to her question, she moved on to another student.

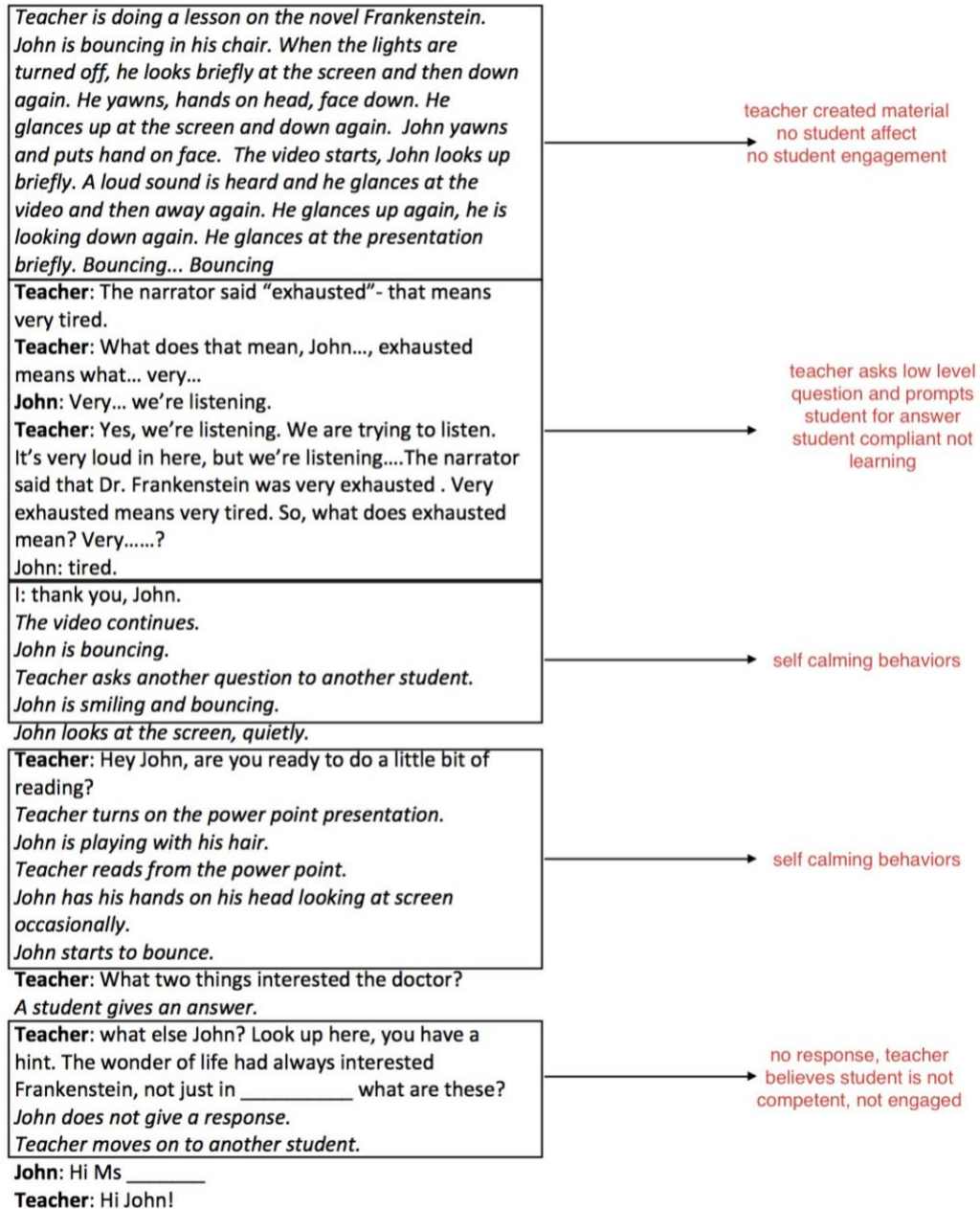


Figure 3. The instructional sequence for traditional instruction with John.

However, the teacher-student interaction seen in the multiliteracies session is vastly different. In the multiliteracies example shown in Figure 4, John was involved in typing sentences about pictures he had selected earlier. When presented with the co-constructed material from earlier sessions, he reacted with affect and engagement. His responses were immediate and enthusiastic. His responses, in turn, elicited reciprocation

by the teacher who guided him into new learning spaces. The teacher withheld prompts and allowed John to type the sentence by himself. John responded by creating a space for problem-solving and showing sustained attention to the task. These behaviors fed into teacher beliefs in his competence.

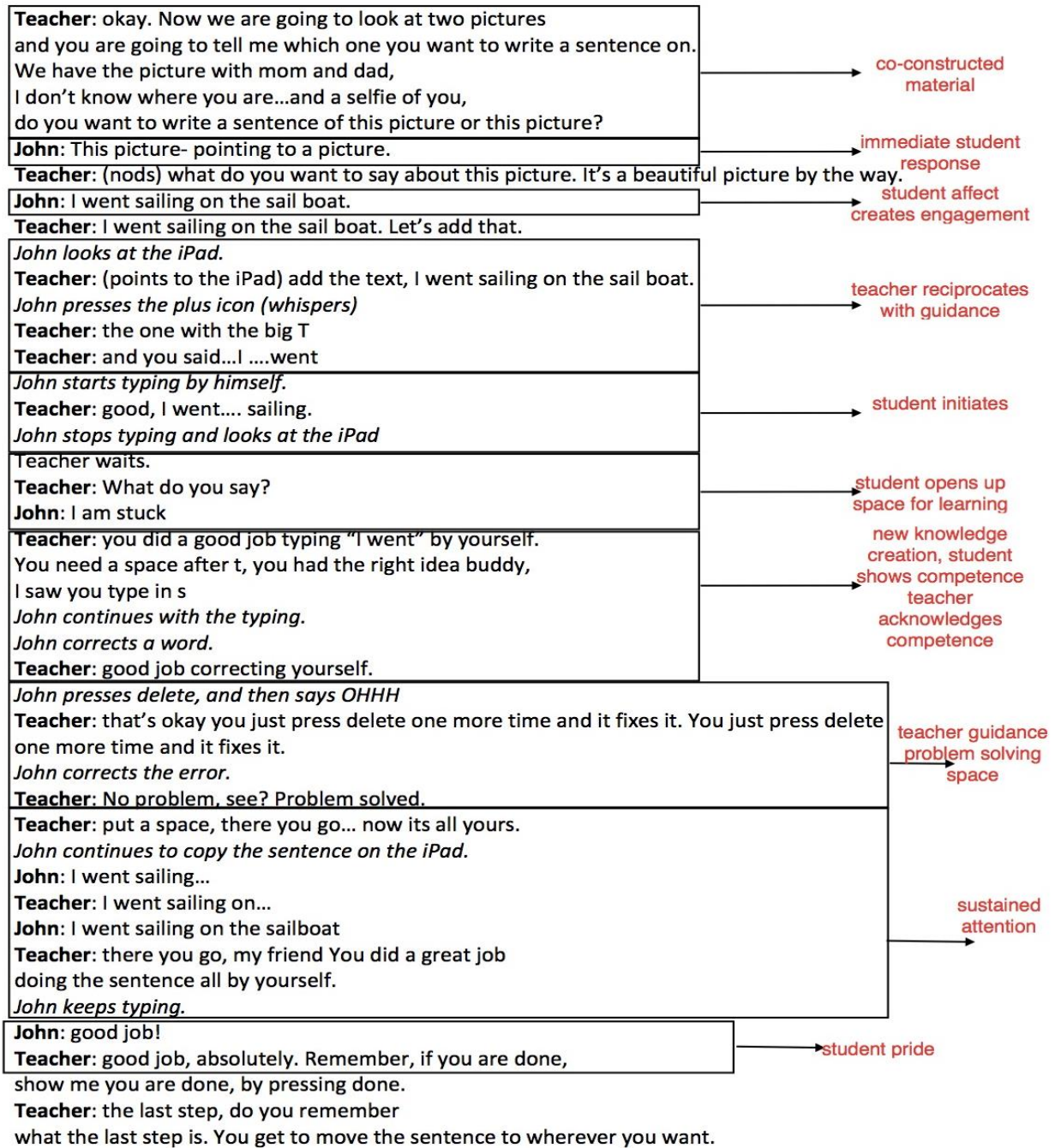


Figure 4. The instructional sequence for multiliteracies instruction with John.

Similarly, Figure 5 illustrates a multiliteracies session with Ethan. Ethan was working on taking pictures with his tablet. He showed excitement at the co-constructed material which prompted an enthusiastic response from the teacher. Ethan responded to her enthusiasm with more actions, which in turn was reciprocated by the teacher in guidance to new learning. Ethan continued to show sustained attention and high student engagement. When he completed the task, Ethan expressed the joy of learning.

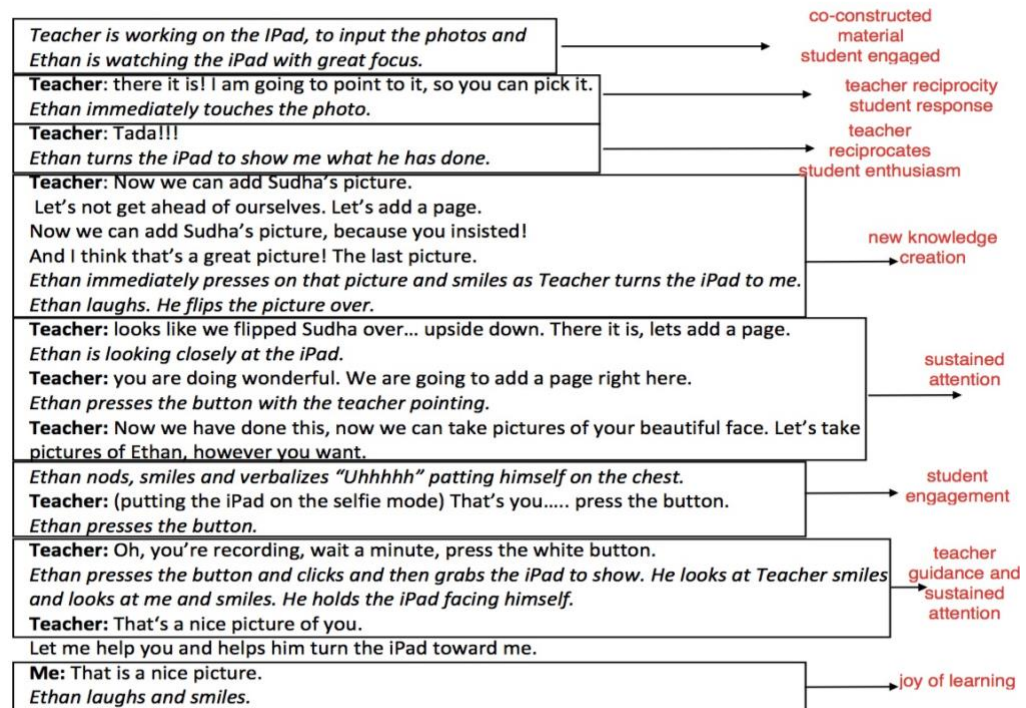


Figure 5. The instructional sequence in multiliteracies session with Ethan.

The multiliteracies settings, as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 created a teacher-student interaction with alternating control of instruction between student and teacher, questions going beyond mere recall, reflection and connection of ideas generated over

time, expression of self-awareness by students, and co-construction of content by the student and teacher.

Repeated analysis of the sequences of instructional patterns for all the sessions led to the formation of a generic model of instructional sequence. Traditional instructional sequences, shown in Figure 6 follow a pattern of teacher's sole control of content and instruction, low level of student engagement resulting in limited student response, increased self-calming behaviors by student, need for an external reward, leading to teacher beliefs about student's incompetence, and the same content being repeated until teacher feels the student has reached mastery.

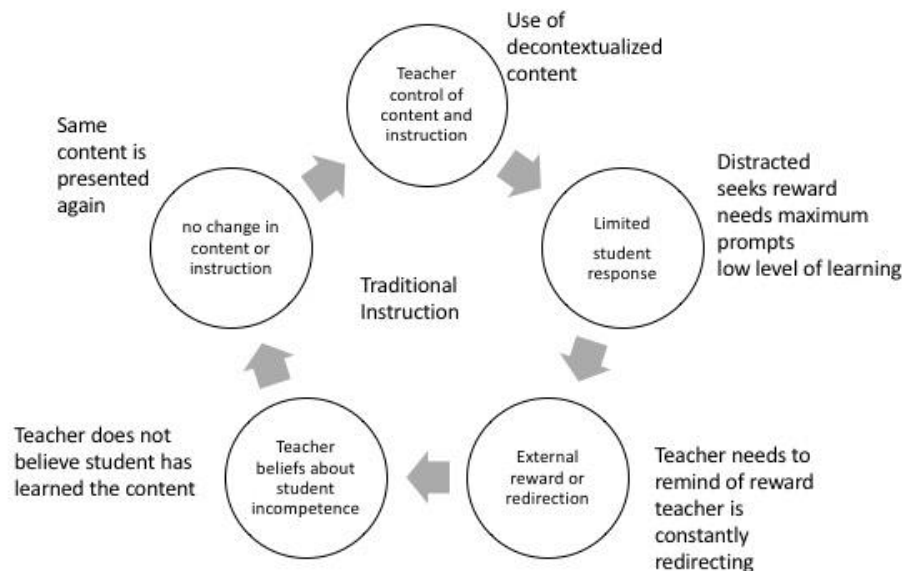


Figure 6. Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in traditional instruction in the classroom.

Conversely, the instructional sequences in the multiliteracies sessions, shown in Figure 7, show a pattern of co-constructed content being presented to the student,

enthusiastic and immediate response from student, alternating student and teacher control of instruction and content, sustained student attention leading to new learning spaces and creation of new knowledge, increasing teacher belief in student competence, and production of new and more complex co-constructed content for the student.

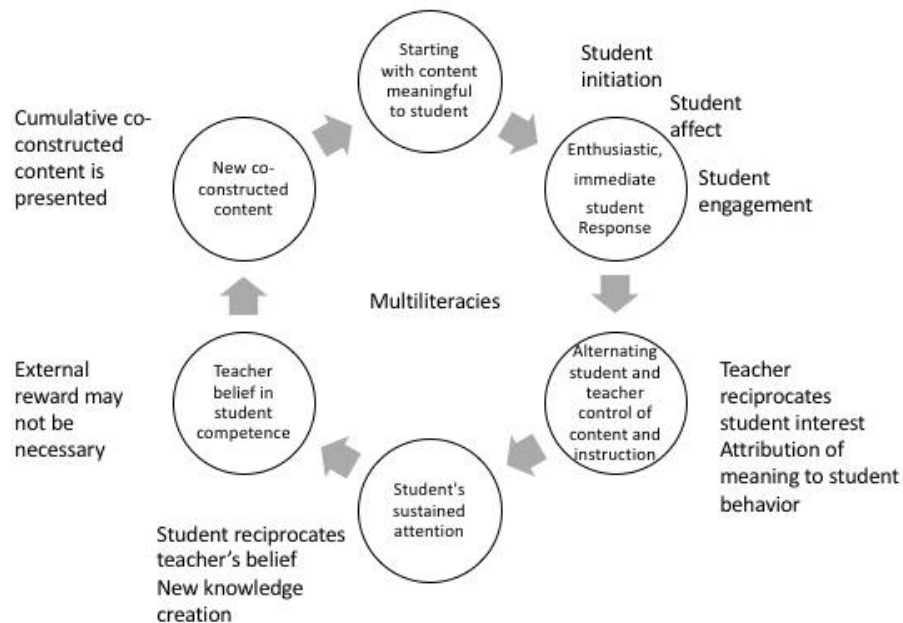


Figure 7. Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in multiliteracies instruction in the classroom.

Engagement, initiation, and joy of learning. Engagement, initiation, and joy of learning were coded in the final analysis as the causal conditions for the central phenomenon of the creation of the new learning spaces.

Engagement. Educational researchers indicate that when students are more engaged in instruction, they learn more (Gettinger & Ball, 2007). During traditional instruction in the classroom, video analysis indicated that John would frequently look down, play with his hair, talk about irrelevant topics, react with anxiety to noise, and

obsess with people touching him even slightly. John exhibited behaviors which in Schlechty's (2011) language could be described as ritual compliance, passive compliance, retreatism or rebellion. These were coded in the study as self-calming behaviors. In one of the typical, traditional sessions shown in Table 13, when John worked with the teacher on counting money, these self-calming behaviors are evident, especially in turns 12, 14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 30, and 32. After seeing this video clip, the classrooms staff remarked that John was not engaged in the lesson because of the noise level in the classroom and that he was extremely sensitive to his environment.

Table 13

Excerpt from the transcript of John's session, January 9, 2018

- 10 Teacher: Are you listening? Alright, and then you will get your box for five minutes and yoga and then we're going to have a different journal, on the tablet, okay?
John looks at the schedule and then nods.
- 11 Teacher: Let's get on with our list.
Complete the dollar up worksheet. Here's your worksheet. What is the first thing that you do?
- 12 John: Ms. I?
- 13 Teacher: What John
- 14 John: Can I talk to you?
- 15 Teacher: Go ahead.
- 16 Teacher: Yes.
John starts to write his name on the worksheet.
- 17 Teacher: Okay, let's do the first one together.
How much does this say?
John is looking at the sheet, one hand on his hair.
- 18 Teacher: 6, come on, 6 dollars, can you repeat after me? 6 dollars
- 19 John: Ms. I?
- 20 Teacher: John?
- 21 John: Where's your phone?
- 22 Teacher: First we're doing this.
- 23 John: Do you get the box?
- 24 Teacher: Your box is second on the list, okay. You can do this, you are a smart boy.
Okay, 6 dollars, we're doing it together 6 dollars and 45 cents.
- 25 John: 6 dollars and 45 cents.

- 26 Teacher: So if we have 6 dollars and 45 cents and we want the next dollar up, how much is that?
John is looking at the sheet, both hands on head.
- 27 Teacher: We are at 6 dollars, and we want the next dollar up, (pointing to the answer)
- 28 John: 7 dollars.
- 29 Teacher: Okay, it is seven. Can you count seven dollars for me (giving him notes to count).
- 30 John: Ms. I, I touched you.
- 31 Teacher: Yes, I did, can you count seven dollars for me?
John gets one dollar puts it on the side. He picks up another dollar, then looks up.
- 32 John: Ms. I?
- 33 Teacher: Yes? Remember you're counting seven dollars.

However, soon after the session described above, he was observed showing authentic engagement and interest in a multiliteracies session even though he continued to be in the same noisy environment (Schlechy, 2011). The para-educators who viewed the video clips of the multiliteracies sessions corroborated these observations. He looked carefully at the tablet or the teacher, rarely looked around and the self-calming behaviors were occasional and not the rule. His responses were immediate, and he wanted to continue working. John showed that when he wanted to, he was able to cope with the environment.

Similarly, Ethan's engagement was evident through his body language, namely his looking at the tablet with focus, responding immediately and enthusiastically. Earlier conversations with the teacher and aides had indicated that Ethan's typical attitude at work was one of disinterest and distraction. An aide working with him had mentioned, "I think you need to have an environment where it's as quiet as possible and you have some pockets of time, meaning there are spans of time where he has one hundred percent focus, where it can be like a minute to couple of minutes and then he takes a break". By contrast, data from the transcripts of multiliteracies sessions showed Ethan working for

20 minutes to 30 minutes without a break. However, Ethan did like to look at his classmates during work, which was often prevented in the classroom by the use of screens to help him stay focused on the task at hand. During one of the multiliteracies sessions, the teacher artfully turned this supposedly distracted behavior into one where he records the activities of his classmates to input into his book. The distraction thus became an engaging activity and created a new learning space for Ethan.

Initiation. Researchers have shown that students, who had no control over their learning or opportunities to show competence, develop dependency on the teacher or learned helplessness and assume that they cannot succeed without the help of others (Burton, 2002; Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978).

The data in this study indicate that students frequently initiated actions that led to learning. Although the teacher supported and encouraged these actions, their motivation was entirely from the student. For example, John initiated selecting videos and pictures that he wanted to include in the book. At the start of most of the sessions, John would take ownership of the tablet and review all the material that he had made in the earlier sessions. He spontaneously shared details about the people and places seen in the pictures that he had included in his book. In one of the sessions, John initiated contact with para-educators to take photos of them and showed them what he had done. This kind of spontaneity and initiation were not observed in the traditional instructional settings.

Analysis of the video data also showed Ethan initiating communication and action. He frequently pointed to what he wanted to do, even when the teacher had planned a different task. In one of the sessions, Ethan took the tablet and recorded people and activities that were interesting to him. In another session, he interrupted the

instruction to show his work to classmates or the staff. Table 14 describes a session where Ethan uses his AAC device spontaneously to communicate his feelings toward his classmate. This action created an opportunity for him to include a photo of his friend and to record an audio for that image in the book.

Table 14

Excerpt from the transcript of Ethan's session, January 11, 2018

67 Teacher: You ready? Let's create this sentence.

Ethan is still looking at his friends in front of the classroom.

Teacher is pointing at the device, and he nods still looking at others.

Ethan smiles.

68 Teacher: You're smiling at something. What's making you smile?

Ethan tries to point to something on the device and then looks away again.

Teacher looks at what Ethan is looking at, Ethan points to the device again.

Ethan uses device to say "I like".

Teacher prompts him to go to the screen with people.

69 Teacher: You have a list of friends. Who do you like?

Ethan uses the device to say, "I like Jack"

Joy of learning. Kliever (2008) identified deriving joy from literacy as one of the critical currents of literate citizenship. The analysis of the videos during multiliteracies sessions indicated that the students showed enjoyment during learning. They smiled, laughed, and moved their hands excitedly, showing by their facial expressions and gestures that they were having fun.

By contrast, in the traditional instructional session, the students looked tired and distracted. The classroom staff euphemistically interpreted the distracted body language, insisting that this could be the students' way of listening or showing interest. One of the aides remarked, "We all have different ways of showing that we are happy. This is, I guess, his way".

However, it was evident from the video analysis of the multiliteracies sessions that when the students showed joy, it was very clear from their body language. They expressed joy at the start of each session while reviewing their books, learning new functions, and even performing complex tasks.

The results of the study suggest that the triad of engagement, initiation, and the joy of learning expressed by the students were crucial in creating the new learning spaces in the multiliteracies sessions.

Changes in Perceptions

The teacher. Interview with the teacher revealed that she was amazed at the reactions of the student to the book project. She remarked, “What surprised me of both John and Ethan was how intentional their communication was.” This was in contrast to her experience before the project when she had found it difficult to get the students to participate in the classroom instruction. She was candid about John, stating, “With John, it felt like there was this huge bubble around him and there was no breaking into it. I always perceived him as able to do something, but not necessarily willing to do it.” Initially, she had doubts about how the instruction would work remarking, “When we first started this endeavor I doubted that we would get such genuine answers from both participants. The part about “Who Am I” blew me away!”.

A fragile orchid. The teacher and I shared a moment of deep insight into the how students with disabilities are perceived when the teacher talked about her earlier feelings about John. She said that it was difficult for staff to determine how much John could be challenged. The staff spent time manipulating his environment and making it perfect so that he could be successful. “He’s like a fragile orchid,” she said. Looking deeper into

the perception of the fragility of the orchid, I found that it is, in reality, untrue. Although orchids may need special humidity levels and growing medium, they are robust plants in their natural environments. Not unlike the orchid's truth, the teacher realized that "after this project, John is capable so much more than he lets on, or the environment can be chaotic, and he can cope."

Classroom staff. There was a perceptible change in the language used by the classroom staff to describe the students after watching the videos of the multiliteracies event. While they had previously grown accustomed to the idea that their students were distracted and non-responsive, needing perfect environments and frequent breaks to work, now they saw the students in a new light. They saw them engaged for extended periods of time with no external reward in many sessions, saw them enthusiastically participating in hard activities. I noted their surprise at the students' behaviors and their silence when I pointed out that the students were working despite the noisy environment. A selection of their comments as they were watching videos of the traditional and multiliteracies events is shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Differences in language use of staff when watching videos of the same student in different instructional settings

Staff	Comments when watching students in traditional instruction	Comments when watching students in multiliteracies
Mike	<p>“...how it is so hard for him to be competent in what he does because of his environment and that can’t be controlled.”</p> <p>“...but I feel he’s struggling to be there 100%, but also struggling with these barriers, these obstacles of sound...”</p> <p>“...when he tends to rock, it could be a mixture of boredom or irritability”</p> <p>“Because he is highly sensitive, when it comes to noise and also routine and scheduling and stuff like that.”</p> <p>“he likes to take breaks. I think that’s what he is doing. So, he’s focusing in and out, like it comes in waves, in and out. But when you have noise, it kind of obstructs his you know, his attention.”</p>	<p>“In this scene, he was having issues using the tablet or app or pictures, ...as far as engagement? I think he was there, he was definitely addressing the problem...”</p> <p>“Wow, he is reacting to the video, you can see the expressions on his face. He is smiling and yeah, he is definitely reacting to the video, and I think he’s being engaged because of that.”</p> <p>“I can see in his face and that he seems like he is enjoying it.</p> <p>“He is engaged, definitely engaged.”</p> <p>“Now he is interacting with his friends, not just looking at them.”</p> <p>“I did not think he could follow, you know, like three sequence tasks.”</p>
Martha	<p>“That hair touching thing, is how he calms himself down when he is anxious.”</p> <p>“I think he may be engaged even if he hunching down and face down. For others it is disengagement, but for him, it could be engaged, you know.”</p> <p>“with the hair and all, he is trying to control his own anxiety in the classroom. For him, the auditory overload is pretty overwhelming. That is his number one tic.”</p>	<p>“this is as stoic as I have seen him,</p> <p>“Yeah, he is obviously engaged, and very interested.”</p> <p>“his attention is there. It’s been there a while. That’s new.”</p> <p>“Hmm, I can see he is trying something new and not worrying, you know about it. It’s not making him anxious or anything....I think he likes that he can see himself in the videos, you know how we do that, like watching videos of our friends and so on.”</p>
Sam	<p>“He does not pay attention, that’s what I told you before. It’s hard for him. But you know, maybe when he is looking down, he is paying attention. You don’t have to make eye contact to listen you know.”</p> <p>“This is him, always looking at others, we need to have a screen to stop that”</p> <p>“Yeah, he’s distracted. I don’t think he cares where he is pointing, he’s not even looking.”</p>	<p>“He was able to understand it well. He is listening, moving back and forth from the teacher to the tablet, that is good isn’t it? He is not only looking at the tablet, you know what I mean? “</p> <p>“He is paying attention, and waiting for her. He is definitely paying attention to what she is saying, I know that he understands. He’s pretty smart you know. I always knew that.”</p>
Caryl	<p>“He is listening but not paying attention, that’s what I think. His body language is anxious. It’s the noise I think. He hates the noise. It bothers me too in the class-our class is so noisy.”</p>	<p>“Oh look, he is smiling so much. He is interested in the video. What is he watching? The video is definitely catching his attention.”</p> <p>“He’s doing great. He is listening so well to, to the teacher. Wish he could be like that all the time.”</p> <p>“He is totally engaged.”</p>

Changes in the IEP Narrative

John's participation in the meeting. Following is an excerpt is from the field notes made on the day of John's IEP, as he presented at the meeting.

(Excerpt from field notes made on the day of the John's IEP, January 25, 2018)

John was very excited to come to the meeting. He pointed to the tablet almost immediately as he entered the conference room and said "we are going to see Ms. I's tablet" and then looked at me and said, "you are going to watch the video on Ms. I's tablet". He was smiling and very relaxed. He looked at the teacher and said, "Ms. I, we are still at school." I guessed that he was confirming that it was past his bus time. After everyone had assembled, John started the presentation on the computer. Without any prompting, he walked up to the screen and pointed to the pictures and read the sentences. After he read the first page, he tried to touch the projector screen to move to the next page. The teacher told him that she had to turn the pages on the computer. He then said, "next page". He commented on the pictures too, adding details about the vacation, houseboat, some of which we had not heard before. He read out all the words in his identity chart. Then he pointed to each video and his favorite activities and commented on them, describing them clearly. For example, he said, "Jenna and Mia in the park". He also described where the activities were happening at school. For example, he said "PE with Mr. Chen in the gym", and "we are having brunch in the cafeteria". I saw a relaxed John, without any of the self-calming behaviors noted in the classroom, giving a very competent presentation.

Ethan's participation in the meeting. Following is an excerpt from the field notes made on the day of Ethan's IEP, as he presented at the meeting.

(Excerpt from field notes made on the day of Ethan's IEP, February 7, 2018)

Ethan was silent when he entered the conference room. He was a little nervous and looked around all the time. When his mom and dad came in, he smiled, and he held on to his mom's hand and would not let go. When everyone had arrived, and there were a lot of people, (15 in all) I gestured to Ethan to start the presentation on the tablet, with the 'read to me' function in the application. Once the book was displayed on the screen, Ethan was excited and laughed. He pointed to the screen and then pointed to his mother. Ethan swiped the tablet to move through the pages and kept pointing to the pictures. Sometimes, he swiped so fast, that the program could not finish reading all the sentences. When his family pictures came up, he pointed again to himself and his mom. When Ethan came to the page with his favorite videos, he started to bounce and clap his hands. At the end of the presentation, he clapped his hands, turned around to look at everyone with a beaming smile, and this prompted everyone to give him a huge applause.

Impact of the presentation on participants. The impact of the presentation of the book at the IEP meeting changed the perception of the meeting attendees. Although both parents voiced pride and enthusiasm after the presentation, the project made a more significant impact on John's mother. She remarked, "And so having him there, made those people around the table, myself included, want to work that much harder. You know, he, he broke the ice in a way that nothing else could. So, having him there, I think was, was absolutely invaluable to the process of making people really feel you know,

who he is and, and want him to be successful. I mean, it was just amazing. I just feel like, wow, I would've never, I would've never guessed.”

She pondered over the choice of his activities, and her takeaway was that he was looking for more events in integrated settings with his typical peers. She noted, “So he's with typical peers, and you know, part of that is, it's not that he doesn't like his peers from his classroom, but typical peers are able tomeet halfway in social interactions.”

After the presentation, she was determined to ask the school to provide him with more opportunities for inclusion.

In conclusion, the results of the study showed that using multiliteracies created an environment that fostered a new teacher-student interaction which led to student engagement, initiation, and joy of learning. These conditions created new learning spaces in problem-solving, complexity of use in language and tools, and self-knowledge for both John and Ethan. Additionally, there were changes in teacher and staff perception of their competence, and in the narrative in the IEP meeting. Finally, the presentation at the IEP meeting led to transformed practice by creating a new narrative identity for the students, changing parent perceptions of their child’s potential, and creating new pathways for advocacy.

Discussion

Using the IEP document, this project attempted to subvert the deficit narrative by allowing students to re-construct their narrative. The multiliteracies project presented an alternate student narrative to the IEP team members while also projecting new notions of student competence. John’s mother was so taken by the presentation, that she reported “my head was spinning. I was so overwhelmed. I was so proud of him. I was so pleased

that I was to some extent surprised.” She along with Ethan’s mother believed that the students should present at every IEP meeting and the teacher should be encouraged to do this project with all other students.

Further, as the dynamic analysis of instructional sequences in the second phase of coding shows, pedagogical practices are never politically neutral (Luke and Freebody, 1999). Instead, there is a substratum of assumptions, political dimensions, and cultural propensities underlying all pedagogical practices. Accordingly, different pedagogical practices can have different results for students. This study brought to the foreground the invisible practices of traditional instruction that prevented SCSN access to high-level literacy instruction and resulted in their deficit identity. As such, the results of this study are in line with the arguments of scholars who have pointed out that pedagogical practices that allow for active student control of instruction, responsiveness to the students’ cultural histories, and student-preferred modes of representation promote student narratives of competence. (Early & Gunderson, 1993; Leander & Lovvorn, 2006; Black, 2006; Blackburn, 2005; Blackburn, Clark, Kenney, & Smith, 2009; Blackburn & Clark, 2010).

It could be argued that the novelty of technology always engages students and the interest or enthusiasm would wear off as the novelty fades. However, technology was already in use in the classroom. The classroom was well equipped with computers, media projectors, tablets and AAC devices. All the students used computer programs and applications in language arts and math. The teacher frequently projected presentations on the screen for whole class instruction. Visuals including photos, icons, and videos were commonplace during teaching. The project created new learning spaces only because

these videos, images, and text were meaningful, relevant, and pleasurable to the students as they had participated in the creation of the content. The new teacher-student interaction that emerged under multiliteracies was the key to the effectiveness of the instruction during the study. Thus, this study highlighted the need for special educators to move away from focusing merely on techniques and instead situate their teaching in a pedagogy with an empowering vision for the students' futures.

A New Pedagogy for SCSN Nested in Multiliteracies

Charmaz states that “theory generation continues to be the unfilled promise and potential of grounded theory” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 244). By using the micro-analysis of this study and putting it in a broader context of social structures and discourses (Charmaz, 2014), the results of this study can be used to make the following theoretical claims. Figure 8 shows a possible nested pedagogical framework for literacy instruction for SCSN.

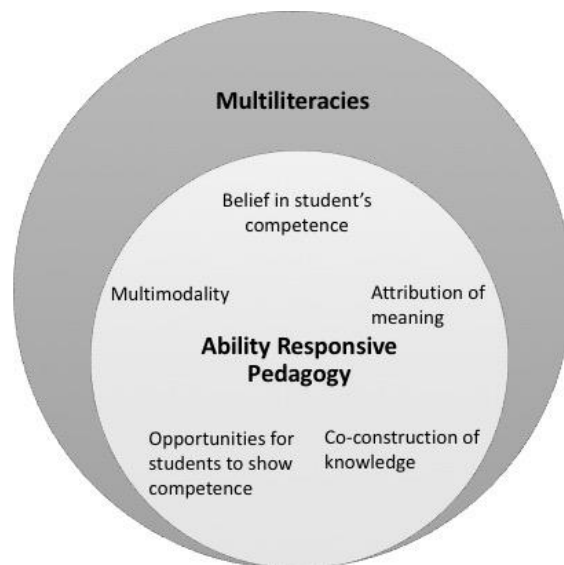


Figure 8. Nested pedagogies including multiliteracies and ability responsive pedagogy.

The principles of ability responsive pedagogy used by the teacher in the study embodied the following: (1) opportunities for multimodal expression and learning; (2) attribution of meaning to students' communicative attempts (facial expression, actions and vocalizations); (3) belief in the competence of students by the people they work with; and (4) opportunities for learners to feel successful. The study showed that a fifth principle, that of co-construction of knowledge was crucial in the success of the project.

Limitations of the Present Study

This study was limited in its investigation by the pre-arrangement of the student IEP meetings and the duration of the research. Only those students who fit into the timeline of the study could be included. Secondly, the excellence of the classroom teacher in understanding and implementing the program played a significant role in the success of the implementation. Although her remarkable abilities in student interactions are rare, the study shows what is possible with SCSN.

Conclusion and Future Prospects

The book creation project was a powerful way to organize literacy activities using multiliteracies pedagogy while transforming the narrative of SCSN by providing challenging, interesting and empowering literacy instruction. This study demonstrated that SCSN need not be subject to perpetual low level of basic skills instruction. They can be challenged and they can show enthusiasm and joy in learning when the materials used are meaningful, relevant, and pleasurable to them. Classroom teachers need to look beyond systematic instruction and reinvent their teaching practices by incorporating

multimodal and student-initiated activities into instruction. Further, co-constructing content along with students using multimodal methods can be considered as part of the repertoire of effective classroom practices.

In this study, I focused on creating a book by students about themselves that they could use in the IEP meeting to provide student input. Further research is needed in using student-authored multimodal text in the areas of journal writing, life skills, science and social studies. More research is also required in developing components of an ability responsive pedagogy that can provide visibility to the literacy citizenship of all students so that we can change the dominant narrative that SCSN have no ideas of their own or any stories to tell (Kliewer, 2008).

To conclude, the contributions of this study are two-fold. First, this study showed the potential of the pedagogy of multiliteracies to address the needs of diverse student populations, regardless of their support needs. Second, this study showed that at a time when the current trend for education, in general, and special education, in particular, is toward evidence-based strategies, it is not merely enough to ask, “Does it work?”, but we need to also ask, “Does it matter?”. The pedagogy of multiliteracies is uniquely placed to provide the vision to create literacy instruction that matters for all students. What matters is that all students are provided access to challenging literacy activities that enable them to achieve their full potential. What matters is that researchers and educators seek new pathways to help SCSN communicate and tell their stories, so that they can be heard. What matters is that students who have been marginalized, because the public perception of their abilities is tainted with false assumptions, become empowered through the literacy process. For, in the end, as Morrell (2010) reminds us, “literacy has to be

empowering, or else what is the point of demanding it?" (p. 149).

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Transforming Narrative Identity through Multiliteracies

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Abstract

This study relates the transformation of one student's narrative identity (stories told about the student by himself and others) which took place over three months as he engaged in the pedagogy of multiliteracies through the creation of a student-authored multimodal book presented at the individualized education program (IEP) meeting. Multiliteracies enabled student agency and offered this student with complex support needs, who had struggled to access literacy through traditional instruction, an opportunity to change his narrative identity from deficit to pride and competence. Two processes were at work here including: (a) the cultural narrative, which was changed through the participation in the IEP, and (b) the narrative from social participation, which was generated through the new patterns of teacher-student interaction created by the multiliteracies framework.

Keywords: empowerment, disability, literacy, multiliteracies, identity

The classroom teacher, in the special day class at a public high school in Northern California, remembered her first meeting with John (all names are pseudonyms). She said, “It felt like there was this huge bubble around him and there was no breaking into it.” She compared him to a fragile orchid, who needed a perfect environment to be successful and she was nervous about pushing him too much out of fear that he would have a tantrum. John’s identity, or being recognized as a certain kind of person (Gee, 2000) had been established long before he entered high school. According to Sfard and Prusak (2005), narrative identities are constructed through the stories students tell and hear about themselves and others. What were the stories that John, who had been labeled as a student with complex support needs, heard about himself? What were the stories that he told about himself? Is it possible that literacy practices in the classroom were aiding and abetting the construction of these stories? Could these stories be changed to tell the story of a different, capable and successful John?

In this qualitative case study of one student’s participation in a broader grounded theory study, I show that John was able to change the perceptions of the teacher, the staff, and his mother when he participated in creating a multimodal book about himself for use in the individualized education plan (IEP) meeting, which is typically held annually for all students labeled with disabilities in U.S. schools. The multimodal book was based on the pedagogy of multiliteracies which expands the notions of literacy beyond print-texts to include visual, audio, gestural, and spatial forms of representation and text (Kress, 2000; Moje & Hinchman, 2004; Morrell, 2004; Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall & Tower, 2006; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Using a symbolic interactionist perspective (Charmaz, 2014), I analyze the actions and responses of John and the teacher during instruction and

show how multiliteracies created new teacher-student interactions that allowed John to be successful and show himself as a competent and a hard-working student.

Theoretical Rationale and Related Literature

The Concept of Narrative Identity

Drawing on the work of Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998), I suggest that John's identity was created through a dual process of narrative identity construction including: (a) cultural narratives, and (b) social participation (Kliewer, 2008). Cultural narratives are stories that are told primarily by influential or *significant* narrators (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). These significant narrators may exist in schools in the form of psychologists, therapists, and teachers creating institutional narratives including "diagnoses, certificates, diplomas, and licenses" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 18).

Unfortunately for John, the cultural narrative was one of deficiency and failure (Kliewer, 2008). The deficit narrative was powerfully created by the official and legal documents, most importantly the individualized education plan (IEP), which are central to special education and created by the significant narrators at school (Franquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011; Kliewer, 2008). The IEP document, in particular, discussed and defined his abilities, labeled him according to his medical or psychological diagnoses, and established his placement in segregated settings. As a result, the IEP document can be considered the dominant cultural narrative in John's life (Lovitt, Cushing & Stump, 1994). The IEP document can also be viewed as a text that embodied the *sedimented* or the thickened (Rowell & Pahl, 2007) cultural narrative of John based on deficit labeling through years of institutionalized practices and professional opinions. It is for this reason that I used the IEP document and the meeting as a context for changing the cultural

narrative in this study.

The social participation that the student experiences also contributes to the narrative identity of the students, particularly as a result of teacher-student or peer interactions at school (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). In fact, scholars have argued that literacy practices, by influencing teacher and peer perceptions of the students, play a significant role in the construction of students' identities and the conception of their abilities (Leander & Lovvorn, 2006; Black, 2006; Cummins & Early, 2011).

For example, Leander and Lovvorn (2006) showed that online computer games created a motivating and successful environment for a student who was generally considered a disinterested and unenthusiastic student at school.

Similarly, Black (2006) noted that success on an online fanfiction writing website transformed the narrative identity of Nanako, a 11-year-old recent Chinese immigrant to Canada, who was struggling academically and socially in school. Nanako got involved in a fanfiction website based on anime characters, where she could write stories about her favorite characters. Nanako found that her knowledge of Asian culture and history was an asset on the website, as she could explain the context of the characters and stories to others. Furthermore, she could express herself freely without having to use conventional English grammar. In a few years, she became a popular writer on the website and had a huge fan following for her stories.

Yet another example of changing narrative identity using literacy practices can be seen in the work of Cummins and Early (2011), who used dual language and multimodal texts (e.g., story-writing, movie making, quilt making, poetry writing, making picture books, and power point presentations) rooted in the lived experiences of the immigrant

students in Canadian schools to teach literacy. These projects, referred to by the authors as *identity texts*, helped students tell their stories, increased student confidence and pride in their work, created student ownership of their learning, and enabled students to critically interrogate their status in their schools and community.

Student Agency in Changing Identity

Even though learning environments and literacy practices have been shown to influence student identity, students need not be inert recipients of stories about themselves. The concept of narrative identity opens up the possibility of human agency and scholars have used multiliterate practices to change the existing narratives about students. (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner and Cain, 1998; Blackburn, 2005; Blackburn, Clark, Kenney, & Smith, 2009; Blackburn & Clark, 2010; Cummins & Early, 2011).

By encouraging student agency, Blackburn's (2005) sought to transform the identity of youth who identified themselves as LGBTQ through critical literacy. By creating a safe space in an after-school youth center in Philadelphia where they could articulate their feelings and simultaneously engage in literacy activities using various modes and genres, Blackburn provided the students with a unique opportunity to redefine themselves through their work. Furthermore, they were able to become activists, disrupting existing negative notions about LGBTQ persons in the minds of their peers.

In the same vein, Held, Thoma, and Thomas (2004) demonstrated the power of student agency, when a student-authored multimedia presentation at the IEP meeting helped a high school student labeled with significant disabilities to take control of his IEP meeting. The authors noted that after the student presentation, the IEP team members started talking to the student, including him in all the discussions, rather than talking

about him. The teachers and therapists were amazed to learn of the student's hopes and dreams and volunteered to help him achieve them.

In line with the work done by Held, Thoma, and Thomas (2004), this study used the context of the IEP meeting to change the narrative identity of John. However, while the study by Held, Thoma, and Thomas (2004) focused mainly on the effect of the presentation on the IEP team members, the present study also placed importance on the design of instruction that led to the presentation. The instructional design was rooted in multiliteracies and used principles of instruction gathered from several scholars who had used expansive notions of literacies successfully with students with complex support needs.

Designing Instruction Based on Multiliteracies

The student-authored multimodal book project embodied the principles of multiliteracies in its design (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015), as shown in Table 1. For eight sessions lasting about 30 minutes each, the teacher worked with John to create a digital, multimodal book on a tablet that included the following:

6. John's favorite family and school pictures.
7. Videos and pictures of John's favorite activities at home and school (taken by John or staff through the duration of the project).
8. An identity chart with adjectives that best described John.
9. John's strengths as identified by activities he believed he was good at.
10. A transition plan describing what John wanted to do after school.

The book was created using images, videos, audio recordings, and text on a tablet application called Book Creator (www.bookcreator.com). Toward the end of the project, John presented this book at his IEP meeting.

Table 1

Designing Instruction Based on Multiliteracies

Principle	Definition	How it was embodied in the project
Experiencing/situated practice	Meaning-making in the real world	Situating the book in the students' lives and their experiences at school and home
Conceptualizing/overt instruction	Scaffolding and supporting students in the knowledge process through multiple modalities	Scaffolding of multimodal instruction on the tablet application, Book Creator, designed to meet student needs and modalities.
Analyzing/critical framing	Process of critically exploring the socio-cultural contexts and purposes of learning	Interrogating the existing deficit identity of the students.
Applying/transformed practice	Producing texts and putting them to use in communicative action	Using the book in the IEP meeting as a student narrative about his strengths and preferences

Applying multiliteracies to students with complex support needs. A review of studies using expanded notions of literacies provided an insight into designing instruction using multiliteracies for students with complex support needs. I elaborate on these studies in the section below.

Scholars have shown that when educators have provided students with complex support needs, who struggle with conventional literacy practices, an optional mode to express themselves, students have been able to demonstrate competence. For example, in

a study using drama in literacy acquisition in preschool children Kilinic, Chapman, Kelley, Adams, and Millinger (2016) found that the teachers, who initially had deficit views of the students with complex support needs in their classes, changed their opinions and consequently the stories they told about the students, when they saw that the students were talking more, participating actively in the drama, remembering the stories even after several weeks, and showing problem-solving skills.

Similarly, in another study using drama to teach literacy, Collins (2011) related the identity transformation of Christopher, an 8-year old African-American boy who was struggling in his classes at school. Christopher, who resisted participating in classroom activities or interactions with his peers because he struggled with conventional literacy, started to participate more when he was provided opportunities to choose his mode of participation in the staging of a student-written folktale from a variety of options including writing, set design, costume design, acting, and directing. When he showed how talented he was at designing costumes and sets, he was able to change the perceptions of his teacher and classmates about his abilities.

Further, scholars have argued that to encourage students to use their preferred mode of communication, caregivers need to react to and attribute meaning to all of their communicative attempts (Basil & Reyes, 2003). For example, Koppenhaver, Erickson, and Skotko (2001), in their study with students of elementary school ages, note that after one mother was asked to take her daughter's loud noises when she saw particular pictures in a book, as a sign of interest, and involve her in conversations about it, the girl showed marked progress in participating in reading the book.

Similarly, Kliewer and Biklen (2001) described a remarkable change in the participation of an 11-year old student, Rebecca, a child labeled with autism along with severe speech impairments, who did not demonstrate conventional literacy skills. During a note-passing activity with her classmates, the authors noted that, when her friends decided to attribute meaning to Rebecca's facial expressions to figure out her response to their notes, Rebecca participated more enthusiastically. The activity eventually led to the creation of a set of symbols based on the classmates' interpretation of Rebecca's facial expressions, which she used to respond to her classmates on a regular basis.

Drawing from these studies, the instructional design for the multimodal book project included research-based principles including: (a) multimodality of expression (e.g., verbal, facial expression, gestures, body movement, images, videos), (b) attribution of meaning to all communicative attempts (e.g., the teacher reacted to all of John's facial expressions or gestures to start conversations about what he was feeling), (c) belief in student's competence (e.g., all of John's answers were assumed to be meaningful and not random), and (d) opportunities for the student to feel successful (e.g., there were no wrong answers; John was given space to use the tablet and produce media on his own).

Research Question

The central question that I address in this article is the following:
How did the multiliteracies project change the narrative identity of John as defined by:
(a) the cultural narrative and (b) social participation in instruction?

Method

Field Site

John attended a special day class in a public high school located in Northern California. The cities served by the school district are racially diverse, (more than 50% of the population is of Asian and Hispanic descent) and the socio-economic status of the community can be considered as middle class with most of the parents of the students employed in the technology sector (Data USA, see www.datausa.io). The special day class was one of two classes for students with complex support needs at this school. The class had nine students and six para-educators. Four students used wheelchairs, and seven students used AAC devices. It was the teacher's second year of teaching this class, working as an intern while she was earning a teaching credential from a local university.

Data Collection

The approval from the institutional review board was obtained prior to the study. The research was done over 60 hours of data collection at the site and in interviews with parents, teachers, and para-educators. The teacher selected two students for this study, keeping in mind the IEP meeting dates which corresponded to the duration of this study and their unique communication styles (Cresswell, 2013).

I followed a qualitative approach along the lines of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) for the multiliteracies study. Grounded theory is the discovery of emerging patterns in data and generating theories from this data (Glaser, 2017). Grounded theory is founded on the belief that knowledge creation is dependent on the actual experience in the real world (Morrell, 2008). Constructivist grounded theory adds the following to the traditional notions: a social justice perspective; foregrounding

multiple realities; positions and subjectivities of the researcher and the research participants; situated knowledge; and seeing data as partial and problematic (Charmaz, 2014).

The data used in this study included:

6. Interviews with parents, teachers and para-educators
7. Video recordings of the book project.
8. Ongoing conversations teachers and aides (Merriam, 1998)
9. Field notes on observations of the classroom
10. Multimodal work samples and documents from the book project.

Interviews. Interviews with John's mother, the teacher, and the para educators were recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. At the end of the project, I interviewed John's mother by phone and recorded the conversation using a digital recorder. The teacher wanted to provide written answers to my final interview questions by email because she wanted time to think about the questions before she answered them. All my interviews were semi-structured and although I focused on specific topics, I used my questions flexibly without any predetermined wording or order (Merriam, 2009). During the in-person interviews, I wrote my observations of my interviews soon after, so that I could capture any of the body language not available in the audio recordings. While transcribing the interview, I took into consideration the situation, what was said, silences, my relationship with the person, as well as the verbal content of the interview (Charmaz, 2014).

Video recordings of the book project. I recorded all the multiliteracies book project sessions and three sessions of traditional classroom instruction using a digital

video camera. The camera was set up on a desk near to the student and focused primarily on the student. I transcribed all the videos, taking care to record students' gestures, facial expressions, and emotions. I also wrote field notes during each session which included my reflections on the process of teacher-student interactions.

Ongoing conversations with teacher and para-educators. I had ongoing conversations with the teacher and para-educators every time I was in the classroom. These were not scheduled interviews; instead, they were casual conversations to understand their opinions about the abilities of the students in the classroom. I wrote these in my field notes and used these to develop codes on staff perception of the students.

Field notes of observations. I wrote my field notes during the observation in the classrooms or immediately after the sessions. My notes were mostly reflective, including my feelings, reactions, and speculations (Merriam, 2009). Many of these field notes eventually morphed into the memos that helped develop the themes for this study.

Multimodal work samples and documents. I examined the multimodal book created by the students on the tablet application Book Creator (2018) and the documents used in the instruction of the students in depth. I used the book to study the following: the student's intention; the process of making the book; the influence of the book on classroom staff and parents; and the use of the book in the IEP meeting (Prior, 2003). In addition to the multiple sources of data, I used feedback from the teacher and para-educators to check my interpretation of the videos. I showed the classroom staff recordings of random clips of the videos to get their feedback so that I could compare it with my conclusions. By triangulating the video transcripts, my field notes and the

ongoing conversations with classroom staff, I studied the construction and transformation of John's identity.

Results

In this section, first I describe John's deficit identity as related by the cultural narrative and his social participation in the classroom instruction. Then, I describe John's presentation at the IEP and the changes in his mother's perceptions. Finally, I describe the changes in his identity as the multiliteracies book project evolved.

The Construction of Deficit Identity

The cultural narrative. After collecting the data, I coded the interviews with the mother, teacher, the para-educators and the IEP document to look for describing words or phrases that labeled John as with a capacity or deficit identity. Although all the participants agreed that John was a sweet and affectionate boy, the deficit identity of John was clearly evident in their language. The dominant themes in the cultural narrative surrounding John were:

1. Passive participation
2. Poor comprehension
3. Low expectations
4. Anxiety during instruction

Passive Participation. All the people that I interviewed agreed that John was not an active learner. The teacher related her experience with John during group instruction. She remarked, "He won't look at the screen or me, but I think he's paying attention." His mother had also experienced his passivity at home and she commented, "he'll kind of roll around on his bed and zone out but he's listening, you know...". John did not like to be

tested or questioned and consequently people who worked with him had learned to just keep talking to him without expecting any response from him. The para-educators in the class said that John was compliant, but his engagement stopped there. He would follow directions, but he had never initiated learning in the classroom. One para-educator also said that he resisted hard work and would find ways to avoid doing anything difficult.

The IEP document painted John as a disinterested student who needed prompts from the teacher to get started on tasks, to spell words, to look at the projector screen, to write details on his journal, and “to verbalize other than saying, “Hi””.

Poor Comprehension. John was portrayed as a student with low I.Q. and poor comprehension. The IEP document focused on his efforts at answering basic comprehension questions and commented on his progress as being “less resistant to doing math” that year. His current teacher was not sure about how much he understood during instruction in class. Even his mother voiced doubts about his understanding saying, “it's pretty apparent to me... feels to me like he is not comprehending.”

Low Expectations. The IEP document had little to say about teaching John academics or addressing higher order thinking skills and instead focused on his participation in vocational skills and community-based activities. John's instruction at school was largely based on functional skills. The teacher and staff did not expect him to learn quickly and mentioned that he needed repetitive and structured tasks.

Anxiety. The teacher mentioned that she felt like John was in his own little world all the time and “with John, it felt like there was this huge bubble around him and there was no breaking into it.” She compared him to a fragile orchid, who needed a perfect environment to be successful and she was nervous about pushing him too much out of

fear that he would have a tantrum. The para-educators believed that many of his behaviors including his rocking, bouncing on the chair, playing with his hair, putting his face down with his hands on his face, obsessing about people touching him or talking off topic were all his ways of coping with the environment. “He can’t deal with the level of noise in the classroom”, said Martha. They described John as being easily frustrated, needing frequent breaks, needing lower cognitive load and a perfect working environment.

Considerable space in the IEP was devoted to describing John’s behaviors. He was sensitive to bird sounds, the feel and smell of clothing, proximity of people, being touched and noisy environments. The teacher suggested, “taking turns (with his aide/teacher) to type sentences on days when he is less tolerant helps John complete the assigned activity with less frustration.” Detailed descriptions of his behavior were included the following sentence:

“When John is upset, he may scream or cry loudly, hit himself or objects around him, throw items that are within his reach, stomp his feet or thrash in his seat.....”.

Thus, the cultural narrative surrounding John was that of deficit and deficiency. Teachers and staff were careful not to challenge him academically because they were convinced that he would react with anxiety and trauma to hard work.

The narrative from social participation. Using a symbolic interactionist perspective, I did a dynamic analysis by coding the student-teacher interactions in the sessions with a critical perspective asking the following questions:

1. Who is in control of instruction?
2. What is John’s affect?

3. How does John attend?
4. How does the teacher mirror John's enthusiasm? and
5. How long are the exchanges between John and the teacher?

Analyzing the instructional sequences of the instructional sessions led to the discovery of the differences in the teacher-student interaction in the traditional and the multiliteracies settings. Figure 1 gives an example of the traditional literacy session in which John participates in reading a modified novel *Frankenstein* along with his class. John was only slightly engaged by the teacher-made material (by his brief glances at the screen) and he did not display much excitement or affect. The teacher asked mostly factual questions, testing student comprehension and recall, which got a limited response, with a lot of prompting from the teacher. John showed that he was anxious and tried to show through his body language that he wanted to avoid participation. John's behaviors and engagement fed into the teacher's belief of student incompetence and when he did not respond to her question, she moved on to another student.

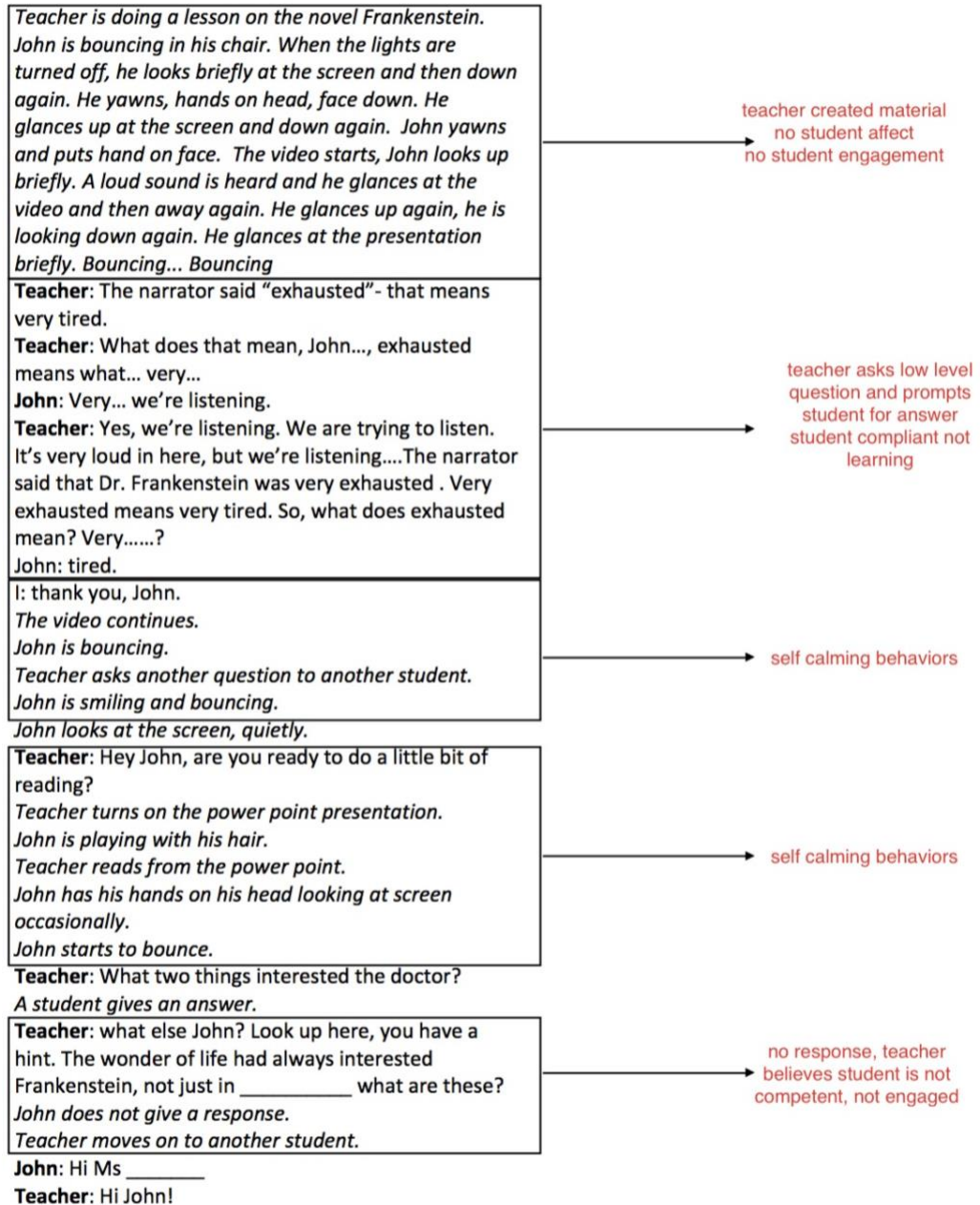


Figure 1. The instructional sequence for traditional instruction with John.

Thus, the narrative generated by John's social participation in the classroom was also one of deficit and disinterest.

The Transformation of John's Identity

An analysis of the video transcriptions, field notes and interviews using grounded theory indicated that new learning spaces were created for John in the areas of (a)

problem-solving, (b) complexity of usage in digital tools and language, and (c) self-knowledge. Many of the skills that were observed in the multiliteracies sessions of the book project had not been previously seen in during observations of traditional instruction in class or gathered from the interviews of staff.

Analysis of the data indicated a pathway to the creation of new learning. The multiliteracies framework used in the study created a noticeable shift in teacher-student interaction that resulted in engagement, initiation, and joy of learning, which was ultimately responsible for the creation of new learning spaces. During the process of axial coding, new learning spaces were identified as the central phenomenon, and the categories of engagement, initiation, and joy of learning were identified as causal conditions (Cresswell, 2013).

The transformation of John's identity began almost as soon as he started creating the multimodal book on the tablet application. He began to show interest and enthusiasm in the activity. He showed a keen sense of self-knowledge as could be seen from his identity chart, his list of favorite activities, and his knowledge about his strengths. His participation changed the perceptions of the teacher and classroom staff about his abilities.

Identity chart. John created an identity chart as part of the project, selecting words that best described him as shown in Figure 2. The teacher had a list of 50 identifiers, which she read out in batches of 10, explaining each vocabulary word with everyday examples (e.g., “independent means you like to do things by yourself, like picking your clothes, picking your lunch...).

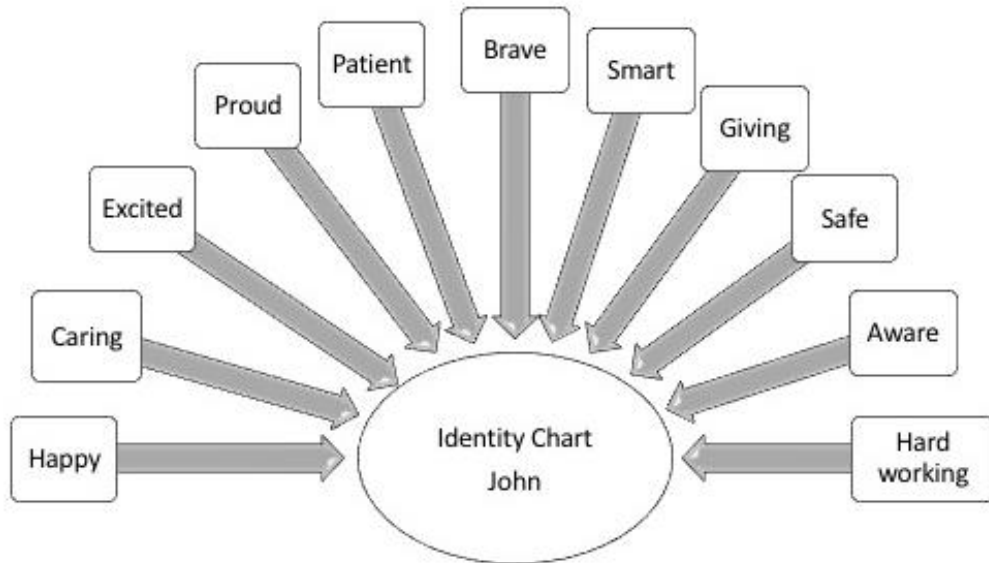


Figure 2. Identity chart created by John.

John registered his choice by circling the words on a sheet of paper. After he had picked ten words, John wanted to add the word “safe” to the list. One of the para-educators felt that John was repeating what he had heard in the classroom, where staff often tell students to be safe, especially when they are anxious or agitated. Her remarks suggested John displayed a keen awareness of staff perception and staff narratives.

Favorite activities. When John selected his favorite activities at school, as shown in Table 2, the staff were surprised on two counts.

Table 2

John's Favorite Activities at Home and School

Location	Activity
At Home	Sailing
	Holiday
	Go to beach with mom
	Walking in the backyard with friends
At School	Gym Class
	Campus Jobs
	P.E with Mr. C ^a
	Money Math
	P's Café ^b
	Cafeteria
	Brunch
	Yoga
	F. Buddies ^c
	Adaptive Physical Education
	Science

Note. ^a Mr. C is the P.E. teacher. ^bP's Café is the school district café run by students in their special day programs. ^c F. Buddies is the buddy program where school peers hang out with students during lunch.

First, the staff was surprised to see activities on the list that they knew John liked because earlier they did not think John was aware of his preferences. One staff said, “It’s common knowledge, you know, that John loves to go to the cafeteria, and he loves his lunch buddy, Mary. Wow! He picked those.” At the IEP meeting, John’s mother confirmed that he had picked activities that he truly enjoyed at home.

Secondly, the teacher and staff were surprised to see academic subjects in the list (for example, science) and this shattered the stereotypical notions the staff had about John being disinterested in academics. The teacher was thrilled. “Hmm...,” she pondered, “I may need to do more units in science.”

Strengths. Additionally, John displayed self-awareness when he selected activities he believed that he was good at, using a list from a commercial program that was used in classroom transition planning, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

John's Strengths Selected from a List of Activities

John's strengths as picked by him	
Caring for the planet	Playing on the computer
Working in groups	Math
Building things	P.E.
Science	Being busy
Making new friends	Learning to be healthy
Helping with yard work	Following the rules
Music	Making important choices

The program displayed choices in the form of activities (e.g., camping, building, working in groups) from everyday lives of students at school and home. The teacher explained these choices with pictures and videos. While the teacher had felt before the lesson that these concepts would be hard to teach, she was pleasantly surprised at the “focus and co-operation” that John showed.

John's participation in the meeting. An excerpt is from field notes taken on the day of John's IEP describes John's presentation at the meeting.

(Excerpt from field notes taken on the day of the John's IEP, January 25, 2018)

John was very excited to come to the meeting. He pointed to the iPad almost immediately as he entered the conference room and said “we are going to see Ms. I's iPad” and then looked at me and said, “you are going to watch the video on Ms. I's iPad”. He was smiling and very relaxed. He looked at the teacher and said, “Ms. I, we are still at school.” I guessed that he was confirming that it was past his bus time. After everyone had assembled John started the presentation on the computer. Without any prompting,

he walked up to the screen and pointed to the pictures and read the sentences. After he read the first page, he tried to touch the big screen to move to the next page. The teacher told him that she had to turn the pages on the computer. He then said, “next page”. He commented on the pictures too, adding details about the vacation, houseboat, some of which we had not heard before. He read out all the words in his identity chart. Then he pointed to each video and his favorite activities and commented on them, describing them clearly. For example, he said, “Jenna and Mia in the park”. He also described where the activities were happening at school. For example, he said “PE with Mr. Chen in the gym”, and “we are having brunch in the cafeteria”. I saw a relaxed John, without any of the self-calming behaviors noted in the classroom, giving a very competent presentation.

The impact of the presentation. The impact of the presentation of the book at the IEP meeting changed the perception of the meeting attendees. The presentation and the book project made a big impact on John’s mother. She remarked, “And so having him there, made those people around the table, myself included, want to work that much harder. You know, he broke the ice in a way that nothing else could. So, having him there, I think was, was absolutely invaluable to the process to making people really feel you know, who he is and, and want him to be successful. I mean, it was just amazing. I just feel like, wow, I would've never, I would've never guessed.”

Pathways to advocacy. John’s mother pondered over the presentation and his choice of favorite activities at school. Her takeaway was that the activities that John had chosen, particularly F. Buddies and P.E., clearly showed that he wanted more time to spend with his typical peers. She was determined to advocate for him to get him into

more inclusive settings. This can be seen as an empowering result of John's agency in changing his narrative (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner and Cain, 1998).

Changes in Social Participation

There was a visible shift in the teacher-student interactions when the traditional sessions were compared to the multiliteracies sessions. In the multiliteracies example shown in Figure 3, John was involved in typing sentences about pictures he had selected earlier. When presented with the co-constructed material from earlier sessions, he reacted with affect and engagement. His responses were immediate and enthusiastic. His responses, in turn, elicited reciprocation by the teacher who guided him into new learning spaces. The teacher withheld prompts and allowed John to type the sentence by himself. John responded by creating a space for problem solving and showing sustained attention to the task. These behaviors fed into teacher beliefs in his competence.

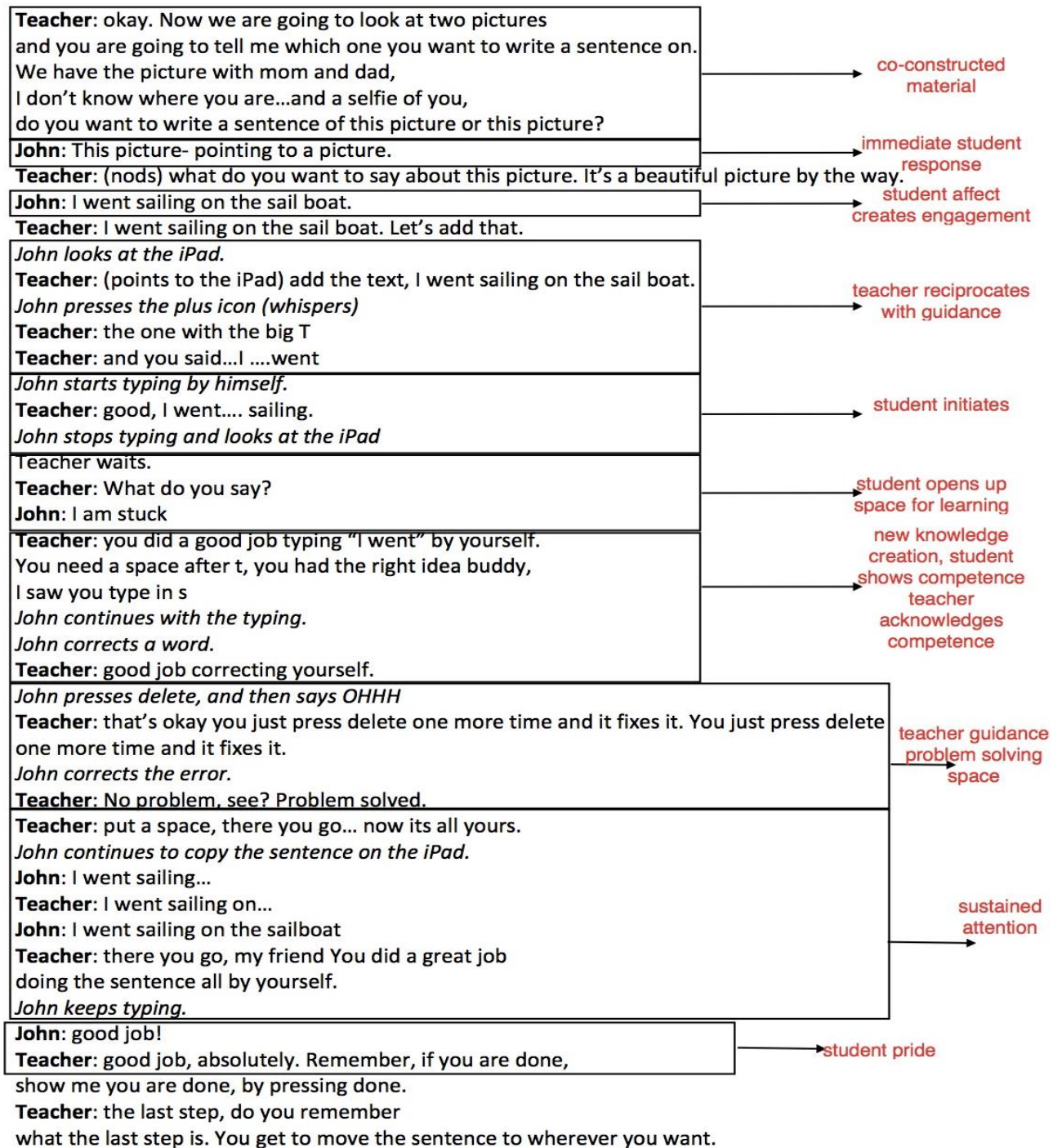


Figure 3. The instructional sequence for multiliteracies instruction with John.

The multiliteracies settings, as shown in Figure 3 created instruction with alternating control of instruction between student and teacher, questions going beyond

mere recall, reflection and connection of ideas generated over time, expression of self-awareness by students, and co-construction of content by the student and teacher.

Repeated analysis of the sequences of instructional patterns for all the sessions led to the formation of a generic model of instructional sequence. Traditional instructional sequences, shown in Figure 4 follow a pattern of teacher's sole control of content and instruction, low level of student engagement resulting in limited student response, increased self-calming behaviors by student, need for an external reward, leading to teacher beliefs about student's incompetence, and the same content being repeated until teacher feels the student has reached mastery.

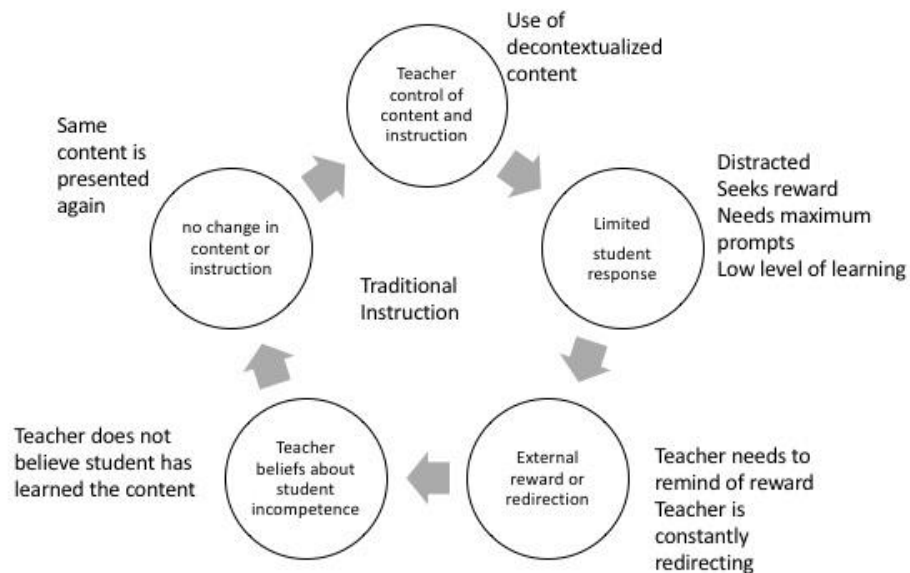


Figure 4. Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in traditional instruction in the classroom.

By contrast, the instructional sequences in the multiliteracies sessions, shown in Figure 5, show a pattern of co-constructed content being presented to the student, enthusiastic and immediate response from student, alternating student and teacher control of instruction

and content, sustained student attention leading to new instructional spaces and creation of new knowledge, increasing teacher belief in student competence, and production of new and more complex co-constructed content for the student.

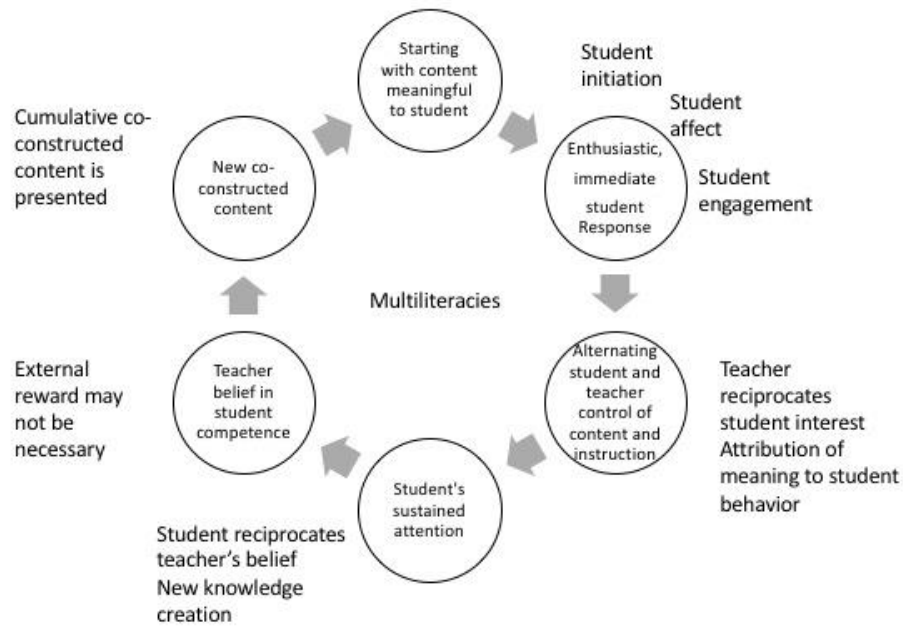


Figure 5. Concept map illustrating the instructional sequence in multiliteracies instruction in the classroom.

Change in the cultural narrative. The teacher revealed that she was amazed at John’s reaction to the book project. She remarked, “What surprised me ... was how intentional their (referring to both students in this study) communication was”. This was in contrast to her experience prior to the project, when she had found it difficult to get the students to participate in the classroom instruction. She was candid about John, stating, “I always perceived him as able to do something, but not necessarily willing to do it.” Initially, she had doubts about how the instruction would work remarking, “When we first started this endeavor I doubted that we would get such genuine answers from both participants. The part about “Who Am I” blew me away!”.

The myth of the fragile orchid. The teacher had said that it was difficult for staff to determine how much John could be pushed. The staff spent time manipulating his environment and making it perfect so that he could be successful. “He’s like a fragile orchid”, she said. Looking deeper into the perception of the fragility of the orchid, I found that it is in reality untrue. In fact, although orchids may need special humidity levels and growing medium, they are very strong plants in their natural environments. Not unlike the orchid’s truth, the teacher realized that “after this project, John is capable so much more than he lets on ... or the environment can be chaotic and he can cope.”

Changes in narrative of staff. As can be seen from Table 4, there was a huge shift in the perceptions of the staff about John’s ability. While they had previously grown accustomed to the idea that John was distracted and non-responsive, needing perfect environments and frequent breaks to work, now they saw him in a new light. They saw him engaged for extended periods of time with no external reward in many sessions, saw him enthusiastically participating in hard activities.

Table 4
Differences in language use of staff when watching the same student in different instructional settings.

Staff	Comments when watching John in traditional Instruction	Comments when watching John during multiliteracies
Martha	<p>“but his environment is very important.”</p> <p>“ ... how it is so hard for him to be competent in what he does because of his environment and that can’t be controlled.”</p> <p>“ ... but I feel he’s struggling to be there 100%, but also struggling with these barriers, these obstacles of sound...”</p> <p>“ ... when he tends to rock, it could be a mixture of boredom or irritability”</p> <p>“Because he is highly sensitive, when it comes to noise and also routine and scheduling and stuff like that.”</p>	<p>“In this scene, he was having issues using the iPad or app or pictures, ... as far as engagement? I think he was there, he was definitely addressing the problem”</p> <p>“Wow, he is reacting to the video, you can see the expressions on his face. He is smiling and yeah, he is definitely reacting to the video, and I think he’s being engaged because of that.”</p>
Sam	<p>“That hair touching thing, is how he calms himself down when he is anxious.”</p> <p>“I think he may be engaged even if he hunching down and face down. For others it is disengagement, but for him, it could be engaged, you know.”</p> <p>“with the hair and all, he is trying to control his own anxiety in the classroom. For him, the auditory overload is pretty overwhelming. That is his number one tic.”</p>	<p>“this is as stoic as I have seen him,</p> <p>“Yeah, he is obviously engaged, and very interested.”</p> <p>“his attention is there. It’s been there a while. That’s new.”</p> <p>“Hmm, I can see he is trying something new and not worrying, you know about it. It’s not making him anxious or anything ... I think he likes that he can see himself in the videos, you know how we do that, like watching videos of our friends and so on.”</p>
Mike	<p>“He does not pay attention, that’s what I told you before. It’s hard for him. But you know, maybe when he is looking down, he is paying attention. You don’t have to make eye contact to listen you know.”</p>	<p>“He was able to understand it well. He is listening, moving back and forth from the teacher to the iPad, that is good isn’t it? He is not only looking at the iPad, you know what I mean? “</p> <p>“He is paying attention, and waiting for her. He is definitely paying attention to what she is saying, I know that he understands. He’s pretty smart you know. I always knew that.”</p>
Caryl	<p>“He is listening but not paying attention, that’s what I think. His body language is anxious. It’s the noise I think. He hates the noise. It bothers me too in the class-our class is so noisy.”</p>	<p>“Oh look, he is smiling so much. He is interested in the video. What is he watching? The video is definitely catching his attention.”</p> <p>“He’s doing great. He is listening so well to, to the teacher. Wish he could be like that all the time.”</p>

Discussion

John was able to tell his story when provided with tools and instruction that allowed him to be successful. His story was that of a boy who loved going out on holidays with his family, enjoyed sailing, longed to be with his friends, and was interested in academics including science and math. He believed that he was among other things, smart, giving, caring, hard-working, and happy. He surprised the classroom staff with his self-awareness and ability to learn. His performance in the multiliteracies sessions showed the teacher and classroom staff his potential.

The story of the reconstruction of John's identity is an example of how pedagogical practices can be instrumental in changing the narrative identities of students with complex support needs (Black, 2006; Cummins & Early, 2011; Early and Gunderson, 1993). The creation of the multimodal book was a powerful tool for organizing literacy practices around multiliteracies and the book-making process involved sedimentation of new identities for John (Rosswell & Pahl, 2007) as he began to have control over his own narrative.

This study showed that narrative identity of a student with complex support needs can be changed by addressing two processes: the cultural narrative and social participation. First, this study changed the cultural narrative during the IEP meeting with John demonstrating his competence and providing his authentic input to the IEP document.

Secondly, this study changed the social participation dynamics during instruction. This study showed that literacy practices are never politically neutral (Luke and Freebody, 1999). This study brought to the foreground the invisible practices of

traditional instruction that reinforce the deficit narrative surrounding John. While the teacher controlled the direction of instruction during traditional literacy practices, the control alternated between John and teacher during the multiliteracies sessions.

Traditional teaching reinforced the deficit identity of the John and pushed the narrative of his incompetence, while multiliteracies teaching promoted the narrative of his engagement, initiation, and joy of learning. Traditional teaching kept John at existing skill levels by constant repetition of content already presented, while multiliteracies teaching created new learning spaces of problem solving, complexity in the use of tools and language, and self-knowledge. As such, the results of this study were in line with the arguments of scholars who have pointed out that pedagogical practices that allow for active student control of instruction, are responsive to the students' cultural histories, and use multiple modes of representation promote student identities of competence. (Early & Gunderson, 1993; Leander & Lovvorn, 2006; Black, 2006; Blackburn, 2005).

This study also showed the relevance of agency in changing the identity of students with complex support needs (Blackburn, 2005; Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner and Cain, 1998). John presented an alternate student identity to the IEP team members while also projecting new notions of his competence. John's mother was so taken by the presentation, that she reported that, "my head was spinning. I was so overwhelmed. I was so proud of him. I was so pleased that I was so, to some extent surprised." She believed that the students should present at every IEP meeting and the teacher should be encouraged to do this project with all other students.

Conclusion and Future Research

In this article, I focused on the case study of John, who was labeled as having a

severe disability by the school, and identified as disinterested and unenthusiastic in the classroom. As he participated in the multiliteracies activities, he was seen to engage successfully, initiate learning and express joy in the learning process. In the broader study, I explored in depth the new learning spaces and student-teacher interactions that were created because of multiliteracies. This study used the context of the IEP meeting to create literacy activities and experiences. Future research is needed to see if similar results can be obtained in other fields like journal writing, life skills, science and social studies. While this study focused on audio, video and written input by the students, future research can explore other diverse modes by which students with complex support needs can participate successfully in the classroom or in the IEP meetings. Further research on the use of deficit language in the IEP document can also reveal to educators how the IEP document and the process constructs a negative narrative identity of students with complex support needs.

Results from this study suggest that designing literacy activities using multiliteracies and student agency can give students who are struggling with conventional literacy practices an opportunity to rewrite their narrative identities. It is up to educators to rise to the challenge of adopting new literacy practices so that we can change the dominant narrative that students with complex support needs have no ideas of their own or any stories to tell (Kliewer, 2008).

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Appendix A
School Permission Form

Dear Principal XXX,

I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco and writing to you for permission to do research at your school. I am studying using multiliteracies with students with significant disabilities and would like to collaborate with XXX teacher at your school. The participating students will be decided by the teacher and with student/parent consent.

Once we have decided on the students who may participate, I will contact their parents for their consent to be involved in the study. I will interview the parents before and after the study. I will also interview the teacher and classroom para-educators before and during the study. I will get consent from all participants before the study for audio/video recordings of their interviews. I will also get consent from parents to video record students' classroom sessions during the study. The audio and video recordings are essential in my grounded theory analysis of teacher-student interactions. At the end of the study, I will attend the participating students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. I will also audio record parts of the IEP meeting. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and any participant may quit the study at any time. To protect participant confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used for all participants. The information obtained will not be shared with anyone, unless required by law.

The study will be conducted at XXX High School between November and February. There are no known risks involved in this study and none of the participants will receive any compensation for their participation.

The majority of data, including audio and video recordings, will be stored on my hard drive, backed up to a secure server, and destroyed after transcription, which may be approximately 2 months after recording; any paper documentation will be stored in a locked file cabinet and shredded following completion of the dissertation process.

A potential benefit of this study is that educators may learn new ways to enable students with significant disabilities to access challenging literacy activities which can engage and empower them.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the process or progress of the study please feel free to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Sudha Krishnan

Doctoral Candidate, University of San Francisco

Appendix B
Consent Forms

Consent Form-Teacher

A Study on Multiliteracies and Student-written Input in IEP.

You are being asked to give permission to take part in a research study on how students can participate actively in their IEPs by writing a personal narrative to describe their strengths, needs and dreams. The study will last for 10-12 weeks. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to examine how using multiliteracies (for example using multimedia like computers and videos for reading and writing) can help students feel successful at school. The students will work on creating a personal story for their Individualized Education Plan document.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study,

1. I will introduce the study and the plan to you in a session lasting for one hour. In this session, I will tell you the details of the literacy plan that the students will be following.
2. I will observe the progress of the students in your class while they work on developing the personal story. With your permission, I would like to video-record the literacy process.
3. I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about your experiences in IEP meetings, your thoughts on your students' strengths and abilities, how best to teach literacy, and your vision for your students in the future. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview.
4. I will have ongoing conversations with you about the progress of the students throughout the study period. With your permission, I will take notes of these conversations.
5. I would like to attend the annual IEP meetings for the students participating in the study. With your permission, I will take written notes during the meeting.

Risks and benefits:

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

There are no benefits to you. I hope to learn more about implementing successful literacy practices with students and ways to empower them through participating in their IEPs.

Compensation: There is no monetary or other compensation associated with this study.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only I will have access to

the records. I will destroy all recordings of audio and video after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Sudha Krishnan. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Sudha Krishnan at svkrishnan@usfca.edu or at 408-888-9643. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, *or more information on University of San Francisco policies, please contact Christy Lusareta, IRB Coordinator, or Dr. Terence Patterson, Ed.D., ABPP, Chair of the IRBPHS; IRBPHS@usfca.edu*. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Consent Form-Paraeducators
A Study on Multiliteracies and Student-written Input in IEP.

You are being asked to give permission to take part in a research study on how students can participate actively in their IEPs by writing a personal narrative to describe their strengths, needs and dreams. The study will last for 10-12 weeks. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to examine how using multiliteracies (for example using multimedia like computers and videos for reading and writing) can help students feel successful at school. The students will work on creating a personal story for their Individualized Education Plan document.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study,

1. I will introduce the study and the plan to you in a session lasting for one hour. In this session, I will tell you the details of the literacy plan that the students will be following.
2. I will observe the progress of the students in your class while they work on developing the personal story. With your permission, I would like to video-record the literacy process.
3. I will have ongoing conversations with you about the progress of the students throughout the study period. With your permission, I will take notes on these conversations.

Risks and benefits:

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

There are no benefits to you. I hope to learn more about implementing successful literacy practices with students and ways to empower them through participating in their IEPs.

Compensation: There is no monetary or other compensation associated with this study.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only I will have access to the records. I will destroy all recordings of audio and video after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Sudha Krishnan. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Sudha Krishnan at svkrishnan@usfca.edu or at 408-888-9643. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, *or more information on University of San Francisco policies, please contact Christy Lusareta, IRB Coordinator, or Dr. Terence Patterson, Ed.D., ABPP, Chair of the IRBPHS; IRBPHS@usfca.edu*. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Consent Form-Parent

A Study on Multiliteracies and Student-written Input in IEP.

You are being asked to give permission for your child to take part in a research study on how students can participate actively in their IEPs by writing a personal narrative to describe their strengths, needs and dreams. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to examine how using multiliteracies (literacy instruction that allows for multimedia expression) can help students feel successful at school. The students will work on creating a personal story for their Individualized Education Plan document.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study,

1. I will implement a literacy plan with your child in the classroom using multimedia to create a personal story about their strengths, needs, dreams and preferences. With your permission, I would like to observe and video-record the literacy process.
2. I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about your experiences in IEP meetings with the school, your thoughts on your child's strengths and abilities, how best to teach your child, and your vision for your child in the future. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. With your permission, I would also like to audio-record the interview.
3. I would like to attend the annual IEP meeting for your child. With your permission, I will take written notes during the meeting.

Risks and benefits:

I do not anticipate any risks to you or your child participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

There are no benefits to you. I hope to learn more about implementing successful literacy practices with students and ways to empower them through participating in their IEPs.

Compensation: There is no monetary or other compensation associated with this study.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only I will have access to the records. I will destroy all recordings of audio and video after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Sudha Krishnan. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Sudha Krishnan at svkrishnan@usfca.edu or at 408-888-9643. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, *or more information on University of San Francisco policies, please contact Christy Lusareta, IRB Coordinator, or Dr. Terence Patterson, Ed.D., ABPP, Chair of the IRBPHS; IRBPHS@usfca.edu*. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Consent Form-Student

A Study on Multiliteracies and Student-written Input in IEP.

To be read to the student:

You are being asked to give permission to take part in a research study on how you can participate actively in your IEP by writing a personal narrative to describe your strengths, needs and dreams. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to examine how using multiliteracies (literacy instruction that allows for multimedia expression) can help students feel successful at school. You will work on creating a personal story for their Individualized Education Plan document.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study,

1. Your teacher will help you to use multimedia to create a personal story about your strengths, needs, dreams and preferences. With your permission, I would like to observe and video-record the literacy process.
2. I will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about your experiences in IEP meetings with the school, your thoughts on your strengths and abilities, how you learn best, and your hopes and dreams. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. With your permission, I would also like to audio-record the interview.
3. I would like to attend your annual IEP meeting. With your permission, I will take written notes during the meeting.

Risks and benefits:

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

There are no benefits to you. I hope to learn more about implementing successful literacy practices with students and ways to empower them through participating in their IEPs.

Compensation: There is no monetary or other compensation associated with this study.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only I will have access to the records. I will destroy all recordings of audio and video after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Sudha Krishnan. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Sudha Krishnan at svkrishnan@usfca.edu or at 408-888-9643. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, *or more information on University of San Francisco policies, please contact Christy Lusareta, IRB Coordinator, or Dr. Terence Patterson, Ed.D., ABPP, Chair of the IRBPHS; IRBPHS@usfca.edu*. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____

Date _____

Appendix C
Interview Guide

Interview Guide- Initial Teacher Interview

Initial Questions

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Tell me what subjects you teach in your classroom?

Initial Open-ended Questions

3. How do you teach reading and writing?
4. How do you think your students learn best?
5. Can you describe a typical literacy session?
6. When do you find your students most engaged?

Intermediate Questions

7. What do you know of multiliteracies?
8. Do you use multi-modal tools (visual, gestural, kinesthetic) in the classroom?
9. Is reading and writing based on print-related text important in your class?
10. Tell me how you go about preparing for an IEP?
11. How long does it take?
12. Who are the people involved in the IEP meeting?
13. How do you get input from the student?
14. What do you think of the kind of learners that your student are?
15. Tell me more.....
16. Where do you see them in the next five years?
17. If you were introducing your student to me, how would you describe him/her?

Ending Questions

18. How have your views changed over the years you have worked?
19. Is there something that you may not have thought of about before that occurred to you during this interview?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?

Interview Guide- Initial Parent Interview

Initial Questions

1. How long have you been with this school district?
2. How many children do you have go to this school district?
3. Do they all go to the home school?

Initial Open-ended Questions

4. What do you think of the reading curriculum for your child with disability?
5. How do you think your child learn best?
6. How do you engage with your child at home?
7. When do you find your child is most excited or engaged about learning?

Intermediate Questions

8. Tell me how you go about preparing for an IEP?
9. What are your experiences about who participates at the IEP meeting?
10. What are your thoughts on your child participating actively in the IEP meetings?
11. What do you think of your child's learning ability?
12. Tell me more....(does he/she work hard? How does he/she do in academic learning?)
13. Where do you see your child in the next five years?
14. If you were introducing your child to me, how would you describe him/her?

Ending Questions

15. How have your views changed over the years about your child?
16. Is there something that you may not have thought of about before that occurred to you during this interview?
17. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?

Interview Guide (ongoing conversations)-Teacher/aide

Initial Open-ended Questions

1. How do you think the student narrative is going?
2. Could you describe how the student is working on the narrative?
3. What are the tools you are using?

Intermediate Questions

4. Tell me what is going well....
5. Tell me what is challenging at this point?
6. What/Who has been most helpful to you?
7. How do you handle.....?
8. Is there anything new that you are learning about _____ ?
9. Is there anything that surprised you about _____ ?

Ending Questions

10. Is there something that you may not have thought of about before that occurred to you during this interview?
11. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?

Interview Guide- IEP team members (including parents)

Initial Open-ended Questions

1. What did you think of the student narrative in the IEP?
2. How do you think others reacted to the student narrative at the meeting?

Intermediate Questions

3. Was there anything new that you learned about _____?
4. Was there anything that surprised you about _____?

Ending Questions

5. Is there something that you may not have thought of about before that occurred to you during this interview?
6. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?