

THIS COULD HAVE BEEN AN EMAIL:  
ADAPTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM TO BETTER SUIT  
MODERN COMMUNICATION NEEDS

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The foundation for this work was the question *How can College and Career Readiness standards be taught in alignment with state and Common Core ELA standards to improve student communication skills and academic engagement?* Through a review of literature focused on academic standards, employability skills, and classroom instruction and curriculum, I worked to build connections between what content skills are being taught, what skills are seen as necessary outside of the classroom, and how these two sectors of communication could connect within the ELA classroom. My capstone project is housed within a WordPress website, with all content created as separate, and, as applicable, interconnected, blog posts. This design was consciously chosen to be respectful of educators' busy schedules as this format allows for all resources to be readily accessible and asynchronous, allowing educators to connect when they have the opportunity. The website will launch in August of 2022, with the intention of continuing with monthly ongoing posts.

Through the construction of the website and its content, I utilized Mezirow's (2000) ideas of learning as transformation. This theory argues that the majority of our learning takes place through our own prior understandings. While analyzing content, we as individuals utilize our own unique contexts, perspectives, assumptions, connections, and more to cement this new learning in the context of how we view the world. It is through these connections that our understanding can evolve and transform (Mezirow 2000).

The intended audience for this project was secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers in Minnesota, however, some resources presented could be beneficial to

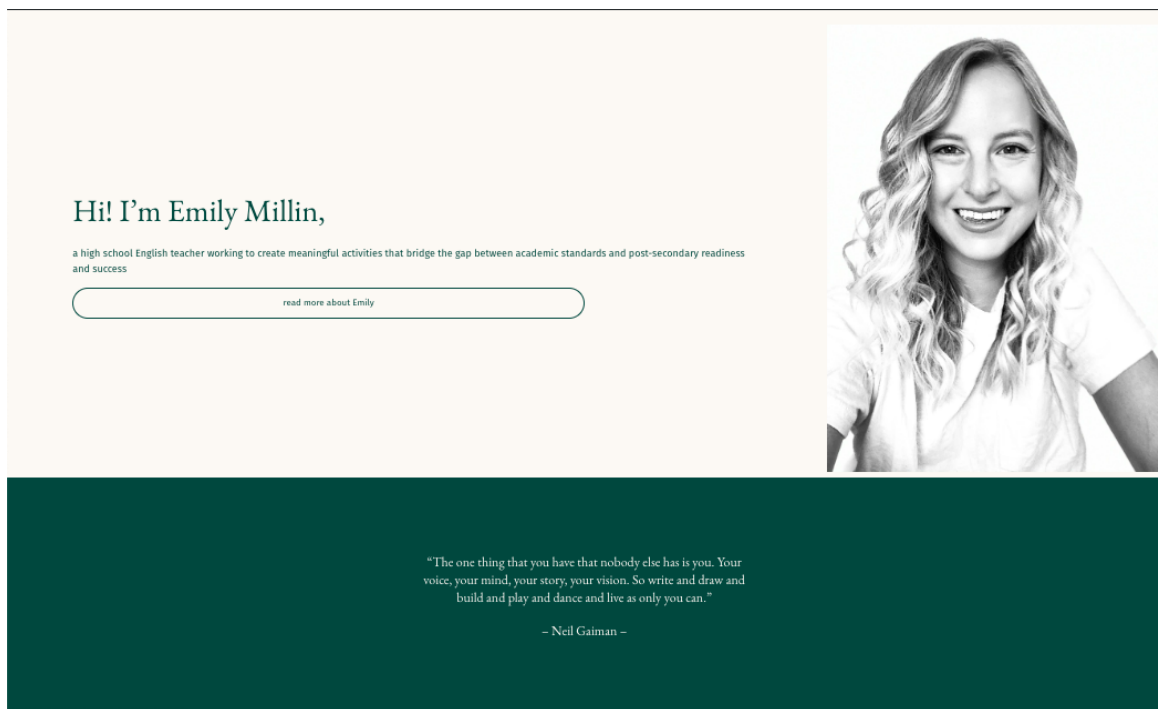
any educator at the secondary level. The classroom activities are directly tied to Minnesota's ELA standards. The scholastic research on communication and professionalism, however, is presented more generally and could be a resource to any secondary teacher. While the construct of this project was to offer resources to educators, all of the content presented within this project is designed to be and should be, modified to best fit the needs of the students in any given classroom.

The content itself was created to address three main areas of focus: scholastic-based informational posts, ready-to-implement classroom activities, and building and reflecting resources for educators to utilize when ready to create their own activities and curricula. Each of these sections will be further outlined in the next section. The separation of content into these areas of focus allows educators to jump in at a point where they feel they are best prepared to connect. If the idea of shifting communication expectations in the classroom to more modern practices, such as switching out a memorized speech for a stylized presentation, is new to an educator, they can begin at scholastic resources. If they are familiar with the why, but not sure where to start, classroom activities are an access point for them. If educators feel practiced with these concepts but are ready to take their work to the next level, the reflection and building section offers a point of access. Throughout the information and posts presented the goal is accessibility and community, allowing educators to read and engage authentically and in a way that works for them.

## PROJECT LINKS AND WALKTHROUGH

The link to my WordPress blog site is: <https://emilymillin.wordpress.com>

When viewers access this project site, they are greeted with a professional headshot and quick biography of myself, and why I am passionate about the work being presented here. The goal of having this section be the first thing viewers see is to welcome them, as well as showcase that an actual human being is helping them through this content.



When users continue to scroll through the page, they will be able to see the three sections of the website, as well as a quick overview of what types of posts are found in each of these. Beneath each header and summary, users also see a carousel of posts, allowing them to flip through associated blog posts in a quick and organized manner.



## THE BASICS

Explore scholastic research on topics such as:



### Section One: The Basics (Scholastic-Based Posts)

The focus of this section is to illustrate important scholastic findings from this capstone's literature review, but present them in a more conversational and accessible language format.

At the website launch, the following posts will be accessible to viewers, with a focus on why this work is important, as well as critical theory, such as Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, which educators need to remember and utilize when beginning this work.

- [Rethinking Communication: Why English Language Arts Classrooms Should Teach Postsecondary Communication Skills](#)
- [Challenging "Professionalism": Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Teaching Employability Skills](#)
- [Phones in the Classroom: A Perspective Piece](#)
- [Talking the Talk: Communication in the Workplace](#)
  - [Google Form Survey Results](#)



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Wondering where to start? Here are some ready to rock activities that blend ELA and CCR standards:



### Section Two: Classroom Activities

The focus of this section is to offer educators examples of classroom activities they could take and utilize within their classrooms. At the website launch, the following posts will be accessible to viewers:

- [Calling All Heroes: Textual Analysis + Cover Letters Using Hero's Journey](#)
- [You Can See It, But Can They?: Teaching Students the Basics of Creating Accessible Digital Visuals](#)
- [We Want You!: Using Job Postings in Connection to Persuasion & Media Literacy](#)
- [They Said \*What?\*: Explicitly Discussion Communication with Students](#)



## BUILDING AND REFLECTING

Ready to build your own practice? Here are resources to help you grow:



### **Section Three: Building & Reflecting**

The focus of this section is to offer educators a place to individually and collectively reflect on the concept and ideas presented throughout this work. At the website launch, the following posts will be accessible to viewers:

- [Reflection on Professionalism](#)
- [Building Bridges: Connection Points Between ELA Activities & CCR Standards](#)

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