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Moving Beyond the Banking Method and Scripted Curricula: Creating Confident Teachers

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Moving Beyond the Banking Method and Scripted Curricula: Creating Confident Teachers
for the Degree of Master of Science in Education

Art of Teaching Program

SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE

Max Solotar

May 2024

Moving Beyond the Banking Method and Scripted Curricula: Creating Confident Teachers

Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the role of scripted curricula in contemporary classrooms and its adverse impacts on students and educators alike. When scripted curricula are put into conversation with Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and his description of the banking method of teaching, the oppressive nature of both are revealed to be deeply intertwined. Political contexts, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, led to a proliferation of scripted curricula in classrooms serving low-income and nonwhite children. These scripted curricula, which often deny students agency and center whiteness, heavily restricted teacher autonomy, treating educators as "robots" to read a script rather than as experts in their profession. Play was eliminated or heavily minimized in early school settings, with scripted curricula that ignored student voices taking center stage. Freire's concept of praxis is discussed as a potential mechanism to transform education into a liberatory, rather than oppressive, environment. This thesis concludes with practical steps towards recentering and valuing both children and educators in the classroom.

Acknowledgments/Dedication

I want to begin by thanking the countless early childhood educators, teachers, professors, and mentors who made me feel a sense of belonging, welcomed, and safe in school settings. To Candace, my preschool teacher, who is one of the first educators I remember and who continued following my journey beyond preschool. To Lisa Borenstein, who allowed for me to TA in her math class while still in high school, catalyzing my desire to teach children as a career. To my professors and mentors in Yale's Education Studies Scholars program, who provided me with an intellectual community to explore the complex field of education. To Carla Horwitz, my professor, Education Studies Scholar Advisor, and Education Studies Capstone Advisor, who introduced me to the joy, value, and complexity of early childhood education, and who suggested I enroll in Sarah Lawrence's Art of Teaching program.

To the Art of Teaching faculty, including Rue, Emily, Farrah, Denisha, Lorayne, Pam, and Genny, who pushed me to expand my beliefs surrounding children and showed me the immense power of values-driven practices. To Robbin, for welcoming me into her classroom with open arms and reminding me to center children in my work. To Taz, Rajihah, and Lee Ann, for acting as my host teachers and sharing their wealth of knowledge freely.

Finally, to my family, friends, and loved ones who have provided indescribable amounts of emotional support through this process.

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Annotated Outline

Thesis Statement: I argue that scripted curricula, deeply intertwined with the banking method of teaching, are pervasive in our current educational system due to a confluence of social and political contexts, and seeks to deny agency to both educators and students. Scripted curricula adversely impact teachers by treating them as robots rather than as bodies of knowledge, simultaneously harming students by centering and uplifting whiteness while ignoring the identities and experiences of children. Future practices that seek to re-center children, and liberate rather than oppress, are offered.

1. My Initial Experiences in Education

- a. Working as an ICT teacher in a kindergarten classroom at a charter school in Inwood during the 2020-2021 academic year
- b. Reliance on scripting in my teaching practices during these times
 - i. Scripting in pre-packaged curricula, such as Stepping Stones
 - ii. Scripting of classroom routines and procedures

2. The Banking Method

- a. Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1993) and definition of the banking method of teaching
- b. Listed ten attitudes and practices central to the banking method that "mirror oppressive society as a whole." (Freire, 1993, p. 54)

3. Scripted Curricula in Social and Political Contexts

- a. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

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- i. Reading First Program, as a component of NCLB, requiring Title I schools to utilize “scientifically-based” reading curricula with “explicit and systematic” instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics. (Bauer & Woolley, 2016)
 - ii. Implications of proliferation of scripted curricula in specific school settings (Demko, 2010)
 - iii. Impact of CCSS on scripting (Fitz & Nikolaidis, 2020)
- b. White Supremacy in Curricula
- i. Segregation by Experience
 1. “In schools across the United States, many young children of color are forced to walk in prison-like lines with silent “bubbles in their mouths” and hands behind their backs. They go through much of the day disconnected from their real lives, asked to submit to significant controlling mechanisms such as behavior charts, monolingualism, punishment systems, and the denial of movement. In other schools, meanwhile, young White children walk in zigzag formations, taking their time, chatting, joking, and sometimes singing with friends.” (Adair & Colegrove, 2021, p. 1)
 2. Agency being intentionally underdeveloped in scripted curricula
 - ii. Wit & Wisdom
 1. Scripted literacy curricula largely center whiteness, mirroring the whiteness of the publishing industry at large (Rigell et al., 2022)

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2. Qualitative and Quantitative analysis of Kindergarten Wit & Wisdom Curriculum (Rigell et al., 2022)

4. Scripted Curricula's Adverse Impacts on Students and Teachers

a. Teachers as robots: The devaluing of teachers, treated as robots rather than as bodies of knowledge

- i. "I'm miserable. Sometimes I wonder if it's worth staying in this job if this is what I'm forced to do. If I weren't subject area leader, I wouldn't feel as much pressure to conform. But again, I just do what I'm told to do."

(Eisenbach, 2012)

- ii. Personal Example #1: Fountas & Pinnell, The Nice Little House (Shannon & Bendall-Brunello, 2008)

- iii. Personal Example #2: Fountas & Pinnell, Individual Student

b. Student representation in curricula

- i. "Variations in students' learning cannot be factored into the script because that creates a variable that the script cannot predict, so it is left out of the process." (Demko, 2010)

- ii. The Nice Little House (Shannon & Bendall-Brunello, 2008)

- iii. Stepping Stones & Exclusion of emergent bilinguals (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016)

c. Elimination of play

- i. Play being limited or removed entirely (Bauer et al., 2016)

d. Internalization of student-teacher hierarchy

- i. Video of student

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- ii. “The Teacher Disciplines and the students are disciplined”

5. Freire’s Concept of Praxis

- a. With a current educational system steeped in the banking method and scripting, we can incorporate student agency by looking towards Freire’s concept of praxis
- b. “To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.” (Freire, 1993, p. 33)
- c. Defining Praxis, and highlighting its relation to Dewey

6. Future Practices

- a. Breaking down the teacher-student hierarchy
 - i. Enacting classroom practices rooted in students rather than compliance
 - ii. Robbin’s classroom
- b. Agency in learning
 - i. Work time, which validates childrens play as their work
 - ii. Taz’s class
 - 1. Modifying math lesson
- c. Relationship Building Over Scripted Practices
 - i. Relationship building, and free time, leads to better understandings over children. (Bauer et al., 2016)
 - ii. Rajihah & Lee Ann’s class
- d. Acknowledging Blind Spots

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- i. “The revolutionary effort to transform these structures radically cannot designate its leaders as its thinkers and the oppressed as mere doers”
(Freire, 1993, p. .
 - ii. The need to incorporate anti-racist practices, and viewpoints of others, in my own approaches to teaching
- e. Trusting Myself
 - i. Rejecting the narrative that the uniformity imposed through scripted curricula is the path towards equity (Timberlake & Barrett, 2017)
 - ii. Valuing my learnings during the Art of Teaching program when supporting children

Process Paper

While enrolled in the Art of Teaching program, I have continuously questioned and reflected upon my initial approaches to teaching and the beliefs that underlied them. After graduating from college in May of 2020, I entered the teaching profession, working as a kindergarten ICT teacher at a charter school in the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan. On one day of summer training, school leadership relayed to new teachers that we would need to take on increased responsibilities in the classroom to meet increased needs of both students and schools due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Thoughts immediately began racing through my mind: Do I know enough? How am I going to write lessons if I haven't ever taught Kindergarten before? After being informed that we would be provided with detailed lesson plans and thorough professional development, the overwhelming sense of self-doubt settled, although it remained in the back of my mind.

Over the course of my first year teaching, I became increasingly familiarized with utilizing scripted lessons and classroom routines. I felt excited when lessons went as planned, with students providing the anticipated responses to a publishing company's pre-written questions. Once I memorized the routinized script of phonics lessons, teaching these became almost second nature, and my confidence increased. I soon associated my memorization of a lessons, and of students' compliance to my instructions, with my skills as an educator. This lingering self-doubt would emerge whenever I couldn't find an answer in a scripted lesson.

I recognized that my teaching practices seemed to be different than those that of my own teachers growing up, having attended a progressive K-12 private school in New York City. They also stood in contrast to the practices that I studied and witnessed in various school settings while

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an undergraduate student in Yale's Education Studies Scholars program. Yet, lacking the autonomy as well as the self-confidence to stray from provided curricula, I continued merging my identity as an educator with my identity as a script-reader. The following year, after transitioning to an early childhood setting that valued a play-based and emergent approach to curricula development, I found myself continuing to question what it means to be a good teacher. The definition of a "good" educator in each of these two school settings seemed incongruous with one another.

I reflected on these previous teaching experiences when engaging with new theories, research, and literature in the Art of Teaching program as I tried to formulate my own teaching philosophy and adjust my preconceived notions surrounding education. For example, reading *Segregation by Experience: Agency, Racism, and Learning in the Early Grades* (Adair & Colegrove, 2021) in Denisha Jones' Emergent Curriculum course, I recognized my own involvement in perpetuating the restrictive teaching practices that black and brown children are more often subjected to – ones that demand compliance and uniformity. One morning that same semester, I walked past my elementary school after returning from Sarah Lawrence's Early Childhood Center, and witnessed students running in circles, yelling and laughing as they climbed into a yellow school bus. I reflected on the ways in which my students spent months trying to practice walking in silent, straight lines, and the deficit lens that supported my belief in its necessity. Equipped with newfound knowledge from my coursework, my views on requiring control and classroom practices shifted towards acknowledging and supporting the humanity of all children.

I was able to integrate these learnings with the works of theorists such as Paolo Freire, who highlighted the oppressive nature of the banking method of instruction, inherent in many

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scripted curricula. At the same time, I was working in Robbin's classroom at the ECC, allowing me the opportunity to witness first-hand the importance and strength of play based approaches to learning. I re-evaluated the deficit-oriented lens that I often utilized when analyzing student work, and through thorough observational and documentation practices, uncovered the many strengths of children that would previously have gone unrecognized. The Art of Teaching program allowed for me to re-center children in my values, children who are often left out of the thinking and planning process when teaching scripted curricula.

As my coursework strengthened my understanding of child development, of educational theory, and of the diversity of approaches to teaching, I found my confidence in the classroom begin to increase. I came to understand that scripted lessons made me feel secure because I was unsure of my belief system, and unsure of how to support children. The Art of Teaching program allowed for me to put words to my feelings surrounding how children learned best, replacing a reliance on others' dictations on how to support children with a reliance on myself and my understanding of children.

This thesis explores the ways that scripted curricula perpetuate inequity and disempower teachers, and explores the liberatory practices and agentic practices that I have witnessed while enrolled in the Art of Teaching program. It is a synthesis of the knowledge that has been imparted on me from countless educators and mentors, and the knowledge that I have developed myself by witnessing children through my personal values-based lens.

I embark on the next stage of my journey in the education field more knowledgeable and capable, ready to utilize my learnings gained through the Art of Teaching program to support children in my future classroom. I have internalized the importance of viewing, and valuing, the

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strengths, identities, and learning styles that each child brings to the classroom. And, having research and theory to defend my classroom practices, can act as a strong advocate for my students.

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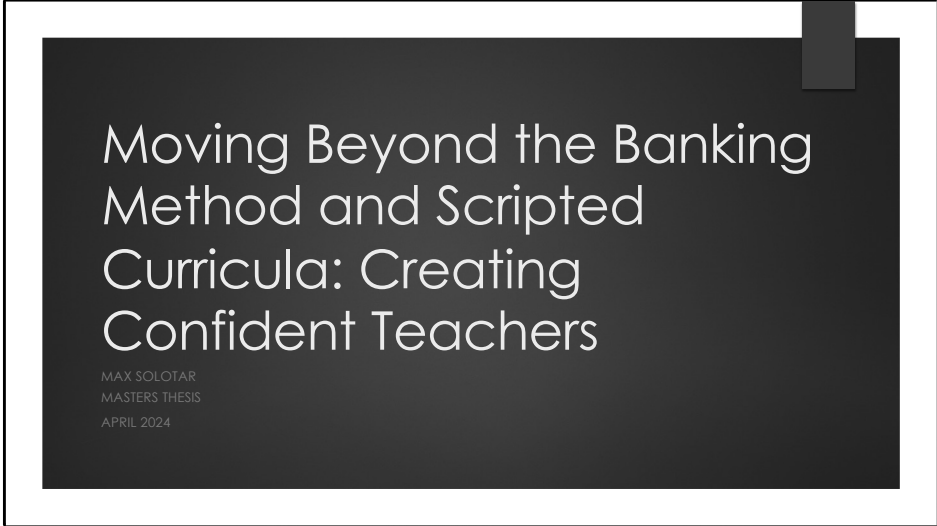
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MAX SOLOTAR
MASTERS THESIS
APRIL 2024

- Good morning!
- I want to start off by thanking you all for attending my thesis presentation, titled “Moving Beyond The Banking Method And Scripted Curricula: Creating Confident Teachers.”
- My interest in scripted curricula predates my time in the art of teaching program, and was a topic that I continuously explored and developed a fuller understanding throughout my time in the program, and I am thus excited that I can share this with you today.

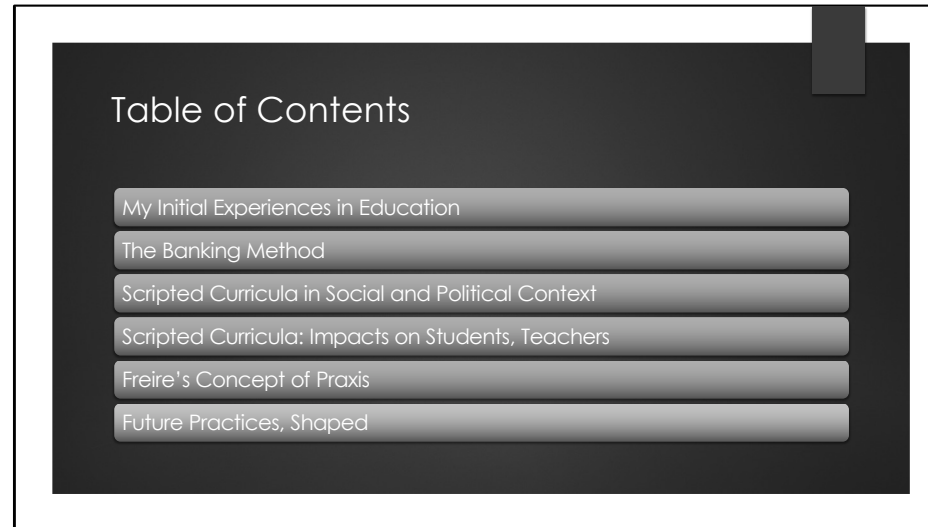
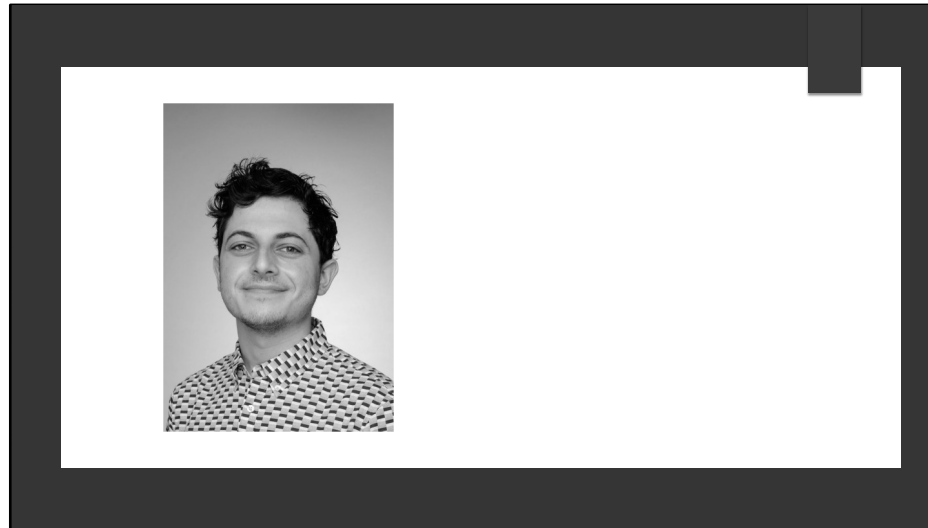
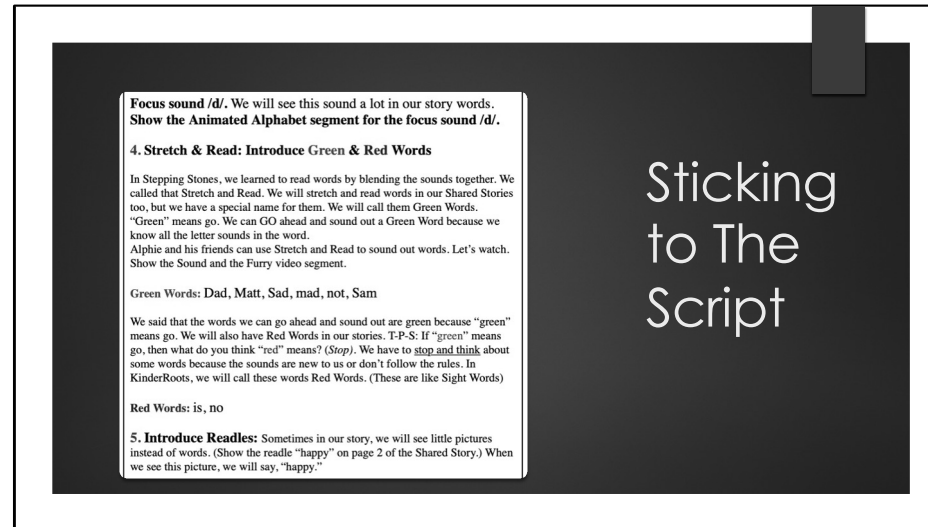


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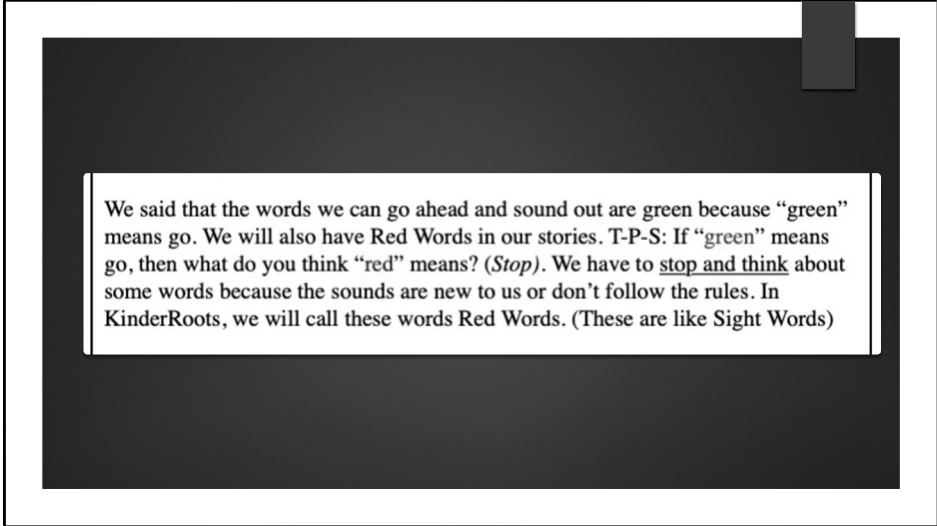
- Before I begin, I have a brief roadmap for today's presentation
- I am going to begin with a discussion of my initial experiences teaching.
- Next, will introduce Freire's concept of the banking, method and I will put this in conversation with scripted curricula.
- I will continue by analyzing the social and political contexts that led to increased levels of scripted lessons in classrooms across the US
- Afterwards, I will continue by discussing the negative impacts of scripted curricula that rely on the banking method, both on teachers as well as students
- I will return to discuss Freire's concept of praxis
- Finally, I will conclude with discussing how these learning and teaching experiences that I have obtained while enrolled in the AoT program have shaped my future practices.



- Photos from my first year teaching.
- In October 2019, the beginning of my senior year of college, I accepted a post-graduate job, teaching kindergarten in the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan for the 2020 school year. Little did I know what lied ahead with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Come new teacher orientation in the summer of 2020, I was told by school leadership that this year, the year of covid, was a year like no other in schools, and that we as new teachers would have increased responsibilities within the classroom to meet student needs
- But there isn't a need to worry, they told us, because we would receive training, professional development, and detailed curricula.
- And this was true – it was a very hands-on school, where leadership frequently observed us teaching and coached us. We had weekly PD sessions and we were provided with lessons for every subject, where scripting was central.



- What was the script?
- The script manifested itself many ways.
- Some were explicit scripts related to academics. These curricula often had pacing guides, telling teachers not just what topics should be covered each day, but exactly how much time to spend on each portion of each day's lesson. They also had full scripts – telling me exactly what I should be saying to children, as well as oftentimes laying out the exact response expected from children.
- The example here was from a pre-packaged phonics curriculum known as "stepping stones" that is produced by a company known as Success for All.
- as you can see, I was provided a verbatim script to follow for each and every time these lessons were taught.



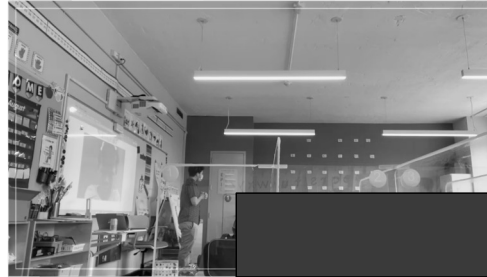
We said that the words we can go ahead and sound out are green because “green” means go. We will also have Red Words in our stories. T-P-S: If “green” means go, then what do you think “red” means? (*Stop*). We have to stop and think about some words because the sounds are new to us or don’t follow the rules. In KinderRoots, we will call these words Red Words. (These are like Sight Words)

Read script

Sticking To The Script

versus how many students are present, etc.

Take Class Attendance!
During this time, narrate continuously to address any off-task behavior.



- We also had another type of script, which were scripted classroom management routines.
- These routines related to classroom management were standardized, memorized, internalized, practiced, and repeated.
- I am going to play a video of us practicing classroom routines during the first week of school in August 2021, practicing how students should stand up in unison.



- The script was explicit – it told children what to do with their eyes (on me), their bodies (calm), their voices (off), their pace (quick and quiet).
- It expected uniformity – not just of the students in my class, but of classrooms across the school building, where teachers in each grade were utilizing the very same script to enact routines and transitions in their classrooms.

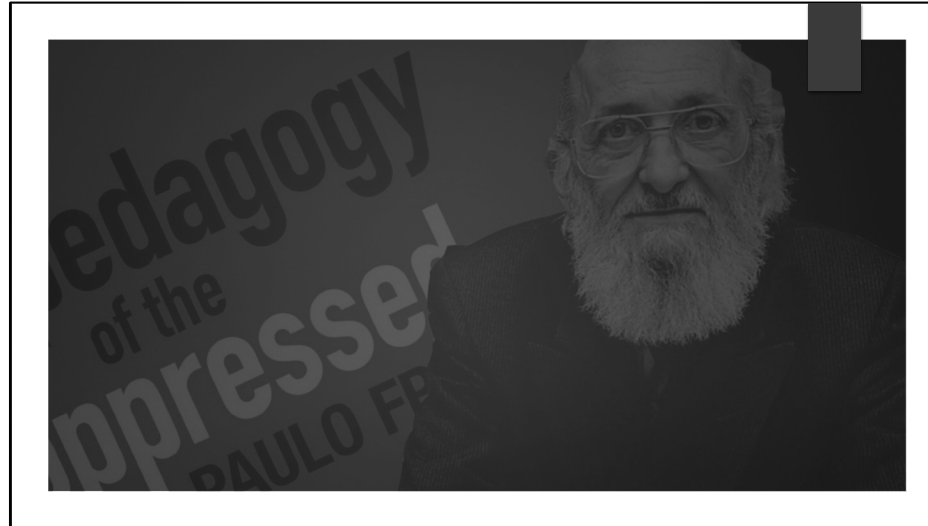
Sticking To The Script

versus how many students are present, etc.

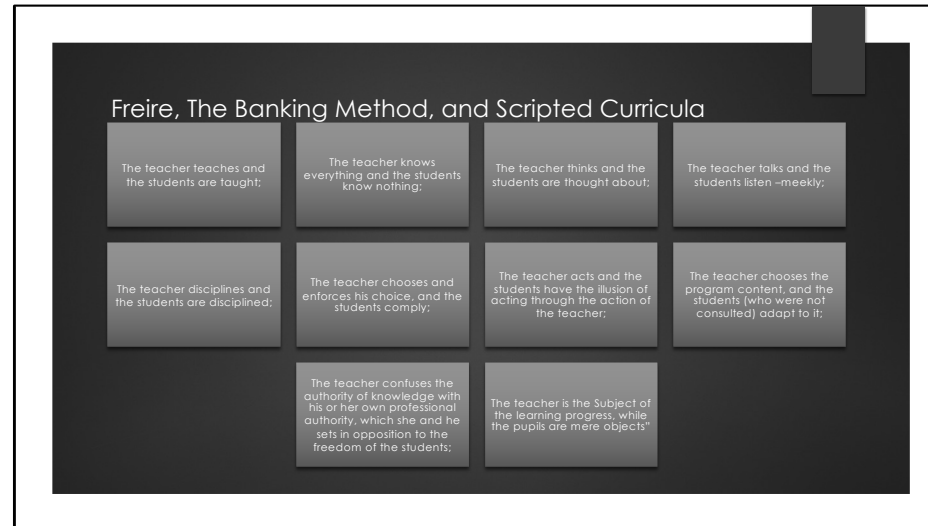
Take Class Attendance!
During this time, narrate continuously to address any off-task behavior.



- These scripts, focused on uniformity, were utilized not just during transitions, but throughout every moment of our day. On the left is a portion of a math routine lesson plan, one where we took attendance as a class and discussed how many students were present and absent that day. In this lesson, there is an explicit portion reminding me *narrate continuously* to address off task behaviors of children - centering the role of controlling children, and utilizing our scripted narrations, throughout all parts of the school day.
- One thing I want to note is that my leadership was not entirely wrong - scripting DID made me feel confident, but only when it worked. I knew that my understandings weren't complete, and when I didn't have a script to rely on, I often felt lost. I didn't feel like I could trust myself to make sound decisions for my class.



- Coming to Sarah Lawrence, and reading about the banking method in Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, I saw stark parallels between his work and my "scripts."
- As described by Freire, the banking method of teaching views students as "receptacles" ready to receive information from the all-knowing teacher, whose job is to deposit knowledge into students. This is done through a prescriptive model of teaching, where students are thought of as passive objects and not considered truly in curricula or pedagogy.



- Freire lays out ten attitudes and practices central to the banking method of teaching which I've included above.
- Freire notes that these attitudes and practices, central to the banking method, *mirror oppressive society as a whole* - something I will delve further into later on.
- There's a few of these attitudes I want to briefly highlight –
- The teacher teaches and the students are taught – a hardened definition of the role of teachers and students
- The teacher thinks and the students are thought about – highlighting the passive nature of banking methods.
- Lastly, the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply:
- Students are seen as passive, meek, incapable. There are rules that need to be enforced, and in turn, students must take on a subservient role.



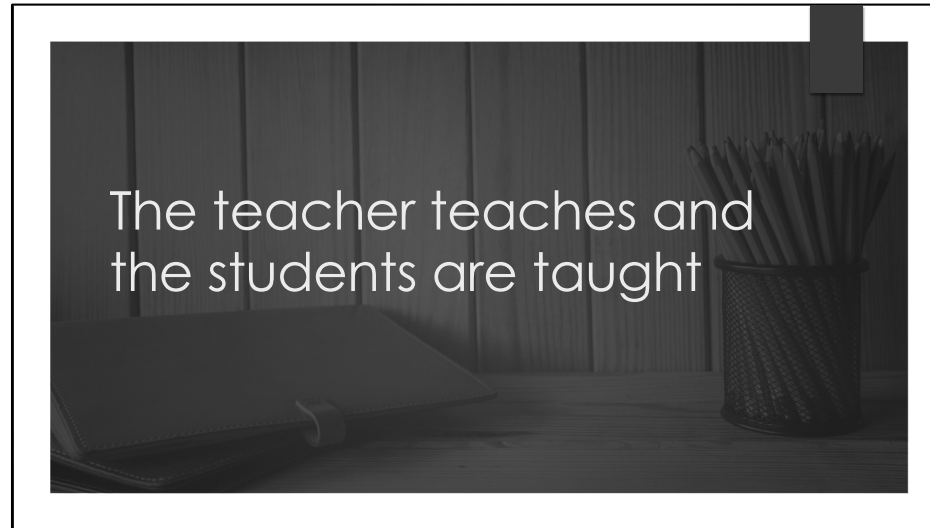
Banking and Scripted Curricula in Social and Political Context

- I've also come to learn, through my time in the art of teaching program, that my experiences with scripted lessons that rely on banking methods of teaching were not unique.
- Oppressive teaching practices are far-reaching, are often applied towards oppressed groups, and are rooted in social and political contexts.



- The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, authorized by then-President Bush, imposed numerous new standards, regulations, and procedures on schools across the country, especially as it related to targeting the achievement gap, and fixing “failing” or “low-performing” schools (Bauer Woolley, p. 228).
- For example, The Reading First program, a component of NCLB, stated that schools which receive Title I funding needed to utilize “scientifically-based” reading curricula with “explicit and systematic” instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics.
- Title 1 schools are those which serve low income students, and whose student population is also predominantly non-white.
- What are the impacts of this? How can you, as a school district, prove your classrooms are aligned with this narrowly-definition of quality, and utilizing scientifically-based, explicit curriculum with fidelity? Heavy scripting of explicit and direct teaching instruction.
- Scripting out the actions and words of teachers ensures a uniform enactment of these curricula, and will thus ensure compliance to funding regulations.
- The Reading First Program, as a component of NCLB, led to a proliferation of scripted literacy curricula

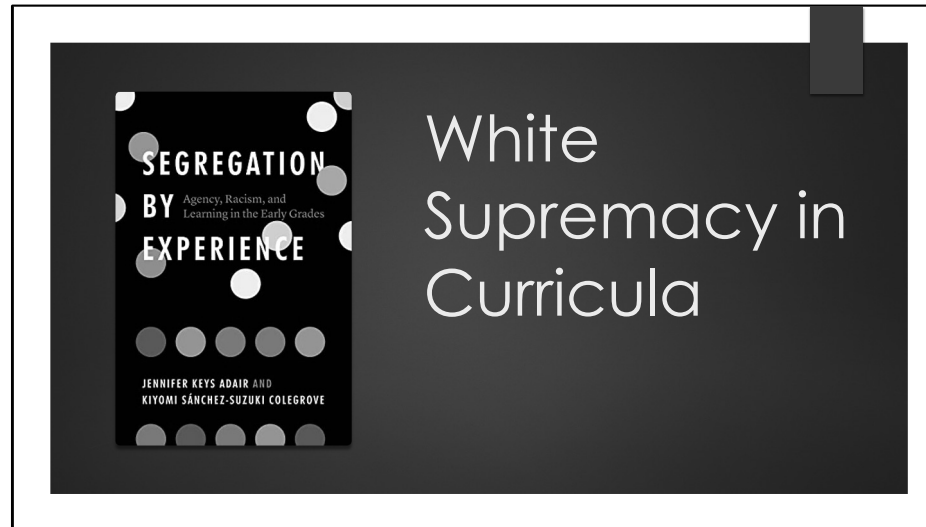
across the nation, specifically within schools serving low income and nonwhite students.



- I want to briefly return to one of Freire's statement regarding the banking method of teaching, and put this into conversation with scripting: The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
- This is inherent and intrinsic in scripted curricula, which hardens the student-teacher hierarchical structure, and quite literally tells teachers exactly what to teach through direct instruction
- And I would like to reiterate that these scripts have been found to mostly impact schools serving low-income students and students of color.

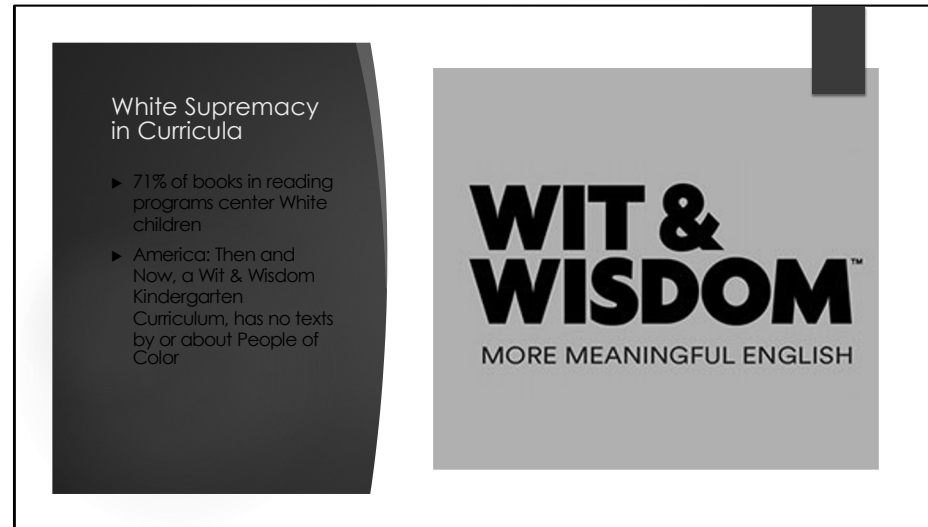


- With the passage of common core state standards a few years later, scripting soon expanded beyond reading programs, and into other subjects as well (Fitz & Nikolaidis, p. 197).
- Districts also believed that by increasing instructional uniformity in all classrooms and by attaching high stakes to teachers' compliance and fidelity to mandated scripts and pacing guides, they would see students' test scores improve.
- What this means is that these "scripts" are meant to teach to a test – which often means more surface level understandings, less transferability, and more fleeting knowledge (Demko 2010).



- Beyond the racial class intersections of defining a failing school, there is also an intrinsic way that we deem some children worthy of agency, freedom, and creativity, while simultaneously limiting these practices in other children, and that is based off of race.
- Jennifer Keys Adair and Kiyomi Sánchez-Suzuki Colegrove authored the book *Segregation By Experience*, a text that was central to my learnings in Denisha Jones' Emergent Curriculum course, and a text that has left a lasting impact on me.
- I'd like to share a brief quote from Adair & Colegrove's book, *Segregation by Experience*: "In schools across the United States, many young children of color are forced to walk in prison-like lines with silent "bubbles in their mouths" and hands behind their backs. They go through much of the day disconnected from their real lives, asked to submit to significant controlling mechanisms such as behavior charts, monolingualism, punishment systems, and the denial of movement. In other schools, meanwhile, young White children walk in zigzag formations, taking their time, chatting, joking, and sometimes singing with friends."
- Adair and Colegrove note that agency is intentionally underdeveloped in scripted curricula, something that

I saw while utilizing these sorts of scripts myself. Scripted curricula often look for compliance and planned responses from students.



- White supremacy isn't just related to how we teach children – who we grant agency, who needs to earn agency. Who practices higher-level thinking, who practices remedial skills.
- Its inherent and ingrained in the content of the curricula we use as well.
- Taking a broad look at reading curricula in the United States, which are often not only standardized but scripted as has been previously mentioned, you can see this to be the case:
- For example, who do we talk about? What stories are centered? 71% of books in reading programs in the US center white children, and these books often promote deficit modes of thinking about people of color. (Rigell et al., p. 853)
- This similar pattern is seen in Wit and Wisdom Curricula as well
- Wit & Wisdom is a curriculum that I became familiar with while student-teaching at the Ella Baker School. Research has been done on the ways that Wit & Wisdom is inherently a white supremacist curriculum, mirroring the whiteness of the publishing industry.
- For example, just taking a look at Kindergarten, the grade band in which I first became familiar with Wit & Wisdom, it was found through quantitative and qualitative analysis that the entire curriculum centers

whiteness. One unit, titled America: Then and Now, presents no texts by or about POC.

- Implies POC were not part of America Then, and are not part of it now.
- This unit uplifts and idealizes white characters in agrarian and rural settings, without any BIPOC representation in agrarian or rural settings or showing the “beauty or joy of life” in urban settings, thus presenting an exclusionary definition of what an idealized America is
- Later units focusing on “the continents” have no texts by or about POC either, save for a single co-illustration credit that is shared with a white illustrator. These texts center locations and geographic features rather than people, yet again providing an exclusionary lens.

Teachers as Robots

"I'm miserable. Sometimes I wonder if it's worth staying in this job if this is what I'm forced to do. If I weren't subject area leader, I wouldn't feel as much pressure to conform. But again, I just do what I'm told to do."

- Mrs. Lewis, Eighth Grade Language Arts Instructor, Florida

- So, what are some of the impacts of using this oppressive scripted model in schools? One of them is the devaluing of teachers who are treated as robots rather than as bodies of knowledge.
- I've learned from experienced educators, both in my student-teaching placements as well as in coursework at Sarah Lawrence. Teachers take into consideration their prior teaching experiences, the specific students they have within the class, and the material at hand when developing inclusive, meaningful lessons.
- Telling teachers that they are required to use a scripted curriculum sends messages to educators – that they aren't intelligent enough, or capable enough, to provide meaningful, rigorous instruction to children.
- "I'm miserable. Sometimes I wonder if it's worth staying in this job if this is what I'm forced to do. If I weren't subject area leader, I wouldn't feel as much pressure to conform. But again, I just do what I'm told to do." – Mrs. Lewis, (Eisenbach 2012).
- In segregation by experience, When teachers viewed a video of an educator going against the grain of standardization and instead enacting progressive practices in her classroom– there were educators who expressed extreme sadness that they felt as if these agentic and student-centered practices couldn't be

enacted within their classroom.

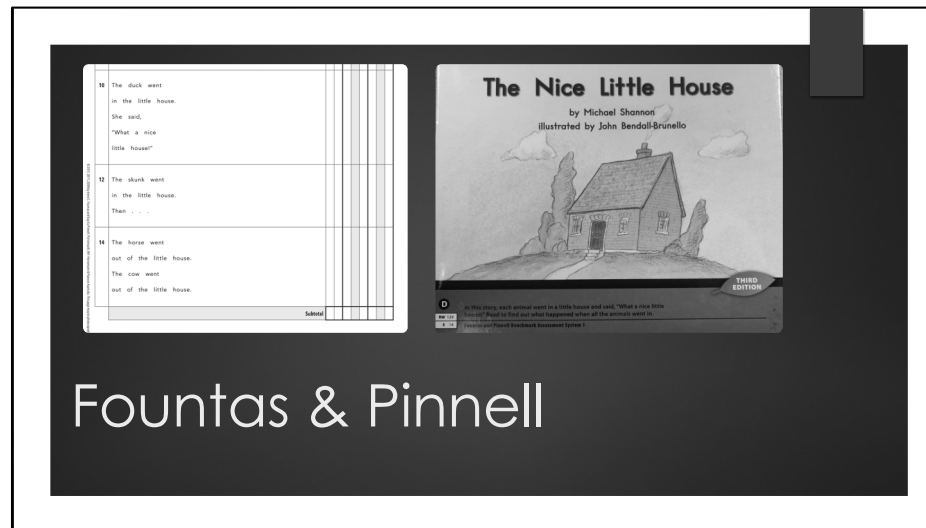
- They blamed the larger system of testing and standardization. One teacher described having a grade-wide schedule that is broken down into 15-minute intervals. If school leadership was to enter any of these classrooms during one of these intervals, they would expect to see the same lesson in the same unit being taught. This level of control denies teachers the ability to utilize their judgement in adapting lessons for their class, or to even reteach lessons that might have proven difficult the first time around.



- I found myself feeling this sense of restrictiveness and powerlessness when utilizing Fountas and Pinnell materials during my first year teaching.
- Fountas & Pinnell, a product of Heinemann publishing, is a common leveling program, assessment tool, and provider of leveled reading texts and aligned guided reading lesson plans.
- One of the texts utilized for running records is titled "the Nice Little House."



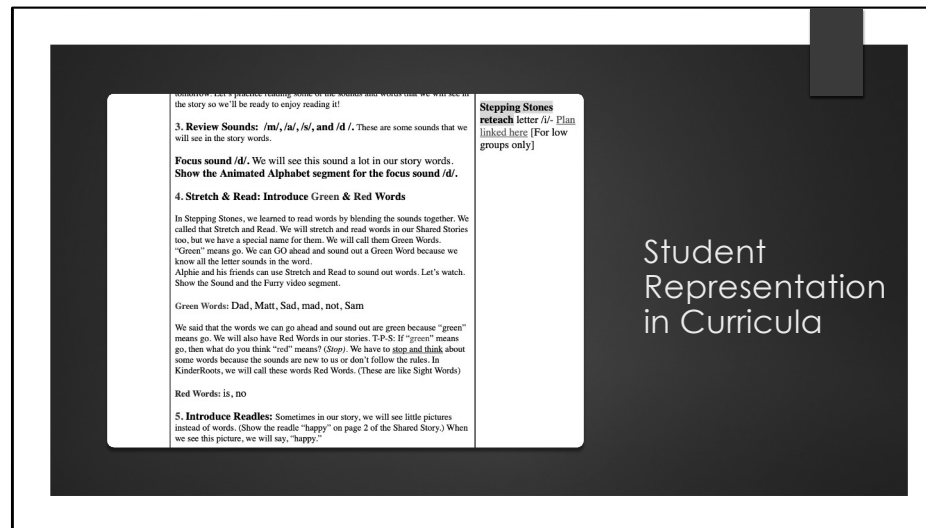
- The book followed a predictable pattern: an animal enters the house and says “what a nice little house.” You see this first with a horse, then a cow, then a pig, a chicken, and a duck, all repeating the same phrase, what a nice little house!
- This is until a skunk appears, which causes the animals to all run out of the house, leaving the skunk alone to declare “what a nice big house.”



- Conducting these running records with my students, there was a repeating trend of student miscues, where they were incorrectly decoding the word “skunk” as squirrel. As a reminder, was teaching students in the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan, skunks aren’t there frequently
- There are many strengths I can identify in this: children were utilizing the onset of the word, were utilizing the picture of a rodent with a fluffy tail, and activating prior knowledge on squirrels to try and make sense of the text.
- But with adherence to guidelines for conducting an F&P running record, it that meant they were losing points when scoring their decoding. More importantly, each of the comprehension questions for this running record relied on students correctly identifying the final animal as a skunk on them having background knowledge on skunks and their odor. Students, thinking this was a squirrel, were therefore *not* correctly answering the comprehension questions according to the scoring rubric, and were repeatedly failing this level.
- . This meant that students’ later reading instruction was largely impacted by whether or not they knew what a skunk was, a largely irrelevant detail when it comes to literacy instruction, rather than adjusting

instruction based on more relevant information, and using this to support their emerging literacy skills and reading identities.

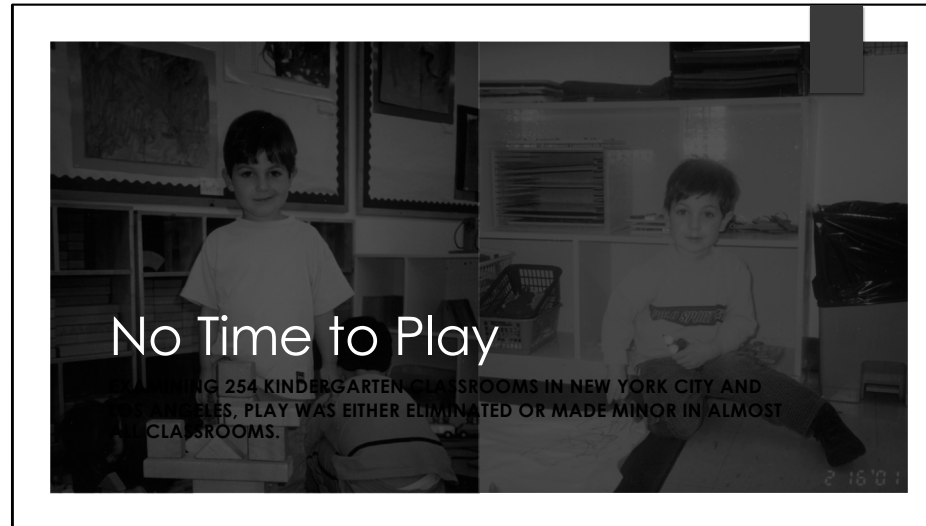
- Another example I have also relates to Fountas and Pinnell.
- I had another student in my ICT kindergarten class.
- This student struggled with relating himself to others. He often struggled to make inferences as well – both in social and literacy contexts – especially as it relates to inferring other peoples’ emotions.
- outside of inference-making and relating to texts, demonstrated strength in reading comprehension. Moreover, he had the decoding and fluency of someone more typically in 1st or 2nd grade,
- However, during each Fountas & Pinnell testing cycle, he continuously struggled to answer narrow comprehension questions during F&P assessments
- as I was not allowed to provide scaffolding or rephrasing beyond an equally-narrow pre-approved list of prompts, this meant that for much of the year, Ethan was being prescribed a label as a “Level B reader,” and was reading simple pattern books with other Level B readers during daily guided reading.
- These books were not appropriately demanding – they didn’t supporting his decoding skills, which far exceeding the texts he was forced to read during guided reading. This also meant that he was largely working in guided reading groups with other level B readers, who were focused on decoding skills that he had already mastered.
- These were scripts and regimented curricula that I saw issues with. I saw it not working, but I also didn’t know an alternative. **This is how it went**



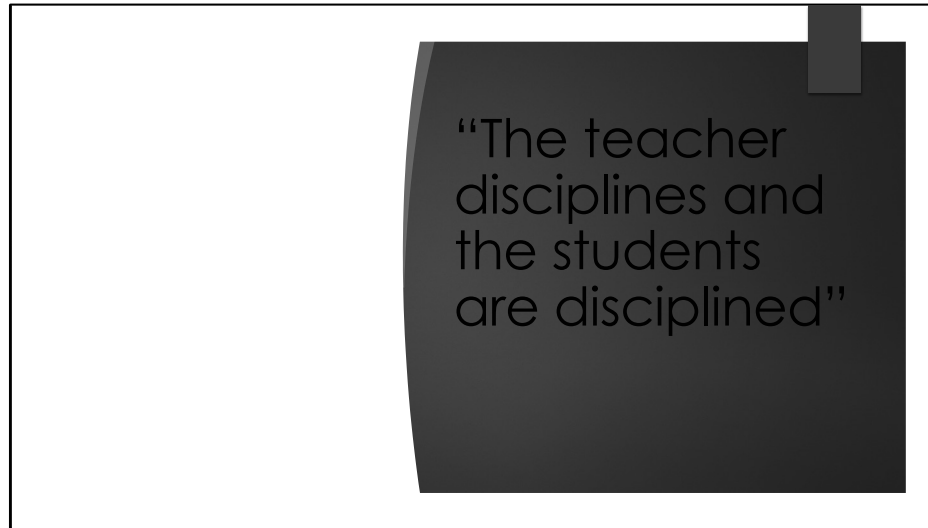
- Maura Demko, in her research on scripted reading curricula, states that “Variations in students’ learning cannot be factored into the script because that creates a variable that the script cannot predict, so it is left out of the process.” (Demko 2010)
- Teachers are seen as robots in scripting and aren’t valued in scripted curricula – neither are students. Their identities cannot be accounted for in nationally distributed lessons.
- Where have I seen this take place?
- The aforementioned example of “The Nice Little House.”
- I see stark parallels between Wit & Wisdom’s curriculum and how it centers white agrarian life as the norm and this text as well, which assumes background knowledge on skunks. For both of these, I ask: what children are being considered when these products are being developed? Because it did not seem to be my students.
- Another place where I saw student identities ignored was while teaching phonics through Stepping Stones. These lessons were regimented and relied on choral responses and speed, including during activities such as say it fast, where I would break down a word into its component sounds, and ask

students to “say it fast” and blend it together. Souto-Manning and Martell, address this in their book, “Reading, Writing, and Talk: inclusive teaching strategies for diverse learners,” which was central to my learning in our yearlong Language & Literacy course. They themselves question how emergent bilinguals can participate fully with lessons that are dependent on knowledge of the English language while simultaneously being disconnected to “urban children’s everyday activities” (p. 5). I’d often see the eyes of emergent bilinguals glaze over while I would repeatedly and quickly ask everyone to blend words together, like p-i-g.

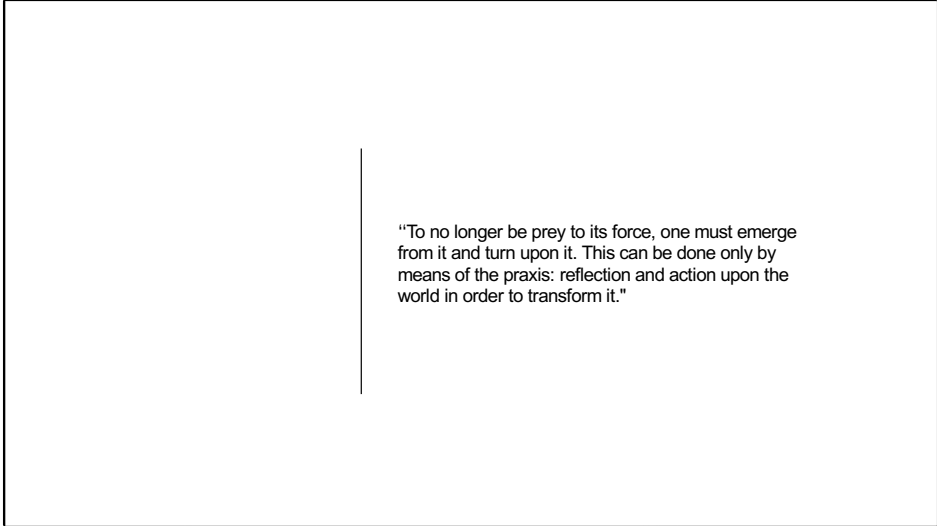
- What this means is that emergent bilinguals were receiving unequal, and inadequate, phonics instruction, further otherizing them within the school system, and setting them up to be viewed through a deficit-oriented lens when these exclusionary lessons didn’t prove useful.
- But yet again, this is often by *design* in a scripted, banking method of teaching. As noted by Freire, “The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.”



- Less play, more instruction.
- How far did this extend? Examining 254 kindergarten classrooms in NYC and LA from 2007-2009, play was either eliminated or made minor in almost all classes. Teachers said they were pressured to eliminate play for more instructional time – p. 232, Bauer and Wooley
- The type of play offered is often structured or academic in nature instead of free play.
- Not the free play experiences that I received as a child. We know how integral, formative play and exploration is in EC settings.
- But this is increasingly being stripped from classrooms.



- Above is a clip of a student during recess, playing “teacher” which in this case is me and my co-teacher
- What I glean from this brief clip is that she already internalized the hidden curriculum, the messages that my scripted, banking method of teaching imparted on students. Teachers disciple, their primary role is to control children – children who want to move, to speak, to have freedom.




"To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it."

- We have a current educational system steeped in banking method, scripting. what do we do? is there hope? how do we incorporate student autonomy?
- one thing we can look towards is Freire's concept of praxis
- Praxis is defined by Freire as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it." This continuing cycle of praxis will lead to liberation of the oppressed.
- Praxis involves students taking agency and ownership - achieving it requires "trust in the oppressed and their ability to reason."
- Takes down barriers of teacher-student hierarchy – sees educators as teacher-students and students as student-teachers, its agentic and focused on the learner rather than the teacher.
- Aligns with Dewey, who has an affinity for constructivist models of education, that build upon students identities, interests, and humanness.



- Through my experiences at the AoT, i was able to see how these philosophies were enacted in realistic ways in classrooms throughout NYS.
- Based off of this, I have compiled five ways that my future practices have been shaped

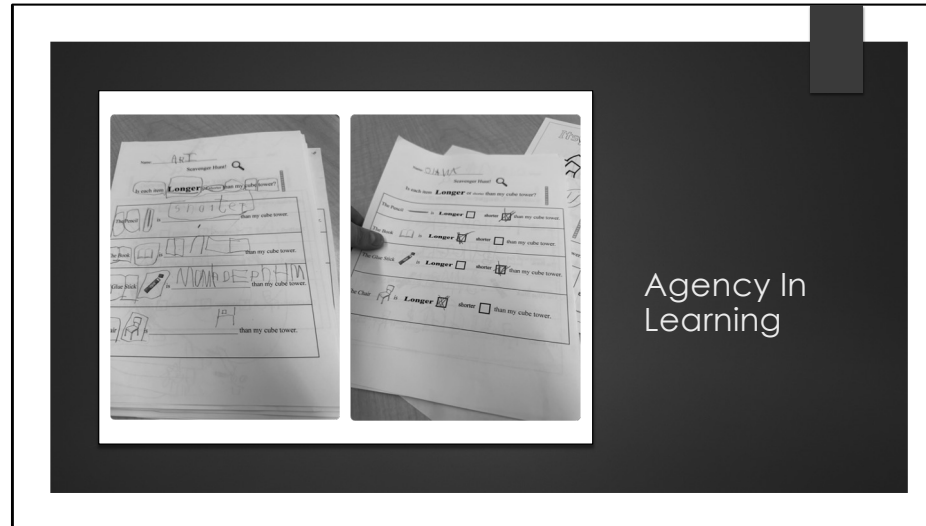


Breaking Down The Teacher-Student Hierarchy

- - Enacting practices that are rooted in students.
- -Classroom management not as a scripted set of statements to be practiced, to be rewarded.
- Building community, and voices in students
- Take a social-emotional example from ECC: I was slightly taken aback to learn that Robbin didn't require children to apologize if they hit another kid or did something "mean." Rather, empathy and apologizing were modeled by teachers in the classroom.
- The apologies that came from children later on were authentic, internalized, and came from a sense of responsibility – they weren't surface level mimickings, or performative acts meant to avoid punishment.



- Freire states that it is “necessary to trust in the oppressed and in their ability to reason” to achieve praxis.
- I have seen this in Taz’s classroom while at the Ella Baker School.
- Each day there was a lengthy amount of time set aside for Work time – I see nomenclature as important, just as intentional language is important in classroom settings. Calling it worktime validates the play of children as their work – it trusts that they will learn through their own choices.
- Providing them with opportunities to utilize a diverse array of materials based on her knowledge of them as children
- Students practiced so many skills – trial/error, hypothesizing, pattern-making, fine and gross motor skills, physics and laws of gravity. And they did so while joyous and furthering their identities within school



- - Practiced this at EBS.
- I Modified a math lesson from a scripted math curricula to make an activity that was more responsive to the needs and capacities of children in my class, made it more student-centered.
- It was about them measuring items in the class. But i adjusted the lesson, changing it from me provisioning materials for them to use while seated, to inviting them to explore the classroom and go on a scavenger hunt.
- Knowing children had a wide range of encoding skills and modes of expressing themselves, I made the handout more expansive, inviting children to choose whether they preferred to write their answer or check it off



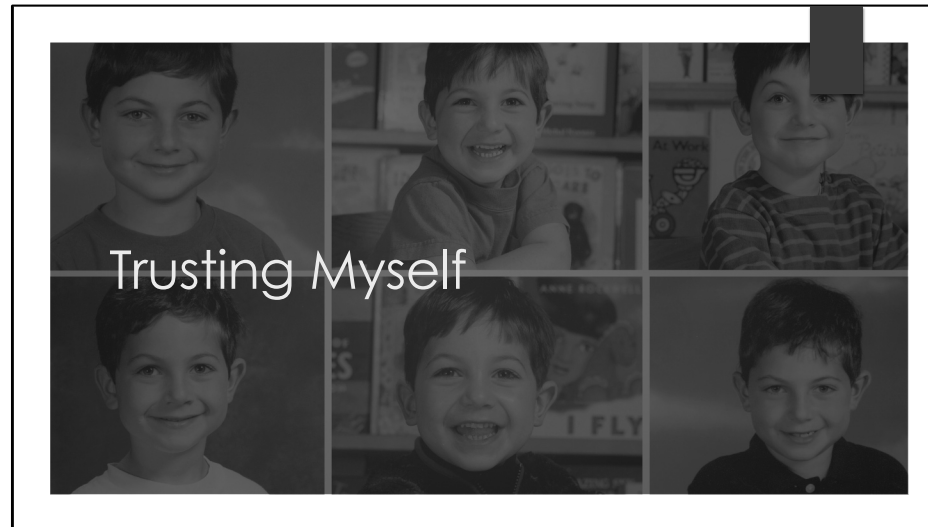
Relationship Building Over Scripted Practices

- Relationship building also leads to better understandings of children - Bauer & Woolley (2016) - Post-NCLB, many schools had to implement scripted curricula and decreased student-choice and free play; this article details a district's attempt to re-integrate play in early elementary, its struggles, and how teachers felt like they learned more about child development and benefits for SEL once play was reintroduced into children's academics.
- I've seen this enacted while student-teaching at CPE2. My Host teachers stressed from the moment I entered the class how integral fostering a strong sense of community is to their pedagogy. Each morning involved community building activities, and they would go out of their way to engage with children on a personal level. This work had a clear impact – students who cared about one another, and the class community as a whole. I saw them adapt lessons, making them relevant to the experiences and interests of children – things that they learned through their relationship building practices.



Acknowledging Blind Spots

- Needing to provide counter-narratives to single stories, and incorporate anti-racist practices into my teaching. Need for allies to shift tides. (Rigell et al)
- As a new teacher, and as a teacher who is a white male, needing to center other voices and perspectives in my practices
- “The revolutionary effort to transform these structures radically cannot designate its leaders as its thinkers and the oppressed as mere doers” – Freire.
- The oppressor cant lead them out – needs to be co-created.



End with this – Trusting the ways that I have grown

Scripted curricula are promoted under the guise of equity – we need to utilize this script to close the education gap, to teach black and brown children. Stray from the script and you are failing them. Studies have shown that when scripts are enacted, teachers come to believe this to be the case, internalizing a simplistic perspective educational equity – one that is predicated on the notion that conformity to restrictive lessons, and ensuring sameness, ensures equity. (Timberlake 2017)

My time at Sarah Lawrence has been a process of unlearning these beliefs, and internalizing a belief in myself. And so I end on this – I trust in my ability to take what I have learned here - my knowledge-base of theory, of child development, and my experiences, in buttressing my teaching practices and values, and I trust that these, can help me support children more than a script can.

