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Education

Ph.D., Curriculum & Instruction, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, August, 2003

Dissertation Title: Troubling Literacy in the “Contact Zone” of a Rural High School English Class

Doctoral Committee Chair: Dr. Patricia Proudfoot Kelly

Teacher Certification:

Postgraduate Professional Licensure in English; 1995-2000; renewed 2001-2005

National Board Certification in Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts, 1999

M.A., Curriculum & Instruction, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, August, 1995

Master’s Thesis: Adolescent Reader-Response to Poetry

B.A., English, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, August, 1993

Major Areas: 20th Century American Literature and 19th Century British Literature

Minors: Studio Art and Humanities

Study Abroad: Edinburgh University, Scotland, and University of Brighton, England, 1993

Teaching and Related Experience

Assistant Professor, English Education, Department of Teaching and Learning, Virginia Tech,

Blacksburg, VA, 2003-Present. Taught:

- ***Literature for Adolescents (EDCI 4424)***
- ***Secondary Methods II***

Program Advisor, English Education, Department of Teaching and Learning, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, 2003-Present.

Instructor & Student-Intern Supervisor, Department of Teaching and Learning, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, 2000-2003. Taught:

- ***Teaching Composition (EDCI 4414)***—A graduate-level course aligned with NCATE/NCTE learner goals and objectives. A review of the history of composition and

discussion of the current debates in the discipline provide a framework within which prospective and experienced teachers of writing can locate themselves and composition pedagogy. The course emphasizes methods to help teachers meet the needs of diverse student writers. Students write in multiple genres throughout the course.

- **Internship in Education (EDCI 5754)**—*This course involves the student teaching internship, which is the culminating experience in the pre-service teacher education program. Working closely with the cooperating teacher and student intern, and using the ten INTASC principles that guide beginning teacher development and assessment, the university supervisor evaluates the student intern’s progress throughout the internship period.*

Consultant, National Computer System (NCS) Mentor for Virginia, summer 2002

- *The NCS Mentor is a CD-ROM training tool developed by the Virginia Department of Education to help Virginia’s teachers prepare students to meet the challenges of the English Writing Standards of Learning. The CD-ROM provides anchor papers written by Virginia students in grades 5, 8, and 11. Students and teachers may view the anchor papers and practice scoring them, using rubrics and assessment guidelines provided in the CD-ROM. Targeting schools whose scores on the writing portion of the state-mandated Standards of Learning English tests were low, I traveled to area schools and presented workshops for English teachers to learn how to implement the NCS Mentor program in their classrooms. In addition, I presented ideas on how to involve parents in school writing programs.*

Teacher, Montgomery County Public Schools, Christiansburg, VA, 2001-2002

- **English 10**—*Students and I “went around the world” in this survey course of world literature, studying various countries’ literary traditions as influenced by social, political, and historical events. We read such books as “Nectar in a Sieve,” “House on Mango Street,” “Habibi,” “Hiroshima,” and excerpts from the Koran, Indian Vedic writings, and other texts. Students wrote in a variety of genres and published essays about current events in a local newspaper.*

Secretary, VCEE (Virginia Council of English Education), 2000-2001

- *As VCEE Secretary, I attended meetings to discuss the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education’s (NCATE) adoption of NCTE guidelines, now called program standards, for teacher education programs in English language arts for middle/junior and senior high schools. Institutions seeking NCATE accreditation are required to submit program review documents showing how their programs meet the NCTE program standards. As VCEE secretary, I helped to align courses within Virginia Tech’s English education program with the standards.*

Director, Creative Writing Camps, Southwest Virginia Writing Project, summer 2001

- *Discouraged by the lack of summer creative writing program opportunities in the area, I requested funding from the Southwest Virginia Writing Project, a National Writing Project affiliate, to create a summer writing program in the Roanoke, VA area. Funding was granted, and two separate camp sessions combining creative writing with art projects were offered.*

Teacher, Roanoke City Public Schools, Roanoke, VA, 1998-2000

- **English, 9--***The English 9 class was a part of the high school's Center for the Humanities program, which combined the disciplines of English and history in an interdisciplinary study of world cultures. When we studied African history, we read "Cry, the Beloved Country" and put the text in a "palaver" with "Heart of Darkness" and "Things Fall Apart" to discuss how writings about a place and its culture are influenced by the writer's cultural background and beliefs. We did similar kinds of things through units on Japan, China, India, the Middle East, and Russia.*
- **Creative Writing, 9-12--***This elective course led students through units on autobiographical/memoir writing, poetry, non-fiction, and the very short short story. Students culminated the course with a creative project and participation in production and publication of the school's literary magazine.*

Teacher-Director, Southwest Virginia Writing Project Summer Institute, 1999

- *The Southwest Virginia Writing Project is one of the seven sites in the Virginia Writing Project, funded by the Virginia General Assembly, the National Writing Project, and Virginia Tech. Based on the premise that teachers are the best teachers of other teachers, Projects draw on the expertise of Institute Fellows to improve the teaching of writing and the writing of teachers, and to explore ways to use writing to learn in all disciplines. In the Institute, Project Fellows spend time investigating important knowledge about composition; exploring and presenting successful approaches to teaching writing and using writing to teach; developing their own writing; looking at resources and technologies that assist writing instruction, and using word processing to write and revise. Having been a former teacher-consultant with the Maryland Writing Project, I was asked to co-direct the 1999 Summer Institute of the Southwest Virginia Writing Project in Roanoke, VA. I served as a mentor to institute participants, guiding their writing and presentation- planning in peer-conferences. I helped assess participant progress, as participants began to see themselves as "real" writers, excited about taking writing back to their various math, science, history, and English classrooms.*

Teacher, Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore, MD, 1997-1998

- **Language Arts, 6-8--***Desiring experience in an inner-city school, I moved to Baltimore city and taught language arts to a combined class of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. This particular school was interesting in that it did not assign grades to students, and students stayed on teams with the same students and teachers for the full three years of their middle school experience. While at this school I was given the opportunity through an Outward Bound partnership with the school to take several teens on a 5-day backpacking trip on the Appalachian Trail in Western Pennsylvania. Students and I were able to bring things we learned on the trail, i.e., importance of working together, back to the classroom and infuse it into our language arts program.*

Teacher, Roanoke County Public Schools, Roanoke, VA, 1995-1997

- **Language Arts, 8—***I designed and taught a middle school elective course for students who did not have a high enough GPA to take a band, art, or foreign language elective. The purpose of the course was to give students additional help with reading and writing*

skills. Realizing I'd have my work cut out for me with students who weren't too happy taking what they saw as "two English classes," I asked for as many computers as I could get my hands on and turned the course into a desktop publishing class. Here, students designed CD covers and calendars, wrote and produced the morning announcements show which was broadcast school-wide, and wrote, edited, and published the school's "Teen 'Zine," which they sold to the student body.

Teaching Competencies/Interests

Undergraduate and graduate-level courses in secondary education and/or secondary English education; literacy; composition and composition pedagogy; young adult literature; social foundations of education; diversity/social justice and equity in education; managing the secondary classroom; qualitative research methods in education; creative writing

Research Interests

Qualitative analyses of intersections of race, class, and gender with literacy in the middle grades language arts and/or secondary English rural classroom; composition "scenarios" for middle grades/secondary teachers of writing; implementation of culturally diverse teacher preparation opportunities/requirements (book clubs, service-learning, community histories) and impact on first-year teacher readiness

Presentations and Publications

Groenke, S.L. (2002, November). Bridging theory and practice: Some ways to actually "do" anti-oppressive education. Presentation for Graduate Seminar on Diversity in Education, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA.

Groenke, S.L. (2002, August 23). Public schools and Christian hegemony [Letter to the editor]. *The Roanoke Times*, p. A13.

Groenke, S.L. (2002, January 30). Students learning about Afghanistan through writing. *The News Messenger*, p. 8.

Groenke, S.L. (2002). Taking Stock of Portfolios in the Classroom [Review of the book *The Whole Story: Teachers Talk About Portfolios*]. *Virginia English Bulletin*, 52(1), 40.

Elkins, S.L. (2001, November). *Bridging interpretation and invention: Using imitation to help reluctant writers write poetry*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, Baltimore, MD.

Elkins, S.L. (2001, May). *The teen 'zine: Publishing in (and beyond) the writing classroom*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Appalachian Writing Project, Wise, VA, and the meeting of the Maryland Writing Project, Towson University, MD, 1998.

- Elkins, S.L. (2001, April). Data analysis session for pilot study of rural high school students' "unsanctioned" literacies. Presentation for Graduate Student Research Day, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA.
- Elkins, S.L. (2001). Parent nights, bulletin boards, and teacher teas: Going public through national board certification. *Virginia English Bulletin*, 51(1), 36.
- Elkins, S.L. (2001). Jamaica Kincaid: A Critical Companion [Review of the book *Jamaica Kincaid: A Critical Companion*]. *The ALAN Review*, 28(3), 65.
- Elkins, S.L. (1999, April 4). SOL scores aren't the be-all of teaching [Letter to the editor]. *The Roanoke Times*, p. A13.
- Elkins, S.L. (1996, October). *The communications workshop: A language arts elective how-to*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Middle School Association, Norfolk, VA.
- Carico, K. & Elkins, S.L. (1996, October). Encouraging literate behaviors through dialogue journals and pen-pal response. Co-presented at the annual meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English, Baltimore, MD, and the Virginia Association of Teachers of English, Norfolk, VA.

Awards/Honors

- Virginia Exemplary Educators Inductee, 2002
- Phi Delta Kappan Inductee, 2002
- Outstanding Graduate Student Nominee, 2002
- Writers in Virginia Grant Recipient (\$500), 2002
- Virginia Tech Poetry Award, 1st place, 2001
- National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar Grant Recipient, 1999
- The Mary Molloy Fellowship for Juvenile Novel in Progress (Readers 9-14) Finalist, 1999
- Urban Teacher Candidate Program Scholarship, Maryland Writing Project, Towson University, 1998
- National Writing Project Scholarship, Maryland Writing Project, Towson University, 1998
- Virginia Commission for the Arts Grant Recipient (\$500), 1996
- Outstanding Beginning Teacher Nominee, 1996

Professional Associations

- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- Virginia Association of Teachers of English (VATE)
- International Reading Association (IRA)

References

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