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Writing in Teacher Education

This guide provides a brief introduction to writing in in the field of teacher education through the lens of threshold concepts. It includes:

1. An overview of what writing characteristics are valued in teacher education
2. A visualization of popular scholars in the field
3. An annotated article (annotated-sample/index.html) demonstrating writing characteristics valued in the field

What does Teacher Education value in writing?

The field of **teacher education** is rooted in the study of **teaching and learning**, and a goal for the work of the field is **challenging candidates to become critically conscious curriculum makers for social justice in solidarity within community contexts**. The field has some fundamental ways of looking at **pedagogy** and doing **curriculum**. Sometimes outsiders or newcomers misunderstand or are confused and surprised by the fact that **the field exists in a sociopolitical context**.

The following are threshold concepts necessary for thinking and practicing in the discipline. Each **threshold concept** is complex, interrelated with the others, and only briefly described here. Below, these threshold concepts (a sampling, not a definitive list) are “nested” within, and are italicized:

- **Intellectual engagement:** Reframing what it means to be a student; moving from seeing self as a passive receiver of information toward an identity of a transformative teacher—an intellectual thinker and actor in democratic teaching and learning.
- **Critical-consciousness:** Awareness of educational inequities and understanding of how and why inequity exists (e.g., power, privilege, curriculum) and the importance of anti-oppressive education.
- **Empowerment/agency:** Seeing oneself as an educator as both capable of making change and responsible for making change.

Popular Scholars in Teacher Education

Teacher education is a broad field with many perspectives and scholars. The genres and kinds of writing in the field are **varied**. Given the emphasis on social justice, teacher education values writing that **connects to the threshold concepts listed above**. Professional writing is often in the forms of **books** and **journal articles**, but the value in “**stories**”—the **experiences of educators, students, and families**—is often found in **blogs**, in **organizational reports**, and **other types of writing**.

Faculty from teacher education were asked the question: “What are ten seminal scholars that students should read and be informed by?” The responses were put into the below Wordle, which visually represents the frequency of responses. For example, Paulo Freire was the most frequently mentioned by faculty, followed by Howard Zinn, Kevin Kumashiro, William Ayers, Gloria Boutte, and Vivian Paley.



Figure 1: Names of authors are placed adjacent to each other in a cloud-like shape. The names of the authors are in different sizes and colors and include: Harper, Sensoy, Zinn, Kumashiro, Noddings, Noguera, MacNaughton, Gorski, Nieto, Paley, Milner, Freire, Kozol, Ladson-Billings, DiAngela, Ayers, Cochran-Smith, hooks, Gay, Sleeter, Boutte, Delgado, Dewey, Foucault, and Deleuze.

An initial observation from the Wordle is that the valued authors are informed by **intellectual engagement (e.g., strong theoretical grounding, synthesis of ideas), critical consciousness (e.g., deep understanding of perspectives and their meaning), and empowerment/agency (e.g., their words and actions are built on a passionate quest for change).**

What Teacher Education Values in Student Writing

Excellent student writing in teacher education **blends self-awareness/student voice** with **deep examination of theoretical constructs** and **social, political, economic, and other contexts.**

The expectation for students as they enter the program is that they **begin to consider the impact of their own assumptions, beliefs, and educational experiences** on their beliefs as future teachers. As they matriculate through the program, they will increase their ability to engage with **complex educational issues** in ways that address the threshold concepts of **intellectual engagement, critical consciousness, and empowerment/agency.**
