

## ***Teaching Composition Together: Democracy, Perceptions, and New Literacies***

Jenny M. Martin, Assistant Professor of Education, Bridgewater College

Sarah L. Morris, Assistant Professor of English, West Virginia University

### **Abstract**

This action research investigates co-teaching and democratic learning in a MAED program and Teaching Composition course that integrated new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). The course designers utilized a motivational survey and inductive analysis of participants' written reflections and course artifacts to explore co-teaching and democratic learning within a teaching program that privileged increasing participants' digital literacy capacity. Moreover, the course designers analyzed participants' consideration of and enactment of democratic culture and new literacies in their professional practices. The motivational survey, which measured participants' perceptions of the program, revealed that participants perceived that the course designers cared about their well-being as people and as participants, believed the information taught was useful, and thought that the course designers supported them in being successful. Themes between course designers and participants emerged: (a) democratic ownership of content, space, and knowledge; (b) communication among participants and course designers, common goals, and collaboration; and (c) transparency in teaching, tools, and feedback. A work-flow model was created in conjunction with the participants, and an advanced version of the model, with new literacies' theoretical components as an overlay, is presented. Limitations included the small, homogenous group of participants, all of whom were high achieving and highly motivated, as well as impracticality of the teaching model; limitations of the methodology are discussed. This research serves as a springboard for future study of the relationship between new literacies and democratic learning environments. Educators may find the motivational survey, which is validated by research, useful in understanding student perceptions of their instruction. The study also provides insight into new literacies and curriculum that privileges democratic learning.

**Keywords:** Democratic Learning, Digital Literacies, New Literacies, Reflection, Co-teaching, Student Motivation

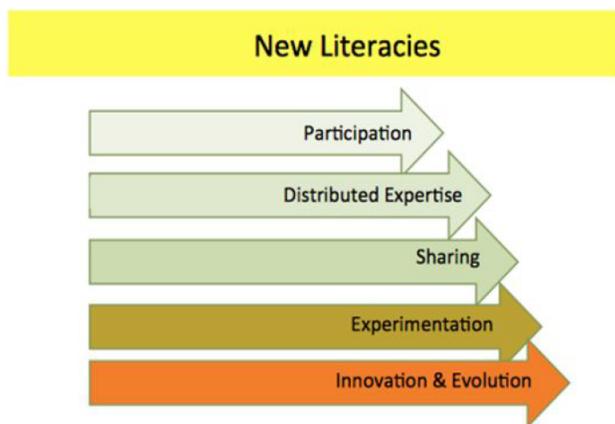
### **Introduction**

Injustice and inequity affect classrooms daily and modeling InTASC standards (CCSS, 2011) with democratic principles in teacher education requires democracy be evident in programs through language, practice, and assessment (Alsup & Miller, 2014). Graziano and Navarrete (2012) assert collaboration yields benefits in teacher education classrooms, including effective modeling for preservice teachers. Meaningful democratic collaboration improves instruction and cultivates professional learning communities (Montecinos et al., 2002). Collaboration among preservice teachers and teacher educators enables co-creation of knowledge, redistribution of power, and disruption of traditional hierarchies (Siry & Zawatski, 2011). By employing democratic shared leadership through

new literacies, teacher educators help students learn to engage in and subsequently create their own productive, democratically structured classrooms.

In this paper, democratic practices are defined as practices that privilege open communication, transparent planning, and joint decision making with all stakeholders. While transparent planning tends to stop at explaining why decisions are made, this paper advances the current knowledge by showcasing ways planning can be made transparent at the point of construction, using course designer co-planning with Google slides in a shared class folder. Furthermore, this communication and these decisions are anchored in course goals. In line with Wood, DeMulder, and Stribling (2011), democratic practices should be deliberate and thus “produce wiser, more informed ways for human beings to be and act together” (p. 240). While democratic practices can be messy, the researchers believe that open communication, transparency, and input from the learners should be modeled for preservice teachers, because the desire is “that teachers who experience democratic learning environments will afford similar opportunities for their students” (Wood et al., 2011, p. 240).

When democratic teaching practices take place in a space enhanced by collaborative digital technologies, or new literacies, community and collective intelligence grow (Poore, 2011). New literacies are defined as meaning-making practices that are newly recognized or evolving and carried out socially and collaboratively in a range of authentic settings. These practices are often mediated through digital technologies (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014). It is important to note that “new” does not mean chronologically new, but rather, newly practiced or recognized literacies. Here, the salient point is that knowledge construction changes depending on how learners draw on the affordances of the technology they use. According to Knobel and Lankshear (2014), studying new literacies requires that researchers look closely at how participants use tools and practices in order to inform teaching and learning (p. 97). In this research, new literacies deals with digital pedagogy that mediates students’ coursework so that responsive features allow online feedback and participation in democratic distributed knowledge construction, sharing, experimentation, and innovation (see Figure 1). Furthermore, this work explores the close connection between new literacies, collaboration, and active citizenship as characterized by Kiili, Makinen, & Coiro (2013).



*Figure 1 New literacies theory emphasizes the participatory culture that digital technology affords (image by Dredger, 2011)*

Shifting leadership, in an effort to enable students to become leaders as teachers, introduces tension and uncertainty, which creates a healthy cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). A hallmark of new literacies work is the allowance of this kind of cognitive dissonance in a collaborative safe space, among “kindred spirits who have different levels of knowledge and expertise across different areas of competence,” which, through participation and shifting leadership, “enrich participants’ personal and collective competence and knowledge” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2009, p. 634). This shift in leadership requires students to step into roles they may not yet feel prepared for in order to engage more deeply in the profession and community, and this shift pushes instructors to embrace uncertainty as students become leaders. In writing instruction specifically, new literacies shift the traditional classroom dynamic, opening new ways of viewing products, processes, and practices (Martin & Dismuke, 2017). However, there is room to explore co-teaching with new literacies in an effort to model a democratic learning community.

Student engagement and democratic participation in a digitally rich classroom was the impetus for this action research, and a focus on how participants enact a democratic culture through new literacies adds to the current literature with a unique third voice. The study took place in a co-taught graduate level Teaching Composition course in a MAED program, and its purpose was to explore student perceptions of co-teaching as a way of modeling democratic leadership, enhanced through new literacies. This study also examined teacher candidates’ enactment of democratic leadership in their professional practice. Labbo suggests new literacies allow “opportunities for students to participate in collaborative democratic activities, such as assembling knowledge, problem solving, synthesizing information, and exchanging perspectives” (Wolk, 2004, p. 32). Input into teaching and learning processes enabled participants to build professional learning communities via social networking and during writing workshop. This democratic participation through new literacies led to student leadership and sharing beyond course designers’ purview and expectations.

According to Creswell (2005), qualitative research studies problems of which little is known and which require detailed understanding of central phenomena (p. 45). Because course designers wanted to deeply understand participants’ perceptions of co-teaching and democratic practices as mediated by new literacies tools, a qualitative approach to this action research seemed appropriate. One of the aims of action research is to seek “convincing evidence that their work has made a real difference in their students’ lives” (Sagor, 2000, p. 3). Deepened understanding of pedagogy served as the goal of the study, and action research allowed for insight and analysis of teaching practice.

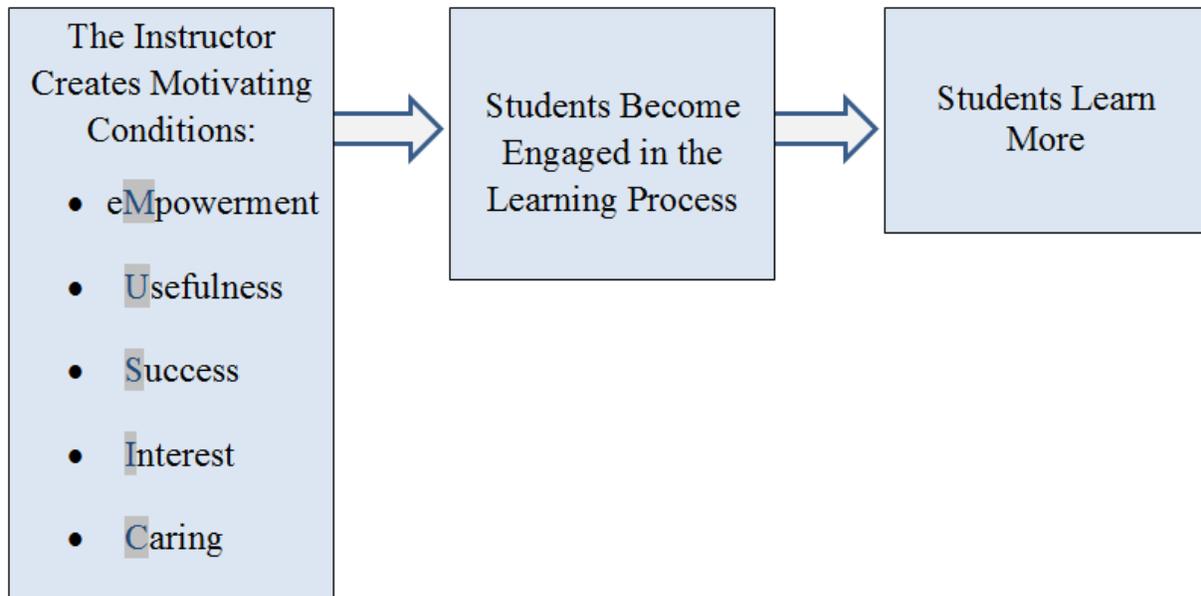
Three research questions guided this study on the phenomenon of co-teaching and engaged democratic participation through new literacies:

1. How do new literacies enhance democratic teaching practices and motivate English Education participants in a MAED program?
2. What are participants’ perceptions of this instruction?
3. How do preservice secondary English teachers enact a democratic culture through new literacies into their professional practice?

### *Theoretical Frames*

The MUSIC model of academic motivation (Jones, 2009, see Figure 2) includes components, derived from research and theory, critical to academic student engagement, including: eMpowerment,

usefulness, success, interest, and caring. These five components prove to be critical to student engagement in academic settings (Aldridge & Harvatt, 2014).



*Figure 2 The MUSIC model of academic motivation*

MUSIC, an acronym based on the second letter of “eMpowerment” and the first letter of the other four components, guided this analysis of participants’ perceptions of instruction. The motivation inventory used in this action research was derived from The MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation Inventory (MMAMI), (see Appendix) developed by Dr. Brett Jones and validated by research (Jones & Wilkins, 2013). Together, the components lead to greater understanding of motivation and learning.

Teachers and researchers of writing instruction have found that new literacies capture the attention of young adults, and that writers benefit from composing in a primarily digital environment (Curwood & Cowell, 2011; Dredger et al., 2010; Graham & Perin, 2007a; Hull & Katz, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). The basis of this research supported the decision to use new literacies theory to frame this study.

### **Method**

Maxwell (2008) emphasized that qualitative research take place in a natural setting and include rich data, both of which were considered in this study’s design. Moreover, one purpose of qualitative research is to explain and understand participants’ courses of action through the reflexive analysis of such data (Maxwell, 2008). This qualitative action research employed survey and inductive analysis of participant reflections and new literacies artifacts. The researchers in this study (referred to as course designers) designed and co-taught courses in a MAED program and supervised participants’ internships in public schools. The participants were students in the MAED program courses and interns under supervision of the course designers. This research was conducted under the approval of

a university institutional review board (IRB 14-042). Research questions were answered through collection of motivation writing inventories, inductive analysis of participant written reflections, and identification of themes in literacies artifacts from participant coursework and practice teaching.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected throughout the course of the Spring 2014 semester. All students in the English Education 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 cohorts were invited to participate; all students were eligible, as subjects were not selected for any demographic characteristics. Students were selected because program courses in which they were enrolled were considering pedagogy and reflecting on teaching practices. The research was formalized on January 21, 2014, after IRB approval and when the consent process took place. The invitation to participate was given orally during an orientation session held at the first formal class meeting of program courses. The course designers explained the research and students were given a consent form, including a written explanation of procedures. The consent form, along with the oral presentation, served as the recruitment material. All potential participants were informed that they could ask the course designers questions throughout the duration of the study should they decide to participate and were informed that they may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Data included results from the MUSIC model of Academic Motivation Inventory (MMAMI) (see Appendix) developed by Dr. Brett Jones (Jones & Skaggs, 2012; Jones & Wilkins, 2013), which measures constructs related to the five primary components of the MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation (Jones, 2009), written reflections from a Teaching Composition course (participants' and course designers'), and new literacies artifacts from Teaching Composition (Google documents, course wiki, course Ning, podcasts, video, vlogs, blogs, and social media). Throughout the Teaching Composition coursework, participants completed several reflective writings on topics related to collaboration, pedagogy, and teaching practices. Students received completion credit for writing these assignments, but no evaluative grade was given. The responses of participants were copied and saved for analysis by the course designers; this analysis took place after the course ended and grades were submitted. Course designers reflections included reflective writing and collaborative discussions; weekly planning meetings allowed for a discussion of pedagogical and planning decisions, their impact on student learning, and the effect of course designers as mentors and co-collaborators. These sources allowed different levels of reflection and analysis as qualitative themes emerged.

### *Participants' Coursework*

Participants' experiences within coursework likely shaped their responses to the research focus of co-teaching and engaging democratic participation through new literacies. Student reflections and new literacies artifacts for this research were collected in a required, graduate level Teaching Composition course within an English Education MAED program. MAED program completers also earned state licensure to teach English language arts in Grades 6 through 12, and (in addition to Teaching Composition) took Teaching Adolescent Readers (also co-taught by the same course designers), Teaching in Middle and Secondary Schools I; Early Field Experience; Teaching in Middle and Secondary Schools II, and a final Internship. The English Education MAED program specialized in digitally rich teaching and multi-modal composition; candidates were selected through an application and interview process. Most students came into the program with an undergraduate degree in English.

The participants in Teaching Composition were required to take it as part of their program pathway or elected to take it as part of another language-focused program in the School of Education. Teaching Composition focused on methods for teaching writing in the secondary English classroom. Teaching Composition included 7 participants: 3 males and 4 females. Six of the 7 participants were English Education MAED, and 1 participant was a PhD student in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Of the 7 participants, 4 had no previous formal classroom teaching experiences, and 2 had completed semester-length internships in secondary English classrooms prior to taking the course. Six of the participants were white, native speakers of English with recent undergraduate degrees in English. One Asian participant, for whom English was a second language, had a background in teaching English as a second language in higher education in her country of origin. The Teaching Composition course, usually taken early early in the program sequence, included the majority of the participants in the program, all of whom were surveyed. Given this, the course provided a relevant frame for looking deeply at teaching strategies and new literacies across the MAED program.

### *Data Analysis*

To answer Research Question 1, course designers calculated mean scores from the participants' motivation writing inventory, given at the end of the semester to all MAED students. To answer Research Question 2, course designers inductively analyzed Teaching Composition participants' written reflections for emergent themes (Erickson, 1986). To answer Research Question 3, course designers identified themes in data collected through new literacies artifacts that originated in course assignments, writing workshop, and practice teaching in Teaching Composition. These artifacts included co-planning documents, blogs, wiki documents, Ning documents, collaborative work in Google Drive, and participant journals and reflections. Practice teaching involved participants employing digital pedagogy, modeled first in class, then practiced with one another, and finally applied in a unique digital internship that involved mentoring high-school seniors through the cooperating teachers' course Ning. Since students in previous semesters of the Teaching Composition course had noted confusion regarding what platform to use for what purpose, course designers and participants collaboratively developed a workflow system on the first day of class to clarify the purposes of the digital tools and to prevent confusion. Later, course designers formalized and further developed the workflow figure, overlaying new literacies theory (see Figure 3).

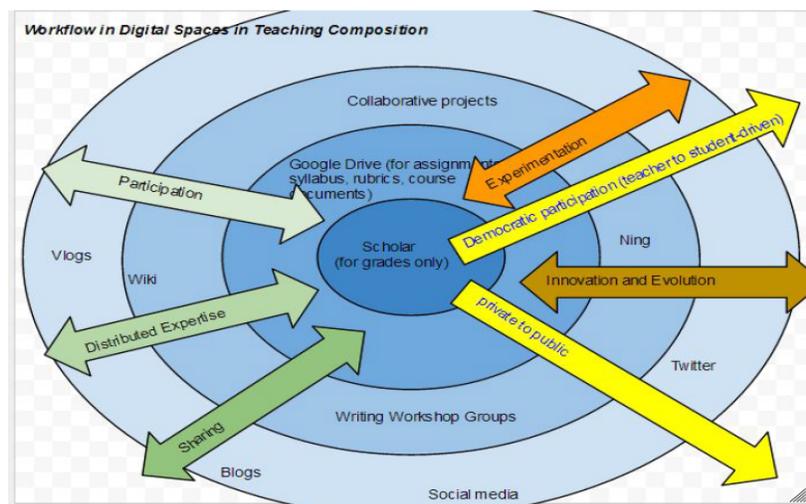


Figure 3 Workflow model with new literacies components

Course designers and participants referred back to this model as a reference, for what to put where and for what purpose, throughout the course.

**Results**

Major findings were related to participant engagement and risk taking with assignments; participants’ perceptions with respect to how co-teaching and new literacies contributed to a democratic learning environment; and emergent themes of: (a) democratic ownership of content, space, and knowledge; (b) communication among participants and course designers, common goals, and collaboration; and (c) transparency in teaching, tools, and feedback. The MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation Inventory (MMAMI) informed Research Question 1 with student perceptions of instruction (see Table 1).

Table 1 MMAMI results

<i>Final Results</i>	<i>eMpowerment</i>	<i>Usefulness</i>	<i>Success</i>	<i>Interest (situational)</i>	<i>Caring</i>
Question #	2,8,12,17,26	3,5,19,21,23	7,10,14,18	1,6,9,1,13,15	4,16,20,22,24,25
Sum	297	336	262	350	408
Average	4.95	5.60	5.46	4.86	5.67

N = 12, \*The Sum reflects a Likert scale from 1-6.

To understand preservice teachers’ perceptions, the course designers distributed the MMAMI at the end of the semester. The survey included questions concerning their eMpowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and caring in their program courses. A total of 12 participants’ responses were used; all 12 students in the MAED program, including the 7 in Teaching Composition and 5 whom the course designers taught in other classes, were surveyed as part of program assessment. In the areas of *empowerment* and *situational interest* (see Table 1), the participants “somewhat agreed” they felt empowered and that courses *interested* them. In the areas of *caring*, *usefulness*, and *success*, the participants “agreed” the course designers *cared* about their well-being as people and as students in the program, that the information taught was *useful*, and that the course designers supported them in being *successful*.

Relevant here is the structure established for working democratically in digital spaces, as course structure shaped data collection and responses. As previously mentioned, participants and course designers collaboratively established a workflow model during the first Teaching Composition class to determine how and where work, course documents, and records would be distributed. The model was first drawn on the whiteboard, and then a participant photographed and uploaded the drawing to a shared Google folder. This figure shows a transposition of the initial model with new literacies overlaid, which the researchers developed during data analysis (see Figure 3).

The model moves from a teacher-centered space to student-centered, collaborative, public, democratic space. The innermost circle is “Scholar,” a university-wide closed course management system, used only for grade reporting. The next circle is Google Drive, used for sharing documents, including

syllabus, rubrics, assignment guidelines, editable by all course members. The next circle holds Wiki, which housed participant-created pedagogical works, and Ning, the site of the digital internship that allowed the Teaching Composition students to mentor high school seniors on developing *Othello* essays. The outermost circle contains public work, mainly a professional blog and e-portfolio, that allowed preservice teachers to begin establishing professional web presences. Course products of which participants were most proud were linked to these public spaces to showcase their work in English Education.

The course designers co-constructed this model with participants to create a sense of democratic ownership among all class members and to designate which tool would be utilized for each purpose of the course. Empowerment was embedded through participant leadership and voice regarding materials and processes such as an active, editable syllabus, co-constructed rubrics, flexible assignment guidelines, and transparent planning of class sessions using shared folders. The course designers positioned themselves as co-learners, working alongside participants, completing assignments with them, and offering instantaneous and collaborative feedback through shared documents. New literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011) made this democratic positionality possible.

Analysis of reflections and artifacts revealed themes: (a) democratic ownership of content, space, and knowledge; (b) communication among participants and course designers, common goals, and collaboration; and (c) transparency in teaching, tools, and feedback. These themes provide insights related to Research Questions 2 and 3.

### *Democratic Ownership of Content, Space, and Knowledge*

Evidence from participant responses and actions showed the democratic approach to be empowering and motivating. For example, one participant joined class in Google Hangouts even though she was excused for illness; she shared a presentation virtually rather than miss class. Expertise was distributed; participants displayed empowerment by assuming leadership. Another participant became a leader in troubleshooting Glogster, a tool for creating digital posters; course designers observed classmates asking her and thanking her for assistance.

Participants discovered and shared tools novel to the course designers: one used TodaysMeet (a closed meeting feed) and Padlet (a collaborative pinboard), teaching peers and course designers to use them; she then incorporated these tools into her ninth-grade internship and reported back in class about results. This freedom and encouragement from course designers to choose the tools appropriate for teaching their selected content enabled shared expertise, evidenced through this participant's reflection that she was "able to draw from conversations [...] and transform [her] lessons and interactions with [her] students." Another participant created a multigenre research project with Storify (an online curation board), teaching the class how to use it. She rushed in breathless and excited because she took a risk just before class and made her multigenre research paper on Storify public. An author she cited in the paper had "Liked" it. To date, that Storify article has 354 views, and it is linked to the participant's professional blog. New tools and knowledge, shared by participants, became incorporated into practices of both peers and course designers, and illustrated distributed cognition, shared expertise, and the positionality of all course members as teachers and learners.

This sense of empowerment widened the reach of course learning. Extending beyond classroom space, two participants initiated communication with authors of the course textbooks: one interviewed an

author via email; another found herself retweeted by an author. Democratic practices were enhanced through new literacies as participants participated in larger, farther reaching professional conversations.

Participants developed, over time, a sense of agency. One participant specifically discussed the sense of active pedagogy generated by digital spaces (e.g. Figure 3), as opposed to more traditional formats, which may have encouraged more passive learning: “we are learning [...] about better ways to use the tools for collaboration, how activity is stimulated through our participation in the online tools, etc...” Through “stimulated activity,” participants found ownership of content, of methods, and of leadership.

### *Communication, Common Goals, and Collaboration*

The democratic, collaborative workspace provided by new literacies offered structure for clear and timely communication and feedback. As a living archive, Google Drive housed documents, many co-created in class and accessible and editable by participants. This allowed for both experimentation and sharing. For example, course designers and participants created and refined assignment guidelines and rubrics in Google folders: for a book review assignment, participants compiled a document containing calls for reviews and specs, uploaded requirements for book reviews from other sources, developed a collaborative rubric in class discussion (during which course designers acted as facilitators and recordkeepers), wrote and workshopped book reviews in peer response groups, polished reviews based on formative feedback, and finally, revised and submitted reviews to publications. Shared goals drove a collaboratively designed assignment that evolved based on participant contributions and moved beyond the scope of the classroom and into participants’ professional lives as they submitted work for publication. Motivated as writers and discussants in a larger conversation, participants shared work in the professional community at large. According to one participant reflection,

...composition has always been a one-person activity, but I believe this experience is a great improvement because more voices can be heard, thoughts can be shared, and writing can be greatly improved.

Sharing was enhanced by new literacies. A wiki housed collaborative group work and became an archive for sharing participant-created artifacts. As a repository for future lesson plans and teaching presentations, participants drew from the expertise of their cohort for ideas rather than creating lessons from scratch. They provided one another revision feedback and exchanged ideas in a closed space in which only they were generating information, as, in the words of one participant, “part of a literacy community.”

The sense of community and collaborative work extended out into participants’ internships, which focused on teaching in public school middle and high school classrooms. During these internships, participants used materials from coursework to further deepen their work with students. One participant reflected on this process, describing intertwining lines between course resources and conversations in the public school:

...we made the teaching plan together, that was, the major process and the good methods shared in the different classes. We discussed about the hidden problems and the skills of writing in our meeting before the beginning of the new lesson. In this way, the quality of the English class was improved a lot for the cooperation and shared repertoire of the resources.

In this way, “shared repertoire” reached beyond the Teaching Composition classroom and into this participant’s internship, having an impact not just on the participant as learner but also on the secondary students in her care.

New literacies tools and practices affected participants in other ways as well. The Ning housed a collaborative project with a high school class; participants worked with a Grade 12 AP English class in an *Othello* discussion board, providing productive questioning, responding to papers, and evaluating those papers using a rubric generated by the cooperating teacher. They sought common goals with the cooperating teacher, whom they met via Skype, working toward the best learning for the AP students they had met on the Ning. This required clear communication and confidence in their own teaching and learning. One participant wrote, reflecting upon this experience:

Digital collaboration and composition pedagogy were seamlessly threaded together within a meaningful connection between high school students and preservice teachers. As a preservice teacher, I learned essential skills connecting to how to teach writing to actual students. I had to negotiate my place in the conversation...

The participants demonstrated empowerment: they asked questions of the cooperating teacher, made suggestions concerning the rubric, and made revisions based on readings and discussions, practicing autonomous democratic thinking. The course designers, in this activity, merely facilitated by introducing the participants to the cooperating teacher, coordinating the Skype session, and then stepped aside to allow participants to negotiate the particulars of the relationships, tasks, and instructional decisions.

### *Transparency in Teaching, Tools, and Feedback*

Google presentations posted to a shared folder served as the planning process for class sessions. Often during course designers’ planning, participants joined the shared slides to observe. Shared co-construction of assignments, rubrics, and work guidelines added to this transparency. Participants gave peer feedback in a shared Google document, and course designers responded to work both together and separately, also in shared Google documents. Transparency and modeling in course designer co-teaching (visible through technology and in class) created a democratic attitude and prepared participants for shared leadership with their own students and colleagues. One indicated:

Having such a healthy relationship to model from is going to help me so much as I navigate this new territory. It has been powerful to see how tasks and teaching have been divided in such a way that there is no general teacher and co-teacher--you are both the primary teacher in this room.

Another participant reflection stated that the two course designers must be “good friends.” Participants saw real-world collegial relationship modeled by the course designers, in class and behind the scenes, and they were encouraged to participate in collegiality.

One participant reflection addressed the notion of collaborative classroom ownership, discussing the contrast between the Teaching Composition classroom and her internship, referring specifically to a power-struggle between her mentor teacher and a student in class. The participant wrote,

...it became clear that the teacher I was shadowing was growing irritated with the blocking student's attempt to, as it was later put, "run a classroom that doesn't belong to her." The rest of the semester, I watched as the bickering continued.

Especially significant in this participant's commentary is the implicit recognition of the effectiveness of a democratic classroom structure in which the classroom *does* belong to students in shared learning with teacher(s), something course designers attempted to model through their democratic co-teaching approach.

### Discussion

The availability of and enrollment in gradeschool online courses exists in all 50 states, yet less than 2% of responding teacher education programs address this need by offering experiences in virtual schools (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). However, virtual schools are not the only venue for giving teacher candidates opportunity to experience online instruction. Digital internships (Nobles, Dredger, & Gerheart, 2012; Townsend, Cheveallier, Browning, Fink, 2013) allow preservice teachers to work with students in a more in depth, often one-to-one mentorship. Teacher education has advanced in the area of technology use, moving from using technology to facilitate management tasks like attendance and grading, to instructing face-to-face with the affordances of tools at the teacher's and students' disposal, and lastly to further extending classrooms through online opportunities. The digital internship that was housed in the Ning served to advance teacher education's lack of online teaching opportunities. This qualitative action research sought to gain deepened understanding of pedagogy and make sense of participants' perceptions of democratic, co-taught instruction enhanced through new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011); moreover, it sought to observe how those participants enacted the practices into their own professional work and dispositions. Using survey data collected from all participants (12) in an English Education MAED program and analysis of artifacts and reflections from participants (7) in one representative course in that program, course designers gained an understanding of participant perceptions of instruction.

#### *Research Question 1: How do new literacies enhance democratic teaching practices, and motivate English Education participants in a MAED program?*

Overall, participants "somewhat agreed" they felt *eMpowered*. Choice was involved in the course design, but the structured deadlines for writing group and other assignments may have made the participants feel less freedom than they would like. Scoring higher in the area of *usefulness*, participants "agreed" the information taught in the MAED program was useful. Given the nature of the graduate program, with students enrolled because they desired to teach, it makes sense that they would find the information useful to them both during the course and in the future. Many of the participants were in the schools and working with young writers in the English classroom, so they were able to immediately apply strategies shared in coursework.

Similarly, participants agreed the course designers supported them in being successful. The emphasis of new literacies encouraged active participation with many forms of media, which in turn led to a high level of responsiveness. With two course designers able to respond, it makes sense that the students said they felt supported in being successful. Naturally, when two people are copied on a correspondence, feedback tends to be timely and thorough. Rubrics were also co-created with each assignment, with specific feedback throughout the semester on all submitted writing, and participants

may have seen this as being supported in success. Participants “somewhat agreed” the program and course held interest for them. Steps were taken to connect the program pedagogy to student inquiry and to connect course activities to teaching expectations through the digital internship and collaboration, but participants may not have seen direct relevance to their interests as teaching candidates if they were not currently serving in an internship placement out in the public schools. While all Teaching Composition participants were active in the digital internship, it may be that the course activities were less connected to the context desired for participants not yet in face-to-face internships. Another factor here may be discrepancy between the writing workshop approach employed in class and the way writing is commonly taught in secondary classrooms (Graham & Perin, 2007b).

Participants “agreed” they felt cared for throughout the program. Course designers’ positionality as coteachers and colearners allowed a mentoring relationship as course designers modeled care toward one another and toward participants. Their “healthy relationship,” as noted by one participant, provided an example of productive collaboration that participants were able to see and adopt. In addition, course designer responsiveness may have enhanced students’ notion of care, since co-teaching allowed more immediacy, double feedback, and multiple, sometimes differing (though always collegial) perspectives. While differing perspectives in feedback may have pushed students to think critically and make choices about their own work, at least one participant carried the discomfort of having to do so, reflecting that double feedback was confusing.

***Research Question 2: What are participants’ perceptions of this instruction?***

Qualitative, inductive analysis of reflections demonstrates that participants appreciated the model. Reflections discussed the benefits of digitally rich, modeled instruction from two former public school teachers with active teaching licenses (the course designers). Participants also indicated they felt listened to and cared about, as evidenced in the written reflections. Finally, participants indicated they would model their collegial collaborations based on the co-teaching example they experienced.

***Research Question 3: How do preservice secondary English teachers enact a democratic culture through new literacies into their professional practice?***

In answering Research Question 3, qualitative, inductive analysis of data collected through new literacies artifacts showed how participants enacted democratic culture, once modeled, into their professional practice. Although the course designers’ view of these participants’ teaching practices was limited to one semester, an implicit enactment of democratic teaching practices occurred in the space of the Teaching Composition classroom as participants moved in and out of teaching roles with peer activities, demonstrations of lessons and new literacies tools, and sharing of expertise. They assumed leadership in ways the course designers could not have predicted, often teaching the course designers new tools and technologies, which became folded into later courses; course designers learned from participants and adapted their teaching in future semesters. A significant shift in participant attitudes toward themselves as empowered learners in a wider reaching academic community was reflected in their willingness to engage in conversations outside the classroom: contacting authors, seeking publication, etc. These acts represent an enactment of democratic culture because participants demonstrated the power of their own decision-making, voice, and authority within and beyond the course.

In both the Teaching Composition course and the MAED program in general, course designers implemented and modeled the InTASC standards (CCSSO, 2011). As a programmatic capstone assignment, students designed digital portfolios that framed their learning and understandings within these standards. Incorporated into the Teaching Composition course were clear enactments of these standards, particularly in terms of learning environments, collaboration, interactive technologies, shared understandings, and respectful communication. Explicit modeling of the InTASC standards in course teaching, tools, and assignments from the first course in their program sequence provided participants with a foundation to continue developing throughout their coursework.

### **Limitations**

Perhaps the most noteworthy limitation of this work is the small, homogenous, and highly academically motivated participant group. As graduate students in a selective program, participants were already well-prepared to move into collaborative, democratic settings. A disadvantage to using a wide range of digital literacies included some participants learning new technology while absorbing the new course material. While learning new technology may have presented some challenge, participants began the course already confident in their abilities to succeed and efficacious enough to navigate obstacles presented through new literacies. Additionally, this research and teaching occurred on a technology-rich campus in a program committed to digital literacy; this work would not have been possible if students and instructors did not have access to such resources.

A second limitation is a possibility that students reflected differently in course designers' presence. Methodology attempted to remedy issues of an implicit power differential with a consent form and clear oral and written communication that data analysis would not occur until after grades were released, but this limitation should be acknowledged since this was a self-study. The course designers' presence perhaps could explain participants' overall positivity toward the teaching approach and new literacies tools.

A third limitation may be related to the privileges present when a small number of students receives the attention of two instructors; the co-teaching model itself may be a limitation as well as a benefit. The selective, small program in which this research occurred allowed individual attention, time for contemplation, and relationship building that may be more difficult in a program with high enrollments or in large classes with only one instructor.

Future research could incorporate these same methods, frameworks, and understandings with different, more novice groups of students who may not be so aptly prepared or confident (undergraduate pre-service teachers, for example, or in-service teachers) in different instructional settings.

Although course designers and students in this study worked together in almost ideal conditions (high achieving students in a digitally-rich program taught by two experienced instructors), both course designers have carried aspects of Teaching Composition with them into other settings with other populations, including a culturally diverse open access state college, a private liberal arts college, first year composition classes, and undergraduate teacher education courses. From co-designing writing rubrics with composition students in Google Docs to co-creating digital videos with preservice teachers, both course designers now use democratic teaching practices enhanced by new technologies in all of their courses.

## Conclusion

Valuable here is the notion of allowing students to lead and to work with instructors; while the depth of immersion in new technologies possible in this research is not possible in every setting, less pervasive changes can still allow democratic work in new literacies space. For example, by choosing one thing to incorporate into curriculum, like co-designing rubrics in a shared document or planning in an accessible space where preservice teachers can observe the construction of lessons, an instructor can enact democratic teaching through new literacies successfully on a smaller scale.

This research is significant because it informs teacher education programs of the power shift that occurs through purposeful use of co-taught, democratic, new literacies based digital pedagogy. Carefully designed, democratic structure, enhanced by new literacies, led to deep student involvement as motivated producers (not just consumers) of learning and knowledge. Working outside of a learning management system, like the ubiquitous Moodle or Blackboard, and instead experimenting with learning environments like a course wiki, Google documents, and Storify, allowed participants to have control of their documents after the course was over rather than the university being in control. Likewise, working outside of a learning management system allowed for their professional work to reside in a public space. Also, the co-taught structure allowed course designers to position themselves as more experienced learners and collaborators, rather than as sole experts.

Course designers' understanding of the new literacies framework changed over time; as it manifested in the classroom, course designers began to see it as recursive, nonlinear, and embedded (see Figure 3). The course design began with the challenge of answering to course evaluations that were from a previous instructor. Several students had commented that so much technology was being used and this quantity led to confusion about what to submit where. Based on this communication, the course designers worked with the participants to design a workflow model. Initially, participants needed to strengthen their voices by actively engaging and sharing their thoughts about how they wanted to course to unfold. It was clear to the course designers that the amount of input the participants had in their own curriculum and instruction was minimal in their previous coursework. While creating a workflow model was a challenging way to begin the semester, it proved to be what worked well with the course design. The interdependence that was needed to make this working model helped the participants and course designers to get to know one another through an active, working project.

Advantages of using new literacies included co-planning, quick feedback, and increased confidence and competence with digital literacy skills for participants who were preparing to enter the classroom. Co-planning for the week often happened with one instructor in the university town and the other instructor two hours away at her home. Lesson plan creation happened on shared Google slides, and the commenting feature and shared document came in handy since one of the course designers commuted, spending three days at the university and four days home with family. Beyond co-planning from afar, several times course designers saw students join the shared planning slides to see co-planning in action. This feature of the tool led to a feeling of connectedness, and to a feel of a shared learning community. As mentioned earlier, participants received thorough and timely feedback, in large part because course designers took advantage of the affordances of the tools available. Finally, participants increased their digital literacy capacity during the course, and this in turn increased their confidence as they prepared to enter classrooms, many of which were adopting one-to-one devices. As schools increase their technological capacity, and as more students come to classrooms with technological

tools, this research may provide insight into the impact of curriculum choices and instructional methods, including opportunities for and benefits of collaboration in teacher-education, as well as organizational structure for course content that invites democracy and encourages preservice teachers to create useful, wide-reaching digital spaces.

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**Appendix**

**MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation Inventory**

**Teaching together: reflecting on practice, analyzing perceptions, making pedagogical choices, and deepening insights in a co-taught teacher preparation experience**

Directions: **These items ask you about your CO-TAUGHT TEACHING COMPOSITION COURSE and INSTRUCTORS. Please select one of the numbers from 1 to 6 below and write it in the space next to each question.**

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Note that the word “coursework” refers to anything that you did in the course, including assignments, activities, readings, etc.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The coursework held my attention.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I had the opportunity to decide for myself how to meet the course goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. In general, the coursework was useful to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The instructor was available to answer my questions about the coursework.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The coursework was beneficial to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The instructional methods used in this course held my attention.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I was confident that I could succeed in the coursework.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I had the freedom to complete the coursework my own way.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I enjoyed the instructional methods used in this course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I felt that I could be successful in meeting the academic challenges in this course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The instructional methods engaged me in the course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I had options in how to achieve the goals of the course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I enjoyed completing the coursework.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I was capable of getting a high grade in this course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The coursework was interesting to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. The instructor was willing to assist me if I needed help in the course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I had control over how I learned the course content.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Throughout the course, I felt that I could be successful on the coursework.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I found the coursework to be relevant to my future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. The instructor cared about how well I did in this course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I will be able to use the knowledge I gained in this course.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. The instructor was respectful of me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. The knowledge I gained in this course is important for my future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. The instructor was friendly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I believe that the instructor cared about my feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I had flexibility in what I was allowed to do in this course.

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**After completing this, please turn this paper over and write the following reflection:**

Using specific examples from your experiences in co-teaching at any level, please describe what having more than one teacher has been like for you. Be as specific as possible.