

Video Transcript: Discussion 1 • Whole Group

Participants: Jayne Marlink, Kim Holsberry, Angie Balius, Lorena Sanchez, Teresa Pitta, Liz Harrington, Norma Mota-Altman, Amanda von Kleist, and Marlene Carter

JM: Good morning, my name is Jayne Marlink, and I am the Executive Director of the California Writing Project and with me are some fabulous, wonderful teachers. We are here on a very rainy Saturday to do what teachers do best - talk about teaching and make instructional plans for how students across grade levels, across California, different contexts, will write about Upstanders, Not Bystanders. It's a complicated issue, complicated topic. We're gonna see if we can test whether all kids can do this. Although none of us want to be on camera, we are all pretty excited about talking about the instructional possibilities that help us think about the way we can support all kids to inform, argue, and analyze in ways that work for our students and in ways that help us grapple with these new Common Core standards and English Language Development Standards. And here's kind of the point of this - the standards make the point that academic talk, conversation, and communication is important for our students to do their best work. If that is so emphasized in our standards, isn't it just as important for professional colleagues to support each other with problem solving planning talk about the what, why, and how of what we are going to teach? And that is what we are going to focus on. First of all, I'd like my colleagues here to introduce themselves. And we'll start with Kim.

KH: My name is Kim Holsberry. I am a kindergarten teacher, and I work in Winters, California, which is a small community outside Davis, an agricultural community. About 60% of our population is Hispanic and approximately 20-25% of our kinder students come to school speaking only Spanish.

AB: All right, my name is Angie Balius, and I teach in Garden Grove, which is in Orange County, California, and in my district we have a lot of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds with a variety of languages. I love what I teach and I love what I do, and I want to thank Jayne for inviting us to be a part of this today.

LS: Hello, my name is Lorena Sanchez, and I teach third grade bilingual at South West Park School in Tracy, California. Our population is 60% Hispanic. Of my class it's 100% students who are. Spanish is their primary language.

TP: Hello, my name is Teresa Pitta and I teach fifth grade at John Muir Elementary School in Merced, a Central Valley town, and the students at our school, um, came to school, probably about 16-20% of them speak a language other than English initially. And our population comes mostly from our downtown area. And we have been working for a number of years to make school an academic, an academic world very successful for our students.

LH: My name is Liz Harrington, I teach seventh grade English/Language Arts at Jefferson Middle School in San Gabriel, California. San Gabriel is a suburban school district, small school district. We have a very diverse population with a large number of languages spoken. We have Asian students who are mostly Japanese and Chinese, large numbers of Hispanic students, very small number of White and African American students.

NM: Hi, my name is Norma Mota-Altman, and I teach at San Gabriel High School in San Gabriel, California for the Alhambra City Schools, and I teach ninth through twelfth English as a Second Language and Spanish for native speakers. Our population at San Gabriel is about 60% Asian coming from diverse Asian countries and about 50% - 45% Latino coming from Mexico and Central and South America.

AK: Hi, my name is Amanda von Kleist, and I teach at Hamilton High School in Northern California in Glenn County. Our school population is about 300, and the town population is about 2000. Our students are probably 60-70% Hispanic. I'm a Special Education teacher in the high school, and that means I do some direct instruction, but most of my time is spent helping my students be successful in general education classes throughout the high school. A range of disabilities from attention deficit, autism, um, emotional disturbance, a wide variety of kids for a small school.

MC: My name is Marlene Carter, I teach at Dorsey High School in the Math, Science, and Technology magnet program in Los Angeles Unified. A magnet is a school within a school, so we are on a campus with a comprehensive high school. My magnet has 125 students, and I am the only English teacher in that program. So I teach grades nine, eleven, and twelve this year. I have a very wide variety of student ability levels within that comprehensive situation. Most of my students are African American. The magnet program is about 70% African American and about 30% Latino/Hispanic.

JM: And to prove to you that we haven't scripted this, I'm going to throw a question out here that we have not talked about, and we'll see what happens. We've all been kind of taken with this, with the possibility of Upstanders, Not Bystanders. It's intriguing; we've talked about it a little bit. But one thing we haven't talked about, and this is a fundamental Writing Project belief. If you wrote about this yourself, who would you write about? Would you go for a historic upstander, a public, community-based upstander, a personal upstander? What do you think? ... See? Go for it.

AB: I know for me, if I were to pick someone I would probably pick Ruby Bridges because I would want to pick a character that was - or a person - that was accessible for my students so that I could take that information back to the classroom and share my thoughts in a way that would be meaningful and

accessible for my students. So Ruby Bridges immediately jumped into my mind as a person to focus on.

JM: So writing as immediate model, almost right away, and seeing what your students will need. Anybody else?

TP: I saw a television clip this morning when I was eating breakfast. And I think it would be the example of public service activism. I'm not sure if that's the right way to say it. And it was, and I would like to be able to show that clip to my students, or I could describe it. It was a policeman, who had noticed several days in a row a homeless person without shoes, went into a nearby shoe store and told the owner what he was going to be doing, and the owner said, "Please use my discount. And this is a really good boot." And then he went back out to the street and asked the homeless man what size he wore, and then took him the brand new pair of shoes, and a passerby, an upstander, took a picture, and sent it in to the news station, and it's now making news. And the reason I would choose that example is it's a current event but it's in a community. Also, not always do public servants have the kind of - um, can't think of the word, I knew this would happen, the kind of, um- recognition, thank you. And sometimes our students see them in not the best positive light, and there's an example of someone who, during the course of his daily work, stepped out of the box, made a situation, improved a situation greatly. And my hope is that my students around the classroom, on the playground, and also in the world that they're growing up in would learn to be upstanders and take a stand. So that's the one that came to mind for me.

MC: Well, the one that came to mind for me immediately was a situation that happened last semester. I had a very challenging class. And so, when the school had brought in some people to talk about bullying, I immediately said "I need those people in my room." The very next day though, a young man hit another man in the back of the head like that. And a girl said, "You think because he's big it doesn't hurt?" And "You need to stop that." And this guy said, "Oh, you gonna let a girl fight your battles for you?" And I said, "No, this is what we said yesterday. None of us are going to tolerate this, and you have to stop." The whole class got very quiet; they could have joked or laughed about it, but the whole class got very quiet and kind of stared him down. And then he turned to the other guy and said, "I'm sorry." And we went on. So she really was, she was the upstander. This tiny girl was the upstander.

JM: Amanda and I talked last night, and I don't know if you still think the same thing. If I did this, I would write about Malala, the young lady who, what, at the age of 11 was making a public statement in Pakistan about the importance of education. I don't know how she had the wherewithal to do it. Knew she was in danger, repeatedly, of course, proved the case. In recent interviews with her, she's not going to be quiet, and she's got the full support of her dad. It's really quite an amazing story. One more maybe.

NM: I think, I agree with everything that's been said. And I think it's so important to have students see people who are not bigger-than-life. Because one of the things that I want students to leave my classroom with is the feeling that one person can make a difference and they can be that one person. And if we talk about upstanders, and we talk about people in everyday life, people just like us who are doing something and taking a stand, I think that's really empowering to all our students.

JM: Just a - Kim, go for it.

KH: It's interesting to listen to this conversation because, as a primary teacher, of course I would choose something in the kids' real life, probably off the playground, so I was assuming that the middle school and high school teachers would choose a historical because that's where I thought I was heading. So it's interesting to me to see that we're still all thinking about kids' own lives first so that maybe they can make those connections later. So it was just an interesting observation.

LH: I think it needs to start there. No matter what, you need to start where they are, you need to start with something that's meaningful to them and meaningful to you as a person, because otherwise it doesn't come across, and then move out into the wider world and the historical background.

TP: Well, and as John Lennon said, "Act locally, think globally."

JM: Haha, we didn't want to reveal our ages here, did we? Oh well. Never mind. Let's just keep going on this vein, and anyone who wants to jump in, jump in. This is a complicated theme that we all do think is going to resonate with our kids. Two in this group have actually started it already. How are you gonna translate this theme with your kids? How're you gonna connect them? It already sounds like we're starting with personal, community-based issues. Is there any of it that's also connecting it to interests of theirs or to prior teaching?

AK: Well, I spent a lot of time with my students on self-advocacy. As students with disabilities, my kids need to be able to express what is difficult for them in a classroom and be able to ask for what they need. And they're also subject to being manipulated by people who want to take advantage of them. And so we do a lot of work on helping them advocate for themselves, protect themselves, keep themselves out of dangerous situations. And so, I think that would be a really great way to connect the learning my students know about advocating for themselves, knowing themselves, asking for what they need, knowing their rights. And if they can think about that as a starting place for being an upstander, I think that would be very relevant to them.

KH: I would piggyback on that and say that for young children and English Language Learners, they need to have some language that they can use when they're in

these situations.

JM: Good point.

KH: And so, I think that's something we all need to keep in mind too, that just talking about it but not giving them the tools they need to deal with it in their own life is something we need to keep in mind.

LS: Oh, I was talking about how we have kind of started an anti-bullying program at our school, and we use the word "ally." So the kids have these scripts where they practice, where they act like they're an ally or what would be an upstander in different scenarios so when it actually does happen, they can do it. And they do it in Spanish, they do it in English, but they can transition between both of them, whatever is necessary at the time. And that way they know if something happens, the language, the vocabulary, what's appropriate.

AB: I know we're going to talk more about literature later, but I think with primary, giving kids stories that we can give to them so that we can start to introduce, what do the characters do, and then taking to that to what could you do, and finding those connections. But doing something safe with a storybook that they can see and see that that character did that, and then have that transfer into their own lives and their own behaviors.

JM: Go for it, Norma.

NM: One of the things that I am really excited about, because, I went to Facing History Ourselves, some of their institutes. And they have this concept of the "universe of obligation", and I start with the, Who is our universe of obligation? And how far does it extend? And the whole notion that, you know, you start with yourself, your family and how far does your obligation extend. And in terms of being a world class citizen, in terms of having empathy and caring for other people around the world, it's such a powerful vision to have, um, and students begin to talk about my obligation and my universe, and so that's been really exciting to see.

LH: For me I think it starts with students writing about their own experiences and getting down in writing what their own experiences have been, especially with bullying. Our school district this year, as part of our master plan, has bullying as a major focus, and so we're going to be really looking into ideas connected to bullying and how to prevent bullying and what to do when you are bullied and this whole notion of being an upstander will play directly into that. And so for me it starts with students writing about what their experiences have been and then being able to share that writing with others and talk to others through writing about those experiences.

JM: You can't propose ways to solve a problem if you're not deeply immersed in the problem, be it in the community, even looking at history, it's just impossible.

TP: I think that um, I was reminded when you were talking that also the configuration of the school plays a role, so I'm at a K-5 school and I'm teaching fifth graders. And at the beginning of the year, one of the things we talk about is, of course they're really thinking, they're head honchos. They're the men, they're the women, they're going to take over the school. Not really, but that's what they've dreamed of since they were in kindergarten. And I proposed to them on the first day of school—next year I will use upstanders and bystanders—but I proposed to them that they are really the big sisters, the leaders of the school. And it is not up to them to boss kids around in the bathroom, on the playground, but to really be a good example and to brother them along or sister them along. And that does help. I have been on duty last year and had some of my pretty tough kids come up to me and say, "There is a little second grader who just hit and times in a row another little person, and we are going to take you to them." My next step is to teach them to step in, they don't need to take an adult over to solve a problem, they really can. So that idea of their social place in a school community, because it is essentially what they are all about and starting with their own eyes. And then also what happens in each of our classrooms in the content areas that we are teaching then can become background launching pads for many critical reading and writing opportunities. So that if in a fifth grade class they're talking about the American Revolution, well, what's an example of a bystander there, and who were the bystanders? And it can just go on and on in many examples so, remind me that it happens in social contexts as well as content areas for our kids.

AB: And I think that's important, to keep pulling it back to what do we already have available to us in the classroom because, as teachers, we don't really want one more thing to add to the plate, but we want to be able to use what's already on our plate effectively and to meet a multitude—and looking at the stories in our anthologies that help us to analyze characters, interpret text, and find those bystanders or upstanders in each of those stories and to utilize social studies, utilize our, you know, literature. I think that's a great place for us to have that nonfiction and fictional stories and to kind of find those links. #00:01:57-6#

MC: And I'm going to go back to something Kim said, because um, you're right that uh, you know, we do want to get to the historical examples because I do teach the eleventh and twelfth graders. By the way, in ninth grade, there's so much literature that does have this upstander, um, but by the time you get into the older grades, it seems the literature is not so focused there. It's something to think about. But the connection I'd like to make is, I know my social studies teacher who's just down the hall from me is going to teach about the Freedom Riders of the 1960s and the buses and what they did to stand up for desegregating buses. So okay, I know he's going to do that, but I think what I would do is personalize it and think about, people who are just a year or two or three older than you stood up, what are the issues you need to stand up for today? So I can see making this a little bit more personal and making it more about action or at least thinking about action.

JM: And I think, just as a way of closing off this segment, you've touched on, we are so fortunate actually, and we may not think of it that way in California, with all the activities and events that get put on our school calendar that actually can fit into taking advantage of that curriculum or that date or that time to refocus on upstanders. I was floored, actually, by all, just taking a look. We've got the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation coming up in January. President Obama has just announced that his new inauguration will be around that theme. There will be texts, visual print, and getting kids to think deeply about these issues. I know Marlene often participates in February, National Council for Teachers of English launches every February the African American Read-in. The range of possibilities for fiction and poetry but nonfiction as well. Collections of essays, unbelievable collections of essays that could be used for that. February, the anniversary of Japanese internment. Lots of digital video examples. The brand new requirement to deal with LGBT history. And one of the upstanders that I know has caught our Improving Students Academic Writing kids, um, Analytical Writing kids, is the 16-year old in Canada, who I don't even have a name for, but two years ago was compelled by the stories of suicides from LGBT kids who were bullied to come up with a day where everybody wore purple in honor of those students and then to recognize difference. Two years later, this is a national event that people pick on Wear Purple Advocacy Spirit Day, depending on what organization. Sixteen-year old kid, for goodness sakes! The bullying campaigns that are now part of our standards, cyber bullying issues, um, character education, this seems to me to be a theme that's going to resonate, that kids can connect with if we can do the right work. And - we'll tease you, you'll see later in this module that there's an invitation for you to participate, and we're hoping you will, along with us. It's going to be a good thing, I think, a good thing. Any last words, about connecting kids, connecting to these issues?

NM: I agree with what Marlene said about starting with the personal and going to the historical, and in L.A. for me, the student walk-outs, where students who were the same age as our students walked out of the high school demanding classes and demanding equal opportunity and access to college information. I mean, and those were Latino students, like my students, so that hits home for them, and just to put that in the light of upstanders. These are students who actually did something, didn't just talk but did something to change it, and you're reaping the benefits.

JM: All the student activity that led to Williams. And I will say that some of us here in Sacramento, a long time ago, had a sit-out in our high school because there were not ethnic studies courses and very little multi-cultural ethnic representation in our courses. For teachers who are as old as I am, you will now know when that happened. Any last words? I'm excited to see the possibilities. I cannot wait to see what we come up with.