

CAPSTONE PROJECT & REFLECTION

EDUC 784: Capstone
Professor Maggie Clark

Richard C. Kelley

Monday, May 3, 2021

I. The Capstone Project

a website and toolkit for teachers

<https://sites.google.com/view/creating-diverse-classrooms>

II. The Capstone Reflection

During the process of completing this design-based capstone project, what did you learn about the topic and what did you learn about yourself?

I don't know why, but answering this question makes me a bit emotional. It's hard to believe that I am nearing the end of this journey in earning an M.Ed., in a completely new field, after working in higher education for nearly twenty-five years. When embarking on this adventure, I was worried about how I would do. My confidence was low, and anxiety was high.

Over the course of the past four years, I was mentored and encouraged by several wonderful faculty within the department, individuals who showed compassion, yet pushed me when I needed a good swift kick. I am eternally grateful to Phyllis Hakeem, who etched in my memory all that I need to know about literacy and the brain. Early on, when substitute teaching, I worried how I would ever pick-up classroom management techniques. I was lucky enough to have learned from Alicia Ginsberg, not once, but twice. Even when I didn't have her as an instructor, she checked-in on how I was doing. Prof. Clio Stearns was the first professional to ever observe me while teaching and provided much needed guidance and feedback during my student teaching semester. Where I was hyper-critical of my teaching, she showed me that I had created a safe and loving classroom environment where students were thriving and learning. She showed me how to look past the wobbles and slight mistakes, and to be a reflective practitioner. And to you Prof. Clark, who helped me find a joy in reading and exploring children's literature, to develop confidence in my work, and to look beyond MCLA to what lies ahead. I am forever grateful for your stewardship this semester.

I was in fear of the Capstone, afraid that I wouldn't be able to handle the work. In some ways I felt like a fraud. Instead, I have learned that I can do anything I set my mind

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to, even at fifty, in a world of much younger classmates. I can be a champion for diverse reading materials and advocating for change.

As for the topic, I must have been living on another planet. I had never heard of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop prior to 2019. Since then, it's like I've taken off the blinders. It seems like everything I read or listen to references her work. She is truly considered the mother of multicultural children's literature. She coined the metaphor, *Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors*. This metaphor has become the driving force in my professional practice.

I also learned that although others have joined my quest, we are on parallel, but different paths. As was said to me last week, I am the "curator of my own work." It reflects my take on the field and is seen through my lens. This toolkit is just the beginning. I hope to add to it as I find new materials. The great thing about my final product is that I've created it in Google Sites, which is free and connected to my personal email account. I've also created a GMail account for the toolkit (creatingdiverseclassrooms@gmail.com). That way, if teachers have questions, they can email me. The project won't end with the completion of the Capstone course.

I've also expanded my own diversity and inclusion toolkit. While working in higher education, I had become a diversity trainer and advocate. I considered myself fairly well educated in this area but have since learned there is so much more to do and learn. While #WeNeedDiverseBooks brought diverse children's literature into focus, the dialogue has shifted to the #OwnVoices movement, which advocates for authenticity in storytelling and publishing.