

Sankofa Learning Framework

by

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Abstract

The intention of my project is to draw upon features of our current education system, as well as components of 21st century learning, and create an alternative framework, which I have named the Sankofa Learning Framework, that will maximize student success and assist teachers in implementing thoughtful practices into curriculum. My project was informed by the history of educational reform and an understanding of 21st century learning (CCL, 2011; 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2011; Partnerships for 21st century learning, 2011; Pearson 21, 2011). The project is divided into four main sections: introduction, literature review, unit plan, and reflection.

My review of the literature revealed that language and literacy researchers and scholars generally agree that lessons should be rich and diverse with the 4 Cs (Partnerships for 21st century learning): communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; creativity and innovation. Further, the structure of short-term and long-term lesson sequences should be scaffolded and include a variety of purposeful and engaging high-inference tasks and open-ended strategies. This understanding assisted me in producing a unit plan which incorporates the lens (4Cs) and structure (scaffolding, high inference tasks and open-ended strategies) into seven lesson sequences. The unit plan includes detailed instruction, specific links to the lens, inclusion of the structure and references to possible modification and extensions.

Lastly, my reflections include the key points of each lens and structure component that I came to understand through research and creation of the unit plan. As well, I reflect on the process of narrowing my focus, creating and including each of these components in the unit plan and my future plans.

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The first master’s course that I ever took was about critical literacies, taught by Dr. Alison Preece. Given that it was my first master’s course, I was nervous and unsure of what to expect. But experiencing a way that curriculum and instruction could be done shifted my teaching paradigm. This shift developed through the next class I took with Dr. Preece, an oracy course, where I acquired a richer appreciation that learning was not stagnant and that it needed to be social, active and meaningful.

In the critical literacies course I was fortunate enough to meet Allison Balabuch, who was also just beginning her master’s course work. Over the program, Allison and I took several classes together and were able to co-write a few of our papers and co-present in class and at workshops. Our friendship developed over the program and I am so grateful for her support, guidance, feedback and expertise, as we both sat on either side of her kitchen table, this past fall, working diligently on our own master’s projects; her patience, empathy and understanding pushed me towards completion of this project.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my friends and family. Their constant patience, support, guidance and love has helped me through all my of education, but more specifically they have kept me sane, grounded, invested and excited about completing my master's course work and this project.

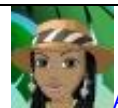
Chapter 1

Introduction

The moments when students are authentically engaged with literature and are able to demonstrate this knowledge through active learning are, as an English teacher, moments that I strive for. Conversely, if a student does not understand or does not engage with literature, the onus should be on me--how I am teaching the material; if learning is not occurring as a result of the way I am teaching, then I need to change my approach.

In order for students to successfully engage in the richness of literature, there need to be structures that support their learning process. Structures should serve to assist students in acquiring knowledge, engaging with text and provide a platform to demonstrate their learning: without such a structure students' ability to effectively engage with and understand the text may be compromised. If taught effectively, at the end of a literature study, students should not be left wondering: what was this text even about?

The following is a post (Yahoo answers, 2011), which shows a student making a plea to anonymous strangers about the content of the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, followed by a thread of posts from strangers commenting on her post.



[Ayeshaaa : \) x](#) What tha hell happens in Romeo and Juliet?!?

I'm in year 10 and I'm currently studying Romeo and Juliet in English. For our assessment we need to write an essay on what happens throughout the play. I really don't understand what happens at all. It's crazy! It also counts as 10% of my GCSE and i don't want to mess it up!

help please :) xx



by [basspunk...](#) Basically:

There are two families (the Capulets and Montagues) who are feuding.

Romeo is a Montague, Juliet is a Capulet.

Romeo and Juliet meet at a masquerade and fall in love.

They decide to run off and marry.

A priest offers to help in their plan. He helps Juliet stage her death, only he fails to get the message to Romeo in time, so Romeo thinks Juliet has died/killed herself.

He goes to her tomb and commits suicide.

Juliet wakes up (she has taken some type of drug that put her to sleep, but made her seem dead), finds Romeo dead, and kills herself.

That's the main plot.

There are other subplots running through. Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, finds out about their love and wants to kill Romeo.

Romeo's friend Mercutio fights Tybalt instead and Tybalt kills him. Romeo finds out and kills Tybalt.

The whole thing ends with the Prince lecturing the two families about the tragedy that their feud has brought about.



by [Knowledge Seeker](#) that's exactly what happens. Hell. ok. so this is wat essentially happens. romeo's gf pisses him so he goes off n sees juliet n is like, oh i m in love wid u. juliet is like, me 2. lets get married. but they cant because their respective fathers hate each other. so this priest tries to help them. only, everything messes up n in the end, everybody dies. the end.



by [Ana](#) It's really important that you actually read the play as it will just keep popping up throughout the rest of your education.



by [fcdl](#) is this coursework? watch the film . . . not the leonardo di caprio version, the other one . . . its quite good, not very long, and it will really help u =] x



by [EC](#) Well, I understand Shakespearean words are hard, but I bet you didn't try very hard huh :]

How was she currently studying *Romeo and Juliet* in school that made her so confused?

Were there no support structures in place to assist her learning process? Was she not engaging in thoughtful, social, active learning? As I followed the threads that linked with the initial post, I was struck by how people responded: some quickly offered up their understanding of the play; others suggested ways that she could understand and enjoy the play; and a few seemed to scold her (“I bet you didn’t try very hard”). Regardless of her motivation for wanting the information, it seemed as though she had hit a stumbling block in her learning process.

The British Columbia (BC) Language Arts Integrated Resource Packages (BC ELA IRP, 2007) provides a curriculum that is built upon strategies and pedagogy that support thoughtful learning practices. Without ignoring what already works in the prescribed curriculum, but rather adapting it to change what, in the government's opinion, is not working and meet future needs, BC's Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2011) outlines the most current reform with a shift towards a system of 21st century learning (CCL, 2011; 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2011; Partnerships for 21st century learning, 2011; Pearson 21, 2011; given the various understandings of this term, see Definitions in this chapter for the definition that I use to guide my understanding).

Some teachers have been keen to adopt the elements addressed in the Plan and many are already teaching in a manner congruent with its key elements. In my personal teaching experience, there are many others, however, who use teaching practices which do not support the current theory-based pedagogy of the Plan. Indeed, these teachers do not even address ideas within the current IRPs (BC ELA IRP, 2007). Often, their current practices are not conducive to successful learning.

If we purposefully and effectively make use of the components of the BC IRP (BC ELA IRP, 2007) and 21st century learning (CCL, 2011; 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2011; Partnerships for 21st century learning, 2011; Pearson 21, 2011) that are advantageous to students' learning through a supportive, yet fluid and flexible framework, students will be able to acquire, practice and demonstrate skills that will enable them to be social, active and critically-literate members of society. In order to provide curriculum and instruction that best meets the learning styles and needs of today's students, we should review the structure of our education system.

Purpose

The purpose of my project is to analyze the components of the BC English Language Arts IRP (BC ELA IRP, 2007) and 21st century learning as exemplars of thoughtful teaching pedagogy and practices (see chapter two). The current IRP in BC does strive for effective teaching practices, yet has many gaps and usability issues. 21st century learning is also praiseworthy in many ways, but is problematic in terms of some its framework and integration of curricula in the high school English Language Arts classroom.

To address the problems of the current education curriculum (see chapter two), I would like to propose an alternative framework that incorporates certain components of 21st century learning while building upon the positive elements of the existing IRPs. This framework will include a particular lens and structure that draws upon both the IRPs and 21st century learning. Through the lens of the 4 C's of 21st century learning (communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; and creativity and innovation) it is possible to fill in the gaps and increase the usability of the IRPs while maintaining the intent of the document. Scaffolding, high-inference tasks, and open-ended strategies provide a structure which enables teachers to realize the full scope of the IRPs and make the shift towards 21st century learning, while maximizing success for their students.

What brought me to this alternative framework

Last year, I found my English binder from high school. In it were basic recall and comprehension worksheets. The experiences in high school classrooms that I did remember were not from fill-in-the-blank sheets, answers to chapter questions, bubble sheets or grammar packages; rather, they were lessons that made me think, feel, understand, share, and reflect. These lessons were relevant, engaging and encouraged students to work collaboratively and

communicate their thinking in creative, innovative and critical ways. I remember them because of a connection that tied what I learned in school to who I was . . . and am as a person.

It is important to develop a curriculum that is more representative of modern learning experiences and will provide students with opportunities to develop skills that they can independently apply in future contexts. Having come out of an education system more based on rote recall than engaged learning, my foundational understanding of how we should educate students was rooted in basic recall and comprehension lessons. My teacher education began to shift my understanding, but, even so, I knew that there had to be ways I might continue to grow as a teacher, but was at a loss as to how I could even go about doing this or even where to begin.

In 2005, mere months after I had completed my teaching practicum, I was fortunate enough to walk into a full time teaching position of four blocks of English 10. Having not taught this level of English before – my practicum was at a middle school – I was overwhelmed and nervous. As in many high schools, the more experienced teachers offered up their resources for my use. As I pulled basic comprehension packages from their dusty file cabinets, I figured that if these teachers had been using them for this many years they must work.

When I first mentioned to students that we would be studying Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* I was met with negative emotions: frustration, confusion, animosity and apathy. Using the resources of experienced teachers, students' disinterest and lack of engagement continued during the unit.

So, what was happening in my class? Initially, I had thought that this anti-Shakespeare mentality was a student problem. Their notions of what the study of Shakespeare would be were hindering their ability to engage with and enjoy the literature. However, as the unit developed and students' lack of interest in the text continued, I realized that it was the way that we were

exploring the text that was the real cause of their disengagement – it was a teacher problem. Using pre-fabricated, teacher-controlled, basic questioning and comprehension worksheets was evidently not working. Although this approach was not taught in my teacher education classes, and it is not been a part of the teacher education of any of the student teachers that I have mentored, these resources continue to be used by some teachers.

Over the next couple of years, I developed and refined my teaching practices, through workshops, inquiry groups and courses at UVic. I attempted to incorporate a blend of drama activities, discussion practices, student-directed questioning techniques and exploratory lesson sequences into my practice. As I developed my own teaching pedagogy, students were actively participating in lessons and demonstrating a richer understanding of the text.

However, it wasn't until two years ago that my teaching of Shakespeare evolved into a program that would effectively support and develop students' learning. Because I was teaching in a computer lab and had access to technology, I began to look at curriculum and instruction in a different way than I had previously. Access to technology initially gave me a vehicle to explore 21st century learning and, as I came to understand that it was more than just the use of technology, I began exploring other components of 21st century learning: technology became a tool through which I developed an understanding of the complexity of 21st century learning. I was able to realize the PLOs of the BC IRPs, with the intentions of the *Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts* and the *Considerations for Program Delivery* (BC ELA IRP, 2007), through application of some 21st century skills. I feel that this approach better supports students' learning because it deviates from basic recall and comprehension and provides students with a rich and meaningful learning experience.

John Abbott, founder of the 21st Century Learning Initiative (see Definitions in this chapter and chapter two), came to visit my classroom in the spring of 2011. He was looking at classrooms around the world that encouraged students to use computers in innovative ways. At the time, I was working on helping students to develop character blogs for *Romeo and Juliet* (see Chapter three). While viewing how students were engaged in both the process and product of the assignment, Abbott made a comment that this lesson fulfilled many of the 21st century learning skills, such as the Learning and Innovation Skills; Information, Media and Technology Skills; Core Subjects; and 21st Century Themes (CCL, 2011; 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2011; Partnerships for 21st century learning, 2011; Pearson 21, 2011). He also stated that he wished more teachers could incorporate similar literature lessons. I was inspired to create lessons and build upon existing thoughtful practices, many of which I had been introduced to during my Masters' course work, for my project: strategies that were engaging and purposeful for student's learning, but also strategies that would, perhaps, spark creative ways for teachers to implement lessons.

This year, I am also involved with a inquiry team, under the supervision of Leyton Schnellert -- a professor of Educational Practice at Simon Fraser University and co-author of *It's all about thinking: Collaborating to Support All Learners in English, Social Studies, and Humanities* (2009) -- that is looking specifically at which type of practices best engage students. Engaged learning refers to student activities which “involve active cognitive processes such as creating, problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making, and evaluation. In addition, students are intrinsically motivated to learn due to the meaningful nature of the learning environment and activities” (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999, para 3). For education to be truly effective, it must be purposeful, relevant, meaningful and engaging to students.

Schnellert is working with several teachers from my school, as well as others in the district, to develop lesson sequences, with a focus on open-ended strategies. Schnellert found that “instruction using open-ended strategies is a key ingredient in classrooms that are learning communities [because they] do not set a ceiling on what students can learn and do. Rather, they allow students to . . . [push] the edges of their current knowledge” (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009, p. 48). Education becomes more reflective of what a student can learn without limiting their acquisition of knowledge.

I originally changed my teaching practice to develop curriculum and instruction that I would enjoy and be proud of, but would also teach students in a way that would allow them to experience and enjoy literature. Reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing are at the core of the BC Language Arts curriculum. These are valuable skills; however, the study of English does not fit neatly into six outcome-based boxes, as I perceive the current BC English Language Arts curriculum (BC ELA IRP, 2007) to be, with separate skills developed in isolation to be checked off as they are realized. Literacy refers to students’

ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society (UNESCO, 2004. What is Literacy? sidebar).

True literacy, therefore, is an interconnected system with these skills working in conjunction to create critically-literate and engaged members of society. In order for students to successfully achieve this, learning practices must move beyond traditional education.

Definitions

The terms traditional education, 21st century learning and my proposed framework, the Sankofa Learning Framework, are used extensively throughout this project. The following section provides the definitions that guide my thinking and ground my understanding of these terms.

Traditional Education

Given that there are many understandings of what traditional education connotes, for the purposes of this project, I am defining traditional education as the ideas and approaches that do not encourage critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication. Traditional curriculum and teaching norms [are] based on prevailing scientific assumptions concerning the nature of knowledge, the learning process, and differential aptitude for learning. Although they have been profoundly challenged by the past three decades of research . . . the assumptions of [traditional education] are firmly ensconced in the standard operating procedures of today's schools. (Resnick & Hall, 1998, p. 92)

Traditional practices and pedagogy focus on rote learning, such as basic comprehension and recall. Curriculum and instruction that do not encourage students to be active participants in the social learning process through acquisition, practice and demonstration of skills, entrench the learner outside the learning process and do not allow for growth and development of the learner and his/her learning practices. As de Kock (2004) comments:

in a traditional setting the teacher regulates the learning process and the learner simply carries out instructions. . . . Learners are not able to learn independently because of the lack of relevant context in which they rely on their own learning practices. Learners are, therefore, to a great extent dependent on the instructions of the teacher. Such traditional

settings are in contrast with modern learning environments . . . where learners rely on their own learning practices to a greater extent. (p. 145)

21st century learning is a shift from traditional education in its attempts to keep the learning process from being stagnant and to encourage students to be active and engaged in a personalized learning process that focuses on skill sets, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

21st century learning

Although there are common threads among the definitions of 21st century learning, there are a few views that I will use to position my understanding that come from the following programs and initiatives: 21st Century Learning Initiative; BC's Education Plan; the Canadian Council on Learning; Pearson 21; and the Partnerships for 21st Century Learning.

21st century learning is not new pedagogy or practice. Elements of 21st century learning can be traced back to Dewey's notion that education should be social, active and rich with diverse experiences (Dewey, 1929, p. 292). The roots of 21st century learning, as a program, first emerged in the UK in 1995 with the 21st Century Learning Initiative, led by John Abbott (see chapter two). As Abbott says, "[t]he 21st Century Learning Initiative's essential purpose is to facilitate the emergence of new approaches to learning that draw upon a range of insights into the human brain, the functioning of human societies, and learning as a community-wide activity" (21st Century Learning Initiative, 2000, para. 1). The Initiative views 21st century learning as a learning system that encourages students to apply and extend their growing knowledge to future technological and social conditions (21st Century Learning Initiative, 1998). The Canadian Initiative based on the UK program began in September 2005.

In March of 2010, John Abbott was part of a series of presentations and meetings that took place in Victoria, BC to discuss how the ideas behind the 21st Century Learning Initiative might influence future reforms to the BC curriculum.

On October 28, 2011, George Abbott, BC's Minister of Education, unveiled BC's Education Plan (see chapter two). The plan's key elements focus on personalized, quality learning, which allows for flexibility and choice, is empowered by technology, and aims for high standards and quality teaching. The plan recognizes that the current education system is good, but is in need of a transformation to make it great. The Minister stated that

under BC's Education Plan, our system will be more flexible and dynamic to better equip students for a bright future. The world has changed and continues to change and in order to keep pace we need to shift the way we look at teaching and learning . . . We need to build on the many strengths of our existing system while modernizing it to respond to students' needs. (Ministry of Education, 2011, para. 6)

This shift is key to any educational reform; we must build on elements of the system that work well, but also include pedagogy and practices that students and teachers will view as purposeful and effective.

The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), a national, non-profit organization committed to improving learning, defines 21st century learning and teaching as “a discrete focus on 21st century student outcomes (a blending of specific skills, content knowledge, expertise and literacies) with innovative support systems to help students master the multi-dimensional abilities required of them in the 21st century” (CCL, 2010, Framework for 21st Century Learning section, para. 1). Students need a framework that allows them to acquire and develop skills and knowledge that will be beneficial to them as 21st century learners. The Council believes that the

21st century learning reform is serving as a catalyst for change by informing the broader education community about the nature of learning and encourage communities to engage in dialogue about the disconnect between this reform and our current educational structure and culture.

Pearson 21 of a panel education leaders that wants to share its views on technology and 21st century learning, in order to develop classroom practices that personalize and maximize student learning (Pearson 21, 2011). According to Pearson 21 (Canada), 21st century learning should equip students with skills and knowledge to be active, engaged and effective citizens within their community, country, and the world and foster innovation and creativity. Although curriculum should still involve mastering content of core subjects, the teaching of the skills, proposed by this framework, ought to be infused throughout the curriculum and their experience in the classroom environment (Pearson 21, 2011).

Pearson 21 recognizes that “there is a profound gap between the knowledge and skills most students learn in school and the knowledge and skills they need in typical 21st century communities” (2011, Our mission section, para. 2) and that this gap is affecting students’ ability to be educated and literate in the 21st century. According to Pearson 21, this means that students should be:

able to effectively communicate in a personal and professional manner, show personal and social responsibility, be effective time managers, use appropriate technology in given situations, and be able to apply their learning to multiple situations. [Students should] be able to communicate honestly and effectively in a variety of ways to ensure understanding, [and be] equipped to continue to learn for a lifetime. (Pearson 21, 2011, FAQ section)

To be critically literate and engaged, active members of society, students will need to develop foundational skills through a supportive learning framework that will help them to apply, personalize and extend their thinking.

The Partnerships for 21st Century Learning was originally a US-based program, but has developed a Canadian arm -- P21 Canada: Partnership for 21st Century Learning and Innovation (P21 Canada, 2011) – consisting of a coalition of public and private educational organizations that advocate for 21st century learning. Their framework, the Framework for 21st Century Learning, is used as a foundation to nearly all the major programs and initiatives of 21st century learning (CCL, 2011; 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2011; Partnerships for 21st century learning, 2011; Pearson 21, 2011).

This framework describes the skills, knowledge and expertise that students must master to succeed [and] it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies . . . Within the context of core knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today’s world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration (Partnerships for 21st century learning, 2011, framework definitions section, para.2-3).

This framework provides a foundation for what 21st century education should look like, namely that skills ought to be rooted in outcome-based education that will prepare students “to think, learn, work, solve problems, communicate, collaborate, and contribute effectively throughout their lives” (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010, p. 43). These skills move beyond simply conveying course content; rather, by using course content, students can develop, practice and transform skills that will maximize their success.

Although many teachers are already teaching, or shifting their methods of teaching, to reflect 21st century learning, not all are. In my experience, some teachers see the initiative as a fad and have opposed it from the onset; others have difficulty infusing their curriculum with short-term and long-term scaffolded practices. Instead, they incorporate isolated elements of 21st century learning in isolated components of their curriculum and instruction. However,

a 21st century conception of learning is much more than adopting new skills and integrating them into the curriculum or purchasing new technologies and placing them classrooms – it is the fundamental shift from a teacher-centred learning environment to a student-centred one . . . This decentralized view of teaching and learning is not an abdication of instructional responsibility but rather embracing the core skills and capacities that students need to be successful. (Zmuda, 2009, p.16)

Therefore, for the purposes of this project, I will define 21st century learning as an approach to learning that builds on the context of the core subjects' content while equipping students with the essential skills that will allow them to successfully negotiate their own learning and sense of self and others in the 21st century. The framework that I am proposing offers a structure that will support students in acquiring, practicing and demonstrating these essential skills.

Sankofa Learning Framework

My proposed framework is developed from my own understanding of 21st century learning, but also incorporates some elements of the BC Language Arts IRPs and other approaches to learning. This framework will use a particular lens and structure. The lens builds from the 4Cs of 21st century learning (communication; collaboration; critical thinking and

problem solving; and creativity and innovation) from the Partnerships for 21st Century Learning Framework (2011). The structure includes: open-ended strategies, scaffolding and high-inference tasks. So as not to be confused with other 21st century learning definitions, frameworks and pedagogy, I will be referring to my proposed framework as the Sankofa Learning Framework during my project.

The term Sankofa comes from the Akan, which is a language used in Ghana, Africa, meaning that we learn from the past, but continually move forward. In application to learning, I thought that this was a particularly appropriate term to use for the practices and pedagogy of my proposed framework (see chapter two).

The practices that I include in my framework stem from an understanding that students need to access prior knowledge and skills to be able to apply them in future contexts, both within the lesson sequences and beyond the classroom experience. The scaffolding of the practices builds on a model of acquisition, process and transformation of knowledge and skills.

From a pedagogical perspective, I think that the term Sankofa encompasses why I think educational reform is needed, but also what that reform should seek to achieve. Without negating intentions of past and present educational reform, programs and initiatives, my proposed framework seeks an alternative approach to learning that will create a synergy between what has been and is currently working well within our education system, addresses the gaps, and moves us forward.

The lens and structure of the Sankofa Learning Framework encourages a particular set of skills (communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity and innovation), which require students to be active, engaged and effective learners. Additionally, learning is promoted as a personalized, meaningful, social experience that is organic, thoughtful,

purposeful and supported. Further, it pushes students to acquire, practice, apply and extend their thinking through a structure of open-ended strategies, scaffolding and high-inference tasks.

In *The Educational Spectrum* (1985), Miller describes seven orientations to curriculum, referring to the basic beliefs about what schools should do and how students learn: behavioural, subject/disciplines, social, developmental, cognitive processes, humanistic and transpersonal. These orientations reflect particular views on educational aims and the following conceptions: the learner and the learning process; the learning environment; the role of the teacher and how learning should be evaluated (Miller, 1985)

Using these orientations, I now outline the major tenets of the Sankofa Learning Framework:

- *Educational aims*: the goal of my curriculum is to draw upon features of our current education system, as well as components of 21st century learning, and consider an alternative framework that will maximize student success.
- *Conception of the learner*: learners are active and social participants, who need opportunities to acquire, negotiate and demonstrate their thinking through a supportive learning structure. As well, the curriculum and the student are seen to interpenetrate each other, allowing for the inner nature of the student to develop (Miller, 1985).
- *Conception of the learning process*: the orientation of the curriculum takes a transformation position, whereby the focus is on students' personal and social change; students should be taught the skills to promote such a transformation (Miller, 1985). As well, the lessons should be rich and diverse with all elements of the 4 Cs: communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; and creativity and innovation. The structure of short-term and long-term lesson sequences should include a

variety of purposeful and engaging high-inference tasks and open-ended strategies, used during the connecting, processing and transforming stages (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009).

- *Conception of the learning environment:* The learning environment should be quite structured near the beginning of the skill-development process and become more loosely structured as the responsibility of the learning process is transitioned from teacher to student (Pearson & Gallagher, 1993; Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009). The learning material should be rich, diverse and engaging, but relevant and scaffolded through the learning process.
- *Conception of the teacher's role:* The role of the teacher is the facilitator of knowledge who, through guided practice, shifts the ownership of the acquisition of knowledge from teacher to students, but this approach also requires teachers to take a more critical look at the roles of schools, so as not to simply mirror popular or passing ideology (Miller, 1985).
- *Conception of how learning should be evaluated:* Evaluation should be more formative than summative. Techniques for assessment are experimental, open-ended and build from criteria that are co-created with the teacher and students.

Utilizing these major tenets to orient my thinking, I was able to construct my framework using a specific lens and structure configuration.

Lens: 4 Cs

Given that the *Partnerships for 21st Century Learning* framework is primarily used as a foundational structure of 21st century learning, it will serve as a baseline for my project. The framework focuses on four student outcomes and four support structures. I will concentrate on

the Learning and Innovation Skills (4 C's) student outcomes and the curriculum and instruction support structure. The 4 Cs refers to communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; and creativity and innovation.

The Partnerships for 21st Century Learning lists the outcomes for learning associated with the 4 C's (although they recognize communication and collaboration as being two different skills, they have combined them together in their outcomes):

Creative and Innovative learners demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology. Learners: a. apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes. b. create original works as a means of personal or group expression. c. use models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues.

Communicative and collaborative learners use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others. Learners: a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts or others employing a variety of digital environments and media. b. communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats. c. develop cultural understanding and global awareness by engaging with learners of other cultures. d. contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems.

Critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making learners use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and

resources. Learners: a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation. b. plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project. c. collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions. d. use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions. (Partnerships for 21st Century Learning, 2011, Twenty-First Century Student Outcomes section)

Building on the core standards of the BC English Language Arts IRPs, the 4 C's will provide the lens to my proposed framework (see Chapter 2 for more information on the 4 C's). Inclusion of the 4 Cs needs to be balanced and interconnected in short-term and long-term lesson sequencing. Opportunities for the successful and effective development and demonstration of these skills must be provided for students to become proficient and actively use these skills in and out of school.

Structure: Key Elements

Students will need to develop, practice and demonstrate skills associated with the 4Cs, using a structured approach to their implementation. This structured approach includes the key elements: open-ended strategies, scaffolding and high-inference tasks (see Chapter two for more information on these structures).

Open-ended strategies pertain to activities that encourage students to construct meaning within the context of their own experiences and the content of the curriculum (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009). These activities are developed fluidly, constructively and purposefully through practices of connecting, processing and transforming/personalizing.

High-inference tasks are practices that reflect authentic and personalized, task-oriented, supportive learning over time, and requiring students to access and build on prior knowledge,

transform and demonstrate their learning: “[h]igh-inference tasks call for the reader to link experience with the text and to draw logical conclusions. They give learners opportunities to develop the complex thinking needed for response and analysis” (Close, 2011, p. 2). These opportunities should be developed through the curriculum. Short-term lesson sequences should include high-inference tasks; and, moreover, final high-inference tasks should stem from correlations to prior tasks.

Scaffolding can be developed using ideas expressed in the BC IRP’s *Considerations for Program Delivery* in the Introduction, such as literacy learning, recursion and *gradual release of responsibility*. Literacy learning refers to constructing meaning through practices of reading, writing, communication, as well as, “a process of making meaning (not just receiving it) and negotiating it with others (not just thinking alone)” (BC ELA IRP, 2007.). Recursion stems from Doll’s notion that we need to be constantly “falling back” on our own thinking to build knowledge (1993). Pearson and Gallagher’s *gradual release of responsibility* (1993) involves building a support structure for students’ learning that models, scaffolds, coaches, explores and reflects curriculum and instruction (BC ELA IRP, 2007)

Overview of Project

My motivation for this project emerged from how I felt that the study of literature could be taught. I was motivated to shift the educational paradigm of why we teach students the way that we do and how we ought to teach students in the 21st century. Realistically, this may not change what some teachers do in their classrooms, but I will propose the *Sankofa Learning Framework* as an alternative which could be used. Curriculum that will engage and support students in developing literacy skills has positive results for students and teachers, in the classroom and beyond.

In chapter two, I will review the literature of educational reform, with a focus on 21st century learning. My teaching resource (see chapter three) will offer purposeful teaching practices, what content we could be teaching and the processes through which it could be taught. Finally, in chapter four, I reflect on my entire project.

Summary

By building on the components of the BC IRP (BC ELA IRP, 2007) and 21st century themes (CCL, 2011; 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2011; Partnerships for 21st century learning, 2011; Pearson 21, 2011), the Sankofa Learning Framework is a supportive, yet fluid and flexible structure for students and teachers to engage with curriculum, meet the needs of today's learners and develop skills for life-long learning practices. This shift in curriculum and instruction is necessary because

without question, it appears traditional methods and performances of the past can no longer serve [students in the] future. Not only are these practices of lecture and tell, assign and grade, anachronistic to their approach, they are suited for today's learner in this informational age. An entire transformation of school life, how teachers and students spend their time during the day, must be changed. (Galloway & Lasley, 2010, pp.272-273)

With another educational reform emerging in BC, it is important for teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and pedagogy. The essential question is: how do we use the BC Language Arts curriculum as a vehicle to provide the skills students will need to be successful, thoughtful, and engaged members of society?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

A decade into the 21st century, we still find ourselves nearly as unprepared for what our students and society need from education . . . The overused phrase 21st Century Learning can take on real meaning only if we compare the challenges educators face now with those faced at the turn of the past century. The idea that virtually all students can, and should, learn a high-demand curriculum, focused on thinking and reasoning and grounded in mastery of complex bodies of knowledge, would have seemed quixotic to thinkers a century ago. (Resnick, 2009, p.183)

Students in the 21st century require skills that will enable them to be critically literate and active members of society who are disciplined, synthesizing, creative, respectful and ethical thinkers (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010). These skills need to be learned in conjunction with each other through purposeful, scaffolded practice.

The current BC Language Arts IRP, while praiseworthy in some aspects, is problematic in its structure and is lacking some important features. The 21st Century Learning Initiative and the Partnership for 21st Century Learning provide frameworks for incorporating 21st century learning into the curriculum, but these could be more focused. It is not my intention to belittle or ignore our current education system, particularly those outcomes currently used in the Language Arts curriculum, and replace it with only 21st century skill-sets. There is genuine merit to the core components of literacy: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing. The problem is that they are taught in a way that follows the same principles as traditional education structures, which does students a disservice. My goal is to focus on the core standards of the BC

Language Arts curriculum but consider an alternative way to teach these skills, through a 21st century learning lens.

Using the 4Cs from the Partnership for 21st Century Learning's framework and a structure of open-ended strategies, scaffolding and high-inference tasks my project explores an alternative approach to the current education system. This framework serves to support students in acquiring, practicing and transforming these skills to be used within a community of practice and for life-long learning. A community of practice is a group of people engaging in the process of collaborative learning; in education, this type of learning is used for three reasons: to create educational experiences in school and develop skills; continue this practice outside the school in the larger community; and extend these experiences over the course of a student's life (Wenger, 2006). Life long learning is noted as being:

(a) continuous (it never stops); *(b) supportive* (it isn't done alone); *(c) stimulating and empowering* (it's self-directed and active, not passive); *(d) incorporating knowledge, values, skills, and understanding* (it's more than what we know); *(e) spanning a lifetime* (it happens from our first breath to our last); *(f) applied* (it's not just for knowledge's sake); *(g) incorporating confidence, creativity, and enjoyment* (it's a positive, fulfilling experience); and *(h) inclusive of all roles, circumstances, and environments* (it applies not only to our chosen profession, but to our entire life). (Collins, 2009, p. 215)

In order to understand why there is a need to reform and what I hope to achieve with my proposed framework as one alternative to our current one, it is necessary to go back and look at educational reform. Therefore, the next component of chapter two will review the history of educational reform, specifically looking at the contributions of John Dewey, Ralph W. Tyler and William Doll Jr. From there, I will make connections from the history to 21st century learning, by

focusing on the roles of John Abbott, George Abbott and The Partnerships for 21st Century Learning.

With a basis for 21st century learning, I examine two frameworks: the BC Language Arts Integrated Resource Package as it currently exists and my proposed framework, the Sankofa Learning Framework. When analyzing the IRPs, I focus on the *Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts*, the *Considerations for Program Delivery* and the PLOs as they relate to 21st century learning. I then examine the proposed lens (creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration) and proposed structure (open-ended strategies, scaffolding, and high-inference tasks) of the Sankofa Learning Framework. Further, I explore scholarly research on the components of the lens and structure.

To critically examine 21st century learning, I use three questions to guide my analysis: 1) Do the PISA ranking results of UK education reflect the 21st Century Learning Initiative's role?; 2) Do the 4C's lens and key elements structures lend anything different to the BC English Language Arts Integrated Resource Packages?; and 3) Do the 4Cs lens and key elements structure compromise content and context, with a primary focus on skill development? Lastly, I will comment on the goals for my project before the lesson sequences in the next chapter.

History of educational reform

John Dewey.

Many educational scholars have pushed to improve curriculum and instruction in schools. Affected by the traditional structure of the education system, John Dewey sought reform in the early 20th century in an attempt to re-imagine the education structure, the role of the teacher and the student, and the learning process itself. In *Pedagogic Creed* (1929), a presentation of his

educational theories, John Dewey outlined what education is, what the school is, the subject matter of education, the nature of method and the school's relation to social progress.

The general process of education, according to Dewey, is social and organic and “the only true education comes from the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situation in which he finds himself” (Dewey, 1929, p. 291). Learning occurs in response to student's views, values and experience; a reflection of how this comes about; and how they position themselves within a larger social context during the process of education. The students' knowledge is developed and interpreted through social conditions; “these powers, interests, and habits must be continually interpreted . . . [and] they must be translated in terms of their social equivalents” (p. 292). In order to be effectively and purposefully educated, students must have command of their own learning and be capable of understanding the conditions within which they can apply this learning.

The school is the social institution where the process of acquiring knowledge and community is shaped. An education system should work to deepen and extend students' thinking and be part of the foundation of their life experience. One of the fundamental principles of a school is that it is a form of community life. To be truly educative, school must be a part of the student's life experience, while providing students with tools, lessons and habits to maneuver through their own thinking. The role of the teacher is not to impose certain ideas or habits onto students, instead they are part of this community that assists students with negotiating their learning and learning practices (Dewey, 1929).

Dewey believed that the subject matter of schools is less about acquiring specific content and should be conceived more as “a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and goal of education are one and the same thing” (Dewey, 1929, p. 294). Content should serve as a

vehicle within the process of learning; presenting content on its own is arbitrary and meaningless if it does not belong to a larger learning framework. Dewey affirmed that we lose much of the value of language and literature because we fail to see that it is more than simply an expression of thought, rather it is fundamentally and primarily a social instrument which should be part of the process of meaning-making.

Dewey understood that students' method of learning should be active and not passive and that neglecting this fundamental principle "is the cause of a large part of the waste of time and strength in school work. The child is thrown into a passive, receptive, or absorbing attitude" (Dewey, 1929 p. 295) and that without a method for active learning, what a child learns is stagnant. This method ought to serve to strengthen a student's curiosity, genuine interest and initiative. "If we can only secure right habits of action and thought, with reference to the good, the true, and the beautiful, the emotions will for the most part take care of themselves" (p. 295). These emotions are the reflex of actions and, through active participation, students can transpose how they develop and understand these emotions within other social conditions.

Social progress and reform in education must be more than an enactment of laws and without the reconciliation the institutional ideas and social consciousness, attempt at successful reform is futile (Dewey, 1929). Education ought to be more than simply the training of individuals; rather, it is the basis for the development of individuals' abilities to function in society. "Through education, society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with the definiteness [towards] the direction it wishes to move" (p. 295). Reform in education is also a reform in society; social progress has direct correlations with how and why students are educated and what students are then able to do.

21st century learning is not new; Dewey's understandings of the purpose and process of education is reflected in this current educational reform, nearly a century later:

[E]very ending has a new beginning; every beginning emerges from a prior ending.

Curriculum segments, parts, sequences are arbitrary chunks that, instead of being seen as isolated units, are seen as opportunities for reflection . . . [and] not merely as the completion of one project but also as the beginning of another – to explore, discuss, inquire into both ourselves as meaning makers and into the text in question. (Doll, 1993, p. 176)

Learning is a social process whereby students can understand their own views and negotiate this understanding through the experiences within the social institution. These experiences are not arbitrary non-connected segments, rather they are part of a larger social fabric that marries the knowledge students acquire and what they will do with that knowledge. Educational reform should follow this same process; reflection on past reforms lends itself to developing curriculum and pedagogy that builds upon what works well, but also attempts to rectify problems within the education system, mindful of future considerations.

Ralph W. Tyler.

Although Tyler has been criticized for having a means-end approach to curriculum, referring to objectives that implied pre-determined and externally-imposed ends, he was more concerned with the actual framing of educational practices. Tyler felt that these frames would allow for individual differentiation, more precise and specific formulation of objectives, and more emphasis on learning, rather than teaching (Doll, 1971).

In 1949, Ralph W. Tyler asserted in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* that educational programs ought to have clearly defined purposes and that “if an educational program

is to be planned and if efforts for continued improvement are to be made, it is necessary to have some conception of the goals that are being aimed at” (Tyler, 1949, p. 52). Tyler noted that objectives should be a matter of choice, but schools ought to look at contemporary problems and the objectives should serve to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help students engage with these problems. Rather than mandate a particular methodology, Tyler felt that approaches should draw upon the needs of the learner.

Studies of the learner suggest educational objectives only when the information about the learner is compared with some desirable standards, some conception of acceptable norms, so that the difference between the present condition of the learner and the acceptable norm can be identified. This difference or gap is what is generally referred to as a need. (Tyler, 1949, p. 53)

This need provides the foundation for educational reform. When educational objectives do not correlate with how and why students learn there is a distinct disconnect. To ratify this, modifications and alternatives better suited to the learner and their needs begin to fuel reform. Tyler set out to provide key educational objectives that schools should use as the basis of pedagogy:

Today [meaning 1949] there are two commonly used arguments for analyzing contemporary life in order to get suggestions for educational objectives. The first of these arguments is that because contemporary life is so complex and because life is continually changing, it is very necessary to focus educational efforts upon the critical aspects of this complex life and upon those aspects that are of importance today so that we do not waste the time of students learning things that were important fifty years ago and no longer have

significance at the same time that we are neglecting areas of life that are not important and for which the schools provide no preparation. (Tyler, 1949, p.54)

To provide a curriculum that works admirably requires features that are engaging, purposeful and relevant to students. Teaching students something that has limited bearing on their present lives hinders a student's ability to see true value in education. The second argument that Tyler used was related to what he termed the 'transfer of training', meaning that school should develop a variety of skills that the student would then be able to use, regardless of the conditions that they encountered. Students would be able to transfer these skill-sets from practice in school to the situation encountered when two conditions were met: “1) the life situation and the learning situation were obviously alike in many respects, and 2) the student was given practice seeking illustrations in his life outside of school for application of things learned in school” (Tyler, 1949, p.55). This is not to say that learning situations and life situations need to be true reflections of one another; rather, they require similar skill-sets in order to engage with and negotiate understandings.

Tyler took into consideration criticisms of these objectives: identifying contemporary issues is not indicative of their desirability and to assume that they should become objectives neglects the importance of considering both students' wants and needs; as well, teaching to the present does not work in a continually changing world because it does not prepare students for things they will encounter in the future. Tyler felt that exploring contemporary issues was useful in developing curriculum, but, like any pedagogical approach, should be used only when considered relevant, purposeful and appropriate.

The value and function of literature, Tyler believed, was a medium which provided students with opportunities to vicariously explore situations that were either out of the realm of

their experience or that provided an extension to the experience of young people. Further, literature, he maintained, should serve to develop reading interests and habits that would offer students a platform to study, appreciate, respond to and critically interpret the form, content and context of literature (Tyler, 1949).

These suggestions, with regard to possible major functions of language and literature, provide large headings under which to consider possible objectives which the school can aim at through language and literature . . . They suggest objectives that are more than knowledge, skills and habits; they involve modes of thinking, or critical interpretation, emotional reactions, interest and the like. (pp. 56-57)

Tyler's objectives are broad and are often opposed for being such a prescriptive and goal-oriented approach, but they bring into light what education should aim to provide. The problem is that there is a disconnect between his theory and practice; similar to some of the problems with 21st century learning, what we should do and how we go about doing it are not closely correlated.

The aim of the Sankofa Learning Framework, like Tyler's objectives, is more concerned with the framing of the learning process – with an unambiguous conception of the goals; but, it is not about teaching to specific end-oriented outcomes. Further, the aim of the framework is for students to acquire skill-sets that they will then be able to transfer to post-school applications and develop habits that will allow them to appreciate and extend their thinking about literature.

William E. Doll, Jr.

William E. Doll, Jr. is recognized for his work on curriculum development. Doll revisited Ralph W. Tyler's educational reform and sought to provide an alternative to Tyler's rationale. He was interested in exploring Tyler's objectives, particularly the idea that curriculum should be developed thoughtfully and systematically, with a clear conception of goals, that focused on the

learner (Doll, 1971). Doll considered Tyler's rationale *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949) "as a sub-category of the rather general notion that the process of education is best affected when means are separated from ends. It is the larger concept which is of interest to me" (Doll, 1971. p.4). Tyler provided basic methods of implementing pre-set objectives, Doll believed, and two assumptions emerged from this thinking: education must be goal-oriented and that goals expressed behaviorally could be better implemented. Doll felt that pre-set goals were a form of manipulation; students should take an active role in receiving "habits, training, enculturation, and indoctrination", rather than be passive receivers of knowledge" (pp.8-9). As well, Doll believed that programmed and textbook instruction minimized the act of inquiry in the learning process, simply because it used ends-based assumptions about learning. Doll wanted to develop a

system of education, then, based on an individual's personal experience . . . for experiences do need to be developed; they do not come into existence full-blown, and they do not receive meaning in isolation from other people. The development of experience requires dialogue and discussion. (p. 26)

In *The Four R's – an Alternative to Tyler's Rationale* (1993), Doll understood that effective learning needed to be more than the immediate acquisition of skills; however, he recognized that

while Tyler's frame expands and broadens industrial functionalism beyond the sales slips and ledgers of the 3 R's, the assumption of pre-set goals still exists. In this frame, goals do not emerge . . . by 'playing with' experiences; rather, goals are predetermined as are the experiences and methods for developing those experiences. (Doll, 1993, p. 175)

So, Doll decided to establish a structure that could be used to develop curriculum that was not fixed or predefined, rather generated and fluid. “This structure should not be so rigid and pre-planned that the individual has little chance to do his own development, but neither should it be so loose and flexible that development is not encouraged” (Doll, 1971, pp. 26-27). Doll’s frame hinged on four R’s: richness, recursion, relations and rigor.

Doll felt that richness played an important role in curriculum development because it was the depth and layered meaning that would provide multiple avenues for exploration and interpretation:

[i]n order for students and teachers to transform and be transformed, a curriculum needs to have the ‘right amount’ of indeterminacy, anomaly, inefficiency, chaos, disequilibrium, dissipation, lived experience, [but] just what is the ‘right amount’ for the curriculum to be provocatively generative without losing form and shape cannot be laid out in advance. (Doll, 1993, p.176)

Balance must be continually negotiated between teacher and student, and disciplines will interpret richness in different ways. The study of language and literature, for example, ought to place less weight on concentrating on the determination of textual meaning and more of an emphasis on their interpretations as a basis for further discussion and understanding.

Recursion, Doll asserted, was a necessary process for students to 'loop back' on their thinking, reflect and build upon prior knowledge. Scaffolding knowledge is akin to scaffolding support structures. Recursion, in addition to being central to transformative curriculum, also serves as “the way one produces a sense of self, through reflective interaction with the environment, with others, with a culture” (Doll, 1993, p.178). Doll was clear to highlight that recursion was different from repetition in that the aim of repetition was to improve skill-

development, but that recursion provided opportunities “to step back from one's doings, to 'distance oneself in some way' from one's own thoughts” (p.178), which developed competence and extended thinking.

Developing relations from a pedagogical perspective is important within transformative curriculum because it gives the network of information its richness. “Conditions, situations, relations are always changing; the present does not recreate the past . . . nor does the present determine the future. So, too, the curriculum frame operating at the beginning of the course is unavoidably different from the curriculum frame at the end of the course” (Doll, 1993, p.179). It is this difference that allows educators to scaffold the curriculum in a purposeful and meaningful way that best suits the needs of changing learners. Likewise, cultural relations draw in the context of what exists outside of the curriculum and forms an even greater layer within which the curriculum is embedded. Connections and interpretations are then reflective of local culture, interconnections with and interpretations of other cultures and what this means in terms of a 'global matrix';

[r]ecognizing the contextualist nature of discourse helps us realize that the constructs of those participating frame all conversations, all aspects of teaching. As teachers we cannot, do not, transmit information directly; rather, we perform the act of teaching when we help others negotiate passages between their constructs and ours, between ours and others” (Doll, p.180).

Lastly, rigor, Doll noted, “keeps a transformative curriculum from falling into either 'rampant relativism' or sentimental solipsism. In presenting transformation as an alternative to our current measurement frame, it is easy to see transformation as no more than anti-measurement or nonmeasurement. Here, transformation becomes not a true alternative but yet

another variation on the very thing it tries to replace” (Doll, 1993, p.181). Educational reform needs to be more than just anti-traditional, radically different, or compromised middle ground between two educational views; it needs to recognize value in aspects that already exist and use these as possibilities for reform. To provide a sense of harmony between various schools of thought, one must be aware of the assumptions that paint what we value.

As frames differ so do the problems, procedures, and valued results. Rigor here means the conscious attempt to ferret out these assumptions, ones we or others hold dear, as well as negotiating passages between these assumptions, so the dialogue may be meaningful and purposeful. (p.182)

Doll recognized where Tyler's objectives broke down in application. Rather than looking at educational reform through overarching principles that in application hindered the student's ability to be an independent thinker, Doll believed that there needed to be a lens that can focus the pedagogical objectives and make them more applicable to curriculum and instruction. A fixed view and structure of education does not allow room for such ambiguous and broad pedagogical notions. What Doll did was provide a way to achieve Tyler's objectives that was more fluid and less prescriptive and, therefore, did not take away from teacher autonomy.

The Sankofa Learning Framework builds from Doll's notion that learning should have a clear conception of goals, but more emphasis should be placed on the process of learning rather than on the outcome. This process should include a richness and depth to the curriculum, as well as opportunities for students to scaffold their thinking, make meaningful connections and recognize value in what and why they are learning. Doll's understanding that curriculum should be fluid, rather than fixed or prescriptive, but could be framed by a specific lens (4 Rs) provided

the crux that was needed to anchor my proposed framework, namely the 4 Cs: communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; and creativity and innovation.

Summary.

John Dewey, Ralph Tyler, and William Doll made significant contributions to educational reform that correlate well with the aims of 21st century learning. Stemming from their contributions were common notions that learning should be social, active and include rich and diverse experiences; and that learning is not about attaining pre-set goals, rather, it is about engaging in the experience of learning. Learning should be process-oriented; students need to acquire, practice and demonstrate skills, knowledge and habits that can be employed, regardless of the conditions encountered. Learning should draw upon the needs of the learner, as well as the context and content of the knowledge. Learners should be personally connected; they need opportunities to understand their own thinking and be able to negotiate this thinking within larger communities and the constructed knowledge of their culture and society. Students need occasions to cogitate; to be deep thinkers they should be constantly reflecting on their thinking in order to apply and extend it. These notions are not new, but are newly highlighted within the context of 21st century learning.

21st Century Learning

21st Century Learning Initiative.

The 21st Century Learning Initiative emerged from the British Education 2000 Trust. Established in 1983, the members of the Trust “were convinced that the present structures and methods of education [in England] were not 'adequately responding to the current and future rates of cultural, social, industrial and technological change'” (Abbott, 2005. Archive section, May 5, 2005, para. 1). John Abbott became involved with the Trust in 1984 after taking a leave

to study effective ways of implementing and “achieving planned change to the curriculum, rather than simply responding to each and every curricular initiative as it occurred” (Abbott, 2005.

Archive section, May 5, 2005, para. 1).

Abbott spent the bulk of the 1980s working towards developing strategies that attempted to change the belief that the integration of technology in the classroom and creating a community of active learners was not merely a passing 'fad'. “By 1988 . . . Education 2000 became evermore isolated by a whole series of legislative proposals made by a government whose educational policy was increasing to become prescriptive, centralized, and based on assumptions that originated in the 1950s” (Abbott, 2005. Archive section, May 5, 2005, para. 6). Subsequently, teacher education classes were restructured to reflect more content-driven outcomes, with less focus on educational pedagogy and purpose, and became pre-occupied with assessment of learning.

With considerable backlash to educational reform, Abbott continually “had to answer the charge that for students 'to learn how to manage their own learning' was not some left-wing plot, predicated on sloppy thinking and a sense of 'do-gooding' for people who simply weren't up to the rigors of academic study” (Abbott, 2005. Archive section, May 5, 2005, para. 9). And, by 1993, Abbott found that it was no longer possible to run trial programs of Education 2000 because it was up against an educational establishment that had dug its heels into a constrained system that the government felt was truly the only effective way to run education. “Centralism triumphed; local autonomy was progressively reduced. In practice any form of education that went beyond the prescribed arrangements made by the Government and which did not start with the Government itself, became simply impossible” (Abbott, 2005. Archive section, May 5, 2005, para. 13). Therefore, success with any programs not supported by the status quo or

acknowledged for potential validity from the onset would fall flat before they had a chance to get off the ground.

This problem did not deter Abbott from his belief that educational reform was needed and could be achieved, but he did become convinced that true change would not be possible until a shift in thinking emerged and that “until people understood the nature of learning better we would never move beyond the traditional panaceas of school reform” (Abbott, 2005. Archive section, May 5, 2005, para. 14). With any attempt to reform educational pedagogy viewed as either being traitorous or the product of disaffected thinking, Abbott felt this to be a travesty because

any system, however thoroughly and effectively applied, still needs . . . room for innovations to flourish and to pioneer new ways of doing things . . . The test of the value of what we are doing will be the value that our work has for the people we may well never meet [and] what use all of this will be to other people. (Abbott, 2005. Archive section, May 5, 2005, para. 23).

Abbott's goal was not to provide the ultimate reform to education; rather, he wanted to develop information and create opportunities for practitioners to share ideas that would re-examine pedagogy and methodologies and create conditions for truly purposeful and effective change to occur.

In November 1994, Abbott understood that this was not only a problem that was isolated to the UK education system; the issues that were emerging were not restricted to this nation, but were tribulations with educational systems around the world. For the next two years, Abbott networked with educators and other similar-thinkers across international boundaries to set up the 21st Century Learning Initiative, “a transnational movement committed to development of

learning systems that: apply and extend our growing knowledge of the learning process and are suited to current and future technological, social and economic conditions” (Brandt, 1998, Archive section, para. 1). Nearly a decade later, 21st century learning began to emerge more prevalently in Canadian education.

21st century learning in Canadian context

In September 2005, members of the 21st Century Learning Initiative met with the Canadian Council on Learning to begin infusing 21st century learning pedagogy and practices in classrooms across Canada, with the intention of engaging “Canadians in dialogue about new ways of thinking about learning systems, based on the research synthesis provided by the 21st Century Learning Initiative” (CCL, n.d., About the Initiative section, para. 1). In March 2010, the notion of 21st century learning began to be really felt in British Columbia; John Abbott began meetings with members of the Ministry of Education “as the ideas developed within the Initiative relate directly to the plans that British Columbia might be making for its future education policy” (21st Century Learning Initiative, 2010, March 24).

Although the Initiative is a strong advocator for 21st century learning, it is not the only advocate in Canada. The Partnerships for 21st Century Learning’s framework is used as a foundational structure to most programs and initiatives of 21st century learning (CCL, 2011; 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2011; Partnerships for 21st Century Learning, 2011; Pearson 21, 2011). This framework is used by P21 Canada: Partnership for 21st Century Learning and Innovation (2011), which has been working with the Canadian School Board Association and Canadian Education Association to shift Canada’s public education systems to 21st century models of learning (21st Century Learning Associates, 2011). Regardless of the program or initiative, advocacy for 21st century learning is being pursued at a national and provincial level,

and has been becoming more prevalent within the context of BC education in the past few months.

On October 28, 2011, George Abbott, Minister of Education, released BC's Education Plan (2011). The plan's intentions were not to completely change the BC curriculum, rather to build from what has been working well and steer it in a 21st century learning direction. While still emphasizing the core skills, the plan's purpose was to infuse the current curriculum with key competencies, such as critical thinking, insight and teamwork. Moreover, the plan's key elements included personalized, quality learning; flexibility and choice for student's learning; integration of technology; and aims for high standards and quality teaching.

One of the ways that BC's Education Plan will enhance the current system is a focus on 21st century learning, by "continuing to place emphasis on basic core skills, while redesigning curriculum to include key competencies like critical thinking, insight and teamwork – the kinds of skills and knowledge that students will need to succeed in the 21st century" (Ministry of Education, 2011). Students require a nimble and flexible system where they are at the centre of their own learning. The plan's aim is to redesign how and what we teach that better reflects important skills and knowledge, such as problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity; the aim is for learning to continue to develop outside of a school context and this is accomplished with an emphasis on teaching students how to learn (Province of BC, 2011).

Given this immediacy and topical nature, it seems pertinent to re-visit the current framework of the BC Language Arts IRP in terms of pedagogy and practice. Analysis of this framework indicates components that will lend itself to 21st century learning, but other aspects require some alternatives. In the following section I will look at the current curriculum in terms of how the core standards are traditionally taught and what a 21st century learning lens could add.

Using this base, I will then propose an alternative framework, the Sankofa Learning Framework, which brings together elements of the current system and 21st century learning for a more flexible, fluid and interconnected approach to this curriculum.

Frameworks

BC Language Arts Curriculum.

Pedagogical Understandings and Considerations for Delivery.

The BC Language Arts curriculum package houses two important features: the prescribed learning outcomes and sections that explore pedagogy and program delivery. In my experience, the prescribed learning outcomes are viewed by many teachers more like a skill-attained checklist, while the other aspects of the curriculum document are inconsistently, and in some cases, not used or taken into consideration when implementing the outcomes. In the *Key Elements* section of the BC English Language Arts IRP (2007, pp. 81-93) there are pedagogical understandings of the language arts curriculum that include: gradual release of responsibility, metacognition, oral language, reading and viewing, and writing and representing. The *Considerations for Delivery* (BC ELA IRP, 2007, pp. 13-18) is a section of the IRPs that is connected to, but not engrained within, the prescribed learning outcomes of the curriculum package. This section chronicles ways of delivering the text that includes working with learners, the school, parents and the community. Further, it provides background on technology use, language learning, definitions and ranges of text that should be grade-appropriate and highlights of the language arts curriculum, including literacy learning, how learning should be organized, research into language processes and moving beyond the classroom (BC ELA IRP, 2007). Although there are components of 21st century learning embedded within these delivery

considerations and the pedagogical understandings, there is a disconnect between what is being asked in this section and the structure of the learning outcomes.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes.

The prescribed learning outcomes of the BC ELA IRP (2007) are categorized as: speaking and listening, reading and viewing, writing and representing. There are numerous outcomes associated each of these categories that are aimed at skill acquisition and developing student understanding. In order to analyze the components of the BC English Language Arts IRP, I have chosen to group the outcomes in a slightly different way than they are presented in the resource package. My analysis continues to keep oral language skills (speaking and listening) together, but I have decided to reorganize the remaining categories.

I found that the skills to develop reading are closely connected with writing skills and are often viewed as being more traditional or foundational components of the language arts curriculum; therefore, reading and writing will be categorized together for this portion of my project. Further, viewing and representing are often seen as being more ambiguous in terms of curriculum and instructional methods, yet require similar skill development; so, they will be categorized together for this portion of my project. This is not to say that particular skill developments are solely within each of these categories, since many of the skills and ways of developing these skills overlap, but I found that restructuring how I approached the IRPs, made more sense this way.

In the following section I will analyze these categories in terms of how they are taught, in my experience, in classrooms that still teach to a traditional education model, in addition to why and how they could be taught to incorporate components of 21st century learning and the pedagogy and program delivery aspects of the IRPs.

Reading and Writing.

Reading and writing skills have always been at the heart of the Language Arts curriculum. Nystrand (2006) found that, over the last century and half, his research documented a trend of recitation and textbook recall, which allowed teachers a means of gauging student's reading comprehension. The problem was that recitation afforded little or no opportunity for students to engage with or demonstrate their reading knowledge. Reading and writing in 21st century learning moves away from basic recall, and encourages students to engage with text with more critical and higher-level thought through supported comprehension and fluency strategies. Further, reading and writing engagement and response to text are assisted through scaffolded practice and process methodologies and collaborative social interactions.

Klinger and Vaughn (1999) noted that reading comprehension was deepened through four reading strategies: accessing prior knowledge and making predictions; self-monitoring comprehension; synthesizing important ideas in sections of readings; and completing post-reading activities to summarize, question and demonstrate understanding of the text. An effective way to scaffold skill development involves 'chunking' the text; the text is broken up into smaller, manageable and, ultimately, more meaningful 'chunks' for students to process, engage and respond to the text before, during and after the reading. Close's Smart Learning framework (2010) and Schnellert and Brownlie's (2007) open-ended strategies are ways to scaffold lesson sequences, both short and long term, to support the development of reading and writing skills during various stages. As students develop reading and writing comprehension skills they must be supported with strategies that allow them to engage with and make sense of the text. Questioning practices should be open-ended strategies oriented to develop reading skills. There are numerous taxonomies of questions that ask students to process text and make sense of it, but

to also think beyond it. Costa's Three Level Questions and Bloom's Taxonomy of Questions (AVID, n.d. Best Practices section), are effective and straightforward tools to help students' develop basic comprehension, connections and higher-level analysis questioning techniques. Adapting a quotation by Oliver Wendall Holmes, AVID uses *One-Two-Three Story Intellect Poem* to bridge students' and teachers' understanding of the aim of different questioning techniques:

There are one-story intellects / two-story intellects, / and three-story intellects with skylights. / All fact collectors who have / no aim beyond their facts / are one-story people. / Two-story people compare, reason, / generalize, using the labor of / fact collectors as their own. / Three-story people idealize, / imagine, predict—their best illumination / comes through the skylight. (AVID, n.d. tutorial support curriculum resource guide, p.1)

Students should have opportunities to learn how to create, practice, demonstrate and respond to a range of different questions and other types of open-ended strategies; these skills are to be acquired and develop from a foundational level through to practices that encourage higher-level thinking.

In *Why Kids Can't Read* (2003), Beers points out that passive reading by students is a reflection of dependent readers. Dependent readers must acquire reading skills in order to develop the comprehension abilities of a skilled reader. She states that dependent readers need to become aware that comprehension and engagement with text occur at various intervals of the reading process, not simply within the confines of the text itself. Further, she contends that frontloading the student's knowledge of a text will foster engagement and will allow students to actively construct meaning prior to reading a text. This, in turn, will assist their understanding

during the reading of the text and give students the abilities to move from dependent readers to independent readership.

Beers' expectations of frontloading strategies are that they will help students to develop reading skills and comprehension "by:

- [accessing] prior knowledge
- [interacting] with portions of the text prior to reading
- [practicing] sequencing, [finding] cause and effect relationships, [drawing] comparisons, [making] inferences and [predicting]
- [identifying] vocabulary that might be a problem
- [constructing] meaning before they begin reading the text" (Beers, 2003, p.74).

Students should begin learning and using reading and writing skills during pre-reading to establish short and long term support structures that will both engage the student in the text and develop comprehension. Short-term structures assist the student in comprehending the text within set parameters of scope of text and lens, both literary and thematic. A few strategies for pre-reading guided thinking include: reader response sentence stems; K-W-L; predictions; connections; and questions. Combining lower-risk oral talk structures, such as A/B partner talk, Whip Arouns, Think-Alouds and small group share-outs with guided thinking provides the scaffolding that students need to maneuver through the reading process.

These types of comprehension and skill-development should be established during pre-reading and used consistently and purposefully during the entire reading and writing process. The more familiar students are with the structure, the more fluid the application to other activities. The emphasis on frontloading strategies is to engage the reader in the text prior to

reading the text itself and establishing the groundwork for the reading strategies employed during reading and post-reading practices.

Further, collaborative learning and oral dialogical thinking are pivotal in assisting reading comprehension and skill development; the foundations of these strategies are established during pre-reading. Long-term structures involve both consistent uses of short-term structures through a variety of strategies, in addition to using these foundational skills for life-long learning.

During post-reading practice, foundational skills that support comprehension will have been established and students can then engage in dialogical thinking and creative exploration strategies that encourage students to demonstrate their reading and writing comprehension through communication and representation. Beers (2003) suggests that reading comprehension and skill development should be viewed as a process that extends beyond the end of the text. Post-reading strategies afford students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of texts. Students will use the skills that they have acquired during the reading process to assist this understanding.

Klinger and Vaughn (1999) also discovered that students who were accustomed to working in settings that promoted social interacting could easily incorporate successful reading strategies and develop proficient use of these strategies to aid reading comprehension. Classrooms that encourage discussion-based social interactions allow students a forum to actively process difficult pieces of text and evolve their understanding. Likewise, classrooms that foster less teacher-generated thinking and more student-led critical thinking practices, in addition to encouraging more open conversation, exchange of ideas and aesthetic responses have a strong effect on student's learning and comprehension.

Reading strategies should encourage students to predict, question, reflect, comment, connect, clarify and visualize (Beers, 2003). To synthesize and analyze text – particularly if there is confusion -- requires a mosaic of the ideas of the text. Each student lends themselves to unravelling meaning as textual reading occurs (Booth, 2001). Dialogical thinking, collaborative learning and skill-support strategies are important to implement during the reading practice because they will assist comprehension through the application of varied lens of experience and understanding and provide students with the support to develop their comprehension and reading process skills.

Furthermore, writing expectations in the 21st century have changed with a different learning environment:

the ability to stay connected with others is constant, and communication takes many forms. Writing, for adolescents who live in an age of digital communication, has taken on new importance and plays a prominent role in the way they socialize, share information, and structure their communication. (Sweeney, 2010, p.132)

Learning Outcomes and Students' Perception of Online Writing (2010) focuses on analyzing the effectiveness of online writing tools. Although the study was done with university students, studies of online writing that promotes interaction and strengthens the classroom community are relevant to high school classrooms. The research in this study suggests that if students write online successfully there will be “1) improvement in the student's writing skills; 2) improvement in the student's sharing of ideas, critical feedback, and confidence; and 3) greater motivation to participate in the activities” (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2009, p.196). For those in the study, richness and elevation of vocabulary was evident; further, complexity of sentence structure and an overall improvement in reading ability was noted. Students generally had a

positive attitude towards the experience and felt that the forum was helpful in improving their writing skill development. Despite an implemented structure to the writing, students found that there was a greater level of freedom associated with the tasks that allowed them to express their opinions.

Over a century ago, the skills of writing involved cursive practice and the skills of reading were comprehension and recall. At the time, however, students were preparing for a life in industrial society. Reading and writing study and skill development have improved beyond the ability to keep a ledger and write a letter with precise penmanship, but traditional forms of writing, such as essays and paragraphs, with prescribed structures, like the ‘hamburger essay’ (a five paragraph essay with set introductory, body and concluding paragraphs) became the norm in English classes for writing development and reading became a game of “what do you remember from the text?”

So what should the path of the 21st century learner be paved with and lead to? Reading comprehension should involve a process that is chunked, structurally supportive, allows for an open-exchange of ideas, higher-level and critical thinking, reflection, metacognition, demonstration of knowledge, and an appreciation and connection to the content.

Students who engage with reading and writing practices collaboratively and develop a forum for communication will benefit from the oral dialogical thinking, purposeful practice and the sense of community. Critical thinking practices give students chances not simply to retain the text, but to engage with the content and come to an understanding on their own terms. Reading and writing ought to give students an opportunity to both demonstrate a critical and insightful awareness of the text, but also to show this knowledge in creative and innovative ways.

Speaking and Listening.

Traditional classrooms emphasize “the role of the all-knowing teacher discussing a topic with quiet, attentive students who may respond to the teacher but not directly to one another” (Cooper & Selfe, 1990, p.847). Speaking and listening skills ought to be developed to allow students to dialogically engage with the text, develop social interaction skills and engage in higher-level thought. Questioning and talk structures assist in achieving speaking and listening outcomes and connect with the 4 Cs. In essence, they need to be scaffolded through consistent, structured and supportive strategies.

Lloyd (2004) discovered that once students gained insight as to why questioning practices were a valuable learning tool and how small-group social interactions could provide a support structure – but also allowed them to challenge their own thinking – they engaged more authentically with discussions that developed these techniques. Furthermore, the use of student-led questioning and genuine discussion encourages the students to engage with and process the texts, rather than seek a pre-determined answer. Questions and discussions developed and practiced through students' social interaction are catalysts for negotiating their knowledge collaboratively, as well as constructing classroom community that encourages authentic discussion and fosters critical thinking.

Metzger (1998) found that discussion skills, like comprehension skills, improved but needed to be supported for growth during this social interaction. Students observed other students' perspectives and talk behaviours, but also how they processed the text. They understood that comprehension was a process and that knowledge was not limited. This approach versus an individual analysis not only allows students an opportunity to become aware of validating, extending or opposing ideas, they foster skills necessary to be part of a community – from

classroom to global: considering different perspectives, the art of communication practices, metacognition, thinking about other ideas, learning from others and appreciating a shared experience.

Discussion practices encourage dialogical thinking. Dialogue allows student to reflect, reassess, reaffirm or reject their understanding of literary content and create an awareness of differing perspectives. As mentioned earlier, smaller oral communication practices include: A/B partner talk, Whip Arounds, Think Alouds, and small group share outs. Larger oral communication practices include: Socratic Seminars, Philosophical Chairs, Fishbowls, literature circles, debates, panels, and choral readings, among many types of talk structures. The structure ought to lend itself to the final task of the unit. For example, if negotiating a perspective to write a response piece, a four corner debate – where students negotiate their thinking as per a strongly agree, somewhat agree, strongly disagree or somewhat disagree stance and discuss their thinking with their peers -- would assist students in understanding their own thinking in relation to possible other perspectives.

The role of the teacher becomes minimized to allow students a chance to engage in discussion that is driven by student response, rather than teacher-prompted. Discussion strategies also lend themselves to reciprocal teaching, which refers to an instructional activity

that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue. (Palincsar, 1986, p.772)

In a traditional classroom, with rows of students learning in isolation, there is little room for any of the 4 C's. Speaking and listening in such an environment reminds me of the Peanuts

comics which shows the characters in a classroom with rows of desks: Charlie Brown and Woodstock are engaging in their own banter; Linus is staring off into the distance clutching his blanket; and Peppermint Patty and Marcy are listening to the droning “Waa Waa Waa” of the teacher at the front of the class.

In a classroom that strives for 21st century learning, the Peanuts gang would be engaged in the material collaboratively: Snoopy would provide some of the critical thought; the communication would sound more like genuine conversation and not a broken Wa-Wa pedal; Woodstock, who most assumed couldn't speak, would have a structure in place to help his oral-dialogical thinking; and Linus could demonstrate his creativity through song, which is a better oral medium for him anyway to share his knowledge. The teacher would not be this ominous presence that all students looked towards for understanding or perhaps ignore; rather, she would play the supportive role of ensuring that the speaking and listening structures were in place and provide the foundation for how and what students will be speaking about.

“Traditional talk activities fulfill neither the new curriculum requirements nor do they provide a complete scope of talk activities necessary for preparing students to become more proficient members of democratic society” (Bloem, Klooster, & Preece, 2008, p.7). Education ought to develop speaking and listening skills. Very often we assume that students will naturally be able to speak and listen, but little is often offered towards developing these communication skills; just because a student is sitting quietly and listening is not indicative that they understand or are engaged with the material. Moreover, there is more to speaking and listening than simply speaking and listening. Given that communication is a social tool, we should use talk structures that help students recognize the value in talking (negotiating their own and others views,

understanding and inquiry and provide a platform to effectively demonstrate their knowledge) and listening, which, in turn, involves valuing the communication of others.

The aim of speaking and listening in terms of 21st century learning has more to do with student-led inquiry and authentic discussion, rather than seeking pre-determined answers, in addition to recognizing that students' voices have merit too. If we continue to keep the same speaking and listening practices as in a traditional classroom, we may very well just round up the students and plop them down in front of a television, because it seemingly accomplishes the same goal.

Viewing and Representing.

“The point of . . . representations is that they are *re*-presentations; literally, they allow us to present information *again*” (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p.11). Students should be able to acquire and demonstrate knowledge through multiple media that are meaningful and relevant to them. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are not the only modes of inquiry or assessment tools that demonstrate student knowledge. Students can use multi-modal texts, such digital media, art, drama, music, film and others. Conversely, teachers also have access to similar literacies to scaffold their lesson sequencing. Rather than have students parrot what they feel the teacher wanted them to take away from the text, representational strategies ask that students synthesize and analyze their understanding to represent this knowledge visually in a manner that coincides with their own interests and understanding.

A key component of representational practices is that they provide students with a choice through a medium that supports their thinking and gives them an opportunity to explore an aspect of the reading in further detail. Allowing students freedom to choose how they want to demonstrate their knowledge could result in poor-quality assignment submission and a fracture

in the learning environment if the task is not scaffolded and developed with both student and teacher input, but if done effectively it could also work to strengthen the classroom community and students' sense of self because it allows students to create projects that are suited to their own learning needs and interest.

Presentation of student's representation projects in a structured forum, whether gallery walk, presentation forum or small group discussion, serves several purposes: a) it makes students accountable and establishes a work ethic among the community; b) it requires explanation, clearly demonstrating the knowledge acquired, represented and their thinking; c) students can view how their peers have interpreted the same text, but also develop an appreciation for the level of thought behind the task; and d) they can make the assignment relevant to them, not only because they can explore a facet of their choosing in a medium of their choice, but they can, in turn, demonstrate a layering to the text.

If one were teaching *Romeo and Juliet* in a traditional classroom setting, it may be frontloaded with the viewing of a documentary of the Globe Theatre. Students may then be asked to recall information that they have acquired from the film and label a schematic of the Globe theatre or answer a set of basic comprehension questions. The viewing aspect would be simply viewing the documentary with little active engagement; the representation component would be recall of information to determine basic comprehension. Viewing and representing in the traditional sense does not allow for transformation of knowledge or high-inference thinking.

Exploring the Globe theatre documentary through a 21st century learning lens would begin by chunking the film. Chunking refers to breaking the text into segments and engaging in active learning for each part. This is done because the viewing of the text is a process in itself and students need to think critically and engage in dialogical thinking to develop their

foundational understanding of the documentary, at various stages of the viewing. The film should not serve, as is often done in traditional classrooms, as a filler or “busy-work” activity. If students are not given an opportunity to respond to, engage with and work in a forum to develop their understanding there is minimal value to the viewing exercise.

The representation component should not be recalling information that, as the students just saw, already exists; therefore, recall questions, fill-in-the-blanks or basic comprehension activities do not serve to enrich or expand the students’ thinking. These activities do not take into account context, such as “what was happening during this time period?” or “what were the causes and effects of the theatre performances in a cultural and historical context?” or “how did the theatre lend itself to performances, such as *Romeo and Juliet*?” If students are given a high-inference task from the onset – for example, create your own theatre that would be more suited to portraying *Romeo and Juliet* and justify your thinking – then they will view the documentary actively, processing relevant information and transform their thinking. There is value to what they are learning and they are doing something purposeful with the knowledge that they have acquired.

Summary.

Although there are components to the BC ELA IRP (2007) that address outcomes -- speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing, and representing -- that students should achieve to acquire and demonstrate these skills and there are a few places that address how and why this can be done, the process of developing these skills and a sense of how they are connected and support each other is not as clearly outlined. This can sometimes result in these skills being developed unevenly and without purpose or not developed at all.

Sankofa Learning Framework.

As mentioned in chapter one, I developed this framework to take components of the BC English Language Arts IRPs that are working well and elements of 21st century learning and created a more flexible, fluid, interconnected, purposeful approach to curriculum and instruction. The development of this framework stemmed from my concern that when 21st century learning strategies are being used, they appear more like diets: isolated strategies used in isolated moments of the curriculum for isolated expectations.

The Sankofa Learning Framework is not meant to replace the content of the BC Language Arts IRP, nor is it meant to follow exactly 21st century learning frameworks, such as the one posed by the *Partnerships for 21st Century Learning*. Like any curriculum and instruction, the framework that I am proposing is meant to illustrate possibilities for pedagogy and methodology. I am hopeful that teachers can take ideas from what I am proposing and adapt them to fit their own teaching style and practices.

This framework is cross disciplinary and could be applied to many different content areas, but within the context of a language arts curriculum, the content would include reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing. The research, therefore, that I have chosen to include with the lens and structure of this framework is geared towards a language arts curriculum.

The Sankofa Learning Framework asserts pedagogy and methodology through a distinct lens and structure. The lens focuses on the 4Cs: communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; in addition to creativity and innovation. Further, open-ended strategies, scaffolding and high-inference tasks make up the structure of this framework. For this next

section, I will first look at the lens, then at the structure, in terms of why they are important features to have within this framework and support each component with research.

Proposed Lens.

I have chosen to focus on the 4 Cs for the lens of my framework. These components are found at various places of the BC Language Arts IRPs (BC ELA IRP, 2007) but are not clearly connected to processes of learning, understanding and skill-development; lack interconnectivity to each other; and are not clearly supported in all aspects of the package. Using the 4 Cs, I hope to provide a more simplified, yet flexible and connected approach that encourages 21st century learning while still valuing core content. The following section will analyze the importance of each component of the lens.

Creativity and Innovation.

The continuance of traditional education practices in schools often impedes the development of creativity and innovation skills, due to a lack of attention in their development.

This is

partly based on a number of common misconceptions – creativity is only for geniuses, or only for the young, or can't be learned or measured . . . [however,] creativity and innovation can be nurtured by learning environments that foster questioning, patience, openness to fresh ideas, high levels of trust, and learning from mistakes and failures.

(Trilling & Fadel, 2009, pp. 57-58)

For students to be able to demonstrate a transformation of knowledge, they need to be able to develop and express this through mediums of choice in order for meaningful, purposeful and authentic learning to transpire. Jonassen and Gabowski (1993) identified the three following fundamental truths of successful learning:

- Learners who command their own learning often master more things than those who rely on being taught.
- Learners have a different sense of themselves, of their time, and what is worth learning and why.
- Learners learn most enjoyably by choosing from a rich array of media, methods, and experiences that mean the most to them. (Jonassen & Gabowski, 1993)

Creativity and innovation encourage students to develop creation techniques (such as brainstorming) as well as “elaborate, refine, analyze and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010, Learning and Innovation Skills section, para 2). Using collaboration to enhance creativity and innovation skills, students will enrich their communication and thinking skills, will develop and implement new ideas, as well as, explore and respond to diverse perspectives. Moreover, students are encouraged to demonstrate originality and innovation, an understanding of the learning process and an ability to implement creative ideas.

A Senior High School Interdisciplinary Humanities Curriculum (Miller, 1970) is a case study of a humanities curriculum that encouraged students to be innovative and creative with their learning. Although the study occurred over four decades ago, it is still relevant today because it supports the notion that 21st century learning is not new, while underscoring the importance of such skill-sets, and provides one way in which creativity and innovation can be infused into a curriculum and instruction.

Students could choose to take this elective theme-based program during their grade 12 year of high school or continue with the regular grade 12 curriculum; all but 10 of the 130 students opted for the program in its first year. Students received no grades; anecdotal

assessment of their creative learning was used for assessment. Sessions were offered in the morning and afternoon; this flexibility allowed for students to focus on their project, particularly ones that were being completed in the community. The goal of the program was

to end the artificiality between life and learning as found in the traditional program . . . to make learning more significant, more relevant long after tests were graded and returned . . . and we believed that school would take on new excitement if together, students and teachers dealt with questions which had no predetermined answers in the back of the book, or in the teacher's head. (Miller, 1970, p. 3)

Students had five weekly project sessions in a creative medium: music, drama, art, or dance. Students would also study three classes of their choice (math, science, advanced placement, physical education, etc.), in addition to the humanities courses (English and social studies). The humanities curriculum was delivered through workshops and seminar sessions three sessions per week (Miller, 1970). "In workshops the students developed action programs and creative expressions; in seminars they dealt with the intellectual understandings of literary and historical contributions during select periods of time – fifth century Athens, the Renaissance, early twentieth century and the contemporary scene" (Miller, 1970, p.9). With each new theme, the students would select a new project to pursue. For example, a student that used music as their creative medium in one theme may choose art, drama, dance, history, film, or literature during the next theme (Miller, 1970).

Several positive results were noted with the Hunter College High School humanities program:

- student's enthusiasm for the program and subsequent graduating classes' eager enrollment;

- teachers in the school considered it an honor to be part of the program;
- parents of students have expressed admiration for the program;
- educators and administrations from across the country visited the program's unique features;
- despite complications with administration procedures as a result of no grades, college admissions officers welcomed students. (Miller, 1970, pp. 8-9)

Creativity and innovation do not necessarily need to be incorporated as a school-wide interdisciplinary curriculum project. Strategies that encourage creative and innovative thought can be successful when infused in short term and long term lesson sequences using educational strategies and skill development opportunities. Expressions of thought can be demonstrated through mediums of written and oral language, in addition to creative and innovative representations that transcend these mediums, such as those disciplines explored in Miller's study (1970) and multi-genre writing, which includes a range of "different types of genres – reports, poems, letters, diaries, stories, advertisements, field notes, photos, drawings, etc. to explore different aspects of and perspectives on a topic" (Doering & Beach, 2001, p.316). Additional modes of expression include using tools that are relevant and purposeful to students in the 21st century.

Using technology to enhance learning is one feature of 21st century learning; it is a tool that can be used to explore components of the lens and structure of the Sankofa Learning Framework. Access to information and types of technological practices that support the learning process are readily available because of the current digital age. "Some young people are beginning to use [digital tools] and the vast array of other social technologies to develop 'interest based' connections with other students . . . [to] pursue real learning and collaborative creation

around their passions” (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010, p.127) in a medium that is purposeful, relevant and engaging to them.

However, some students do not know how or why they ought to engage with these multi-modal texts.

Just because more students are online than ever before does not mean that they are as productive, successful, safe or connected as they may be. While they may thrive in social networks, they often struggle to efficiently and effectively communicate meaning to a diverse group of people. While they may 'play' with new design tools and multi-media formats, they often use predictable features and ways of working without experiencing deeper innovation, critical thinking and creativity. (Zmuda, 2009, p. 3)

Infusing digital tools in curriculum and instruction allows students to develop creativity and innovation skills through systems that are current and relevant; additionally, students are encouraged to explore mediums, purposefully and effectively, that they may or may not be aware of. Exploring different forms of technology in the classroom provides students with optional paths to be creative and innovative with their mode of expression. As scholars note “[s]tudents often respond positively to [digital tools] because it is consistent with their everyday experiences with multi-modal environments that combine images, animation, video, music, and texts . . . and can also assist in organizing links around central themes of topics in writing instruction” (Doering & Beach, 2001, p. 316).

In a study (Doering & Beach, 2001) that looked at technology use in the classroom, there were multiple ways that the digital tools could be used for instruction, and for student inquiry, engagement and understanding. Online collaborative story narrative was implemented by one of the participants in the study so that students co-created the shared experience. She noted that this

experience “shifted the students away from simply rehashing information about persons to understanding people and events as shaped by historical and cultural forces” (Doering & Beach, 2001, p. 316). Another participant found that posing questions to produce creative pieces was a thoughtful approach to integrating technology. Students, in journal-style dialogue exchanges, would be encouraged to elaborate on their thinking through posed questions posed by their peers. The students would then internalize these questions and apply their thinking, resulting in increased elaboration in their writing (Doering & Beach, 2001).

Other participants in the study used digital tools to explore multi-perspectives, collaborative inquiries, multi-genre writing project, hyper-media productions, discussion forums, and as platforms for teacher and peer communication. Regardless of how the digital tools were being used, the results suggested that teachers found their students negotiating their knowledge, inviting open communication and exchange of ideas, engaging well in role-play writing to consider alternative perspectives, and were self-reflective on the process. The character blogs and prezi project in my Sankofa Learning Framework unit (see unit plan in chapter three) are a blend of these types of online collaborative learning, where students write and respond from a particular perspective and to their peers, in addition to applying and extending their thinking through creative expression and inquiry.

Collaborative learning using technology is emerging in 21st century classrooms and is the subject of *Inside the Gap: Innovative Uses of Technology and Student Teachers* (Mahoney-O’Neil, 2010). In this qualitative study, pre-service teachers were chosen as the participants because they were perceived as being more proficient than some experienced teachers with using technology that students in the 21st century had access to, given the smaller generational gap. “For this study, innovative uses of technology included, but were not limited to: blogging;

creation of websites, webquests, wikis, podcasts; and the use of a myriad of technological devices such as LCD projectors in conjunction with laptops, cellphones, and mp3 players” (Mahoney-O’Neil, 2010, pp. iv-v). Themes associated with innovative uses of technology that emerged in the findings included: technologically-based pedagogical practices needed to be infused into pre-service teacher courses to expand their knowledge and skills with using and integrating technology into the curriculum; as well, the complexity of incorporating technology involves embracing new practices for 21st century learners, making technology accessible and relevant, and developing the skills to both engage with the tools in addition to teaching the acceptable behavior norms for technology use (Mahoney-O’Neil, 2010).

Digital creativity and innovation are 21st century skills largely because of the technology that is readily available, but also because to be an active citizen in the 21st century it is becoming increasingly important to maneuver through such media:

the dichotomy between the self-directed learning in a virtual world (online research, gaming, blogs, wikis, etc.) and the teacher-directed traditional school world has been a source of increased frustration and disengagement as students become more accustomed to environments that respond to them based on their current achievement level, point of view, areas of interest, and aspirations. (Zmuda, 2009, p.17)

Developing opportunities for students to engage in creative and innovative thought and strategies should reflect who their students are: class to class, students’ interests, abilities and learning styles will vary. If the students have a positive and successful capacity to engage with digital media to support their learning, then inclusion of this technology tool is warranted; if students find that other creative vehicles support their thinking, then alternative modes of expression ought to be explored.

In the ideal classroom, a blend of many creative outlets is encouraged. For example, in my unit plan (see chapter three) there are two post-reading tasks: one has students working with Prezi, a digital media tool, as an alternative to more traditional forms of essays to assess reading comprehension; the other task is more open-ended and encourages students to explore their own modes of expression. The goal is for students to acquire, explore, transform, extend, personalize, and express their thinking.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skills encourage students to engage with a text or idea, rather than simply retaining information. Critical thinking and problem solving encourage students to reason effectively; make judgments and decisions; and solve problems. Students will need to demonstrate an ability to use different types of reasoning and “analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010, Learning and Innovation Skills section). When students are asked to make judgments and decisions, they will need to demonstrate ability to: analyze and evaluate texts, arguments and points of view; make connections; interpret texts and their own understanding; and reflect. Lastly, students will use questioning and dialogical thinking to solve problems and offer solutions.

Like many of the other outcomes, there are numerous ways that these skills can be obtained. The implementation of these skills can occur independently or collaboratively. Additionally, they ought to be infused in process methods, final tasks and products of the curriculum. Instructional strategies should encourage students to think critically and problem solve at all stages of the learning process. Shifting the classroom from less teacher-directed inquiry to more student-directed learning demands that students take an active role in their own

learning process. Critical thinking and problem solving skills encourages students to enrich and extend their learning experience.

Fortifying the English Department Curriculum with Literature Enrichment To Heighten Student Learning as Evinced in the Advanced Placement English Program for Senior-Level Student (Konaxis, 2000) is a qualitative study done in 15 secondary Advanced Placement English classrooms in the United States. Although it is dealing with U.S. curriculum, it provides insights into the importance of incorporating critical thinking and problem solving strategies into Canadian curriculum development. The curriculum for the study was designed to increase student exposure to literature enrichment strategies, to develop student understanding and appreciation of literature, and to use the skills acquired for life-long and diverse learning practices. The study emerged due to a trend at the high school level of students entering the English courses having had minimal exposure to enrichment strategies and an inadequate curriculum that did not provide for these opportunities to occur.

Moreover, many teachers in the study felt that they did not have time to plan, develop and implement such strategies into their curriculum design; as well, many teachers felt that the function and organization of their instructional time, often spent dealing with classroom management problems, diminished the possibility of incorporating quality enrichment strategies (Konaxis, 2000). It was noted in the data that students in classes where the teachers had minimal time to plan, develop and implement thinking and strategies “possessed deficiencies in their ability to enhance their literature studies and in their understanding and appreciation of literature”; whereas, teachers that were able to implement such strategies saw academic success and favorable attitudes from their students towards creative and critical thought (p. 30).

Konaxis' analysis of the data revealed that literature enrichment activities greatly impacted student's academic and affective growth, enhanced critical and creative thinking skills, and deepened students' understanding and appreciation of literature (Konaxis, 2000). In order for these enrichment activities to occur, Konaxis' research findings suggest that a "well-prepared and effectively delivered literature curriculum [that creates] a provision of the richest array of instructional activities within a stimulating and engaging environment will enhance and will benefit learning" (p. 26). As well, "curriculum development must satisfy the students' need for skill-development, knowledge, and enrichment to strengthen academic success" and enhance critical, creative and high-order thinking skills to maximize educational opportunities (pp. 26-27).

"Knowledge separated from skills and presented as revealed truth, rather than as an understanding that is discovered and constructed, results in students simply learning data about a topic instead of learning how to extend their understanding beyond information available for assimilation" (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010, p. 17). In an age where information is easily accessible to students, it is no longer imperative that students become masters of knowledge through memorization alone. With students having information at their fingertips, as well as being inundated with more information than previous generations, it is necessary to teach students skills that will allow them to think critically about the information.

The purpose of the qualitative case study, *Improving critical think skills through online synchronous communications: a study of learners' attitudes toward building knowledge networks* (2006) was to investigate learners' attitudes toward Online Synchronous Communications (OSCs) to build knowledge networks. The study was done at a college level, but provides insights into how to improve these learners' critical thinking skills via online communication

(Kurubacak, 2006) and lends itself to developing a deeper understanding of the benefit of using blogs in my lesson sequence (see chapter three).

Kurubacak's findings suggest that using a variety of communication styles and strategies provides learners with diverse opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, but requires a flexible and supportive structure, rich with authentic learning experiences (Kurubacak, 2006). In the findings, the majority of students improved their critical thinking skills during the experience because

they tended to explore diverse points of views; learn from their mistakes; become flexible; seek and provide reasons for what they are doing; remain relevant to the main point of a discussion; consider the new ideas and opposite information and knowledge; follow their own thinking; be sensitive to others' ideas and knowledge; seek appropriate solutions; and distinguish between concrete objects and abstract constructs. (p. 11)

Lastly, language skills provided the medium for developing critical thinking skills and students began to realize that they had to pay close attention to what and how they thought in order to demonstrate and transform their thinking.

Communication.

“Children we now know need to talk and to experience a rich diet of spoken language, in order to think and to learn. Reading, writing and number may be acknowledged curriculum basics, but talk is arguably the foundation of learning” (Alexander, 2004, p.8). The value of developing oral language skills is becoming increasingly more important to pedagogical practice. The BC Language Arts IRP places an equal emphasis on talk as it does in traditional language skills of reading and writing:

In 20th century instruction, little time is spent on building capabilities in group interpretation, negotiation of shared meaning, or co-construction of problem resolutions. The communication skills it stresses are those of simple presentation, rather than the capacity to engage in richly structured interaction that articulates perspectives unfamiliar to the audience. (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010, p.15)

This shift is reflective of a growing understanding of the importance of communication for learning. Communication activities that reflect less teacher interference and an increased emphasis on student-to-student interactions are necessary for students to “make explicit their thinking and to hear their classmates as well as their teacher's perspectives, leading to co-construction of understanding” (Do & Schallert, 2004, p. 627). It is imperative that open exchanges of inner speech and thought happen if metacognition is to occur (Galloway & Lasley, 2010).

Communication has roots in both speaking and listening: students will “articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts [and] listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010, Learning and Innovation Skills section). Within the context of 21st century learning, communication ought to be developed in terms of oral, written and digital skills. Moreover, students should acquire and develop these skills independently and collectively. Further to this, students need to be aware of and demonstrate communication for various intentions, such as informational, instructional, motivational and persuasive purposes. Oral communication involves both speaking abilities and listening comprehension; written and representative communication includes formal and informal modes of expression; and digital communication demands an understanding of a variety

systems as well as an ability to proficiently engage in digital communication. Not only do these skills make up a significant component of the BC Prescribed Learning Outcomes for the Language Arts curriculum, in order for students to be able to function within a 21st century society, lack of proficiency with communication skills will ultimately be a disservice to students. Students will need to be able to communicate their own ideas and effectively engage in communication platforms.

21st century students are being educated in an age where the information, media and technology materials are dramatically different from previous periods in education. Despite students living in a 'digital age', simply the awareness of many online and other technological materials does not always coincide with their ability to use the resources. Many students do not know how to appropriately engage with online discussion forums. Therefore, like oral and written practices, in order for students to become proficient, skill development needs to be scaffolded. Front-loading instruction ought to familiarize the students with the tools, engage them with this method of learning and provide a supportive structure for developing communication skills. Online social interactions are effective in increasing student's engagement, understanding of the topic, community building and quality of responses through a medium that is relevant and accessible to them.

Wells' *Dialogue in the Classroom* (2006) reports the results of an extended collaborative action research project that created conditions for dialogic co-construction of meaning to occur. Beginning in 1991, Wells, with a group of cross-curricular classroom teachers and university researchers, began to explore classroom communities that would stimulate dialogue, with a focus [that] was not directly on dialogue per se, but rather on the activities that would be likely to generate dialogue . . . Little success would be achieved by encouraging teachers

to engage in dialogue for its own sake, because, to be effective, the genre of discourse selected on any occasion must be appropriate for the purpose of the curricular activity it is designed to achieve. (p. 388)

The data was collected from members of the group who were able to choose the way they wanted to approach the task. By using a coding system for analysis,

the study found that interaction became more dialogic when the class was engaged in [an exploration of ideas] (e.g., planning, interpreting, or reviewing student inquiries). By contrast, episodes of teacher-led instruction, classroom management, and checking on what had been learned tended to be characterized by shorter sequences of talk. (p. 390)

Over the seven-year study it was noted that as teacher-initiation became less prominent in the classroom, there was an increase in student initiation, negotiatory questions, high cognitive demand, student response length and sequences including authentic discussion. When building a classroom community where dialogue can occur it is “worthwhile to devote time to explicit teaching of the social and discursive skills necessary for such dialogue” (p.417) and that the benefit of collaborative knowledge is the co-construction of meaning and understanding.

Collaboration.

“The nature of collaboration is shifting to a more sophisticated skill set . . . [because] the importance of cooperative interpersonal capabilities is higher and the skills involved are more sophisticated than in the prior industrial era” (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010, p.19). Students need opportunities to demonstrate an ability to work effectively and respectfully in various group settings, such as partnerships, small groups and whole class settings. Further, students need to demonstrate awareness of the value of collaboration: an ability to be flexible and willing to

compromise to achieve a common goal, assume shared responsibility and value individual contributions to the collaborative work.

“As children collaborate, they learn to take turns, share, give and get help, and listen to others” (Bickart, Jablon & Dodge, 2000, p.74). Through collaboration, students learn fundamental skills of respect for themselves and others and responsibility. Collaborative learning allows for an array of diverse perspectives to “play together harmoniously . . . [and] reap the rewards of learning and living well” (p. 78). Responses to content can be avenues for discussion and process positioning; rather than react on an individual level, collaborative dialogue allows students to reflect, reassess, reaffirm or reject their understanding of literary content, as well as create awareness about different perspectives.

The study of a novel, such as Alбом’s *The five people you meet in heaven* (2003), in a high-school English class can allow for such collaborative dialogue. In the following hypothetical anecdote, I will demonstrate how such co-constructed learning can organically develop from inquiry and discussion.

In the novel, as the main character, Eddie, went about his daily business at the amusement park, he was oblivious to the fact that he was going to die very soon, but we, the readers, were because of a narrative clock counting down Eddie’s life within the text. Dramatic irony sets the stage for the reader to gain insight into the exact time of Eddie’s death.

“I wonder if Eddie would have done things differently if he had known he would die?” commented Jesse*¹ after the amusement park accident.

“I wouldn’t want to know,” Jamie* piped up. This started a low murmur among the class.

¹ Jesse and Jamie are made-up students in the theoretical classroom anecdote

“Okay, so everyone that would want to know the time and circumstances of their death to this side of the class; those that do not want to know to the right,” the teacher instructed. The majority of people dispersed to either side of the classroom, with a few torn; they chose to stay in the middle until they could be convinced either way. There were a few more on the side that would want to know and their greater number gave them confidence; however, those on the opposing side also had similar convictions.

After an opportunity to discuss in their groups they each elected a speaker to present their opening points. As the discussion continued a speaker’s log – where the students raise their hands and the teacher records their names, so that all students have an opportunity to partake in the discussion in a systematic order -- was used to allow for organization of thoughts, opportunity for students to think through response before their speaking turn and established an open forum to dialogue about their position on the resolution both in terms of the text and their own experiences and thoughts.

To establish a positive environment where students can feel comfortable commenting and questioning text and problem solving the text itself with all members of their classroom community, it is important to support the growth of collaborative talk structures at all times. Dialogical thinking can be done independently, by using dialogical journals, ‘say something-silently’ and ‘reflection response’ (Beers, 2003; Booth, 2001). However, collaboration that builds in oral language practices also allow for shared meaning-making.

Since there are many types of collaborations, students will learn that reading and writing and speaking and listening skills are developed and demonstrated in different ways. Collaborative practices also provide a forum for students to develop viewing and representing, creativity and innovation, and critical thinking and problem solving practices. Instruction during

collaborative learning will be more student-led, rather than teacher-directed inquiry. The role of the teacher is pronounced at the beginning of the lesson sequence to provide the guidelines and support structures for the collaboration. However, as students become more proficient at collaborative learning, the teacher will allow the students to take more ownership over the practice. This can be developed through open-ended strategies, scaffolding and high-inference tasks.

In *Delivering, modifying or collaborating? Examining three teacher conceptions of how to facilitate student engagement* (2010), Harris conducted a qualitative study to identify and analyze the strategies that teachers report using to engage their students. Within the sample group of 20 secondary school English teachers, Harris noted three approaches in the data: delivery, modification and collaboration.

In the delivery approach, teachers prescribed the activities for the students, with the intention of maintaining order in the classroom and getting students to participate. In Harris' data, she noted that the focus, while using a delivery approach, was more on controlling and improving student participation with teacher-set work, rather than learning and that "at times teachers seemed to have 'no idea' what students may learn, hoping learning took place instead of designing activities with specific learning outcomes in mind" (Harris, 2010, p. 139).

Modification referred to approaches where activities were modified to cater to student interest, motivation and ability. The purpose was to make activities achievable and interesting for student participation and success. Harris noted that while some teachers "talked about being flexible and appealing to student interests, changes to activities were made to suit the interests of groups of students, not individuals" (p. 141). Teachers in this category found that there were often two types of students: students that were capable of higher level thought and other students

that were “described as in need of teacher intervention and scaffolding in order to participate and achieve success” (p. 142). In these classes, the students were streamed to provide modifications.

Collaborative approaches involve teachers and students collaborating to construct learning activities suited to student purposes, meant to develop thinking skills. Harris found that among teachers in this category, there was the intention that students would gain critical thinking skills and facilitate deep learning, as well, student ownership of learning would increase. In this category,

teachers talked about becoming so focused on ‘getting quality learning happening’ that they were no longer concerned with issues of control within the classroom. They described willingly relinquishing their role as the ‘expert’ or authority and working with students to jointly achieve objectives. However, teachers all said it was difficult to teach this way given current school structures, indicating that successful projects were not necessarily replicable. (p. 144)

Based on her data, Harris believed that student engagement in classrooms that incorporated collaboration was most fruitful approach. She also noted that this was the most complex way of facilitating student engagement in learning.

Summary.

The 4 Cs lens provides students with a structured, yet flexible, vantage point for engaging with course content. Students need opportunities to develop creative and innovative thought. This development can be fostered through different media, such as dance, drama, art, music, film, writing, and using digital tools. Students are encouraged to acquire, explore, transform, extend, personalize, and express their thinking through a mode that is relevant, purposeful and engaging to them. Critical thinking and problem solving are also worthy of including in

curriculum because students need opportunities to make judgments and decisions; make connections; engage in questioning and dialogical thinking practices; analyze and evaluate text, ideas and perspectives, including their own; and engage in the process of reflection.

Communication skills are important for students to develop so they can acquire process, application and transformation skills to extend their thinking. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to engage in multiple communicative practices, at various stages of the lesson sequences, through oral, written, representative and digital modes. Lastly, collaborative learning allows students to work effectively, respectfully and purposefully in a range of group settings so that students can develop an awareness of the value of collaboration and the skills that it affords students. All of these components are included in this framework because they provide relevant, purposeful, rich and diverse avenues for students to explore their thinking.

Proposed Structure.

The lens of the 4 Cs provides ways for students to engage with text, understand and negotiate their thinking and demonstrate this understanding. But, without a purposeful structure to acquire, develop and demonstrate these skills, the success of using the 4 Cs may be compromised. Short term and long term lesson sequences need to be developed through structures of scaffolding, open-ended strategies and high-inference tasks. The following section explores why these structures are important when developing student's thinking and skill sets.

Scaffolding.

Harking back to the 4Rs (Doll, 1993), scaffolding is a form of recursion whereby students are constantly falling back and building on prior knowledge and skill development to further develop and expand their understanding and experiences. Students need a guided support structure to develop their thinking – one where the teacher's role is more pronounced at the

beginning, but gradually their role becomes lessened and the roles and responsibilities of the students becomes more pronounced (Pearson & Gallagher, 1993; Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009).

A scaffolding framework to support the construction of evidence-based arguments among middle school students (Belland, Glazewski & Richardson, 2008) gives consideration to current research on scaffolding support structures and processes and has developed guidelines for the implementation of scaffolding practices:

- scaffolding should be embedded within a system and students must be readily aware of the scaffold as part of a larger process;
- students need opportunities, at various stages of the learning process, to articulate their thoughts verbally or in a written or a representational manner;
- specific content and intellectual skill-learning goals should assist in framing the learning process with those elements most relevant to the learning goals;
- motivation needs to be considered when constructing scaffolded so that students can see relevance in what they are seeking to accomplish and the use of the clearly-connected structures to accomplish this task;
- scaffolds need to be explicit for students will less prior knowledge;
- and conceptual, strategic and procedural scaffolds need to be developed at all stages of the learning process (Belland, Krista, Glazewski, Jennifer, & Richardson, 2008, pp. 412-418)

The development of skills and knowledge is done with two goals in mind: providing a temporary support structure for students to develop these skill-sets and help students gain competency with the scaffolded tasks to become proficient performing the tasks unaided.

Knowing that this process is needed throughout the lesson sequence, teachers need to build in

content and skill development opportunities that are interconnected and purposeful and will allow learning to occur. Question prompts, expert modeling, and concept mapping are often used to scaffold students' thinking. "When key features are identified for a unit of study, teachers can gradually release the development of their students' capacity as thinkers and doers, moving from modeling to guided practice to students practicing in small groups, to independent practice" (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009, p.50) and the responsibility for the learning process is gradually shifted from the teacher to the student.

Scaffolding puts the students on an even playing field because it stops the assumptions about what kids already know and ultimately what they can do. It provides a foundation that is shared by all students and allows them to develop this understanding through various entry points: story elements, literary terms, and prior literary knowledge. Skill development is about the acquisition of skills; this cannot be done if students are not provided opportunities to learn, practice and demonstrate them. Skill-scaffolding is more than learning a series of skills; there needs to be relevance and purpose to the skills in a single lesson, with cohesion and connectivity to the larger learning framework. If teachers are not developing curriculum and instruction with both short term and long term goals in mind, there is little room for continuity and contributions to designing of individual lessons, which themselves scaffold to more complex tasks. As well, if both skills and content are not scaffolded, then students' learning is limited to their existing skills and knowledge repertoire and further entrenches their struggles.

The study *Learning how to learn: the dynamic assessment of learning power* (Crick, 2007), included two thousand learners who were asked to report on how they viewed their own learning process. The findings of the study suggested that there are very diverse learners: some learners wanted to create meaning and make connections between what they were learning and

what they already knew; others wanted to explore creative options, through playful, yet purposeful systematic thinking; some found that collaborative learning and opportunities for independent practice were both needed to understand their own thinking. Understanding their own learning process was key to many students; they needed to talk about what and why they were learning, in addition to themselves as learners. Modeling and imitation were noted as being very important to the enabling of dispositions, attitudes, values and ways of thinking. Active dialogue, reflection, choice, learner awareness and ownership were also found to be important for learners to engage with and process texts and ideas. A common theme in all the classrooms in the study related to the framework of the curriculum content:

Sequencing and framing the curriculum particularly pertained to stimulating curiosity, creativity and meaning-making—the starting point would be students’ ‘lived’ experience, personal interest and motivation. Teachers reorganized the ways in which they presented the material for a lesson, creating a situation where students were challenged to make sense of data and to make meaning from it. Teachers also explicitly related the content of lessons to students’ experiences outside school and in the community, and they would ‘scaffold’ learning by inviting students to make connections with other aspects of the curriculum and with their wider life experiences. (p.16)

Developing a curriculum “with open-ended strategies leaves room for us to scaffold learning based on the strengths and needs of the individual students within the class” (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009, p.9). Learning encourages students to think authentically about “purpose and meaning, relate to a context, and includes ‘know-how’ and ‘know-why’, not just ‘know-what’” (Crick, 2007, p.136), which means that students will be continually negotiating their understanding and thinking of changing data and its reformulation through a learning structures.

This learning structure should include open-ended strategies and high-inference tasks that scaffold students thinking and skill development.

Open-Ended Strategies.

Brownlie and Schnellert (2009), in their book, *It's all about thinking: Collaborating to support all learners*, point out that the strategies that they propose are not new, rather they are pulled from a variety of sources and teachers and they invite teachers to modify, adapt and change the ideas, units and lessons that they include. Much of the paradigm that they are suggesting is evidenced in other sources, such as Close's Smart Learning framework (Close, 2008; 2011), AVID strategies (AVID, n.d., Best Practices section) and the Partnerships for 21st Century Learning (2011). The root of Brownlie & Schnellert's findings, though, is that lessons ought to be sequenced according to foundational improvements that support all learners.

When planning curriculum, they feel that "purposeful, constructive activities that teachers engage in [must] link their students and their experiences with the content of the curriculum, [and] prepare students to construct meaning" (p. 9), capitalizing on the social aspect of learning. When developing curriculum that will do this, three things need to be taken into consideration: connecting, processing and transforming/personalizing.

Connecting strategies allow students to connect to the content and others, as well as access, activate, acquire and build background knowledge and skills: "[w]e often start a learning sequence by asking students to predict, link, and/or compare key words, ideas or relationships before engaging with new content" (p.9). These strategies provide students with a structure with which to view the information and skills they will be about to acquire, while building on what they already can do and know; it is a means to ground the lesson from the beginning and shift the students' focus.

Processing strategies “help students build the comprehension and analysis skills that they need to successfully use, link, and compare key information from the texts with what they knew previously . . . [and] can be used with all kinds of texts – print, media, visual and oral” (pp.49 and 10). These strategies encourage students to interact with ideas and develop an understanding by building on new information and revising former information. This stage of the learning processes asks students to engage with the material, rather than perform rote activities. It serves to develop and deepen their understanding through a range of seamless support structures and prompts that encourage students to engage with the material.

Transforming, or personalizing, strategies allow students to move beyond the traditional structures of recall and basic comprehension by asking them to use the knowledge that they have acquired, make connections to it and demonstrate their knowledge by transforming the information acquired: “[w]e want our students to take information and be able to synthesize and represent it in a way that shows that they have taken important, relevant ideas and understood them, and, when possible, interpret the information in their own way” (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009, p.49). This notion of personalizing their knowledge is also a key feature in 21st century learning, as well as in the BC Education Plan (2011).

Open-ended strategies “are open-ended in that they do not ask students to find the ‘right’ answer but rather require students to make connections, process information, and transform the information in a variety of ways” (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009, p.10); they are developed through a single lesson and over the course of the lesson sequences so that students have many opportunities to negotiate their thinking at various stages of the learning process. These type of strategies are effective in a 21st century classroom because

they do not set a ceiling on what students can learn. Rather, they allow students to stretch as far as they can go using language and pushing the edges of their current knowledge. At the same time, they support learners in their thinking about their learning and contributing to the learning of others. (p.48)

The findings from this work within classrooms suggest that teachers need to make fewer adaptations and modifications when designed instruction include open-ended strategies. With all learners included in the learning process, the classroom is shifted from a teacher-led class with students learning in isolation to a community of engaged, meaning-making, critical and self-regulating learners that can build their knowledge collaboratively through authentic, purposeful, lessons.

High-Inference Tasks.

Making connections, inferencing and personalizing acquired knowledge are significant components of the Sankofa Learning Framework, in addition to 21st century learning and aspects of the current BC curriculum (BC Education Plan, 2011; BC ELA IRP, 2007). In her research, Close (2008; 2011) found that

high-inference tasks encourage readers to express and defend an idea related to the actions of the character or outcomes of the events [and] to discuss and react to the underlying meaning of the passage as a whole. They are usually directed at broader ideas or underlying themes that relate to the significance of the passage [and] call for the reader to link experience with the text and to draw logical conclusions. They give learners opportunities to develop the complex thinking needed for response and analysis.

(Smart Learning Anchor section, para. 8-10)

With this complex thinking in mind, students would be encouraged to develop more sophisticated levels of understanding. But, also “*Smart Learning* has grown as an approach through over 25 years of action research” (Close, 2008; 2011, Six T’s of Effective Literacy Learning section, para. 1) and has been able to develop strategies that thoughtfully support student learning, including high-inference tasks.

Close believes that these types of tasks anchor students’ thinking because they allow the learner to, through response and analysis, explain connections (text↔text, text↔self and text↔world). High-inference tasks play an important part in developing lesson sequences because it serves to drive the learning and inquiry towards more complex, relevant and connected thinking. Student’s learning is given a purpose, which is motivated by inquiry that strives to deepen and develop their knowledge. Given the variety of paths with which this type of thinking can lead a student, choice plays a critical role in these types of tasks. Moving beyond their ability to simply recall and reproduce information from the text, students are able to engage with and think about the text, using the text as a foundation to their thinking.

The Hunter College High School humanities program (Miller, 1970) was an innovative, high-inference approach to curriculum. Miller noted that

if learning is to have lasting value, [students] need to perceive the pain and joy of writing their own poems, preparing their own films, and planning their own environment for living. One important level of understanding and sensitivity is attained when we comprehend what others have accomplished; a different and often deeper level is achieved when the students themselves become the creators. The level of involvement becomes a qualitative, rather than a quantitative experience. (p. 7)

21st century learning is not new practice and pedagogy; the humanities program is indicative of how elements of 21st century learning have taken place within the history of literacy education. The lens and structure of the Sankofa Learning Framework encourages practices that support the humanities programs' understanding of learning, which elicits a harmonious approach to scaffolding skill development, as well as using open-ended strategies and high-inference tasks.

Summary.

For students to be able to thoughtfully acquire skills and knowledge there needs to be a system that structures their thinking and action. This structure is meant to assist them at all stages of the learning process; students will use open-ended strategies to develop their thinking during connecting, processing and transforming/personalizing stages (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009). Student's ability to acquire, practices, and develop their thinking needs to be scaffolded; students need to be continually falling back on what they know and can do, while pushing the edges of their understanding and experience. For students to engage authentically, requires choice, relevancy and opportunities to make personal connections to the text, themselves and the world around them. If student's learning is given a purpose, they will be more motivated to engage with complex tasks and extend their thinking.

Critique of 21st Century Learning

In my experience, some teachers are fairly resistant to incorporating elements of 21st century learning into their curriculum and instruction, either viewing it as a commercial program or because of unfamiliarity with how to incorporate components of 21st century learning, while still meeting the outcomes in the BC IRPs. In order to critically examine 21st century learning, I propose three key questions:

- Are the PISA ranking results of UK education reflective of the 21st Century Learning Initiative's role?
- Do the 4C's lens and key elements structures lend anything different to the BC English Language Arts Integrated Resource Packages?
- Do the 4Cs Lens and key elements structure compromise content, with a primary focus on skill development?

Question 1: Are the PISA ranking results of UK education a reflection of the 21st Century Learning Initiative's role?

Given that the 21st Century Learning Initiative was first developed in the United Kingdom (UK) school system, it seems pertinent to inquire whether this system is conducive to enhancing student's learning in other countries. Further, is it a true reflection of the school's pedagogy and practices, and is this comparable to other school systems, such as Canada, that are moving towards reforms similar to the 21st Century Learning Initiative?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed an international survey that was driven by a key question: Around the world, are 15-year-olds well prepared to participate in society? (EduContact, 2011). This survey, known as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), is used every three years to “assess how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society” (PISA, 2011, What PISA Assesses section, para.1). Since the United Kingdom ranking for reading fell from 6th place to 23rd between 2000 and 2009, there could be an assumption that initiatives associated with the reading practices, such as the 21st Century Learning Initiative, could be related to this downward trend.

But looking at the statistics of the PISA results alone would draw only premature conclusions. “PISA is about a lot more than test scores . . . its aim is to encourage all participating countries to use the survey findings to improve their own teaching and student performance. To give every student the best possible opportunities to achieve the best possible results” (EduContact, 2011). If the results suggest that something is not working well within the UK system, what is happening? To answer this, I will focus on three points: the results within the context of the survey; the context of the country; and the context of the education system.

In the context of the survey, the test results themselves are flawed in two ways. Firstly, the results encompass the national average, but the ranking does not reflect the discrepancy between high and low achievers. “England had a relatively large difference between the score points of the lowest scoring pupils and the highest scoring pupils compared with many other countries. However, the proportion of pupils at each level of achievement was similar to the OECD average” (Bradshaw, Ager, Burge, & Wheeler, 2010, p. 24) Similarly, Canada’s reading placement fell from 2nd to 7th in the same time period, but Canada was still performing above the OECD average (PISA, 2011).

Secondly, in 2000 and 2009, the aim of the survey was to assess student’s reading. “It focuses, therefore, on just one of the three attainment targets for English in the National Curriculum as it does not seek to assess the skills of speaking, listening or writing. (Bradshaw, et al., 2010. p.11) As well, over half of the assessment strategies used to determine reading ability are closed-ended (such as multiple choice answers) and are more reflective of assessment in traditional education. 21st century learning, however, takes into account multiple aspects of language arts, not simply reading ability and summative assessment.

In the context of the country, there are socio-economic influences that may skew the intentions of the results:

Students who did not surpass the most basic performance level on PISA were not a random group and the results show that, as in many other countries, socio-economic disadvantage has a strong impact on student performance in the United Kingdom . . . and socio-economic differences among students translate into a particularly strong impact on student learning outcomes. (OECD, 2010, para. 21)

An analytical report by OECD suggests that four socio-economic aspects are having an impact on student performance in the UK: community size, family composition, immigrant students and concentration in schools. Therefore, many students are already at a disadvantage before they are even met with the curriculum, so it seems no surprise that the influence of these external factors, not necessarily the curriculum itself, would affect student performance.

In the context of the education system, the PISA results suggest that “school systems that grant schools greater discretion in deciding student-assessment policies, the courses offered, the content of those courses, and the textbooks used are also those systems that show higher reading scores overall” (OECD, 2011, p.2). In an attempt to continue the practice of 21st century learning and to reform the education system that suffocated it, John Abbott prepared a briefing paper on the design faults of the education system, for British Parliament to put forth some considerations in light of the PISA results (Abbott, 2009). Some of the faults addressed are a reason why the 21st Century Learning Initiative could have done better within an alternative system. Some of the considerations that Abbott posed included an understanding of learning and unpacking the curriculum.

John Abbott's first consideration is Understanding Learning (Abbott, 2009). He wanted Parliament to

take the lead in showing the country that the task of education involves far more than producing good pupils able to pass exams. Rather, it is to encourage schools to begin a dynamic process through which students are progressively weaned of their dependence on teachers and institutions, and given the confidence to manage their own learning.

(Abbott, 2009, p.6)

The skill development encouraged by the 21st Century Learning Initiative promotes this view of education, but does not work in a system where the institution has such a firm grasp on how and why and when students develop these skills.

One of Abbott's major criticisms was the way in which some school systems were delivering the curriculum.

In an information-saturated world it is essential to appreciate what it is that children need to know and understand now that will equip them for a lifetime of performing justly, skillfully and magnanimously. [We] can no longer assume that a well-educated person is the by-product of the study of a range of academic disciplines . . . A far less content-prescriptive curriculum emphasizing skills such as the ability to think, communicate, collaborate and make decisions is required. (Abbott, 2009, p.7)

This skills-based curriculum is what Abbott has been pushing for the past decade and a half in the UK and it is similar to the curriculum that is being implemented in British Columbia. My concern is that if the delivery of the 21st century learning curriculum in BC is not done effectively it will fail.

In light of the PISA results, John Abbott made a plea with Parliament for educational reform. He continues to push for the 21st century learning as a means to rectify the problem with the current UK education system. “Knowing what we now know we no longer have the moral authority to continue doing what we have always done” (Abbott, 2009, p.7) and a change in the delivery of 21st century learning programs in the UK and a shift from traditional education is needed to provide students with what they will need to be successful members of society. The PISA results for the UK are not a true reflection of 21st century pedagogy and practice because of the other things to take into consideration when analyzing the results.

Question 2: Do the 4C’s lens and key elements structures lend anything different to the BC English Language Arts Integrated Resource Packages?

In order to critically examine if the 4Cs lens and key elements structure lent anything different to the BC English Language Arts Integrated Resource Packages I needed to establish what already existed in the PLOs (see table in chapter three for a comprehensive overview). Since my unit plan (see chapter three) involves the study of *Romeo and Juliet*, I decided to focus my examination on the grade 10 BC ELA IRP.

Were there outcomes linked to communication, collaboration, creativity and problem solving and critical-thinking and problem solving; as well as to scaffolding, high-inference tasks and open-ended strategies? Were there direct descriptions associated with each component of the lens and structure? Did word choice and phrasing lend itself to the component? In the next section I will explore the lens and structure in terms of what currently exists; following that I will then examine what could be done differently with a purposeful and effective inclusion of this lens and structure.

To what extent do the lens and structures currently exist in the IRPs?

Collaboration.

Collaboration is quite evident in the oral language (speaking and listening) section of the IRPs. Several outcomes are associated with collaborative learning, both in the purposes and strategies portions (pp. 54-56). The reading and viewing sections reference collaborative reading comprehension in the purpose (p. 57), but there is no reference to it in the strategies' portion. One of the *11 Key Elements of Effective Adolescent Writing Instruction* includes the ability to write collaboratively "to plan, draft, revise, and edit their compositions. It shows a strong impact on improving the quality of students' writing" (p. 29). The IRP also cites literature circles as a good strategy for the collaborative study of reading (p. 137). However, although appearing extensively in the oral language outcomes, collaborative learning is referenced infrequently and in isolated elements in the rest of the IRPs.

Communication.

Communication is noted in extensively of the oral language section of the PLOs. For example, A2 expects that students will express ideas and information in a variety of situations and forms to: explore and respond; recall and describe; narrate and explain; argue, persuade, and support and engage and entertain (p. 54). The oral language PLOs also expect students to select, adapt, and apply a range of strategies for the preparation and expression of oral language. As well, there is emphasis placed on a student's ability to both speak and listen when making personal connections, analyzing, synthesizing and reflecting (pp. 55-56). In the reading and viewing portions, students are expected to use strategies to comprehend, demonstrate and transform understanding (pp. 57-59), and the writing and representing portion expects that students will be able to represent and communicate their ideas (p. 60).

In the *Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts: Oral Languages* section there is the statement that “speaking and listening are oral language processes that are important for both communication and learning. . . students need to be provided with many opportunities to use talk for learning in partners, small groups, and large class discussions” (p. 86). Effective oral communication is chronicled in the Oral Language Skills and Functions diagram and includes skills such as asking for and clarifying information; demonstrating sensitivity to, and awareness of, audience; conversing, discussing, and exploring; and imagining (p. 86). Lastly, it emphasized that the “oral language is an essential component of English Language Arts on its own, but can also be used to explore reading and writing as students articulate their thinking and explore how others have made meaning from what was read or written” (p. 138).

Critical-thinking and problem solving.

Critical-thinking and problem solving are not specifically stated in the outcomes, but there are words and phrases that connote these skills. In the oral language component of the PLOs (pp. 54-56) students are expected to argue and persuade, extend understanding, acknowledge different and diverse viewpoints, generate thoughtful questions, make inferences, explain relationships, transform existing ideas, and use metacognitive strategies. In the reading and viewing portion (pp. 57-59) students will reflect on literature as well as be able to apply a range of strategies to make logical and detailed predictions, make inferences, draw conclusions, describe bias and contradictions, and recognize how and why texts take shape. In the writing and representing section (pp. 59-61) students will be able to speculate and consider when writing purposeful informational texts and be able to explain and persuade when creating thoughtful interpretations.

The *Criteria for a Good Thinker* (Grades 8 to 12) table outlines ways to be an effective, purposeful and meaningful thinker: be open-minded and flexible; extend personal thinking by assimilating new ideas and information; look for connections among ideas; and be self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitoring, and self-correcting (p. 85). Lastly, in the *Considerations for Program Delivery*, the section on critical literacy points out that students need opportunities to position themselves as readers and thinkers and be able to take a critical stance in respect to the way language and representations are used in their own lives and in society (p. 21).

Creativity and Innovation.

Like the critical-thinking and problem solving component there are no specifically-stated outcomes for students to be creative and innovative, other than simply expecting that they will *create* a representation. In the oral language component of the IRPs (pp. 54-56) students are expected to engage and entertain, select and apply a range of strategies, and express and transform ideas and information. In the reading and viewing portion (pp. 57-59) students will read student generated material, read and view creative and personal texts, and transform existing ideas. In the writing and representing section (pp. 59-61) students will be able to engage and entertain, write meaningful and imaginative texts, create thoughtful representations and expressions of thought, experiment, and use conventions to enhance meaning and artistry.

Students can demonstrate creativity through

representations [which] are visual constructions in any medium that allows students choice in the form in which their understandings relating to English Language Arts can be shown. When students create representations (e.g. collages, diagrams, posters, multimedia presentations), they are able to construct and convey meaning in ways that may suit their particular learning style. (p. 140)

The specific references to creative learning are minimal and usually accompanied with writing outcomes; moreover, the innovative learning outcomes appear to be lacking by a significant degree in the IRPs.

Scaffolding.

In the PLOs, the *Gradual Release of Responsibility* (pp. 93-94) model and pedagogical understandings illustrate how scaffolding can be applied. The *Ways of Assisting Readers Through Their Zones of Proximal Development: Modes of Scaffolding* table (p. 89) in the *Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts: Reading and Viewing* component of the IRP shows how scaffolding techniques can be executed during reading instruction. In the oral language component section (pp. 54-56) it is expected that students will contribute ideas and support the ideas of others, plan and rehearse presentations and extend their understanding by accessing prior knowledge. Before, during and after strategies are used in the reading and viewing section (pp. 57-59). The writing and representing section (pp. 59-61) as well, suggests using a range of strategies to generate, compose and revise texts and representations.

There are several PLOs in the BC ELA IRPs -- C5, C6, and C7 in Writing and Representing; B5, B6, and B7 in Reading and Viewing and almost all the Oral Language outcomes – that reference the use of open-ended strategies in terms of a process, namely before, during and after particular tasks. These outcomes expect that students will be able to engage with a range of strategies during connecting, processing and transforming stages of learning. These are effective components of the PLOs because they stretch across the broader context area of the language arts course: reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing. However, scaffolding only works well here if there is connectivity between these strategies and a richer, more diverse, experience. For example, connecting strategies are used before tasks, processing

strategies are encouraged during the tasks and extending strategies are implemented at the end. However, the checklist nature of the outcomes could be misconstrued as not needing to continually acquire, develop, and personalize the use of these strategies at all stages of the learning process or an attempt at doing so that is not done purposefully through short term and long term lesson sequences.

To support these strategies as beneficial to students' successful learning at all stages of the learning process "a teacher models a concept or strategy and makes explicit the thinking one engages in when choosing and applying that strategy in a specific context. Gradually students are given more independence with the goal of being able to use the strategy on their own" (p.83). The skills themselves ought to be developed, but this gradual release of responsibility works to transition the development of these skills from teacher to students. Given the way that the IRPs are set up, it is expected that teachers will apply this technique when considering the learning outcomes, but there are no specific outcomes associated with the ability to demonstrate thoughtful engagement and understanding using scaffolding.

Further, the use of communication is fairly ambiguous and does account for oral, written, representational and digital modes, at all stages of the learning process. For example, oral communication is referenced only in the oral language portion, but oral language could also be used when applying these strategies to other outcomes; written and representational communication can be used with multiple outcomes, but is only mentioned in specific outcomes. Needless to say, there is a rich weaving that can occur with these outcomes as they are developed through the learning process, but the problem is that within the outcomes themselves there are no implications that this matrix of skill-development ought to occur or the complexities using these strategies and scaffolding techniques in short term and long term lesson sequences.

Open-ended strategies.

Broad, open-ended strategies are used in the PLOs and it is expected that teachers will use a range of strategies. In the oral language component section (pp. 54-56) students are asked to explore experiences, ideas and information using strategies to access prior knowledge, make connections, generate thoughtful questions, extend thinking, and personalize and transform ideas. In the reading and viewing section (pp. 57-59) students were expected to be able to use strategies before, during and after reading and viewing to anticipate, explain, construct and extend meaning. The writing and representing section (pp. 59-61) calls for students to make connections, speculate, explore, experiment, respond and engage.

Furthermore, students are expected to write for various purposes: to explain, analyze and synthesize thinking, such as in the *Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts: Reading and Viewing* component of the IRP: “complex reading and thinking processes such as response, analysis, and synthesis need to be “unpacked” for students. Teachers need to model methods and strategies, and as students become more knowledgeable and confident using these various strategies and approaches, teachers need to encourage and support them to select, adapt, and apply various approaches in small groups, with partners, and individually” (p. 89). The IRP also notes that reading should encompass before, during and after stages to “help students connect, process and reflect what they read and view by strategically preparing students for reading/viewing” (p. 90) and includes strategies such as, accessing prior knowledge, making predictions and connections, inferring, evaluating and responding. “Strategies are used by teachers to help students develop their literacy abilities, skills, and learning strategies. In order to meet the diverse literacy needs of students, teachers must adapt and incorporate a variety of

strategies” (p. 141). The strategies that the IRP suggest are broad and leave lots of room for interpretation, but also room for misuse and misinterpretation.

High-inference tasks.

There are a few PLOs that call for students to make inferences, but the development of high-inference tasks are not clearly outlined; references are inconsistent and not clearly connected. The reading and viewing section (pp. 57-59) comments on goal setting, but the goal is more in line with metacognitive tasks; in essence, having a student think about their own thinking, in terms of the knowledge acquired and the experience of acquisition. Metacognitive tasks involve higher-order thinking and encourage students to be self-regulated and actively engaged in thinking about their own learning process, such as planning how to approach a given learning task, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task (Livingstone, 1997).

In the writing and representing section (pp. 59-61) students are expected to write and create texts and representations that express ideas; use a range of strategies to generate, compose and revise texts and representations; and use and experiment with elements of form in writing and representing. The *Modes of Scaffolding* table (p. 89) demonstrates successful high-inference tasks for reading from teacher-regulated to student-regulated, using discussion and inquiry practices and culminating with students using their own strategy in the context of an inquiry project. In the *Considerations for Program Delivery* section, one aspect of conceptualizing the curriculum is that “over the course of a unit planned in this way, students can examine and create various texts, and teachers can work with students to explore the concepts related to a big idea and/or inquiry questions and the thinking processes needed to study, understand, and apply what they learn” (p. 22).

Summary of which lens and structures currently exist in the IRPs.

There are outcomes associated, to some degree, with most of the lens and structure components. Some, such as communication, were highly engrained in the learning outcomes. Other components, such as critical-thinking and problem-solving and open-ended strategies, were included in the learning outcomes, but required a lot of interpretation on the teacher's part. As well, some components, such as innovation skills, were lacking in the learning outcomes. Using the rest of the IRP, outside of the PLOs, there were direct and indirect references to most of the components. Some of the pedagogy behind the lens and structures could be found in the *Pedagogical Understandings for English Language Arts* sections and in the *Considerations for Program Delivery*, but were either linked to specific core standards, but not all, or required a great deal of searching to find – even in the glossary or index portion, there was little reference to most of the components.

Some of the word choice and phrasing was clear, direct and specific to the components, such as collaboration and communication. However, in other cases, the word choice and phrasing was related, but not specifically referenced, such as the open-ended strategies, creativity, and critical-thinking components. Some components, such as innovation and problem-solving, have minimal word, phrase or ideas associated directly with the components. Parts of the lens and structure word choice were easily accessible for clarification and understanding, such as scaffolding and communication, whereas other components required ample searching to even find direct or indirect references in the IRPs.

What could the 4Cs lens and key elements structures lend to this framework?

With an understanding of what existed within the curriculum, what could the 4Cs lens and key elements structures lend to this framework? What could be done differently? What was

missing? In order to examine these questions, I decided to analyze three components of the IRP: framework, process and connections. Is the frame of the IRPs conducive to the lens and structure? Is the development of the components evident within the IRPS? Is there connectivity between of the components of the lens and structure in the IRP?

Framework.

The framework of the IRPs is not conducive to the understanding and implementation of the lens and structure components. The PLOs themselves do give consideration to most of the components, but is done in such a categorized and check-listed way that effective and purposeful implementation of these components may not occur. Once the outcome is realized there is nothing in the PLOs that warrants reexamination or reengagement with the outcomes. Some of the components are heavily pushed in the PLOs, such as communication and collaboration, whereas others seem to fall short or are entirely lacking.

The structure of the rest of the IRP does include elements of deeper understanding, analysis and supportive pieces that will assist with most of the components. However, this information is scattered around the IRP and is not easily accessible. In order to find information on the components of the lens and structure, I found that I was jumping from place to place in the IRPs when there was some affiliation to the components in the table of contents. A few of the components, such as scaffolding, had clear ties to the IRPs, but were only linked to certain core standards, such as reading and viewing, and were found in the pedagogical components. Others required a preliminary understanding of the components to begin with in order to draw any connections, such as open-ended strategies, critical thinking and creativity. Lastly, despite searching through the IRPs, some components, such as innovation, are entirely lacking in terms of any direct or indirect referencing.

Process.

In a few places in the IRPs the idea of the development of skills, or process, is evident. In each of the core standards sections, there are connecting, processing and transforming strategies. These strategies are also present in the *Considerations for Program Delivery* (p. 26) and the *Modes of Scaffolding* table (p. 89). But, given the framework of the PLOs, the idea of recursion is lacking.

The lens and structure are portrayed as isolated strategies that will lend to the process of the development of the core standards, but little consideration is given to the process of developing the skills of the lens and structure. Further, aspects of the lens and structure are implied at various stages of the core standards process, but are not compulsory. For example, using a range of strategies does not mean that all the lens and structure components are developed at all stages of the learning process, nor does it mean that they interlace with one another to support the learning.

Connectivity.

There is some connectivity between some of the components of the lens and structure in the IRPs. However, it does not specifically state that there ought to be interrelationships among these components. The connections that did exist are suggested only by underlying word choice and phrasing or placement of components; for example, collaboration makes up a significant portion of the oral language section, with the implication that collaboration and communication ought to be used in conjunction. Further, although not specifically stated, an example of a high-inference task is embedded in the *Modes of Scaffolding* table (p. 89), implying a connection.

One of the paramount problems with the IRPs is this lack of connectivity. The components appear to be isolated and overlap loosely and infrequently. This is not to say that

teachers could not infuse their curriculum and instruction with these components working in tandem, but the IRPs are not set up in such a way that it is required. Therefore, my concern would be that those teachers that still hold a traditional view would not be as open to accommodating this need.

Conclusions.

The core standards should be used as a basis for some of the types of content and texts that are included in the study of English Language Arts; for example reading, writing and oral language content/texts. Given that teachers are relatively open as to what this will look like in their classroom (e.g. *Romeo and Juliet* as a reading text), I view the lens and structure of the content/text as a separate component. This allows for my proposed lens and structure to be applicable to other content areas. Having said that, there are other forms of content that are lacking in the BC Language Arts IRP (see question three).

The lens and structure of the Sankofa Learning Framework do appear in parts of the IRP, but are limited in terms of process, connectivity and the overall framework of the package. My proposed lens and framework provide a more straightforward and connected approach to the implementation of the core standards that encourages 21st century learning while still valuing core content, such as reading and writing.

Question 3: Do the 4Cs Lens and key elements structure compromise content, with a primary focus on skill development?

For this project, it is not my intent to analyze the content of the Language Arts course, rather the means of delivery and outcomes we should be striving for. Having said that, content and skills are interconnected and require both aspects to be effective curriculum. At present, the IRPs offer a plethora of types of content and possible skills to develop, in correlation to the

proposed content. However, the skills proposed are intermittently developed in the IRPs and the content is quite vague. This allows teachers a means to interpret what reading, writing, viewing, representing and oral language content they will include in their curriculum and the skills they will use to view and develop this content, but leaves a lot of room for omissions, types of content and development strategies, which may not lend itself to purposeful and effective curriculum and instruction.

Types of content that may be omitted, or included, depending on teacher discretion includes, but is not limited to, such things as: culture, globalization, social justice, technology, Indigenous studies, critical literacies and various types of literature. Based on the IRPs there are subtle references to some of these components, such as the inclusion of technology (p. 15), but based on the PLOs, it is not a requirement. If this content was included, the 4Cs lens and key elements structure would lend itself to the study and use of this content; critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication could explore aspects of these content pieces. Further, I view some of this content, such as technology, as a tool to understand the content and assist with skill development.

The lens and structure that I am proposing should not negate or overshadow course content; rather students should use the content to develop skills that can be used with other contexts in the students' lives. "What we know now is that just as facts do not constitute true knowledge and thinking power, so thinking processes cannot proceed without something to think about" (Resnick & Hall, 1998, p.101). So, learning needs to be grounded in some form of content, but the education experience is derived from the learning process, rather than content knowledge. If a curriculum is entirely content-driven and students do not know how to access and engage with the material, it does not matter what the students are learning, they will still be

struggling with how to learn it. Regardless of content, life-long learning skills, such as those that are

continuous, collaborative, self-directed, active, broad in domain, everlasting, positive and fulfilling, and applicable . . . will require changes in the way teachers teach and learners learn, as teachers take on a more facilitative role and learners take more responsibility for setting goals, identifying resources for learning, and reflecting on and evaluating their learning. (Collins, 2009, p. 613)

Life-long learning involves diverse and rich experiences over people's lives; therefore, the skills that they will need to access and understand the content stem from skills that 21st century learning advocates: the ability to communicate, work collaboratively, think critically and embark on creative ventures.

At the root of all the criticism we should ultimately be asking ourselves: what is the goal of education? “If [curriculum] is just picking up a manual, or a series of nonconnected or nonsequenced experiments in science or literary works with no connection and no background knowledge, it's not going to help our kids think any better” (Sawchuck, 2009, para 40). If we want students to be life-long learners who can collaborate with others, express their ideas and develop critical and creative thought, then a framework should provide them with skill-sets to process whatever content they are faced with.

Goals for my Project

The intention for doing my project is not unlike that of Doll, Jr. sifting through the works of Tyler and Dewey, or the discussions of 21st century learning playing a part in BC Education Plan, or Brownlie & Schnellert’s considerations that alternative methodologies can be taken and modified and adapted. My goal is to draw upon features of our current education system, as well

as components of 21st century learning, and consider an alternative framework that will maximize student success. The lessons should be rich and diverse with all elements of the 4 Cs: communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; and creativity and innovation. The structure of short-term and long-term lesson sequences should include a variety of purposeful and engaging high-inference task and open-ended strategies, used during the connecting, processing and transforming stages (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009).

In the next chapter, I will offer a lesson sequence for a *Romeo and Juliet* unit which attempts to illustrate the Sankofa Learning Framework.

Chapter 3

Sankofa Learning Framework unit plan

Subject: English

Grade: 10

Total Time: 15 classes

Overview

Although the IRPs (BC ELA IRP, 2007) provide a framework of outcomes, often the PLOs are viewed as a checklist and do not take into consideration the *Pedagogical Understandings and Considerations for Program Delivery* (BC ELA IRP, 2007) or components of 21st century learning. This is problematic in terms of framework, process and connectivity. The Sankofa Learning Framework offers an alternative approach to purposefully meeting the PLOs while still maintaining the intent of the entire document and incorporating components of 21st century learning. This unit plan consists of series of lesson sequences in a *Romeo and Juliet* unit that provides balance, fluidity and interconnectivity of seven skills and structures in the short term and long term lessons.

Each lesson includes goals, connecting tasks, process tasks and reflections/post tasks, per lesson. At the end of each lesson sequence, there are modifications/extensions that could be used and references to which strategies correlate with each component of the lens. Since the structures of the Sankofa Learning Framework are used in short term and long term sequencing, they are not documented in each individual lesson, rather they, along with the lens, are analyzed in the reflections in chapter four.

This unit plan should be considered as one example of how to infuse the lens and structure into curriculum. While viewing the lesson sequences, the focus should not be on which specific strategies are used or which layering of the 4 Cs occurred, rather how the lens and

structure of the Sankofa Learning Framework can serve to support students' learning and maximize student success in short term and long term lesson sequences.

My intention is to demonstrate one way that this framework could be implemented, since there are a variety of strategies, content, context and lessoning possibilities for implementation. The design of the framework is meant to incorporate rich and diverse experiences of communication, collaboration, critical thinking (and problem solving) and creativity (and innovation) through a flexible, yet supported, structure of open-ended strategies, high inference tasks and scaffolding. These skills encourage students to view learning as a meaningful, social experience that is thoughtful, purposeful and personalized.

Theory to Practice

Listed below are a few samples of the literature that would support this unit plan:

Harris, L. (2010) Delivering, modifying or collaborating? Examining three teacher conceptions of how to facilitate student engagement. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and practice*, 16(1), 131-151.

This study identifies and analyzes the strategies that teachers report using to engage their students. Within the sample group of 20 secondary school English teachers, Harris noted three approaches patterning in the data: delivery, modification and collaboration. Collaborative approaches were learning activities were co-constructed by teachers and students, meant to develop thinking skills. Harris found that among teachers in this category, there was the intention that students would gain critical thinking skills and facilitate deep learning, as well, student ownership of learning would increase.

Wells, G. (2006) Dialogue on the Classroom. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 15(3), 379–428.

When building a classroom community where dialogue can occur it is “worthwhile to devote time to explicit teaching of the social and discursive skills necessary for such dialogue” (p.417) and students will benefit from the co-construction of meaning and understanding. This study explored classrooms that encouraged dialogue with a focus more so on the associated activities. Over the seven-year study it was noted that as teacher-initiation became less prominent in the classroom, there was an increase in student initiation, negotiatory questions, high cognitive demand, student response length and sequences including authentic discussion.

Klinger, J. & Vaughn S. (1999). Promoting reading comprehension, content learning, and english acquisition through collaborative strategic reading (CSR). *The Reading Teacher*, 52(7) 738-748.

Students who worked in settings that promoted social interacting could easily incorporate successful reading strategies and develop proficient use of these strategies to aid reading comprehension. Classrooms that encourage discussion-based social interactions, through a supportive framework, allow students a forum to actively process difficult pieces of text and evolve their understanding. As well, classrooms that foster less teacher-generated thinking and more student-led thinking practices and open exchange of ideas have a strong effect on student's learning and comprehension.

Jonassen, D. & Grabowski, B. (1993). *Handbook of individual differences, learning and instruction*. Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Transformation and personalization of knowledge allows students the ability to be expressive through mediums of choice in order for meaningful, purposeful and authentic learning to transpire. Jonassen and Grabowski (1993) identified the three following fundamental truths of successful learning:

- Learners who command their own learning often master more things than those who rely on being taught.
- Learners have a different sense of themselves, of their time, and what is worth learning and why.
- Learners learn most enjoyably by choosing from a rich array of media, methods, and experiences that mean the most to them.

Kurubacak, G. (2006) Improving critical think skills through online synchronous communications: A study of learners' attitudes toward building knowledge networks *College of Open Education. Turkey: Anadolu University*.

In a study that sought to understand learner's attitude towards online collaborative discussions found that, through the experience, most students were able to improve their critical thinking skills, consider new and opposite ideas and perspectives and guide their own thinking. Metacognition, as well, developed and students demonstrated strong self-reflectivity and a sensitivity to the ideas of their peers. Students found the experience relevant and engaging because they were able to explore diverse points of view through a supportive, yet, flexible framework.

Doering, A & Beach, R. (2001). Co-inquiry approach to learning and using hypermedia. *ERIC report*, 1(2), 314-325.

Exploring different forms of technology in the classroom allows students to choose optional paths to be creative, innovative, critical and collaborative. "Students often respond positively to [digital tools] because it is consistent with their everyday experiences with multi-modal environments that combine images, animation, video,

music, and texts . . . and can also assist in organizing links around central themes of topics in writing instruction” (p. 316). Digital tools assist students with negotiating their knowledge, open communication and exchange of ideas, considering alternative perspectives, and self-reflection on the process.

Konaxis, A. (2000). Fortifying the English Department Curriculum with Literature Enrichment To Heighten Student Learning as Evinced in the Advanced Placement English Program for Senior-Level Students. Ed.D. *Practicum II Report*, Nova Southeastern University.

Literature enrichment activities greatly impacted student’s academic and affective growth, enhanced critical and creative thinking skills, and deepened students’ understanding and appreciation of literature. Konaxis’ research suggest that this understanding and growth of skills occurs when “well-prepared and effectively delivered literature curriculum [creates] a provision of the richest array of instructional activities within a stimulating and engaging environment [that] will enhance and will benefit learning” (p. 26). As well, “curriculum development must satisfy the students’ need for skill-development, knowledge, and enrichment to strengthen academic success” (pp. 26-27) and enhance critical, creative and high-order thinking skills to maximize educational opportunities

Brownlie, F. & Schnellert, L. (2009). *It’s all about thinking: collaborating to support all learners*. Winnipeg, MB: Portage & Main Press

Purposeful and constructive activities link students to their experiences in a supportive way and encourages them to construct meaning and capitalizes on the social and active aspects of learning. Three things need to be taken into consideration: connecting, processing and transforming/personalizing. Connecting strategies allow students to connect to the content and others, as well as access, activate, acquire and build background knowledge and skills. Processing strategies serve to develop and deepen student’s understanding through a range of flexible and open-ended support structures and activities that encourage students to interact with and experience the text. Transforming, or personalizing, strategies allows students to move beyond the traditional structures of recall and basic comprehension by asking them to use the knowledge that they have acquired, make a connection to it and demonstrate their knowledge by transforming the information acquired.

Close, S. (2008; 2011). *Smart Learning*. Retrieved November 12, 2011, from www.smartreading.com

High-inference tasks encourage students to be reflective, link experience, make personal connections, and express and defend their thinking. These tasks anchor students’ thinking because they allow the learner to, through response and analysis, explain connections. They serve to drive the learning and inquiry towards more complex, relevant and connected thinking. Student’s learning is given a purpose, which is motivated by the student inquiry that strives to deepen and develop their knowledge. Given the variety of

paths with which this type of thinking can lead a student, choice plays a critical role in these types of tasks. Moving beyond their ability to simply recall and reproduce information from the text, students are able to engage with and think about the text, using the text as a foundation to their thinking.

Belland, B., Krista E., Glazewski, D., Jennifer, E. & Richardson, C. (2008) A scaffolding framework to support the construction of evidence-based arguments among middle school students *Education Tech Research*, 56, 401–422.

The author explores current research on scaffolding support structures and processes and has developed guidelines for the implementation of scaffolding practices:

- scaffolding should be embedded within a system and students must be readily aware of the scaffold as part of a larger process;
- students need opportunities, at various stages of the learning process, to articulate their thoughts verbally or in a written or a representational manner;
- specific content and intellectual skill-learning goals should assist in framing the learning process with those elements most relevant to the learning goals;
- motivation needs to be considered when constructing scaffolded so that students can see relevance in what they are seeking to accomplish and the use of the clearly-connected structures to accomplish this task;
- scaffolded need to be explicit for students will less prior knowledge;
- and conceptual, strategic and procedural scaffolded need to be developed at all stages of the learning process.

Preparation

This unit is intended to be taught using the Sankofa Learning Framework. Familiarize yourself with the lens and structure of this framework and prepare to incorporate it purposefully into the lesson sequences. It is important to share with your students the significance of learning these skills and with this structure, so they too can familiarize themselves with the learning process.

This specific unit is designed to be incorporated into a grade 10 *Romeo and Juliet* unit. Prior knowledge of the text and connectivity to the lesson sequence is necessary.

This unit requires the use of a computer lab for a few of the lesson sequences; make the appropriate arrangements to have access to a lab for this time. Other parts of the lesson sequence will require access to a computer, internet, projector and a document camera.

Lastly, familiarize yourself with the websites used in the lesson sequences (www.youtube.com; www.prezi.com; and www.blogger.com), in addition to the teaching resources, strategies and implementation material by: AVID; Smart Learning (Close, 2008; 2011); and Brownlie & Schnellert (2009), many of which have been used throughout the lesson sequences.

Unit Plan

Lesson Sequence One

Text piece: Prologue

Lesson: Slam Poetry

Two lessons: Day One

Post Goal(s)

- Understand the prologue text through translation and analysis
- Collaboratively write and present a poem that speaks to themes/content of the play

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk:* Using the title, *Romeo and Juliet*, partners will discuss possible questions they want to know (think about: characters, setting, plot, conflict, theme, etc.)
- A/B partner: share out

Process:

Prologue Translation

- *A/B partner talk:* each partnership is given a line from the prologue and makes an attempt to translate the line
- B share out; students will share out their line and what they think that it meant
- Whole class discussion: what do we think this prologue is about?
- *A/B partner talk:* students will revisit their line and see what validates their thinking and make any necessary changes to their thinking
- With the entire prologue under the document camera (or using an overhead projector) the teacher will now call on the A partners (in order of when their line appears) and ask for a translation.

Structured Reading of Prologue

- Students, in 6 groups, will use AVID's "Critical Reading"
- Each group has a different task: Summarize, Visualize, Connections, Clarify, Questions, Response
- Each group, on a piece of paper, will complete the assigned task
- Groups will share out their critical reading pieces to the class

Mapping out of themes and content

- *A/B partner talk*: students will negotiate three key themes/content pieces that they feel are particularly important in the prologue then share out their key points
- Whole class: students will begin to create a word bank web of their key points
- Then students will begin to create their “Word Wall” that they will add to with each Act and refer back to post-reading (such as, key themes and points, as well as information on characters, setting, conflict, plot, and quotations, etc.).

Reflection:

- *Whip Around*: Students will share out what they feel is the most important theme/content piece and justify their thinking (use of sentence stems, such as: *I think _____ because _____* can provide students a place to house their thinking. As well, stems can be used to extend their thinking, for example, adding: *I am wondering about _____*).

Lesson Sequence One

Text piece: Prologue

Lesson: Slam Poetry

Two lessons: Day Two

Post Goal(s)

- Understand the prologue text through translation and analysis
- Collaboratively write and present a poem that speaks to themes/content of the play

Connecting:

- Whole class: review of yesterday’s themes and content web
- View examples of Slam poetry (i.e. Taylor Mali, Billy Collins, Shan Koyczan, Slam Poetry winners etc.)

Process:

- To understand the themes and content; in groups, students will select a focus from some aspect of the prologue
- Students will need to work collaboratively to come to a consensus as to what their theme/content piece will be
- Then, students will write a poem that speaks to their theme, content choice and their own interests and views.
- Students will be making connections to themes and content. It is not imperative that the text be in Shakespearean English or iambic pentameter, rather that students have a firm grasp of their selected theme/content and are able to portray this in a poem

Post Final Task

- Students will present their group poems
- At the end of each group piece, the other groups will discuss and share out “See-Feel-Think-Notice”

Extensions and Modifications:

- Slam poetry pieces can be written individually and either presented to the class as a whole or workshopped / presented in small groups
- Can also be done/revisited near the end of the unit
- Groups can focus on all 6 aspects of critical reading
- Depending on students' needs, the presentations may be done on a third day.

Sankofa Learning Framework: Lens

Communication:

- A/B partner talk
- Slam Poetry

Collaboration:

- Critical Reading
- Word Wall
- Slam Poetry

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

- Prologue Translation
- Critical Reading
- Identifying themes and Content pieces

Creativity and Innovation:

- Slam Poetry

Lesson Sequence Two

Text: Act One Scene Five

Lessons: Mediums, "Say Something" and Point of View pieces

Two lessons: Day One

Post Goal(s)

- Develop an awareness and critically engage with a variety of representations
- Create a character representation
- Write a point of view piece from the perspective of one of the characters

Connecting:

- Using what we know so far in the play, students in A/B partner talk will complete a prediction "Probable Passage"
- A/B partner talk: share out their prediction pieces as the teacher houses each of the share out pieces on a larger version of a Probable Passage

Process: Structured Reading of Act One Scene Five

- Students will use the sentence prompts for "Say Something" to help guide their thinking

- during the reading of the scene
- *A/B partner talk*: students will discuss and then share out their “Say Something” sentences

Structured Viewing of Act One Scene Five

- Students will view three mediums of the scene (*see modifications and extensions for examples*)
- Students will use the sentence prompts for “Say Something” to help guide their thinking during the viewing of each of the mediums
- *A/B partner talk*: students will discuss and then share out their “Say Something” sentences after each medium viewing

Reflection:

- *Whip Around*: what similarities and differences did you noticed that emerged from the mediums

Lesson Sequence Two

Text: Act One Scene Five

Lessons: Mediums, “Say Something” and Point of View pieces

Two lessons: Day Two

Post Goal(s)

- Develop an awareness and critically engage with a variety of representations
- Create a character representation of Act One Scene Five
- Write a point of view piece from the perspective of one of the characters

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk*: Have students draw character names and share out “What we know about them so far”

Process:

Character Representation

- Divide students into groups and assign each group a character (Romeo, Juliet, Nurse, Lady Capulet, Lady Montague/Montague, Mercutio, Benvolio, Tybalt)
- Students will be draw a representation of what they think that character would look like
- Students will web “Say Something” sentence stems (in role) around the character, providing one example from each category (*Make a prediction; Ask a question; Clarify something; Make a Comment; Make a Connection*)
- Groups will share out their Character representations and justify their thinking

Post Final Task

Point of View Pieces

- Students, individually, will select one of the characters.

- Students will then compose a one page written piece that is written from the point of view of that character.
- Students need to synthesize the events and themes that have emerged so far in the play and respond/analyze their synthesis from the perspective of their character.

Reflection:

Whip Around

- One word to describe your character and explain why
- Make a prediction about what will happen to this character later in the play

Modification and Extensions:

Other examples of mediums

- Youtube/film: Zeffereilli version, modern version, Russian Ballet version, Sealed with a Kiss cartoon version)
- Comic/Graphic novel depictions
- Children's stories

Written pieces

- Point of View pieces can be written by a partner or group
- Written pieces can also be workshopped
- Students can share their written pieces and have other "characters" respond to what they have written

Sankofa Learning Framework: Lens

Communication:

- *A/B partner talk*
- "Say Something" sentence prompts

Collaboration:

- "Say Something" representation
- *A/B partner talk*

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

- "Say Something" sentence prompts
- Whip Around: Similarities and Differences
- Point of View Pieces

Creativity and Innovation:

- Viewing of different mediums
- "Say Something" character representation
- Point of View Pieces

Lesson Sequence Three

Text: Act Two Scene Two

Lessons: Text and Text Messages

Two lessons: Day One

Post Goal(s)

- Use text inserts for reading comprehension
- Analyze portrayals of the ‘balcony scene’
- Use a 21st century tool to assist in comprehension and analysis

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk*: using the Anticipation Guide, students will select one of the statements, explain if they agree or disagree with the statements in the context of the play and justify their thinking

Process:

Structured Reading of Act Two Scene Two

- As students are reading they will code their text using the “Text Inserts” (✓ - + ? !, for example)
- After reading the section, students will form groups to discuss their inserts
- As a group, they will come up with one point for each insert
- Each group will share out their insert points and discuss as a class

Analyze Art Pieces of the Balcony Scene

- Whole class: brainstorm what this scene ought to look like (given information from the text)
- Students will view three different art mediums that represent the moment of the Balcony Scene and how different interpretations affect the “text”
- Analyze Art Pieces (movie posters, painting, still images) of the Balcony
 - Use Quadrant Thinking/Four quadrants to house thinking
 - *A/B partner talk*: share out points from the Quadrant Thinking per art piece

Reflection:

- *Whip Around*: Students will share out a “Text Insert” for one of the Art pieces and justify their thinking

Lesson Sequence Three

Text: Act Two Scene Two

Lessons: Text and Text Messages

Two lessons: Day Two

Post Goal(s)

- Use text inserts for reading comprehension

- Analyze portrayals of the ‘balcony scene’
- Use a 21st century tool to assist in comprehension and analysis

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk:* students will be given an example of a “text message” jargon and asked to explain what they think that it means and how they think that it would be written in Shakespearean English

Process:

Group Analysis

- *A/B partner talk:* students will be given one or two lines from the sonnet between Romeo and Juliet
- Students will attempt to figure out what this would look like in a “modern day” text message
- Share out to class in order as they appear in the text

Partnered Practice

- In partners, student will transcribe the whole passage into modern day text messaging

Post Final Task

- Presentation
- Partners will get into groups and share their text messages; as a group they will select one that they feel best reflects the content and themes of the scene (as well as the play) to share out to the class.

Reflection:

- *Whip Around:* For characters other than Romeo and Juliet, select one “text message” jargon that best represents them and justify your thinking.

Modification and Extensions:

- Use of the Anticipation Guide during Pre-reading, will support this revisiting of the statements
- Art pieces: can be done as a whole class or in small groups with each group being given a different art piece
- Can use other 21st century tools other than text messaging (i.e. Twitter, Facebook status, etc.)
- If you do not have access to the internet, a handout detailing different text messaging jargon would be beneficial

Sankofa Learning Framework: Lens

Communication:

- A/B partner talk
- Text messages

Collaboration:

- Text inserts
- Quadrant Thinking
- Text Messages

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

- Text inserts
- Quadrant Thinking
- Text Message translation

Creativity and Innovation:

- Art Pieces
- Text Messages

Lesson Sequence Four

Text: Act Two Scene Six

Lessons: Characterization

Two lessons: Day One

Post Goal(s):

- Analyze and Synthesize Act Two
- Demonstrate knowledge of characterization
- Write and respond in role
- Demonstrate knowledge through collaborative and high-inference task
- Use a 21st century tool to aid in comprehension and analysis

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk:* select any two characters and complete the ABC's of Comparing and Contrasting sheet
- Discuss and share out what you noticed

Process:

Structured Reading of Act Two Scene Six

- *A/B partner talk:* Synectic Analogous Thinking
 - Students will be given random topics (eg. fruit/vegetable; things you take on a holiday; animals; things you find in the kitchen/bathroom, etc.)
- Using four squares, students will create an abstract analogy for any of the characters so far and justify their thinking (It may help to provide a sentence stem, such as: *[character] is like a [one of the topics] because _____*).
- Students will share out their analogies.

Character brainstorming

- Divide students into partners and assign each group a character (Romeo, Juliet, Nurse,

- Lady Capulet, Capulet, Lady Montague/Montague, Mercutio, Benvolio, Tybalt, Friar)
- On large chart paper, partners will then create a Four-square Characterization of that character using specific references to the text and explaining the significance of each point:
 - What the character says
 - What the character does
 - What is said/done to/about the character
 - Their opinion of the character
 - Students will post their chart paper and do a gallery walk
 - Each partnership will be given sticky notes to comment on other characters four-squares (this can be done either in role or from their own thinking)

Reflection:

- *Whip Around:* Select one quotation from the text that best represents your character and justify your thinking

Lesson Sequence Four

Text: Act Two Scene Six

Lessons: Characterization

Two lessons: Day Two

Post Goal(s)

- Analyze and Synthesize Act Two
- Demonstrate knowledge of characterization
- Write and respond in role
- Demonstrate knowledge through collaborative and high-inference tasks
- Use a 21st century tool to aid in comprehension and analysis

Connecting:

Logographic cues

- Working in their partners, students will construct meaning for their assigned characters using Logographic cues and record their responses on paper
- Using a document camera, students will share out their character Logographic cues to the class and justify their thinking

Process:

Character Blog

- Students will need to create all aspects of the blog first (profile, background, name of blog, etc.)
- Students will then write from the perspective of their character to synthesize and analyze what has happened to far
- Students will then comment on each of the other character's blogs, based on their character's perspective and what the other characters have written on their blogs

Reflection:

- *A/B partner talk*: what would your character be like if they existed in a modern day context

Modification and Extensions:

- Blogger.com works well for Character blogs, but other blog choices (i.e. wordpress.com will also work)
- Character Blogs can also be done through other mediums (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, etc)
- Character blogs can also be scaffolded through the play and used at various intervals
- Synectic Analogous Thinking can vary depending on the prompts given

Sankofa Learning Framework: Lens

Communication:

- A/B Partner talk
- Character Blogs
- Gallery Walk

Collaboration:

- Gallery Walk
- Four-square Characterization
- Synectic Analogous Thinking
- Character Blogs
- ABC's of Comparing and Contrasting

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

- Four-square Characterization
- ABC's of Comparing and Contrasting
- Synectic Analogous Thinking

Creativity and Innovation:

- Logographic cues
- Character Blogs
- Synectic Analogous Thinking

Lesson Sequence Five

Text: Act Three Scene One

Lessons: Questions and Secrets

Two lessons: Day One

Post Goal(s)

- Analyze text using questioning strategies
- Engage in critical and higher-level thinking

- Respond to themes and content through representation

Connecting:

Yarn sociogram

- Taking on the roles of specific characters, one student begins, holding the yarn. Have them unspool it, connect to another character and cut the yarn (these characters are then connected).
- As more characters enter into the sociogram, unspool sections of yarn and connect it to other characters, explaining how they are connected to form a matrix of yarn pieces connecting all the characters together.

Process:

Structured Reading of Act Three Scene One

- *Dialectical Thinking*: stopping at various places in the text and pull out one of the quotations. Using *A/B partner talk*, students will share out their quotation and response (significance, connections, questions, clarifying, predictions etc.)

“Somebody Wanted But So”

- Around the classroom, put up sheets of paper with each of the characters name on them and columns for “Wanted, But and So”
- Have students form small groups and begin with one of the papers. (Benvolio, Mercutio, Tybalt, Romeo, Prince, Lady Capulet, Montague) filling in the column portion for their character
- As students rotate to new papers, they will add another row and complete the WBS portion, adding information different from what has been written before for this new character.
- When students have completed all the characters, each group will take one of the sheets and synthesize the information into a character analysis. Then, share out.

Bloom’s Taxonomy of Questions

- In small groups (ideally, six small groups), students will develop a Level One (Knowledge) question and record it at the top of a large sheet of chart paper, based on themes and content so far in the play (they do not have to answer it at this stage)
- Students will then rotate their paper to another group who will develop a Level Two (Comprehension) question that reflects/builds on the Level One question on the sheet they received
- Rotate the papers until each of the levels of questions are completed (Application; Analysis; Synthesis; Evaluation)
- Students, using chart paper, that house their Level One question and select one question for their Placemat

Placemats

- In groups, students will negotiate their “best question” and record it in the middle

- Students will then:
 - Think: in the triangles, students will complete an individual quick write in response to the question
 - Share: students in the group will discuss their responses
 - Negotiate: students will negotiate 3 key points from their responses
 - Show: groups will share out their responses

Reflection:

- *Whip Around:* students will comment on something that they took away from the Placemaths (what validates, opposed or expanded their thinking)

Lesson Sequence Five

Text: Act Three Scene One

Lessons: Questions and Secrets

Two lessons: Day Two

Post Goal(s)

- Analyze text using questioning strategies
- Engage in critical and higher-level thinking
- Respond to themes and content through representation

Connecting:

Silent Carousel

- Record the Placemats questions from the day before on large chart paper and place them around the classroom (one question per sheet).
- Students will walk around the class and silently respond to each of the questions. When arriving at a paper, student will record their response, pass the pen to the next member and so forth. When the trio is done at one paper, they will move to the next and continue, silently.
- Afterwards students will return to their question from the previous day, summarize the responses and present it to the class.

Process:

Secrets

- *A/B partner talk:* brainstorm with students: why do people keep secrets? Levels and types of Secrets? Causes? Effects?
- *A/B partner talk:* students will discuss and share out “secrets” that they notice in the text and what they feel may be the causes and effects

Post Secrets

- Show students examples of “Post Secrets” (Youtube and Frank Warren’s book), explain the back-story and give students an open forum for response
- *A/B partner talk:* students will select one of the characters in the book and describe what their “post secret” would say and look like.

Post Final Task:

- Give students a large blank cue card. Explain that this is their blank “post card”.
- Students will then create their own post secrets to be put on a collaborative wall. Teacher should have an envelope for students to secretly put their “post secrets” in. Once posted, allow students an opportunity to view the wall of post secrets.

Reflection:

- *Whip Around:* Students will re-examine a character and their “secret” and respond to how they think this secret has/will affect the course of the play.

Modification and Extensions:

- SWBS can be done as a whole class brainstorm
- Depending on time, students can write a response piece based on any of the Questions that were posed using Bloom’s Taxonomy or cut the questions out, distribute one to each student and have them share out the question and their answer
- Costa’s Three Level Questions can also be used.
- Students can write a memoir or poem in response to their post secret, but this would depend on the classroom community.

Sankofa Learning Framework: Lens:

Communication:

- A/B Partner Talk
- Silent Carousel
- Placemats
- Yarn Sociogram

Collaboration:

- Yarn sociogram
- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Placemats
- “Somebody Wanted But So”

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Placemats
- “Somebody Wanted But So”
- Yarn Sociogram

Creativity and Innovation:

- Post Secret

Lesson Sequence Six

Text: Act Five Scene Three

Lessons: Who is to blame? Debate and Prezi: the Alternative to the Essay

Three lessons: Day One

Post Goal(s):

- Synthesize, Analyze and Discuss the themes and content of the play
- Engage collaboratively in critical and higher-level thinking
- Pose an inquiry question to drive high-inference task and student directed inquiry
- Engage with 21st century tool to write an essay
- Work collaboratively in writing workshops
- Communicate and discuss in a structured forums

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk*: Students will select important thing so far in the play and discuss:
 - “What?” (Important fact, quote, events, character, etc.);
 - “So what?” (explain the important);
 - “Now What?” (Explain how the fact connects to quality of life; what else should we be thinking about)

Process:

Structured Reading of Act Five Scene Three

- As students are reading they will code their text using the “Text Inserts” (√ - + ? !)
- After reading the section, students will independently “code” their text
- Individuals will share their information in a small group information circle
- Groups will then synthesize their discussion to three key points to share out with the class

Rotating roles Philosophical Chairs

- Students will be assigned the role of one of the following: Romeo, Juliet, Friar, Nurse, Fate/Destiny, Parents, Feud
- Using specific references to content in the play, each group will create an argument for their “side”
- Students will elect one speaker per small group (this will be just to start, since the remaining two can rotate into the speaking position, the alternative character role or the HOT seat)
- The structure of the philosophical chairs will vary, but, given the rotating roles, allow time for small group debriefing
 - For example, allow each person 2-3 minutes to give their opening response, then allow small groups to “touch base” and confirm, reject or add new details/rebuttal points to their repertoire. Then allow each group a 2 minute platforms for rebuttal questions (which they can direct at any other small group and the group must try to answer). Allow for a debrief of small groups, then allow for a round of last minute, final thought.
 - This initial structure can segue into a more open discussion.
 - As well, there should be two open seats for other students to jump into (Character

seat for alternative characters and students that want to slip into another role for the time being; as well as a HOT seat where students can jump out of the role and comment/question on their own accord)

- The goal of this is not for students to come to a consensus on who is to blame, but for students to be engaged with varying different perspectives

Reflection:

- *Quick Write:* at the end of class students will respond to “Who/What is most to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet?” This does not have to be based on the group that they were a part of for the discussion

Lesson Sequence Six

Text: Act Five Scene Three

Lessons: Who is to blame? Debate and Prezi: the Alternative to the Essay

Three lessons: Day Two

Post Goal(s)

- Analyze text using questioning strategies
- Engage in critical and higher-level thinking
- Respond to themes and content through representation

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk:* students will revisit their Quick Write and discuss their stance with their partners; then share out
- Whole class: brainstorm criteria for “what makes a good essay” (this will be modified on the third day)

Process:

Brainstorming

- Students will then create a thesis statement that best represents their stance. Teachers may want to consider sentence stems to assist with students that may be struggling (for example: _____ is responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet because _____).
- Students will brainstorm three to five key points that emerge from their thesis
- Additionally, they must also include specific reference points from the play for support and explain the significance of these points. (A web or graphic organizer would work to house their thinking).

Small group workshop discussion

- Students will form small groups and share out their thesis and structural elements of their “essay” (examples, explanation of examples, etc.)
- The small group discussion gives students a forum to respond to comments and questions from the group, in addition to posing comments and questions to help shape their Prezi.

Project and Teacher conference

- Students will begin “Prezi” (computer and access to the internet needed; prezi.com)

- Students ought to touch base once one-on-one with the teacher while they are working on their Prezi
- *Depending on the scope of the project, students may require another day to work on the project before the presentation day*

Reflection:

- *Whip Around:* have students reflect on the process of using a Prezi, rather than writing a traditional essay (for example, what they liked? Didn't like? What works well? What are they finding problems with?). This may also provide students with a chance to troubleshoot or offer alternative ideas.

Lesson Sequence Six

Text: Act Five Scene Three

Lessons: Who is to blame? Debate and Prezi: the Alternative to the Essay

Three lessons: Day Three

Post Goal(s):

- Analyze text using questioning strategies
- Engage in critical and higher-level thinking
- Respond to themes and content through representation

Connecting:

- As a class, develop criteria for “what makes a good Prezi” (this criteria should be student-driven in its development, with some input from the teacher; they should keep in mind while they are viewing the other Prezis and considering their own)
- Students may need an opportunity to make additional changes to their prezi

Process:

Partnered Presentations

- Students will need an opportunity to sit one-one-one with a partner and walk them through their prezi, both being able to provide comments and questions during the demonstration.
- Students switch partners and continue demonstrations in a more informal presentation mode (small partnership discussions) that talks about the project and the criteria

Reflection:

Gallery Walk

- Allow students an opportunity to view the remaining project; an open gallery walk forum will allow students to move around the classroom/computer lab and interact with students' Prezis

Personal Reflection

- Students will write a brief reflection piece and self-evaluate their presentations based on the criteria created at the beginning of the class.

Modifications and Extensions:

- Philosophical Chairs can be modified: a debate, fishbowl discussion, jigsaw, small group discussion, or presentation
- As well, it can be less structured by not assigning roles and having an open discussion
- Prezi topics do not have to come out of the Philosophical Chair discussion; they can be other final questions posed by the teacher or created by the student(s)
- Prezi can be done individually, partnered or in small groups
- If there is not access to the internet, this task can be modified as a ‘One-pager’
- Presentation can be done as a Carousel, Gallery Walk, full class or small group presentation, stations, etc.
- Students will have experience with the coding aspect; the information circle enhances this task

Tools: This task will require access to computers and the internet to access prez.com and during the presentations

Sankofa Learning Framework: Lens

Communication:

- Philosophical Chairs
- A/B Partner Talk
- Prezi
- Workshop/conference
- Reflection

Collaboration:

- Criteria building
- Philosophical Chairs
- workshop/conference

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

- Criteria building
- Prezi
- Workshop/conference

Creativity and Innovation:

- Philosophical Chairs
- Prezi

Lesson Sequence Seven

Text: Post-reading

Lesson: Representation projects

Two lessons: Day One

Post Goal(s):

- Engage in student-directed inquiry and high-inference task
- Transpose knowledge to create a representation of the themes/content of the play
- Discuss and present project using ‘moving circles’ framework

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk*: students will brainstorm and discuss which aspect of the play (plot, setting, characters, theme, conflict, etc.) stood out for them and justify their thinking – they can use the word wall as reference, or things that came out of the Philosophical Chairs or the Prezi

Process:

Brainstorming

- Students will take their idea from the *A/B partner talk* and record it in the middle of the sheets.
- Students will then brainstorm themes and specific pieces of content from the play that would marry well to the topic chosen.
- Students will then look at the Representation Project handout sheet for possible examples of Representation projects (but they are not limited to this sheet) that might be able to draw out themes and content (both in terms of the Elizabethan Age and modern Digital age)
- Students will then create a thesis statement for their project (the style and subject matter of the project ought to support and extend the thesis statement)

Small group workshop discussion

- Students will form small groups and share out their thesis and how/why they plan to create their project; the small group discussion gives students a forum to respond to comments and questions from the group, in addition to posing comments and questions to help shape their project.

Representation Project

- Students will, using their thesis statement as well as the style and subject matter of their project to begin creating their Representation Project
- Students ought to touch base once one-on-one with the teacher while they are working on the project
- *Depending on the scope of the project, students may require another day to work on the project before the presentation day*

Reflection:

- *Whip Around*: one thing you particularly like about where your project is going and one thing you may need to work on.

Lesson Sequence Seven

Text: Post-reading

Lesson: Representation projects

Two lessons: Day Two

Post Goal(s):

- Engage in student-directed inquiry and high-inference task
- Transpose knowledge to create a representation of the themes/content of the play
- Discuss and present project using ‘moving circles’ framework
- Reflect on their process and understanding of the play

Connecting:

- *A/B partner talk*: Students, referring to the Word Wall, will negotiate one of the words that they feel best represents their project and share out

Process:

Roving Circles

- Students will use the moving circles framework to present their projects. Half the class will form a circle, facing out, and the other half of the class partners with someone from the inside circle.
- Each partnership will then share out information about their project (thesis, how and why they chose to represent that thesis in their project and what they want the other students to ‘notice’ about their project). This also gives an opportunity for the other students to comment/question on the project.
- Once both partnerships have had an opportunity to share out, students on the outside ring will rotate to the left. It is not necessary to have students share out to everyone, if a gallery walk is used at the end of class.

Carousel

- Allow students an opportunity to explore and engage with all the projects. They will move around the classroom (re-engaging with projects they really liked/understood and exploring other projects that they haven’t seen yet).
- Students will each be given a dozen “sticky notes”; they should record questions/comments about the projects and leave them with/on the projects.

Reflection:

- *Exit slip*: students will use the comments/questions on the sticky notes to write a brief reflection piece that chronicles:
 - Where the idea developed?
 - What was the process like to develop the project?
 - Views on the final project?
 - Respond to questions and comments?

Modifications and Extensions:

- Representation projects do not have to be a final task; they can be done during the course of the play on a smaller level (possibly even in groups to create a representation board as the play develops – as well, the class could be divided in half, with one board for Montagues and one board for Capulets; their ongoing representation projects will reflect this)
- Projects can be presented in alternative ways, such as a Carousel, Gallery Walk, full class or small group presentation, stations, etc.

Sankofa Learning Framework: Lens

Communication:

- Roving Circles
- Carousel
- A/B Partner Talk
- Representation Project
- Workshop/conference
- Reflection

Collaboration:

- workshop/conference
- roving circles

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

- Workshop/conference
- Representation project
- Reflection

Creativity and Innovation:

- Representation Project

Chapter 4

Reflections

Reflections on focusing my project

In retrospect, when I first set out to start this project I was a little overzealous in terms of what I hoped to accomplish and how I would go about doing it. It took me a substantial period of time to determine even from what angle I would approach 21st century learning. I found that I was using many of the components of 21st century learning in my own teaching and the announcement in October of the new BC Education Plan (2011) could not have been timelier. Researching the articles that had to do with the roots of this reform led me to the meeting of the two Abbotts: John and George. Further, the more that I inquired into 21st century learning, the more John Abbott's name emerged. I felt as though I had come full circle from Abbott being in my classroom many months earlier to his prominence in this current educational shift. The research that I found seemed to settle around current BC curriculum trends, John Abbott's role in 21st century learning and in the Partnership for 21st Century Learning framework.

However, looking beyond these areas of 21st century learning, I was hard pressed to find specific scholarly research about 21st century learning. However, using the lens and structure of my proposed framework gave me avenues to explore associated research. Although I set out looking for current scholarly research, I stumbled across a final report (Miller, 1970) about a humanities program that had attempted to provide an alternative curriculum; it was inspiring, humbling and disheartening, all at once, to read about this experience. I was in awe of a school that would encourage students in their final year of high school to take part in this experience, which wielded such positive results; humbled by what a large undertaking this was; and

disheartened because it was forty years later and this type of learning experience was still far too rare.

In order to understand why I felt my proposed framework was even necessary, I needed to go further back in educational reform. Scouring through textbooks on curriculum and pedagogical history, you almost always come back to Dewey (1929): learning should be an active, social and organic experience. As a foundation principle, I tried to keep this in mind as I was building the lesson sequences.

Tyler's (1949) belief that key objectives should be used as the basis of pedagogy in educational practice was a good idea, but it did not transition well to effective implementation; 21st century learning seemed to mirror this broad, pedagogical approach. I wanted to build my lesson sequence with elements of 21st century learning, but I was not sure how to structure it.

Seeing how Doll viewed Tyler's rationale in terms of his 4 Rs gave me a clearer focus for how I could view 21st century learning in terms of the 4 Cs. Doll's interest in creating a curriculum that was not fixed or predefined, rather purposeful, flexible and fluid, using the 4 Rs as his anchor (1971; 1993), seemed to highlight for me what was significant when considering the umbrella of 21st century learning.

When first viewing the Partnership for 21st Century Learning's framework, I realized that the 4 Cs component (communication; collaboration; critical thinking and problem solving; as well as, creativity and innovation) was essentially the heart of 21st century learning; life and career skills, core subjects and information, media and technology skills appeared a little extraneous, as these outcomes and support systems wove in naturally. The unit plan was for an English course, so the core subjects of reading and writing were quite apparent given that they were also a part of the PLOs. I was already incorporating the development of information, media

and technology skills into my own lessoning planning, largely because I had access to a computer lab and wanted students to be able to make use of the technology, but also because I was drawing upon media and technology as texts and teachable resources. Further, if purposefully and effectively implemented, life and career skills seemed to emerge through the development of the 4 Cs anyway, such as: initiative and self-direction, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility.

Using the lens of the 4 Cs gave me a foundation for how to approach my lesson sequences. By focusing on seven lessons in a literature unit, I had initially wanted to have three lessons that encompassed all the 4 Cs and four more lessons that focused on one of the particular skills. While developing the lesson sequences it became clear that this was going to be problematic; the 4 Cs, inadvertently, found their way into the other lesson sequences. So, the seven lesson sequences became all about the incorporation of collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity skills; the connectivity of these skills were so engrained that it was difficult to isolate any one of them.

When first trying to implement the 4 Cs into each lesson sequence, I struggled a bit with how I would structure the lesson because I did not want one quarter of each class dedicated to one of the skills; even if they were done in one lesson they would still be done in isolation. Developing a lesson sequence that would purposefully and effectively implement the 4 Cs required a flexible and non-linear structure. This would allow teachers to guide student's learning, but not in a constrained way.

Looking back over the last seven years of teaching, I noticed that my interest in different curriculum and instruction strategies seemed to ebb and flow. Although I was constantly trying new things, I found that kept coming back to many of the strategies of 21st century learning,

Smart Learning (Close 2008; 2011), AVID (AVID, n.d) and Brownlie & Schnellert (2009). Not only did many of these strategies complement each other, but many of them seemed to overlap in intention – Close’s A/B partner talk and AVID’s think—pair—share, for example. The strategies that seemed most effective and engaging in my own classroom were open-ended and high-inference. I also found it imperative that the skills associated with the strategy be scaffolded. The lens and structure of my proposed framework emerged from the seven components that I found worked well within my own classroom, seemed supported by research and just made the most sense to me as thoughtful practices. In the next section, I will reflect the lens and structure in terms of the process of developing these components in the lesson sequence and, through this process, what I found to be the key points with regards to each of these components.

Reflections on the lens and structure of the Sankofa framework

Communication.

Communication is at the crux of all my lesson sequences. Whether oral, written or digital, students need to communicate their thinking; this is at the foundation of learning (Alexander, 2004; Do & Schallert, 2004; Galloway & Lasley, 2010). Communication skills need to be developed through a supportive and structured frame from the onset, through the process and at the end of the lesson sequences (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Lloyd, 2004; Metzger, 1998; Wells, 2006). This can be done in partners, small groups, whole-class settings or one-on-one conferencing, but students need a forum to articulate their thinking, regardless of the stage in the lesson sequence. The art of communication requires a community to practice and develop these skills and extend student’s thinking, but ought to be student-driven so that students could play an active role.

Having students simply “discuss” is not enough; students need to acquire the foundational communication skills. Students need to practice these skills during the lesson sequencing; building on foundational communication strategies acquired, students will continue to develop and refine their communication while engaging with the text. Lastly, communication practices need to be carried through an entire lesson sequence to allow students an opportunity to transform and personalize their thinking, articulate their knowledge and listen to the experiences of others.

While developing my lesson sequences, I became highly aware of how communicative practices were critical components to my lesson sequencing. They provided the platform for thinking at the beginning of the lesson, became a tool for negotiating and deepening thinking during the process of the lesson and provided a way to ground students at the end of the lesson and reflect on what we had learned. For example, in lesson sequence one, students engage with A/B partner talk from the onset. As the lesson develops students negotiate and demonstrate their understanding of the prologue, as well as the larger themes and content, through structured communication practices that still allow plenty of room for individual interpretations.

Communication practices were developed through all of the lesson sequences, using a variety of strategies and platforms. As students become proficient with certain strategies, I was able to introduce them to more complex communication forums, such as Philosophical Chairs, because they had acquired and practiced the skills necessary to engage in a larger discussion practice. Further, at the root of these communication skills was students’ ability to take a stance on their own thinking and justify it; such as the Prezi in lesson sequence six, the representation projects in lesson seven and the use of A/B partner-talk (Close 2008; 2011) throughout the unit plan.

The size of the groups was constantly shifting: from individual share outs and conferencing, to partnered discussion, to small groups, to larger groups and whole-class experiences. The layering of these practices allowed students to become comfortable with each other and set a standard for how some of the knowledge was shared. Moreover, it gave students different entry points for how they could communicate their thinking because it was not limited to one particular structure.

Lastly, I tried to find a reasonable balance between oral, written, and digital communication practices. Much of the oral communication was built into various parts of daily lesson sequences to help students develop, process and transform their knowledge. I tried to incorporate written communication practices that built on what students could process during oral exchanges and were constructed both individually and collaboratively, such as the point of view pieces in lesson sequence two and the slam poetry in lesson sequence one. Given that 21st century learning should make use of 21st century tools, I wanted to incorporate communication that made use of these tools without saturating the lesson sequence with their use. The text messages in lesson sequence three gave students a chance to transform their knowledge using tools that they were most likely familiar with, whereas the character blogs in lesson sequence four and the Prezi in lesson sequence six encouraged students to engage with digital media that they, perhaps, were not as proficient with. As well, the character blogs provided students with a specific forum to engage in online communication with their peers, which allowed room for individual interpretation while contributing to the collaborative learning experiences of others.

Collaboration.

The nature of effective collaboration requires that students demonstrate an awareness of collaborative learning; skills that students acquire through this practice include respect;

community-building; a willingness to compromise; shared responsibility; developing, negotiating and transforming knowledge together to achieve a common goal, and recognizing the importance of individual contributions to the collaborative work (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Harris, 2010).

Used effectively, collaboration is both a part of the process of acquiring and making sense of information and the product of the student's experience. Additionally, the onus of the task resides with the students, more so than the teacher, as the students are the ones collaborating. If students are actively participating in collaborative learning, they are able to confirm, change and extend their thinking through the experience, which individual learning does not encourage.

When incorporating collaborative practices into my lesson sequences I tried to infuse them at various stages of the learning process. I wanted to provide students with opportunities to work together not simply for the sake of "working in groups", rather to assist in their thinking and as a medium for demonstrating their knowledge. For example, the primary focus of lesson sequence four was characterization; students developed their knowledge collaboratively through A/B partner talk, brainstorming, representation and the character blogs themselves.

Additionally, I wanted collaboration to be more than just personalized discussion; I wanted students to work together to deepen and demonstrate their knowledge. Therefore, I tried to incorporate a blend of collaboration during structured reading, such as questioning practices in lesson sequence five and activities outside of the reading itself. For example, the poetry slam in lesson sequence one encouraged students to work together on a common task that required more than just negotiating their thinking. As well, although the Philosophical Chairs in lesson

sequence six was discussion-driven, it allowed for students to move beyond their own perspectives and engage collaboratively while in role.

Critical thinking and problem solving.

Learning in the 21st century has less to do with simply recalling information and more to do with thinking critically about it. In order for students to extend their thinking, the teacher needs to provide opportunities for this to occur as well as ensure that students have the support structures to develop critical thinking skills. If students are to be successful in developing these skills, they need to engage with authentic and relevant texts and structures that will allow for this type of thinking to occur: the ability to reason effectively; use systems thinking; make judgments and decisions; and problem solve. This approach involves students being able to synthesize and analyze texts; take into account varying arguments and perspectives; make connections; practice questioning and oral-dialogical thinking practices; interpret texts and their own understanding; and reflect on the process, product and their own thinking (Konaxis, 2000; Kurubacak, 2006; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2011).

When developing critical thinking components in my lesson sequence, I found that it became imperative to shift the focus from teacher-led to student-led, so that the students would have an opportunity to comment and question from their own vantage points. The dialogical thinking that I wanted students to engage in had to be motivated by what the students wanted to know in order to be authentic and purposeful. For example, the questioning component in lesson sequence five is built around the student's questions, not the teacher's. It encourages students to interpret the texts and their own thinking through a critical lens. Often the closing of the class revolves around reflective components that give students a chance to ground their thinking for the day and position themselves.

The critical thinking components were engrained in all aspects of the lesson sequence, from processing of knowledge at the beginning of class, through the structured reading and from post-tasks. The last three lesson sequences--Philosophical Chairs, Prezi and representation projects--are built on the foundation of knowledge that students have acquired, but encourage students to demonstrate high-order, creative and critical thought. Without the necessary background information, students may find this difficult, but if properly supported, they can be an effective way for students to understand, negotiate and demonstrate their thinking and the thoughts of others.

Creativity and Innovation.

In my teaching experience, not all teachers deem creative and innovative skills worthy of inclusion in a classroom. However, these skills provide students with an opportunity to process and demonstrate their understanding through an alternative medium. Students need an opportunity to transform and personalize their thinking and, if this is to be an enriching experience, requires that they are given room to be creative with their interpretations.

As Jonassen and Gabowski (1993) stress, students who make their learning personal and relevant stand a better chance of being successful. Students who are given more choice and control over their learning process – so that it aligns more closely to their learning styles and needs – have a greater understanding of the text, themselves and their own thinking. As well, given the diversity of creative experiences that students can be willing to participate in and demonstrate knowledge through, there is a lot of flexibility with tools and practices to use: drama, song, art, dance, digital media, critical literacies, and writing to name a few.

Because this skill development is a little more abstract than some other forms of skill development, students may not have the necessary background information or experience to

maneuver through this lens. The role of the teacher is to provide students with opportunities to acquire and develop their creative thinking, in addition to offering platforms that encourage students to transform and demonstrate this skill set. This approach will require teachers to model these practices and engage students in a variety of creative mediums to build the student's repertoire of experiences.

Creative and innovative thought are scaffolded through the lesson sequences. Students are encouraged to represent their knowledge in a way that may be different than they typically are asked to. For example, rather than simply responding through oral or written practices, lesson sequence four asks students to create logographic cues, thus transforming their knowledge into a visual representation. As well, creative skills allow students to make personal connections to the text that recall and comprehension strategies typically do not allow for, such as lesson sequence five that asked students to develop their own Post Secret.

In terms of a larger creative task, lesson sequence eight is highly focused on students' sharing their thinking through a creative medium. When students are given a choice as to how they can demonstrate this knowledge, they are better able to transform and personalize their experience with the text. They can approach it through a lens that is relevant to them, through a medium that they find comfortable or challenging; but, regardless, shows what students were able to 'take away' from their learning.

Open-ended strategies.

Building a curriculum framework around open-ended strategies shifts the focus from the teacher being the 'vessel of knowledge' to a member of a community of practice (Wenger, 2006). Open-ended strategies must be supportive, but lend themselves to the larger frame of the lesson sequences. As Brownlie & Schnellert (2009) suggest, for these strategies to be successful,

when developing short-term and long-term lessons, students to connect, process and transform/personalize their thinking.

Given the range of strategies, there is room to modify and adapt the practices to best scaffold the lessons towards common goals. In order to be effective, the strategies must be purposeful and relevant in implementation, as well as structured to allow students a chance to engage with and become proficient with using these practices. These strategies allow students to develop and deepen their thinking.

Open-ended strategies grounded and provided an effective framework for the development of my lesson sequences. Every lesson opened and closed with an open-ended strategy that encouraged students to connect, process and transform their thinking. The strategies that I have included are only a few possible strategies that teachers can use. As well, they can be implemented with other texts and in other courses because of their open-ended nature.

I made a concerted effort to scaffold the strategies within singular lesson sequences and as part of the larger framework. For example, in lesson sequence two, open-ended strategies began with a more vague inquiry into the background knowledge that students has about characters, continuing through open-ended strategies that allowed students to process their understanding – using character representations to ground the task, to post tasks that encouraged students to transform this knowledge in an open-ended medium (point of view pieces and character blogs). This approach encouraged students to step away from a ‘right’ answer and view the content through their own interpretations.

High-inference tasks.

High-inference tasks provide a sense of purpose to frame lessons (Close, 2008; 2011). With this in mind, all the other facets of the lesson sequences, such as content and skills, scaffold

towards this outcome. Students, then, see relevance to what and how they are learning in class because of this connectivity. High-inference tasks push students towards more complex, relevant and connected thinking. Rather than merely demonstrate what they can recall and comprehend, these tasks give students an opportunity to deepen, develop and transform their thinking. Giving students a choice in these tasks means that students can showcase what they know, rather than what they think the teacher wants them know.

When developing the lesson sequencing I tried to scaffold what we did in individual lessons to build towards a smaller high-inference tasks, and scaffolding the entire lesson sequences to larger high-inference post tasks. For example, on day two of lesson sequence three, students acquired the background knowledge of text messaging lingo and the content of the scene for interpretation. Knowing that they would be transforming this knowledge into a large text-message representation provided a sense of purpose as to what the skills and content were going to be used for.

In terms of the post-high-inference task of Philosophical Chairs, students were able to draw on the content knowledge that they had acquired over the course of the unit and the skills that they had developed during practices that allowed them to look at differing perspectives and apply it to the Philosophical Chairs that required them to take a stance from a particular perspective and justify why it would be viewed that way by that character. Several of the strategies that students engaged in served to deepen their understanding of the content in order for them to transform this knowledge at the end of the course of study.

Scaffolding.

Scaffolding is a critical part of lesson sequences. Scaffolding is not about repetition: it is a structure that serves to deepen and develop student's understanding and abilities by revisiting

past experiences and applying them to future experiences. As Doll (1993) noted with his idea of recursion, for students to build on acquired knowledge and further develop skills, they need to be constantly falling back on what they know and can do.

The guided support of scaffolding requires that the teacher's role is more pronounced at the beginning, but, as students become more proficient with the content and skills, the role of the teacher is minimized in favor of a more student-directed approach.

The scaffolding of skill development and content knowledge is of equal importance. Content scaffolding allows students a chance to begin constructing knowledge from a level vantage point and deepen their understanding of the text over the course of the unit. Skill scaffolding gives students an opportunity to experience and develop the skills they need to understand the content. This scaffolding, whether for skills or content, needs to occur in daily lessoning and through the larger lesson sequences.

I tried to find an appropriate balance of scaffolding in individual lesson sequences as well as part of the long-term lessons. By continually coming back to what we had learned students could then extend their thinking. In the characterization lesson, for example, students needed an opportunity to review what they knew about characters before they could assume the role of a character effectively. Similarly, the Prezi would be most effective when students could build their knowledge and experiences over the entire unit because it asks them to synthesize what they know and analyze their own thinking; without scaffolding towards this, they may not have the background necessary to successfully complete this task.

In order to understand the complexity of how open-ended strategies could be infused into curriculum, I propose the following matrix (see Figures) that, regardless of the strategies, encourages students to create/develop, practice, demonstrate and respond to elements of the

strategy, during multiple stages of the learning process, through different lens that may or may not be used in conjunction with one another.

Therefore, to use the matrix, teachers should select one box per column so as to complete the following open-ended strategy outcome: students are encouraged to [create/develop, practice, demonstrate or respond to] [the specific open-ended strategy used] during the [connecting, processing, and transforming/personalizing] stage through [one of the four lenses]. Depending on the strategy, when, why and how students engage with it will vary. For example, if the strategy was questioning practices, having students develop questions, during the processing stage, through collaboration yields different reasons and results in its implementation than if students are responding to questions during the connecting stage using critical thinking and problem solving. The reason that I chose to incorporate this figure was two-fold: a) it developed as a way for me to understand the complexity of how, why and when to use open-ended strategies and b) it can provide a systematic way for teachers to approach this same complexity.

Reflections on what I've learned

I've gained an understanding as to why some teachers may feel overwhelmed by trying to implement 21st century learning practices into their curriculum and instruction, let alone tackling the framework. The 21st century learning framework, proposed by the Partnerships for 21st Century Learning, is daunting upon first glance. Taking into consideration all the content goals and the support structures seems like such an arduous and complex task that this process helped me gain a better perspective as to why teachers would seemingly 'shut down' and just abandon trying to incorporate any aspect of 21st century learning, outside of what they may be doing in their own classrooms. As well, unless you had a sense of what you were looking for specifically, there are few examples of 'good practices' that encompass an entire lesson sequence; practices

are presented in isolation and it becomes up to the teacher to see where they can be included and how they fit into 21st century learning.

I became very conscious of the effect the 4 Cs lens was having on my teaching paradigm; through the sequence development a lot of what I was already doing in my classroom became validated, but I was also able to extend my repertoire of thoughtful practices as I researched. Developing the lessons with this particular focus gave me a good insight on how I was managing my class time and ensuring that I was implementing a diverse scope of skill development. I was already incorporating facets of the 4 Cs into my lessons, but they were more done as isolated practices; the process of developing these lesson sequences gave me a clearer understanding of how this could be done within the breadth of an entire unit of study. Upon completing my lesson sequences, I have an even stronger belief that this proposed framework would greatly benefit students' learning.

Returning to Miller's Report (1970), the goal of that program was to make learning significant, relevant, and personal. Its aim was not predetermined but somewhere between the artificial nature of traditional educational and how students will learn now and over the course of their lives was a structure that would allow students to be thoughtful, active and purposeful learners. A shift in the educational paradigm is needed to best meet the needs of today's students. My proposed framework encourages possibilities for how and why this reform can occur. Focusing on the 4 Cs of 21st century learning can provide a purposeful and flexible lens with which to view content and skill development in curriculum and instruction. Open-ended strategies, scaffolding and high-inference serve as a possible structure to implement the 4 Cs. The framework is one interpretation of what I view as thoughtful curriculum development, but it is open for teachers to modify, adapt and change.

Future Plans

The completion of this process does not signify the end of the Sankofa Learning Framework. My intention is to continue to develop these skills and structures within my own curriculum, specifically: designing a new *Romeo and Juliet* unit with the same framework, but incorporating different strategies; as well, the lens and structure is fluid and flexible enough that I would like to transpose it to other language arts curriculum pieces and explore other lesson sequences. I hope to be able to develop my use of the framework so that it becomes a more regular part of my teaching practices.

Further, I hope to use this framework with two upcoming collaborative inquiry projects. The first project is one that I am currently involved with, but becomes more in-depth in the upcoming semester. Leyton Schnellert is working with teachers and administrators in our district to develop lesson sequences that stems from much of the work in his book, *It's all about thinking: Collaborating to support all learners* (Brownlie & Schnellert, 2009). My part in this project is to create a lesson sequence for an English 11 pre-AP course. Other teachers from my school will also be creating lesson sequences, but we have the same goal in mind: how to use open-ended strategies to engage students and develop their thinking skills. Given that Schnellert's book influenced some of my framework, specifically the open-ended strategies, I am hoping to be able to apply my proposed framework to the creation of this lesson sequence.

Creating lesson sequences in a similar manner to how I chronicled the *Romeo and Juliet* unit for this project, our goal is to use the Sankofa Learning Framework to develop lesson sequences in science and modern language curriculums. Our goal is to create a teachable resource that teachers from our school could use, which documents my proposed framework, but demonstrates how it could be applied to any type of curriculum.

Conclusion

Completing the course work for my Masters' program and developing this project has had a strong impact on my own teaching pedagogy and practices. I have acquired many resources and strategies that I have been able to use in my classroom. I have a foundation for why educational reform is necessary and a basis for how I can create this shift on my own terms, while still working within our current education system. I would like to be able to take my proposed framework and the experience of developing it to advocate for curriculum changes. I hope that my future plans will allow me to begin this shift at a school and district level. I believe that the lens --- communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity and innovation – and the structure – open-ended strategies, high-inference tasks and scaffolding – of my proposed framework will benefit educators and will wield positive results for students.

Figures

Figure 1 is the blank template of the open-ended strategies matrix. Figures 2 to 5 provide examples of various ways that questioning practices—one type of open-ended strategies—can be incorporated into a lesson plan. Although these examples are based on the use of questioning practices as a form of open-ended strategies, it shows how the matrix could be used for other types of open-ended strategies. Essentially, the matrix provides a way to incorporate open-ended strategies into all aspects of the learning process while encourages a range of skill development; students are encouraged to [create/develop, practice, demonstrate or respond to] [the specific open-ended strategy used] during the [connecting, processing, and transforming/personalizing] stage through [one of the four lenses].

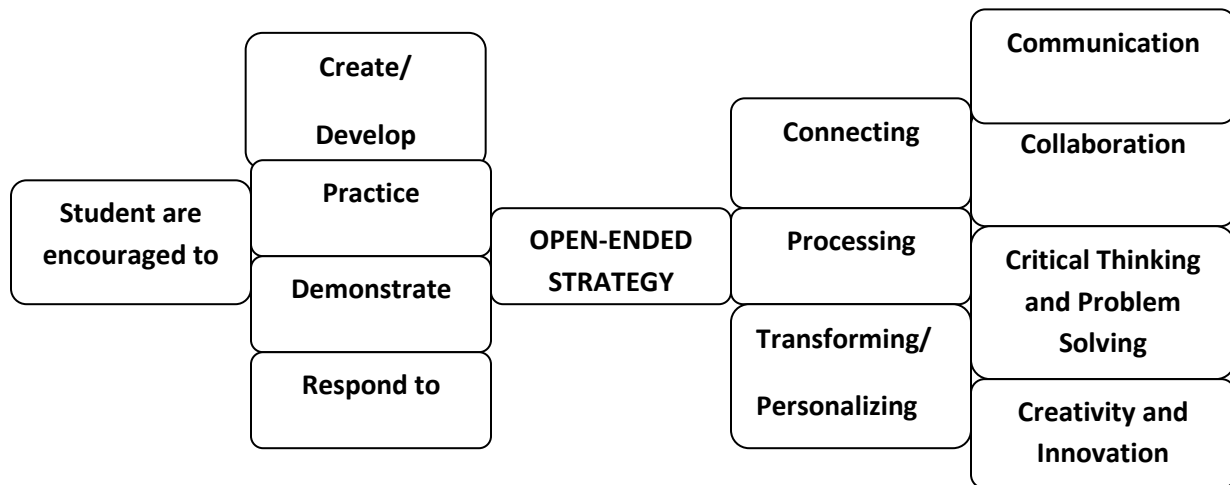


Figure 1: open-ended strategies matrix

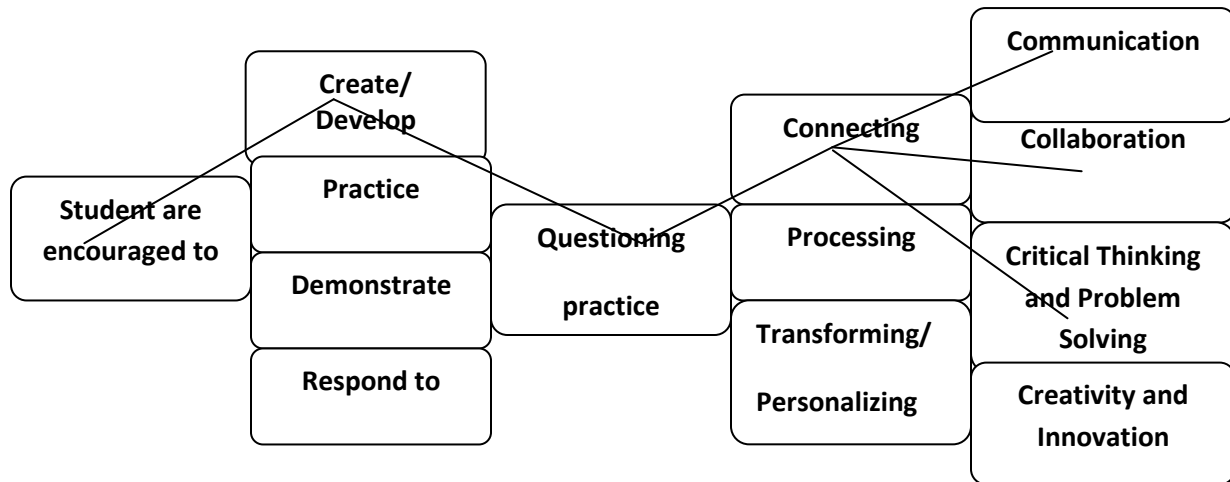


Figure 2: example of the open-ended strategies matrix used in lesson sequence five during the Structured Reading of Act Three Scene One's *Dialectical Thinking*.

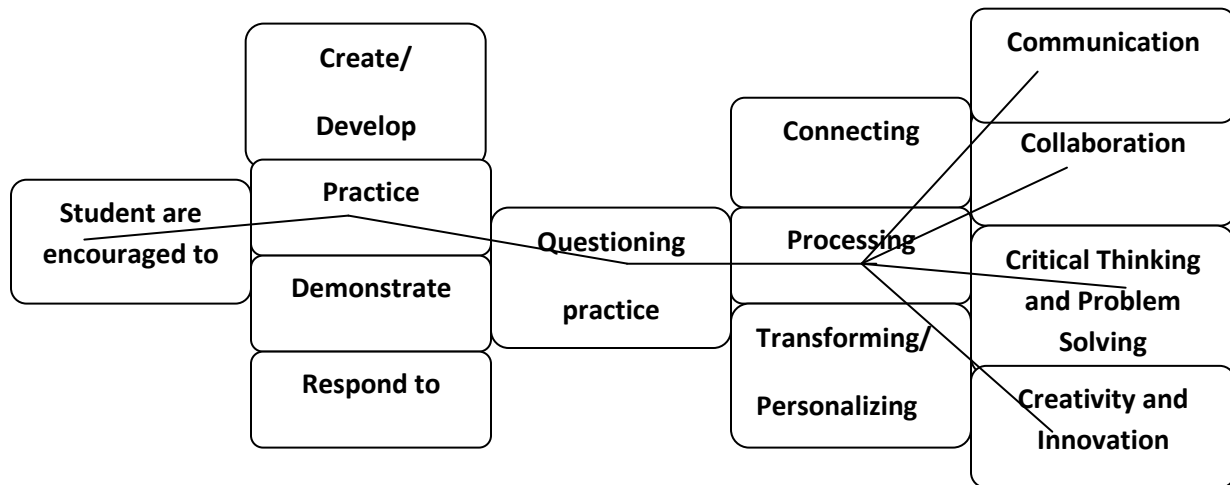


Figure 3: example of the open-ended strategies matrix used in lesson sequence five during *Bloom's Taxonomy of Questions*

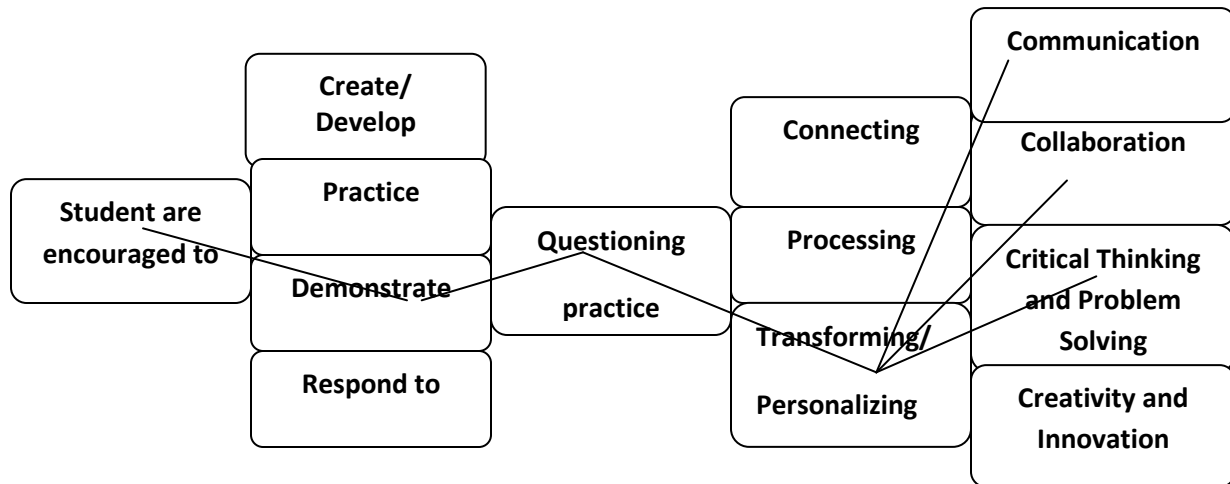


Figure 4: example of the open-ended strategies matrix using *Placemaths* (Day one) in lesson sequence five

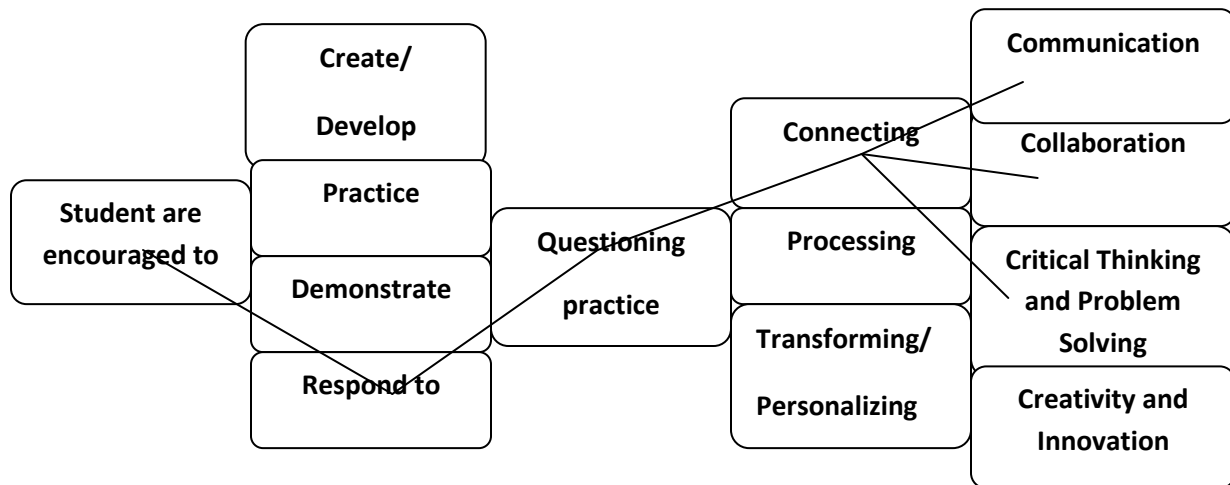


Figure 5: example of the open-ended strategies matrix using *Placemaths* (day two) in lesson sequence five

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