

## **Seeking Entrance:**

### **An Annotated Bibliography of Resources on Rural Poverty**

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This annotated bibliography has as its nexus our need as teachers to understand the students we teach who come from backgrounds so different from ours. With forty-five years of teaching between us, we have experienced success with many student writers. However, we also remember those students we did not help as much as we would have liked; students whose engagement in writing and whose writing progress remained elusive. We remember facing these students during writing conferences, or when reading their papers after school, unsure how to adapt our teaching to meet their needs. What could we say, how could we change our instruction to make a difference for these students?

The schools in which we work are in rural northwestern Washington state. These schools serve affluent families living along miles of waterfront, poor families drawn to less-expensive housing away from urban centers, and Native American families whose tribal communities have lived in this area for generations. We noticed that it is often the children from poverty we struggle to teach. Over time we formulated questions about teaching our students from rural settings, and specifically, students from rural poverty.

#### **Questions Compel Us to Seek Answers**

We wondered about our students' lives: What does it mean to be a child growing up in rural poverty? We knew little about the reality of our students' lives, so we sought information to help us understand our students, their families, and the implications of rural poverty for teaching, learning, and teaching writing in particular.

We wondered about diversity: what is the best way to teach writing to diverse students? Over the years, in addition to the rich culture provided by the Native American students in our classrooms, our rural Washington state classrooms have become increasingly diverse. Black, Latino, and Asian families, traditionally living in cities, have begun to move into rural areas. Children from Mexico, South America, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Samoa have also enrolled in our schools. Some of our students puzzled us: what is the best way for children from diverse cultures to share their background through writing? Others come to our classrooms with limited English proficiency, and we seek better ways to develop their writing ability and welcome them into a community of writers. One of the authors researched the question "How does oral fluency affect writing?" during her attendance at the Puget Sound Invitational Writing Project in 2003 to begin exploring the question of how to best teach writing to students with nonstandard or limited English. Her research gave us a good starting point for further inquiry into this area.

We wondered about relevance: How can teachers use the unique interests, passions, and experiences of rural students to help them develop their writing abilities? Our inquiry was

based on our need to develop our own understanding of students' unique placed-based experiences and voices.

### **The Annotated Bibliography**

With these questions in mind, we have sought books, articles, and research over the past four years. We have found the resources that follow to be informative, and they have assisted us in exploring our questions.

We are well aware that the bibliography that follows contains gaps and would be enhanced by the inclusion of additional resources. As our work grew out of rural Washington state, the resources we initially collected were those we found pertinent to our own questions. However, we soon found that our understanding of teaching writing to Washington's rural students was greatly enhanced by accessing resources from other regions of rural poverty. As a result, we include resources from such areas as Appalachia, rural Maine, Mississippi River Delta, and Alaska. We hope this bibliography, while not exhaustive, will prove to be useful and that it provides leads to further resources for understanding and teaching rural student writers.

### **Resource Organization**

We organized our resources into two categories. *The Door* contains resources about rural poverty across the United States, and about teaching diverse students living in rural poverty. *The Keys* holds promising practices and instructional resources with special emphasis on student writers from rural settings. Some of these resources can be placed in either category, such as a research article describing poverty that also contains information on classroom implications. We grappled with the best placement of several annotations; we have placed them in the section where the bulk of the material seemed to fit. So we encourage readers to explore resources from both sections in order to not miss materials pertaining to more than one section.

## **The Door**

### **Understanding Students Living in Rural Poverty**

Bomer, Randy, Joel E. Dworin, Laura May, and Peggy Semingson. 2008. "Miseducating Teachers About the Poor: A Critical Analysis of Ruby Payne's Claims About Poverty." *Teachers College Record* 110 (11). Accessible at <http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=14591> [ID Number: 14591].

A critique of the content of a popular professional development program for educators developed by Ruby Payne, this qualitative research study is a systematic evaluation of the relationship between Payne's claims and existing research about low-income individuals and families and takes place within a policy context of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) regulations for students (economically disadvantaged). Intended as a tool for administrators and teachers considering Payne's inservice programming, this study is recommended for writing project inservice coordinators, site directors, and continuity groups involved in studying the impact of poverty on student learning. Those who have read Payne's work or attended *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* inservice program will find this study thought provoking.

Budge, Kathleen. 2006. "Rural Leaders, Rural Places: Problem, Privilege, and Possibility." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 21(13), December 18. Accessible at <http://www.umaine.edu/jrre/21-13.htm>.

This article examines the need for critical leadership in rural communities and schools, especially for places without economic opportunities. The article constructs two approaches to "place": "place as problem" and "place as possibility." This resource is beneficial for summer institute reading, professional development, continuity sessions, or any teachers interested in expanding their understanding of rural schooling and place-based learning.

Froemke, Susan (Producer), and Susan Froemke, Deborah Dickson, and Albert Maysles (Directors). 2000. *Lalee's kin: The Legacy of Cotton* [Motion picture]. USA: HBO.

A video journal that explores the painful legacy of slavery and sharecropping in the Mississippi Delta, this documentary takes the viewer deep into the delta and the intertwined lives of Lalee Wallace, a great-grandmother struggling to hold her world together in the face of dire poverty, and Reggie Barnes, the superintendent of the West Tallahatchie School District. This is a moving resource for use in professional development sessions, summer institutes, or continuity study groups geared toward gaining a deeper understanding of rural poverty.

Gorski, Paul. 2006. "Savage Unrealities: Classism and Racism Abound in Ruby Payne's Framework." *Rethinking Schools Online* 21 (2). Accessible at [http://rethinkingschools.org/archive/21\\_02/sava212.shtml](http://rethinkingschools.org/archive/21_02/sava212.shtml).

Gorski challenges educators to push beyond a one-dimensional understanding of poverty. Rather than examining a "culture of poverty"—a term used by Ruby Payne and others who write and speak about poverty at the national level—Gorski urges educators to question the culture of classist and racist assumptions that infiltrate classrooms and schools. Readers may also want to access Payne's rebuttal to Gorski and Gorski's response to Payne. This thought-provoking resource is useful for continuity study groups, as part of summer institute reading, or for professional development sessions.

Hillskemper, Jan. 2003. "How Our Assumptions Affect Our Expectations." *The Quarterly of the National Writing Project* 25 (2). <http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwpr/574>.

Hillskemper discovers the "underground culture" of her students from rural poverty. She discusses her realization of their distinct needs and describes how she created a bridge for parents to work in her classroom. The article explores the disconnect teachers often experience when trying to understand their students and students' families. This resource offers much-needed background material for those analyzing writing project site participation and engagement or attempting to discover what participation and engagement might look like for diverse pools of leaders and leadership in varying school and writing project contexts. Teachers involved in classroom inquiry, writing project sites involved in site self-study, and professional development providers would find this article useful.

Housing Assistance Council (HAC). 2006. *Poverty in Rural America*. Washington, DC: Author. Accessed December 2006 at <http://www.ruralhome.org/manager/uploads/Povertyruralamerica.pdf>.

A concise overview of data on geographic and demographic trends in poverty in rural America, this report lists high-needs areas around the United States, names subgroups of the population with the highest poverty rates, defines persistent poverty, and points to a correlation between poverty and cognitive development problems in children. It ends with a quick look at housing issues for the rural poor. Recommended for teachers, professional development providers, and site leaders.

Johnson, Jerry, and Marty Strange. 2005. *Why Rural Matters*. Arlington, VA: The Rural School and Community Trust. Accessed September 19, 2007. Available at <http://www.ruraledu.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=beJMIZOCiRH&b=1000115&ct=846267>.

This annually published digest draws a statistical portrait of rural America. It analyzes the elements of rural populations such as rural diversity, family head-of-household, rural poverty, and transience. It provides the rural statistics for each state, with a Poverty Gauge

ranking a state's rural population with respect to five criteria of need on a scale of Fair to Urgent and includes recommendations. A document for teachers, administrators, and researchers to use for uncovering the often hidden demographics of rural populations.

Jones, Stephanie. 2004. "Living Poverty and Literacy Learning: Sanctioning Topics of Students' Lives." *Language Arts* 81 (6): 461–469. Available online at <http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/la/articles/117285.htm>.

This article assists readers to understand and perhaps even bridge the divide that exists when teachers from the white middle class instruct students living in poverty. The author maintains that while we have begun to address needs of different ethnic minorities, our understanding of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds lags behind. This is a useful article when you need a thought-provoking short piece that illuminates the issues of teaching the rural poor. Recommended for site directors and for use during professional development workshops.

Kirby, Angela. 2003. "Rural Poverty and the Importance of Place Value." *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* 19 (2[Fall/Winter]): 28–32. Accessed June 20, 2006. Available at <http://www.ncte.org/about/issues/slate/116409.htm?source=gs>.

A teacher-consultant from the Crossroads Writing Project, the author explores the context of teaching students and working with families in areas of rural poverty. Kirby's short article would be useful in staff meetings or for teachers concerned with the issues of reaching students and families in their rural communities.

NREA, the official website of the National Rural Education Association.  
<http://www.nrea.org>.

Originally a part of the Department of Rural Education, the National Rural Education Association (NREA) is the oldest organization for rural education in the United States. It is rich with resources to help educational leaders understand the issues of rural education. The NREA is a strong political support and advocate for rural schools. Of particular interest for teachers and educational leaders are two publications of the NREA: *Rural Education News* and *Rural Educator*.

Payne, Ruby K. 2005. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Rev. ed.). Highlands, TX: Aha! Process.

A popular work on the challenges of living in poverty, Payne's book offers an explanation of the impacts of poverty on students and their families. Educators, often coming from middle-class backgrounds, will find the information, charts, and scenarios useful, and discussion of Payne's ideas may help teachers work with these students more effectively. This is a thought-provoking and controversial resource.

Payne, Ruby K., Philip E. Devol, and Terie Dreussi Smith. 2001. *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*. Highlands, TX: Aha! Process.

Written for various professionals (such as nurses and public health workers) who work with the poor, this book describes the frames of reference and cultural constructs of those who are from generational poverty and offers suggestions about how to better serve these clients. While not specifically designed for educators, this resource might be used by professional development providers, book study groups, and rural sites directors.

*Rural Schools and Community Trust*, the official website of The Rural Schools and Community Trust. [http:// www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org).

The Rural Schools and Community Trust website focuses on place-based education work, improving rural schools and their communities, and improving rural teaching and leadership. The site has links to books and articles for rural educators. Teachers, rural site leaders, and rural school administrators will find the ejournal *Rural Roots* informative and inspiring.

Stairs, A. 1990. "Questions Behind the Questions of Vernacular Education: A Study in Literacy, Native Language and English." *English Quarterly* 22: 103–123.

In response to native questions concerning school language policy, a study of Inuktitut and English writing proficiencies was carried out with elementary students. The study is useful for researchers and those interested in the influence of language on writing.

Sutherland, David (writer, producer, and director). 2006. *Country Boys* [Motion picture]. USA: WGBH/Frontline.

This is an epic documentary that chronicles three years in the lives of two teenagers mired in rural poverty in the Appalachian hills of Floyd County in Eastern Kentucky. Both struggle with normal teen angst complicated by issues known to those familiar with the discouraging forces of persistent poverty. All audiences will benefit from viewing this three-part video. Appropriate for rural sites inservice and institutes, for leaders, professional development providers, and participants.

## **The Keys**

### **Promising Practices and Instructional Resources with Special Emphasis on Student Writers from Rural Settings**

Apthorp, Helen. S., Elaine DeBassige D'Amato, and Amy Richardson. 2003. *Effective Standards-Based Practices for Native American Students: A Review of Research Literature* (Rep.). Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. Available at <http://www.mcrel.org/topics/products/15/>.

What is quality instruction for Native American students? What are the supports necessary for Indian students to meet the standards set by NCLB? With these questions in mind, the authors created a synthesis of Native American research and related literature pertaining to teaching Native American students. The focus of the analysis is the teaching of English Language Arts and Mathematics. While the synthesis resulted in only a few recommended practices for academic improvement, it is just as interesting to note the practices that did not lead to academic improvement for Native American students. Written for educators, researchers, and policymakers, the report points to areas where further research is needed.

Apthorp, Helen S., Freya Kinner, and Mariana Enriquez-Olmos. 2005. *A Teacher's Tool for Reflective Practice: Racial and Cultural Differences in American Indian Students' Classrooms. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning*. Available at <http://www.mcrel.org/topics/Diversity/products/264/>.

Because of the differences between cultures, teachers of Native American students who are not native themselves may not be aware of the impact of the way they respond to their Native American students. This tool, printable from the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) website, is a format for teacher reflection in four important areas of classroom practice in teaching Native American students: social organization, participation and roles, communication, and informal learning and home-school connections. This tool can be used by a single teacher or in a study group. It also contains a list of additional resources and links for teachers and a list for principals. This would be a tool for site facilitators, teachers, and professional development providers.

Banks, James. A. 1996. "The Canon Debate, Knowledge Construction, and Multicultural Education." Chap. 1 in *Multicultural Education, Transformative Knowledge, and Action: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. New York: Teachers College Press.

This chapter explores the debate about the knowledge related to ethnic and cultural diversity that should be taught in school. Banks describes the kinds of knowledge that exists in society and in schools, in order to help educators and researchers identify types of knowledge that reflect particular values, assumptions, perspectives, and ideological positions. He discusses the importance of helping students from multicultural backgrounds develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to participate in reflective civic action. This resource may help writing project leaders or teacher-researchers gain understanding of the hidden perspectives embedded in the school culture that can limit the success of diverse students.

Brooke, Robert, ed. 2003. *Rural Voices: Place-Conscious Education and the Teaching of Writing*. New York: Teachers College Press.

This book explores the theory and practice of place-conscious education. Its introduction has concise, well-articulated information on the subject. Secondary teachers will find chapter 2, "A Geography of Stories: Helping Secondary Students Come to Voice Through Reading, People, and Place" particularly significant for understanding the role of place in

teaching writing with secondary students. This is a resource that will help rural site directors and teacher-leaders create shared understanding of how to incorporate place-conscious student-centered teaching in instruction. It is also a good source of quotes to inspire writing and teaching during rural sites institutes.

Dean, Ceri B., and Jacinta Behne. 2002, October. *Meeting the Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Special-Needs Students in Rural Communities: A Report on McREL's Diversity Roundtable IV*. Aurora, CO: Mid-Continental Research for Education and Learning. Available at <http://www.mcrel.org/topics/Diversity/products/117/>.

This report was written after a series of McREL Diversity Roundtables. It includes an illuminating introduction concerning the challenges to rural schools posed by NCLB. The document is written in an accessible question-and-answer format, and covers some of the difficulties of instructing culturally and linguistically diverse students and special-needs students in rural classrooms. This resource is of particular use for site leaders to help them understand the pressures faced by rural schools, and for educational leaders who seek to understand and possibly influence educational policy affecting rural schools.

*Foxfire*, the official website of Foxfire Organization. <http://www.foxfire.org/>.

This website contains the resources of an organization dedicated to teaching in rural areas. A collection of promising practices for meeting the needs of rural students, teaching resources, and a bookstore for teachers can be found at the site. While the materials are specific to Appalachia, the resources here can serve as models for any rural area. Rural site directors, teacher-consultants, and those needing research or classroom resources will find this site valuable. Persons using Mozilla Firefox as their Web browser may have difficulty accessing this website.

Gardner, Ann. 2005. "Place-Based Poetry, One Step at a Time." *The Quarterly of the National Writing Project* 27 (2). Available at <http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwpr/2230>

This article demonstrates how one teacher validates the life and culture of her students through a place-based poetry unit. Choice, peer work, revision, and minilessons led to the creation of a quality finished product and stronger, more confident student writers. Classroom teachers, professional development providers, and those researching the needs of children of diverse cultures with an emphasis on place will find this article useful.

Kong, Ailing, and P. David Pearson. 2003. "The Road to Participation: The Construction of a Literacy Practice in a Learning Community of Linguistically Diverse Learners." *Research in the Teaching of English* 38 (1): 85–124. Available at <http://www.ncte.org/pub/journals/rte/articles/111589.htm>.

This highly readable study examines a classroom of fourth and fifth grade students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds as the teacher begins to incorporate

constructivist principles in teaching. It explores how the opportunities for more complex thinking and critical response provided by a constructivist approach enabled these students to make reading gains. Teacher scaffolding and use of the gradual release of responsibility model leads to increased student achievement. The report is informative for research during rural sites institutes, professional development workshops, and group study.

Nieto, Sonia. 1999. *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sonia Nieto, a highly respected researcher and author on the topic of multicultural education, focuses on the importance of personalized, supportive relationships among teachers and students. She shows how these relationships lead to greater learning and equity among all students, especially students from diverse backgrounds. This inspiring book could be a focus for group study, and would be a useful resource for rural site leaders planning institutes or doing research.

Pellino, Karen M. 2006. *The Effects of Poverty on Teaching and Learning*. Accessed July 21, 2006. Available at [www.technology.com/tutorials/teaching/poverty/print.htm](http://www.technology.com/tutorials/teaching/poverty/print.htm).

This paper describes five challenges to the learning success of children living in poverty. A teacher's understanding of these issues could affect her teaching and the students' learning. Brain-based research is considered in the context of learning and poverty, with applications in a classroom setting. Finally, a comprehensive list of "implications for curriculum adaptations" is included. Teachers, teacher educators, and administrators will view this as an insightful analysis of poverty's effects on learning.

Reeves, LaVona L. 1997. "Minimizing Writing Apprehension in the Learner-Centered Classroom." *English Journal* 86(6): 38-45. Available at <http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/middlewriting/images/pdf/WIReadMinimizing.PDF>.

"I am an apprehensive writer because I was born poor, rural and female." With this opening line, the author paints a picture of the apprehension that many students from similar backgrounds feel when faced with writing. Reeves outlines students' behaviors and attitudes when faced with writing, and describes the written products these students might exhibit, then offers suggestions for diminishing writer apprehension. Classroom teachers and teachers attending rural sites conferences and rural sites institutes will find this article illuminating.

Schultz, Marylou, and Miriam Kroeger. 2000. *Teaching and Learning with Native Americans: A Handbook for Non-Native American Adult Educators*. Available at <http://www.literacynet.org/lp/namericans/contents.html>.

Designed with Navajo students in mind and coauthored by a Navajo, this website contains information applicable to students from many Native American tribes. While not

extensive, the information in the sections “Teaching and Learning with Native Americans” and “Strategies for Teaching Native Americans” has information that will enable teachers and professional development providers to learn approaches for working with Native American students.

Slocumb, Paul D., and Ruby K. Payne. 2000. *Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty*. Highlands, TX: RFT Publishing.

The two authors look at the way giftedness in students living in poverty is often disguised, and how educators can learn to recognize their gifted students from impoverished families. Of particular help are tools educators can use to recognize these students. Researchers, faculty groups, and classroom teachers will find this book useful for discovering and meeting the needs of gifted students living in poverty.

Solley, Bobbie A. 2005. *When Poverty's Children Write: Celebrating Strengths, Transforming Lives*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This book is a small volume with a big message. Teach writing well, provide a safe, nurturing environment, operate from strength as opposed to a deficit model, and build on language structures with which children come to school. This is a hopeful, authoritative text, valuable for classroom teachers and administrators.

Weeks, Denise Jarrett. 2002. “Wishing on a Star.” *Northwest Education Magazine* 8 (2). <http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/08-02/sixtraits/wishing.asp>.

The author shares how the third-graders in one teacher's Anchorage classroom, many of whom are English language learners living in settings of rural poverty, use a model to draw on their ideas and experiences in their writing. “For children whose lives have been disconnected in one way or another, writing can be a through-line that connects their inner and public lives . . . their individualism with identity.” Teachers with students who come from areas of rural poverty, and who come from diverse cultures and languages, will find Weeks' article an inspiration. Also includes instructional ideas to incorporate in the classroom.

Wheeler, Rebecca S., and Rachel Swords. 2004. “Codeswitching: Tools of Language and Culture Transform the Dialectally Diverse Classroom.” *Language Arts* 81 (6). <http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/la/articles/117287.htm>.

The authors discuss ways for teachers to affirm the dialects of diverse students and still teach Standard English by teaching students to use codeswitching to intentionally choose the register for their writing. This is valuable information for teachers who work with writers using nonstandard English—a resource for researchers, teachers, and rural sites conferences.