

# JOURNALISTIC LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A RELATIONAL AND CIVIC APPROACH TO WRITING PEDAGOGY

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## 01 INTRODUCTION

Writing instruction occupies a complicated place in schools: it is foundational to learning, yet often under-supported, narrowly assessed, or disconnected from how young people write and communicate beyond the classroom. This study was situated during a period of post-pandemic reconnection and rapid generative AI disruption, both of which raised urgent questions about the purpose of classroom-based writing. Against this backdrop, journalistic learning offered a way to reimagine writing as relational, civic, multimodal, and connected to real audiences, real people, and the social world beyond school.

## 02 OBJECTIVE

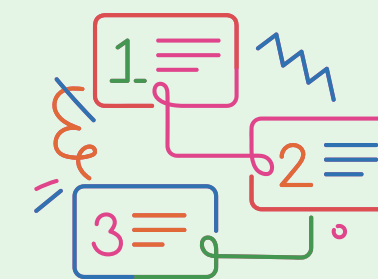
To explore how teacher candidates learn to teach writing through journalistic learning.

The central research question asked: How do teacher candidates understand process-based writing pedagogies, particularly journalistic learning, as they learn to teach writing?



## 03 METHODOLOGY

This qualitative practitioner inquiry took place in an English methods course in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. The study followed 25 teacher candidates during the 2022–2023 academic year as they participated in process-based writing and journalistic learning workshops. Participants interviewed a young person, created an analytic memo, and composed a digital journalistic text for a networked audience. Data sources included participant interviews, course artifacts, teacher candidate reflections, writing samples, and researcher reflections, allowing the study to examine both learning processes and pedagogical meaning-making.



## 04 ANALYSIS

The analysis drew on sociocultural literacy learning, multiliteracies, critical literacy, and world-building civic education. Data were examined through open readings and listenings, inductive coding, descriptive review, and writing as analysis. Rather than treating analysis as a purely mechanical sorting process, the study approached meaning-making as iterative, interpretive, and relational. Codes and themes were developed across interviews, reflections, writing samples, and course artifacts to trace how teacher candidates made sense of journalistic learning, process-based writing, relational pedagogy, and their emerging identities as future writing teachers.



## 05 FINDINGS

The study identified three interconnected findings:

- 1) Teacher candidates came to understand process-based writing and journalistic learning as humanizing pedagogies that resisted compliance-driven models of schooling. They began to see writing not simply as an assignment to be completed, but as a relational, civic, and identity-forming practice that could affirm students' subjectivities and expand what counts as meaningful classroom writing.
- 2) Journalistic learning helped teacher candidates more fully understand, or "unflatten," young people. Through interviewing and ethical representation, participants encountered youth as complex people with layered experiences, perspectives, and literacies. This process revealed joy as a vital dimension of relational writing pedagogy, not as superficial fun, but as an affective sign of connection, discovery, and meaningful learning.
- 3) Journalistic learning functioned as a form of world-building civic education. It invited teacher candidates to imagine writing classrooms where students could listen carefully, compose for real audiences, participate in public meaning-making, and understand writing as a way of belonging, responding, and contributing to more just civic futures.



## 06 IMPLICATIONS

This study contributes to scholarship in literacy education, English teacher education, and writing pedagogy by showing how teacher education can cultivate more relational, process-based, and civic-oriented approaches to writing. The findings suggest that journalistic learning can help future teachers move beyond narrow, product-driven models of writing instruction and design classroom practices rooted in listening, ethical representation, multimodal composing, and public purpose. In a moment shaped by generative AI and civic fragmentation, this research argues for the continued importance of writing pedagogies that centre human connection, student voice, and socially meaningful participation.



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