

PART II

SEEING SMALL: THE CALL FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT THE WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE

In her 2009 TED Talk, “The danger of a single story,” Nigerian Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reminds us that “Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize.” Consequently, any topic of research in education should not be seen small, but too often topics are treated that way. Greene frames this approach as seeing “from the perspective of a system” (2000, p. 10) as detached observers. Seeing small risks the development of an oversimplified and single story when our view of the subject should be considered through more than one iteration and presented by more than one narrator. In this manner, we unearth more of the particulars. Part II is a sieve through which we deconstruct a single image of the Writers in the Schools Collaborative professional development program. In Part I, we heard from members of the organization in terms of structure and goal setting foundations, but here we amplify the voices of participants in various programmatic and partnering roles.

Chapter 6 by Former Executive Director Robin Reagler, *Reflection on WITS history and the challenges of change*, presents a narrative history of the organization’s work in establishing “The WITS Way” of professional development offering and the challenges of change inside and outside of the organization. Her focus on the goal of the program to act as “a personal trainer at the gym” by entering into a supportive and consistent partnership with classroom teachers provides a foundation for the job-embedded, relationship centers approach that has evolved into the program we see today.

In Chapter 7, *In search of a trellis: A principal’s perspective on the need for cross-institutional literacy partnerships*, high school principal, Terri Osborne, shares the journey of a leader in search of support. Terri reached out to WITS during her first year as the principal of a school that was low-performing on state assessments and where the language of discourse regarding students in it was “those kids.” A review of the data and the schools in neighboring areas led her to believe that what had been offering was not working. High turnover rates on the campus and at the district level left the English department and “those kids” underresourced and underperforming. So, Terri “took that language and owned it, but we did not see them as ‘those’ kids. They were ‘our’ kids,” and forming a partnership with WITS was an opportunity to better serve them.

What follows the principal's anticipatory success with the program is Chapter 8, *Tough Turf: Restored moments in the dissipation of an urban knowledge community*. Here, Abdulkader Mokhtari, Chestin T. Auzenne-Curl, and Kaleah Hicks present a collective restorying of Mokhtari's participation in the Writers in the Schools Collaborative on two campuses in one more urban and one less urban community setting. His perspective on the Collaborative as a space for relationships among teachers shed light on the ability of interorganizational partnerships to build a community of practice that is sustainable and which transcends the physical proximity of its members.

We then proceed to Sarah Jerasa's Chapter 9, *The beauty of petals and thorns: Negotiating identity as a writer-teacher*, in which she recounts the shifting perceptions of self and associated behaviors that she adopted in the field. Working as a WITS Writer on multiple campuses provided her with a window of reflection on what defines coaching as her best loved self.

Last in Part II is Chapter 10, *Reflective conversation on the value of longevity as collaborators in education*, which is guided by the transcribed interview of P. Tim Martindell by Cheryl J. Craig. The pair, along with Chestin T. Auzenne-Curl, revisit key coaching moments in the Zoom meeting and contextualize the topics of discussion with narratives from the field and relevant images. Tim reflects on his CFG® coaching role during the three-year evaluation of the program by Cheryl's research team (Chestin T. Auzenne-Curl Project Lead), and as the restorying takes place, the Critical Friends (CFG®) protocols, which are referenced as important tools for supporting the WITS writers for their field work, seem an active presence in the construction of the chapter.

REFERENCES

- Greene, M. (2000). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ngozi Adichie, C. (2009, July). *The danger of a single story*. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en. Accessed on February 2, 2020.