

Bay Region 4  
Final narrative year 1

Narratives  
Sarah Capitelli/Melrose

I have included the following four short narratives because collectively they contributed to my reflection process and led me to my analysis. Although they were each written on separate occasions and were a result of particular experiences, I have come to consider them one piece.

Narrative #1

Context: My ELD class consists of 19 Latino students whose first language is Spanish and one Cambodian student, Julie. Julie did not speak in class her entire Kindergarten year. However, we know that Julie can speak. She speaks at home and with her peers. Julie had begun to speak regularly in her homeroom class and in ELD class before this incident described in this narrative occurred.

The room is busy. Papers and scraps of paper cover the tables and floors. Children are talking and whispering in Spanish and English. Children hurry to clean up. Children are quickly collecting glue and scissors before the bell rings for recess. "You need to say something with your words. I know that you understand what I am saying. It is your choice. You can choose to say something or you can not say anything. If you choose not to answer me, you will have to stay with me until you choose to talk. This means that you will not go back to class to be with Ms. Uk." She sucks in her lower lip. Her eyes grow big. The white of her eyes take up more and more space. They look wet. Her head doesn't move. "Lets go tell Ms. Uk about this. Lets tell her that we have decided that you need to participate once during ELD class and that if you choose not to, you will need to stay with me until you do." She is small - smaller than almost all of the other children. Her hair is all over the place. Her arms hang limp at her sides. Her shoulders fall forward slightly. Her lip is still in her mouth. I reach for her hand. "O.K. Julie." Lets go outside. This really isn't o.k. I know that you can talk and that you have wonderful things to say. I want to hear your beautiful voice." *What is wrong with you? Are you laughing at me? You make me so frustrated. How can you turn your voice off and on. I am tired. I am frustrated. This feels like a battle. You are winning.* Kids are rushing around . Hurrying to get outside. Julie's hand is small and cold inside my hand. She trails behind me. She is walking on the balls of her feet which bring her up and down with every step she takes. Her lip is still in her mouth. I feel prickly and hot. "Ms. Uk, Julie and I have made a decision. We have deiced that she

needs to say at least one thing during ELD class. She can choose to say something during class time or not. If she chooses not to talk during ELD class, she will need to stay until she chooses to share something with her words. This means that she may miss part of your class in the afternoon.” Ms. Uk nods. “You have a beautiful voice Julie. Ms. Sarah just wants to hear your voice.” *Does she agree with me?* I give Julie’s hand to Ms. Uk. “Julie I want you to think about our day today. Tomorrow we will begin with the new rule.” Tears run down her face. Her lip is still in her mouth. Her shoulders quiver. A student pats her on the back. “It is O.K. Julie. Don’t cry.” “I’ll see you tomorrow Julie.” Julie nods and walks away.

## Narrative #2

Context: This is a 1st and 2nd grade ELD class with 19 Latino students and 1 Cambodian student. All of the students are considered emergent English language learners (IPT A, B, or C). With the exception of one of the Latino students, who is in a sheltered English class, and the Cambodian student, this is the only English instruction that these students receive during the day. I am the primary English language model in this ELD class.

“Are you my mother?” “No, I am not your mother. I am a snort.” The music starts. The rubber hot potato is passed around the circle. The music stops. “Are you my mother?” “No, I am not your mother. I am a kitten.” The music starts again. “Yo quiero la papa caliente.” Children smile and hold on to the ball a little too long. “Are you my mother?” “No, I am not your mother. I am a boat.” There are no more cards in the middle of the circle. All the children have had a turn. I pass out the books that they started yesterday. “We have four things that we need to finish today. We need to finish illustrating our books. We need to read our books to five people. We need to finish our puppets. And we all need to work with Ms. Perez.” I remind the children of the chart that can help them with their books. They all hurry around the room, collecting crayons and colored pencils. They make their way back to their tables. The room is quiet. Children are focused on finishing their books. Carla stands up and walks over to the board where the chart is hanging. She holds up her book to one of the words on the chart: “dog.” Alejandro says “cow”. Maria asks “¿Puedo leer?” Carlos answers “Sí.” Maria begins to read her finished book upside down. She has memorized the book. She does not attend to any of the print in the book. Carlos is still working on his book. He doesn’t look at Maria once while she is reading her book to him. She

finishes reading the book and walks over to Josue. “¿Puedo leer?” Josue nods, signs his name to the sheet, and continues to work on his book. Maria reads the first page and begins to walk away from Josue. He doesn’t look up. I remind her that she needs to read the entire book to Josue. She smiles and looks down. I smile at her. She walks back to Josue and begins reading the book again. Josue doesn’t look up. Sandra sharpens her pencil. Zenaida is working on her book. I look around the room. Everyone is either working on finishing their book or reading their book to someone in the room. Maria asks “Teacher, can I read you my book?” “I would love to listen to you read your book.” Maria begins reading her book to me. She uses her finger to point to each word that she says. Carlos asks Cristian “Puedo leer?” Cristian says “Sí.” Maria reads cow for dog and self-corrects after checking her illustration. All the students are busy finishing or reading their books. I have a pit in my stomach and my mouth feels dry. *Where else do you speak English? How can I get you to speak more English? What is going to happen to you? What can I do to help you learn this language?* Janet is speaking Spanish to Valeria. Julie sits quietly next to Zenaida. George is speaking Spanish to Marisol. *Is anyone speaking English? They must be tired of listening to me talk.* “Are you my mother? No, I am not your mother. I am a snort.”

### Narrative #3

Context: Unlike other schools or other communities, speaking Spanish at Melrose has status. Spanish speaking parents and students are welcome and encouraged to express themselves in Spanish. Parent meetings, conferences, and correspondence home are always translated into Spanish. Non-Spanish speaking stake holders at Melrose often accuse Melrose of being a “Spanish school”.

Gustavo is a fifth grade student with an IPT level C. He is thirteen years old and has been at Melrose since third grade when he arrived from México. It is unclear how much formal schooling he received before coming to the United States. Gustavo is reading below grade level in both Spanish and English. He will go to junior high school next year regardless of his academic progress.

It is 1:00 pm. It is Melrose’s school wide ELD time. All the students in the school are in their ELD classes. Students in my class are illustrating their books. I am sitting next to Alejandro watching my class work. They are

focused. They are on task. Nobody is speaking English. Carlos and Maria are speaking Spanish. Zenaida, Julie, and Marisol are silently working. Gustavo walks into the room. Gustavo is tall. He is really tall. He is almost as tall as I am. *He must be the tallest kid in the school.* Gustavo smiles. His smile is infectious. I smile back before he has a chance to say anything. “Ms. Lewis quiere saber si Usted puede prestar su pelota amarilla a ella.” I raise my eyebrows at him. He smiles again. I look at him disapprovingly. *I’m teasing him.* He crosses his legs at his feet. He looks down at the ground. *Is he embarrassed?* “Gustavo! It is English time. Can you ask me for the ball in English?” “Ms. Lewis...um...want...umm..ball yellow..uh yellow ball for...play outside.” “Ms. Lewis would like to borrow the yellow ball to use outside?” I ask, already knowing what he wanted to say. He looks at me and nods. “Yes?” I ask, knowing that he has just said yes. “Yes” he repeats, shoving his hands deep into his pockets. “Of course Ms. Lewis can borrow the ball. It is over there, in the basket under the table.” He looks towards where my finger is pointing. He looks back at me. “Under the table” I repeat, emphasizing each word. He grabs the ball, puts it under his arm, and says over his shoulder as he is walking our the door “¡Gracias!” I open my mouth ready to remind his again that it is English time. Nothing comes out.

#### Narrative #4

Context: Alejandro is a second grade student. He is reading and writing on grade level in Spanish but didn’t progress in English in first grade (according to the IPT assessment). Alejandro has a brother in fifth grade who has been at Melrose since Kindergarten who is still an IPT level C. Like Alejandro, Miguel is reading and writing at grade level in Spanish. Both boys are not particularly verbal in their primary language. Neither of their parents speak any English. Their mother has told me that neither of the boys talk very much at home.

The students are sitting on the rug. I pick a book up, In My Family, with a painting of a family on the cover cooking. “What do you see in this picture?” Alejandro is sitting quietly. He looks at the cover of the book. He looks at his hands in his lap. He watches students as they begin to raise their hands. “A family.” “A mom.” “Kitchen.” “What are they doing?” Alejandro doesn’t raise his hand. Cristina raises her hand. Josue raises his hand. Arturo raises his hand. I call on Alejandro. “They cooking.” “Your right! They are cooking. What do you think they are cooking?” I look at the students. I move my head from right to left, giving them a

chance to think about my question. I can see Alejandro raise his hand out of the corner of my eye. When I turn my head towards him, he pulls his hand down quickly. I call on other students. "Tamales." "Tacos." "Sopas." "Who is in the kitchen cooking?" Alejandro is playing with a sticker on his left hand. He snaps his fingers three times. Softly. *We have been working on family vocabulary for three weeks. Can't you offer one idea about who is in the picture? Come on...just one.* The bell rings. We line up to go to the assembly.