

Literacy Autobiographies: Putting the “Meta” into Co-Requisite English Courses

Kristen Keckler, PhD
Dawn Cancellieri, MA
English and Composition
Mercy College

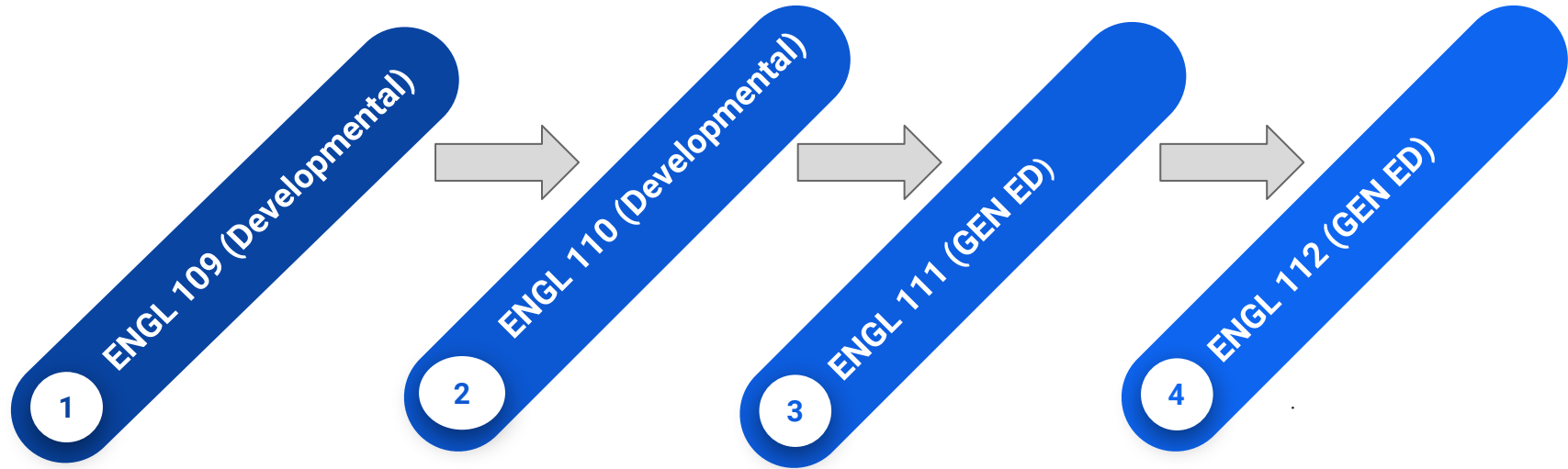


2016 Remediation Revamp!

Mercy re-envisioned its remediation model in Math and English due to:

- Graduation rates**
 - Retention**
 - Roadblocks to student success**
-

Previous Model: Nearly 70% of incoming freshmen were required to take two “developmental” courses before entering Gen Ed ENGL 111



Our Goal was to Shorten the Pipeline...



**A Co-Requisite is
Born**

**Cohort of
students...**

**2 courses,
same term...**

**with 1
instructor**

ENGL 110
Co-Requisite



ENGL 111
Gen Ed



Gen Ed Credit
completed in one
term

Drumroll: initial data findings?

Pre-redesign

Students took 110 one term, 111 next term

Percent who passed Gen Ed 111 in 2 terms: **63%**

Post re-design, Year 1

Students took co-req 110/111

Percent who passed Gen Ed 111 (1 term): **77%**

Post re-design, Year 2 (1 term)

Students took co-req 110/111

Percent that passed Gen Ed 111 in fall (1 term): **85%**



What

is

ENGL 110 ?

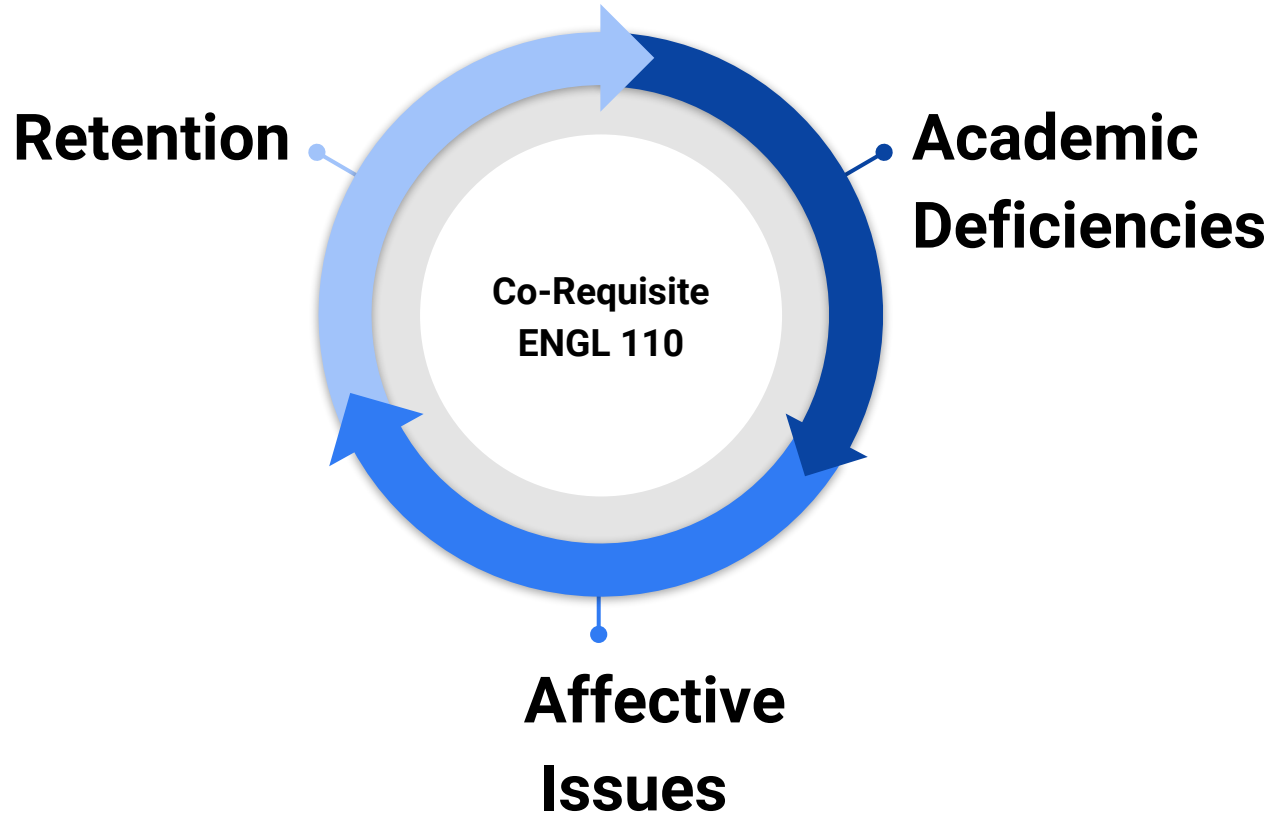
**SLOs and syllabus aligned
to ENGL 111**

- **Grammar & sentence
work**
 - **Drafting**
 - **Workshopping**
 - **Close reading**
-

Feedback: **“Double English”**



Issues to Address...





Intervention!

**110 gets its own
assignment!**

A Literacy Autobiography is a project in which you examine, describe, and reflect on your personal journey with reading and writing.

- The project will “emerge” over the term, rooted in the journals you complete
- you will think critically about how to organize & structure your story
- you will choose a medium for your project

Why Autobiography?



**Bridge
to 111**

**Calls on
Pre-existing
knowledge**

**Multiple
Literacies**

Collaborative

Multimodal

**Personal
&
Reflective**

Texts about Literacy

David Sedaris “Me Talk Pretty One Day”

Mike Rose “I Just Wanna Be Average”

Frederick Douglass “Learning to Read and Write”

Stephen King “Reading to Write”

Malcolm X “Learning to Read”

Sherman Alexie “The Joy of Reading & Writing: Superman and Me”

Gloria Anzaldua “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”

Richard Rodriguez “Aria: Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood”

Amy Tan “Mother Tongue”

Joan Didion “On Keeping a Notebook”

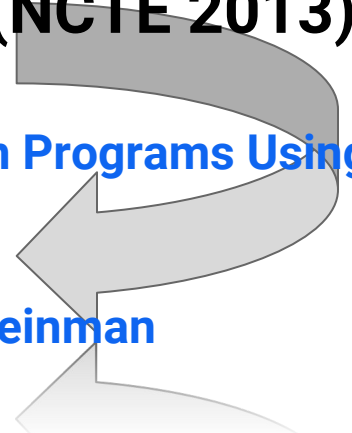
Maya Angelou “Graduation ”

Applicable Research...

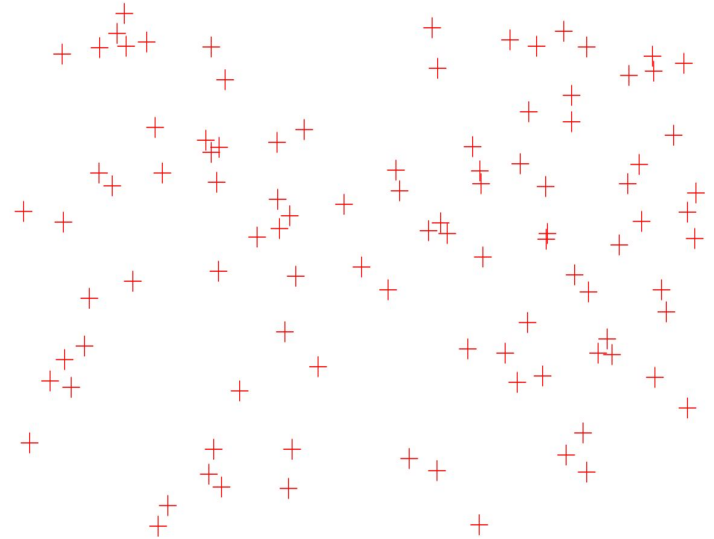
Literacy, broadly defined, is now considered malleable, dynamic, and multiple, and as a tool to participate more fully in the technological society of the 21st century. (NCTE 2013)

“Reimagining Understandings of Literacy in Teacher Preparation Programs Using Digital Literacy Autobiographies” by McTavish and Filipenko

“Literacy Autobiographies in a University ESL Class” by Linda Steinman



“Autobiographies help to locate and define the self within an ongoing life story, that, simultaneously, is strongly oriented toward future goals” (McAdams)



**“Literacy autobiographies honor the prior
knowledge so important to pedagogy”
(Steinman)**



**“Literacy is not just about
skills, but also about
connections, relationships,
communities of practice,
joy, and embodiment.”**

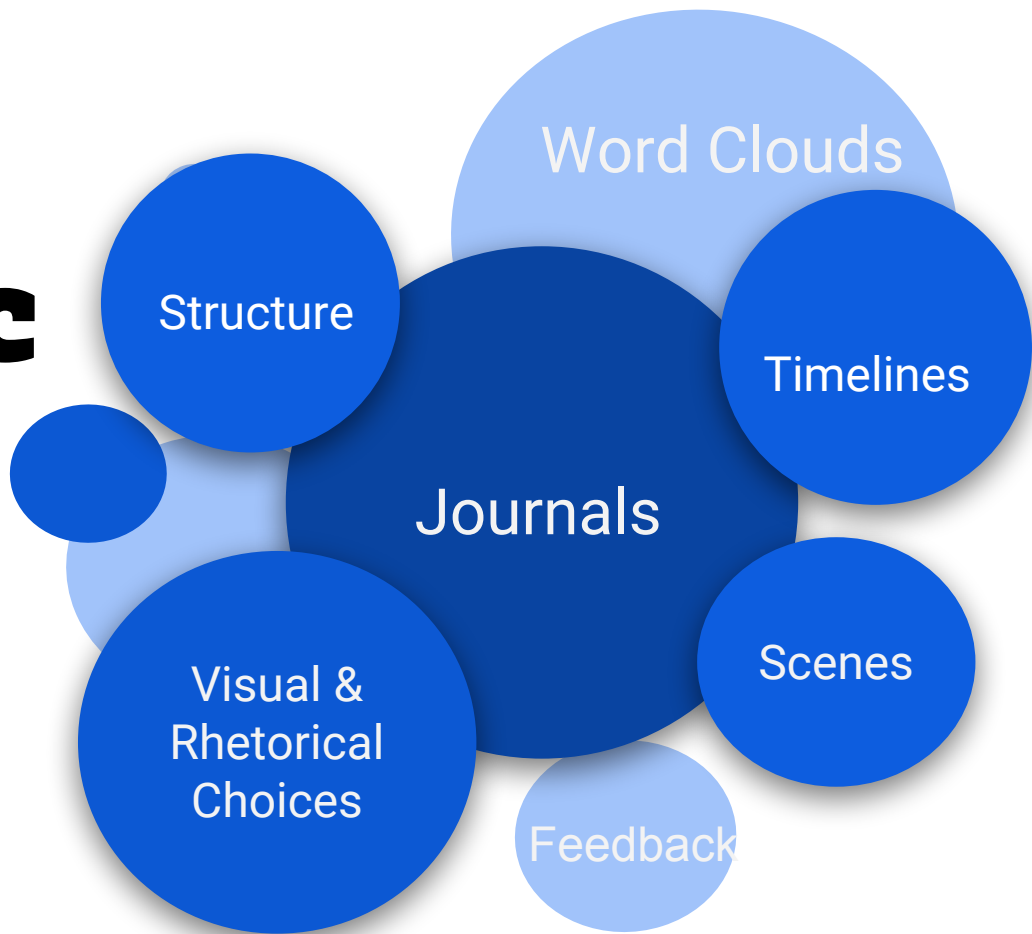
(McTavish and Filipenko)



Got Literacy?

**Students offer their
personal definitions of
literacy at the start of
the term and later
re-visit this definition
in their projects and
reflections**

A Dynamic Living Project



Journals...

- Practice writing skills such scene and exposition
- Reflect on, examine, question assumptions made by themselves and others

- Make comparisons and drawn inferences
- Link past, present, and future
- Share and collaborate, forming active and supportive learning communities

What will I write about today?

Journals...

"When I was young one of my favorite activities was listening to my parents and teachers read stories. Getting lost in the plot of a novel always relaxed me and brought out my creativity. Some of my best memories are listening to my parents read The Hardy Boys series before I went to bed. As I got older my parents tried to get me to read more outside of school but I rarely did. This all changed when I got my first computer and could start reading online." -- JG

Journals...

"I learned how to read at home from my dad and at school is where I learned how to write. As years went along, i remember in 3rd grade they split up kids in High Middle and Low reading. It was embarrassing to me because i was in low reading." LR

Journals...

"One of my favorite books back then was "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak. I've always been fond of action books, more now than before, although I barely have time to read. I struggled a lot trying to comprehend the spoken language everyone in the class knew. I didn't know English all that well and being home didn't help either, my mom only spoke Spanish so I was constantly mixing up words from both languages. I was speaking Spanglish, English and Spanish together."
T.S.

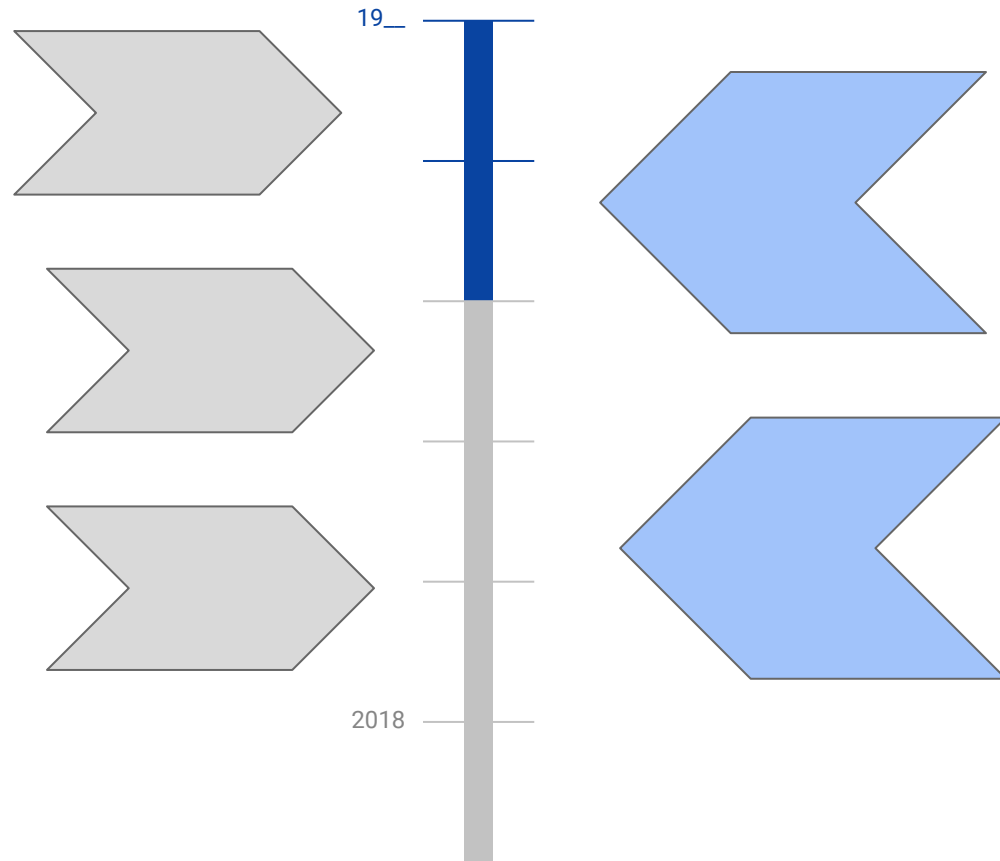
Journals...

"I completely understood the books, I could even hear the characters in my head. But whenever I had to read out loud, well that would be the end of me, I could never pronounce all the words out loud! I knew what they were and what they meant and how to say them but whenever I had to read out loud I would stumble and get tongue twisted." A.F.

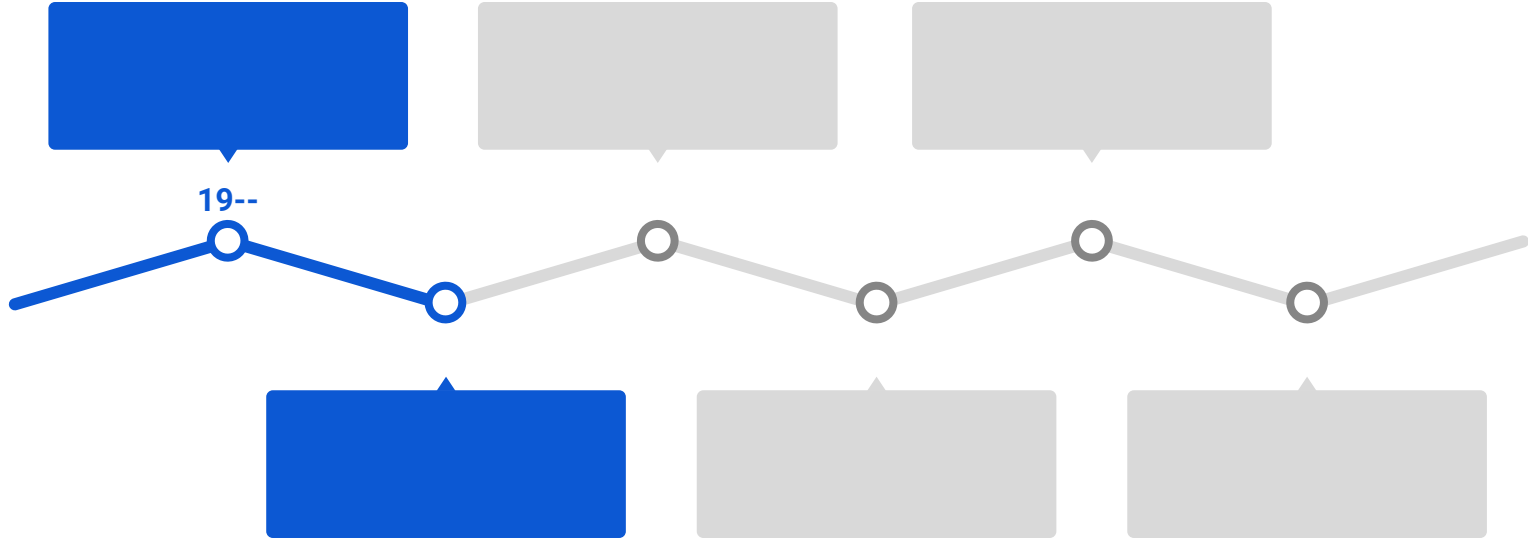
Journals

At times my grandmother would put me to write to my family member in Dominican Republic in Spanish. I'm grateful for her having me do that because today I am very fluent in both languages.

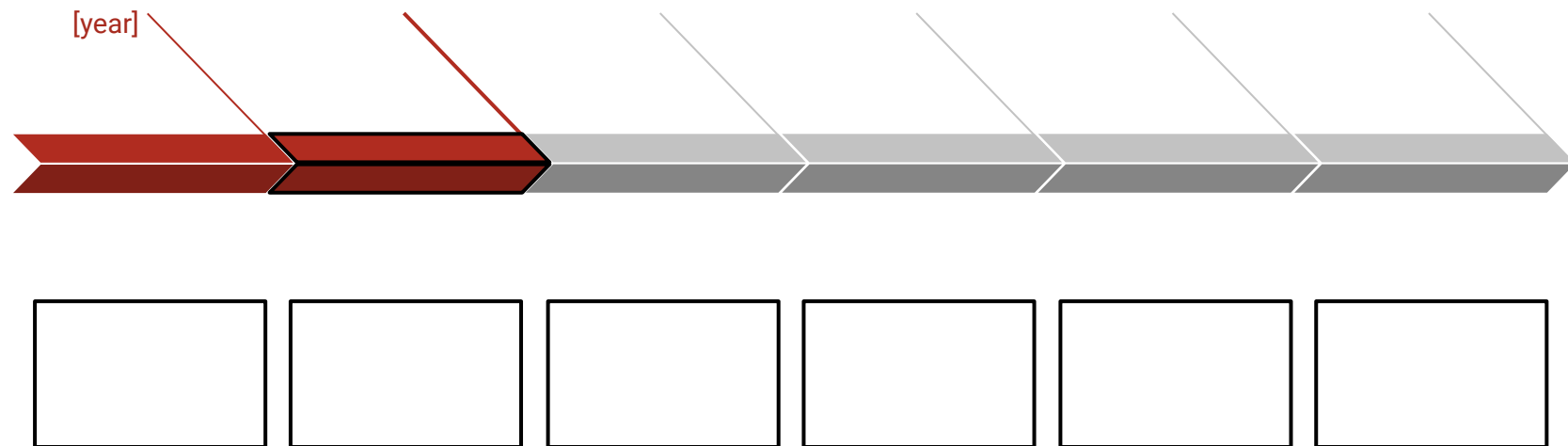
LITERACY TIMELINE



Literacy Timeline



Literacy Timeline



Topics that Emergued in the Literacy Autobiographies

Self-Esteem Studyhall
Scholastic Peer Sports
Spanish Fairytales Vampire
Parents Spelling Learning Dreams
Bedtime Teachers Pressure
Reports Playing Gangs
Novels Coach Twin
Escape Judy Blume
Book ADHD Diary Stories
Dr Seuss Music Gifted
Harry Potter Magazines
Bookfair Grandmother Library Disability
Divorce Handwriting Drop-out
Comics

A Student Example





“Meta” Wrap-up

Literacy Autobiography Self-Assessment Questionnaire	
Definition	1. Did you tweak your definition of “literacy” from the start of the term? If so, how did it change?
	2. How have you come to define the term “autobiography”?
Format & Choices	3. What medium (slide presentation, video, paper, etc.) did you choose and why? How is the format suited to your journey and your literacies?
	4. What textual choices did you make? Be specific.
	5. What visual choices did you make, if any? Be specific.
Audience	6. How well do you think the audience connected to your presentation? Not at all? Adequately? Well? Or Very Well? Explain.
Changes	7. Is there anything you forgot to mention or wish you had emphasized?
	8. Is there anything you would change about your project and/or your presentation of it?
Reflection	9. What is the most significant realization or connection you made about your own literacy journey?
	10. What class activity was most helpful to this project?
	11. What advice would you give to your future ‘self’ student about literacy?

Student Feedback

"This is the first assignment I did in college that was personally meaningful to me. I learned a lot about myself, my triggers, my bad habits, but also some good points. Literacy is more than just being a bookworm. It is being able to critically analyze all kinds of media and messages."

Student Feedback

"I really liked the journals. I found myself looking forward to IIO every week because I'd get to write in a way that was free of judgment. I also love how honest everyone was in their projects. I wasn't nervous at all giving my presentation because we all got to know each other so well. It was more like presenting to a group of friends.

References

McTavish, M., & Filipenko, M. (2016). Reimagining Understandings of Literacy in Teacher Preparation Programs Using Digital Literacy Autobiographies. *Journal Of Digital Learning In Teacher Education*, 32(2), 73-81.

doi:10.1080/21532974.2016.1138914

Steinman, L. (2007). Literacy Autobiographies in a University ESL Class. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(4), 563-573.

Keep in Touch with Us!

Kristen Keckler -- kkeckler1@mercy.edu

Dawn Cancellieri -- dcancellieri@mercy.edu