Precious’ Story: Learning to Use Language and Literacy for Her Own Purposes

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Purpose
The purpose of this reflective essay is to explore key life experiences of Precious Jackson, an African American teacher.

The Article
This article is a reflective essay that explores key life experiences of Precious Jackson, an African American teacher who has taught kindergarten, fifth grade, and ninth grade. Her story includes the outcome that Precious experienced when her own teachers worked successfully with her to help her learn to use language and literacy for her own purposes. The authors begin the article by sharing their own background information as authors, colleagues, and friends. They next present excerpts from Precious’ most influential school learning experiences through the use of multiple quotes from various conversations they had with her. As they provide excerpts of Precious’ conversation about her school experiences, they analyze her experience in view of language-related research as well as studies relevant to dialect and language variation. Finally, the authors talk about implications of Precious’ story for literacy teachers and learners.

What this Means for the Field
This essay provides a reflective, first-hand experience, review of what children can achieve when teachers help children to develop a proclivity and capability to use language and literacy for their own purposes. It is vital that children’s experiences at school build from their knowledge of language and literacy practices and sociocultural experiences. It is important that school be a positive experience for children and teachers play a key part in creating that positivity. Teachers can reflect on their own assumptions about the sociocultural practices of students who are diverse in their own linguistic, cultural, racial, and/or family backgrounds. By having an understanding of this gap teachers can then learn to design the appropriate next steps in their professional development so they can promote the learning of all children.

Citation

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