

## **Illuminating concepts, creativity, and inclusion in a Poetry unit.**

In the current context of performativity and standardisation in education, the result in primary English can be a relentless push for teachers to focus on constrained *skills* of literacy through constrained *pedagogies*.

In contrast, the ACE Rationale and Aims articulate a complex and nuanced set of purposes and outcomes for subject English; goals that incorporate conceptual understanding, engagement with literature and a purposeful use of literacies to promote personal flourishing, social cohesion and participation.

How are we, as teachers and teacher educators, to navigate the tension between pressures to use specific pedagogies and our professional knowledge (and inclinations) to engage with English and literature in creative and collaborative ways?

### ***Research questions***

This presentation explores how poetry unit was crafted to support conceptual understandings, creative self-expression and positive literate dispositions. The research questions concern

- The choices made about texts and pedagogies.
- The level of inclusion afforded through ‘low floor’ and ‘high ceiling’ opportunities.
- The evidence of understandings, self-expression and dispositions.

### ***Methodology***

With reference to the literature on the features of quality inquiry tasks (complex questions, shared learning, meaningful negotiations, relevant context) we analysed a subset of the data collected across the unit in a small urban school. Data included interview transcripts and the reflections of the teachers, student work samples, planning notes and observations.

### ***Emerging Insights***

The inquiry approach afforded ‘low floor / high ceiling’ opportunities during which students and teachers were empowered to collaborate and engage. Teachers drew on their repertoire of professional knowledge to design teaching and learning. Students appreciated and analysed the poems of others; they wrote and shared their own, achieving curriculum outcomes.

### ***Significance***

When teacher knowledge is trusted and student needs and experiences are attended to, English lessons can be conceptually rich, wonderfully collaborative and highly creative.

