

# What It Means to Pose, Wobble, and Flow

In *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Anne Lamott (1995) suggests that writers should write the books they wish to come upon. The book you're reading came about during a coffee-break conversation we were having one chilly day on the Colorado State University campus where we teach. As we walked back to our university offices from the student union, we discussed some challenges we were both facing in our courses with preservice English Language Arts (ELA) teachers. As soon-to-be teachers, our students were understandably preoccupied with the “how-to” aspects of teaching: writing standards-based lesson plans, designing meaningful projects for their future students, figuring out how to grade them fairly, and so forth. We felt confident that many of the books we had assigned in our current courses would help them with these practical tasks, such as *Teaching for Joy and Justice* (Christensen, 2009), *Teaching English by Design* (Smagorinsky, 2007), and *Supporting Students in a Time of Core Standards* (Wessling, 2011).

Because we were (and are) equally committed to the “why” behind the “how” of pedagogical practices in the English Language Arts classroom, however, we also assigned a parallel set of texts that were primarily theoretical in nature, like Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and excerpts from bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) and Allan Johnson's *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (2001). Joined by a commitment to critical pedagogy, the authors of these texts advance the idea that teachers have a special responsibility to teach from a social justice perspective, tackling issues of privilege, problems of equity and access, and the possibilities inherent in social and civic action. These texts routinely problematize that alluring notion that there's a set of best-practice teaching methods somewhere out there that are so foolproof they should come with a money-back guarantee. As hooks points out, “engaged pedagogy recognize[s] that strategies must constantly be changed, invented, reconceptualized to address each new teaching experience” (1994, pp. 10–11).

The links between practice and theory in the texts on our syllabus were obvious to us, but often less so to our students, who routinely complained that the latter set was irrelevant; they just wanted to get on with learning

*how* to teach. Furthermore, in their minds, teaching seemed like an apolitical enterprise, or one that ought to be if they didn't want to stir up trouble in their future classrooms. Nearing our university offices at the end of our walk, we reluctantly came to the conclusion that our attempts at cobbling together a collection of articles and chapters from various texts to help our students connect the dots between the "how" and the "why" was not only unsuccessful from their standpoint, but from ours as well. In fact, the mere separation of the texts on our syllabus was actually exacerbating the commonly held belief that when it comes to theory and practice, never the twain shall meet. Our coffee break was over, but our conversation wasn't. It still isn't.

Thus, in this book, we invite you to join the conversation as we follow Anne Lamott's advice to write the book that we have wished to come upon as teachers and teacher educators, one that embraces a dual focus on the principles of culturally proactive teaching and the thinking and teaching practices that accompany them. Throughout the book, we address in conceptual *and* practical ways the challenges present in today's teaching contexts. We fully recognize that these challenges may be daunting, especially at the beginning of your teaching career. Yet we encourage you not to shy away from them, but instead to approach them as opportunities to support the capacities of students as they navigate their ways through an ever-changing and connected world. To help you do that, we offer a framework we call Pose, Wobble, Flow, which will prompt you to maintain the continual focus on personal reflexivity and professional growth that is so necessary for acknowledging how privilege and cultural positionality shape one's practice.

### **THE POSE, WOBBLE, FLOW FRAMEWORK: WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO USE IT**

In the early 1990s, educational researcher Mike Rose traveled to classrooms across the United States to learn more about teachers who were making positive changes in students' lives, their schools, and the profession. His resultant book, *Possible Lives*, focused primarily on career teachers, but he also interviewed a handful of preservice teachers. Predictably, these interviews are peppered with the students' questions and apprehensions, as well as an earnest commitment to the profession, despite the fact that they had yet to step into their own classrooms. What is surprising, perhaps, is Rose's discovery that, though the specific questions asked by the preservice and career teachers he interviewed throughout the book varied depending on where they were in their careers, the act of questioning their practice never disappeared.

He concluded that "good teachers, novice and senior, live their classroom lives, maybe out of necessity, in a domain between principle and uncertainty" (1995, p. 283). If experience bears wisdom, then why is this the

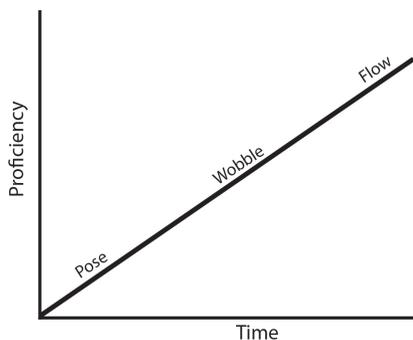
case? After years in the profession, shouldn't teachers eventually figure out how to get it right? Maybe not. Personally speaking, we know that though our uncertainties and apprehensions differ from those we experienced in our early years of teaching, we have them all the same. What's changed is that we don't view them as liabilities, but as challenges that can further our professional growth. The Pose, Wobble, Flow (P/W/F) framework has helped us conceptualize this mindset.

These three terms function in a metaphorical sense that reflects the practice of yoga. Even as novices, practitioners of yoga assume particular "poses" (e.g., tree, plank, warrior) designed to strengthen their bodies, lengthen muscles, improve balance, and increase mindfulness through focused breathing and concentration. To progress in yoga, practitioners learn to hold familiar poses for extended periods of time and to gradually add more difficult poses to their repertoire. In so doing, they experience "wobble" as a guaranteed and necessary part of the growth process. While wobble may initially cause frustration, it also signals a commitment to increased discipline and deepened practice. Persisting through wobble produces a satisfying sense of being "in the flow," of focusing oneself so intently on the activity of the moment that time seems to disappear. Flow is also an overall aspect of styles of yoga in a different sense. For example, in *vinyasa flow yoga*, practitioners combine varied poses in a sequence (e.g., sun salutation), attempting to achieve a graceful flow of movement in the process. Repeated P/W/F cycles with new poses are necessary to improve one's strength, balance, and concentration; yoga is a lifelong practice, and one never quite arrives at a perpetual state of flow.

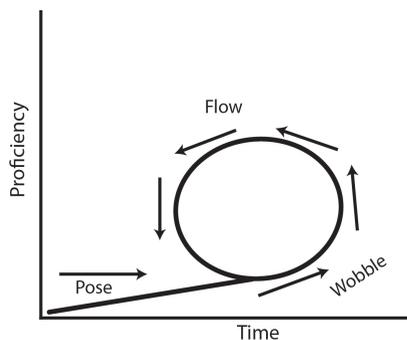
To extend the metaphor to teaching: Like yoga practitioners, teachers who are committed to professional growth also take up stances (or poses) toward their practice, and reflect on areas in which they wobble with the intent of attaining flow—those provisional moments that mark progress in their teaching. In the sections that follow, we unpack the meaning of each of these terms one at a time, show how they work together by drawing on classroom examples, and then make suggestions for steps you can take to enact P/W/F cycles in your own teaching. Before we do that, though, we want to point out three essential features of the model.

First of all, it is framed by a focus on educational equity. Throughout this book, the poses we highlight are centered on re-evaluating the educational needs of *all* students in order to challenge assumptions of equality in pedagogical design and educational reform. Secondly, the P/W/F cycle is not purely linear. If you've observed or been taught by effective teachers, it may seem that they have discovered some hidden answer key containing sure-fire teaching strategies, engaging assignments, and methods for effortless classroom management. Looking something like Figure I.1, their expertise appears to elevate in a steady line because they know how to move directly from pose to flow.

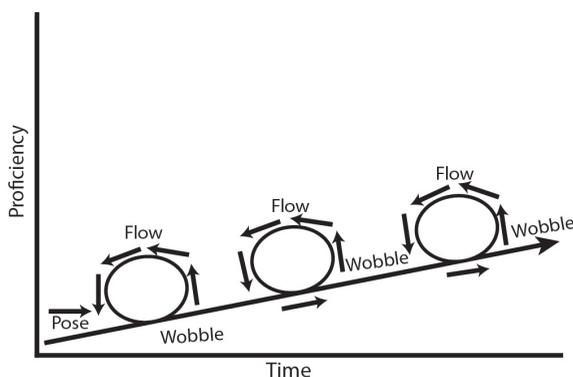
**Figure I.1. Linear Model of Developing Expertise in Experienced Teachers' Practice**



**Figure I.2. P/W/F Model of Developing Expertise in Experienced Teachers' Practice**



**Figure I.3. Recursive Model of Developing Expertise Through Repeated P/W/F Cycles**



But we can say from experience that even teachers whose practice is apparently seamless to the outside eye will continue to wobble in response to changes in their teaching contexts. Working through these wobbles continuously is an integral part of their commitment to deepened practice. In reality, then, their development looks more like Figure I.2.

As a more accurate reflection of professional growth, the P/W/F model is *not* about an endpoint; it is a framework to help acknowledge how one's practice changes over time and requires constant adaptation. It provides language for the often frustrating feelings of uncertainty inherent in the recursive process of improving one's practice. It also reflects the reality that in teaching, just as in yoga, repeated P/W/F cycles are necessary for continual professional growth (see Figure I.3).

Finally, even though the model as we've described it above often sounds individualistic, we don't intend for it to be. In fact, especially when taking on what we'll describe below as "proactive" poses, we have found that we go

through P/W/F cycles most successfully when we collaborate with colleagues who provide moral support and at the same time challenge our thinking.

### **What Does It Mean to Pose?**

There's more to yoga than walking into an exercise studio, unrolling a mat, stretching your muscles, and balancing on one foot. Rather, yoga practitioners deliberately position their bodies in particular ways called *asanas*. The literal translation of *asana* is "seat," conveying an image of stability that enhances meditation. A yoga practitioner often pauses to focus her attention as she moves into a pose, deliberately setting her body in place. She sustains a pose in order to stretch a certain set of muscles and to simultaneously assume a particular mindset. Similarly, our use of the term *pose* in reference to teaching is meant to convey intentionality. A pose is *a stance or mindset you willingly take on as a teacher for well-considered reasons*. In this book, we recommend several poses that you can take up as a teacher, for instance taking a culturally proactive stance toward your practice and seeing yourself as a writer, a curator of curriculum, and so on.

Although the word *pose* often has a pejorative connotation (i.e., one poses in an attempt to trick, dissemble, or cloak true intentions), a more neutral definition also exists. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, to pose can also mean "to assume a posture or attitude, usually for artistic purposes." Etymologically speaking, this form of the word comes from the Late Latin *pausare*, meaning "to stop or rest," and thus is actually a closer cousin to the word *pause*. The word also conveys deliberation. To pose is to "set forth or offer for attention or consideration" (i.e., to pose a question) or to "put or set in place" (i.e., to pose a model). These definitions illuminate that in both yoga and the P/W/F model, the word *pose* conveys the dimensions of mindfulness suggested by the Latin root *pausare*.

We want to be clear that a pose is far more than a "best practice," which, as we pointed out earlier, is an idea that relies on the myth that some teaching techniques are so foolproof they will work with all students in all contexts for all time. Rather, adopting a pose requires considerable mindfulness, for poses focus on the "why of teaching: why teaching methods work in particular ways in particular settings" (Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 19). As such, they function as touchstones to guide our teaching.

### **What Does It Mean to Wobble?**

The poses you take up in your career will have profound implications for the kind of teacher you intend to be and the impact you and your students will make on the world. The commitment it will take to sustain them will often lead you to wobble. Bob Fecho (2011) defines *wobble* as a naturally occurring circumstance that is not just limited to teaching and learning, but is part of everyday life. He explains that wobble is

a calling to attention, a provocation of response. When something wobbles—a wheel on a car, a glass of wine on a waiter’s tray, a child’s top, the Earth on its axis—we notice. It causes us to stare and consider. Wobble taps us on the shoulder and induces us to ask why. It nudges us toward action. It suggests we get out of our chair and do something. (p. 53)

Wobble occurs routinely in the classroom when something unexpected emerges, such as an unpredictable question that neither the students (nor you, for that matter) can adequately address, or a spat that breaks out between students that has absolutely nothing to do with the academic subject at hand. When wobble occurs, you may feel as if nothing in your teacher education program has prepared you for this, and you may very well be right. Because teaching and learning are complex and alinear processes, because the classroom is a dynamic context, and because students can be mercurial, wobble is guaranteed. In fact, “the messy realities of teaching do not lend themselves simply to the selection and implementation of curricula and methods produced by experts from afar. Ambiguities, uncertainties, and unpredictably [sic] are the substance of teaching” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 74). Recognizing that this unpredictability is inherent in teaching can make wobble easier to deal with over time, depending on one’s degree of comfort with ambiguity.

To return to the yoga metaphor for a moment, experienced practitioners not only expect to wobble, they welcome it:

When holding a yoga posture, you want to go to your edge. The edge is a place where you feel a deep stretch in your body or you feel the body working hard, but not going past that to where you hurt yourself or overwork the body. . . . try to relax into the edge by consciously relaxing the muscles that are stretching and the muscles that do not need to work in the pose. (Burgin, 2012, “Asanas: Yoga Postures” section, para. 3)

Likewise, in teaching, it’s essential to remember that although you and your students may not feel comfortable when you wobble, this discomfort is natural because you are “going to your edge.”

Fecho (2011) explains that “wobble . . . marks a liminal state, a state of transition. Where there is wobble, change is occurring. . . . That which was once *this* is moving slowly—at least at first—toward becoming *that*” (p. 53). As he points out, because wobble introduces instability into our lives, our instincts may be to avoid it at all costs, or when it does occur, to attempt to restore order, but we also have another option: We can choose to “construct meaning from an experience different from what might have been imagined” before (p. 54). In other words, when you wobble, it doesn’t mean that you’re failing. Rather, it signals that you are pursuing worthwhile poses that require learning, reflection, and professional growth. As Cindy reminds her students, “You gotta wobble if you ever want to flow.”

## What Is Flow?

Wobbling sometimes entails considerable effort and resolve that can achieve worthwhile results, yet it's not a state you can maintain inevitably. The good news is that “flow,” the final stage of P/W/F, is achievable. Otherwise, we ourselves most likely would have left the profession long ago. As the pre-eminent scholar on *flow*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2008) defines it as a “sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like” (p. 3). This “harmonious, effortless” state (p. 40) occurs when we feel immersed in achieving a worthwhile goal that is precisely appropriate for our level of ability. That is, the goal-oriented activity we are engaged in is just difficult enough that we feel challenged rather than overwhelmed, yet not so easy to reach that we feel bored. Flow experiences are so intense that we lose track of time and temporarily escape other everyday concerns. We want to feel the joy and fulfillment they induce again and again; thus, over time, flow experiences “add up to a sense of mastery—or perhaps better, a sense of *participation* in determining the content of life” (p. 4). Ultimately, “this is the way the self grows” (p. 42) because individuals become more capable and skilled as a result of the flow experience.

It's worth noting that although Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow is primarily associated with a psychological state as it is experienced in particular moments in time, he also makes reference to the connections between flow and yoga, explaining that “[the] similarities between Yoga and flow are extremely strong; in fact it makes sense to think of Yoga as a very thoroughly planned flow activity” (p. 105). He goes on to say that “[it] is not unreasonable to regard Yoga as one of the oldest and most systematic methods of producing the flow experience” (p. 106). As alluded to in our overview of the P/W/F model above, we are likewise using the term flow in a dual sense to refer to both the moments of psychological well-being one experiences in singular moments during the everyday course of teaching, and the larger overall project of linking complementary poses together over the span of one's teaching career.

Csikszentmihalyi points out that the approach one takes to achieving flow depends on the activity in which one is engaged. That's because both the goals and the feedback inherent in particular activities vary in specificity. For instance, in activities like rock climbing, the goal is concrete, and the feedback is clear and immediate; if you are pursuing a peak, you'll know when you've reached it. Other more open-ended activities have more ambiguous goals and outcomes, however. Csikszentmihalyi offers writing music and painting pictures as examples. Both songwriters and painters who sit down in front of a blank canvas or page (or screen) may have a vague concept toward which they are working, but as the art emerges, they may make countless adjustments and new decisions that result in a product they probably didn't imagine from the start. Csikszentmihalyi advises that in

“activities, where goals are not clearly set in advance, a person must develop a strong personal sense of what she intends to do. . . . Without such internal guidelines, it is impossible to experience flow” (p. 56).

We believe teaching falls into the latter open-ended category. Like painters attempting to produce a work of art, as teachers, our ultimate goal is to support students’ learning, but our attempts to do so vary according to the specific challenges presented in the circumstances and context at hand. For instance, when students’ learning needs differ across a particular class, it can be difficult to find one teaching approach that will accommodate and engage all of them. Thus the goals for both painters and teachers are sufficiently vague as to make it difficult to know whether or not we are succeeding on a moment-by-moment basis. This is why poses are so important. As we said before, they function as touchstones to guide our teaching. Reflecting back to our poses during moments of wobble allows us to gauge the progress we and our students are making toward the flow state that will ultimately result in growth. Just as Csikszentmihalyi notes, in our experiences of persisting through wobble to the other side of the flow activity, our identities emerge as more complex, and we feel capable of meeting new challenges as they arise.

As we mentioned previously, however, we don’t mean to suggest that movement through the P/W/F cycle is linear and upward in nature. That’s just not how teaching works. Remember those changing contexts? They inevitably make us wobble anew and necessarily require that we shift and refine our poses in response. Yet, just as yoga practitioners flow from pose to pose in a yoga session, each P/W/F cycle builds on the next. In the process, our teaching deepens and our courage to seek out more complex challenges grows as well.

In the sections that follow, we provide two examples to help you see what a P/W/F cycle looks like from start to finish. The first hypothetical example shows how flow might be achieved in response to a challenge presented in a singular instance of wobbling. The second example, from Antero’s teaching, demonstrates how he achieved flow in relation to an overarching pose that has framed his career as a culturally proactive teacher—by challenging inequities in the education system that inhibit students’ life chances for success within and beyond school.

### **MOVING FROM POSE TO WOBBLE TO FLOW: TWO EXAMPLES OF A P/W/F CYCLE**

Practitioners of yoga often speak of mindfulness when referring to the meditative aspects of yoga. Even when poses are so challenging that they seem almost impossible to maintain, the experienced practitioner notices what is happening in the moment, observes the sensations his body is experiencing, returns attention to his breathing, and (when in a yoga class with others)

relies on the teacher to guide him into the next pose. Over time, yoga practitioners report that these same mindfulness skills can extend beyond the yoga studio into one's reactions to the challenges of everyday life.

Similarly, when dealing with wobble in teaching, remember that reacting is not the same as being reactionary. The former word carries a connotation of reflectiveness and intentionality; the latter implies a knee-jerk, conditioned response. It's helpful to recall that the Latin root for "pose" is *pausare*. Reacting to wobble requires you to pause, observe, and critically read the demands of the context, unpack the assumptions embedded within those demands, and determine mindfully how to respond.

Often, as teachers, we wobble as we decide when to follow mandates that don't sit with us too well. Admittedly, our first impulses are often reactionary, leading us to rant to anyone within earshot about the injustice of "it" all, whatever "it" may be. Sometimes blowing off steam like this is enough and we determine that we can "go along to get along" because in the long run, complying with the mandate will have a pretty inconsequential impact on our teaching and our students' learning. At other times, our wobbling just won't go away. In those circumstances, we can use two strategies to work toward flow:

1. We can work *within* the system by meeting the mandate, but doing so on our terms.
2. We can "work" the system by being subversive.

Again, determining which option to take in a moment of wobble requires that we use our poses as touchstones so that we can react reflectively rather than be reactionary.

### **Working Within the System**

Sometimes you will be asked to comply with routine systemic constraints that conflict with the poses you've adopted as a teacher. Again, in such circumstances we recommend that you pause and critically read the system, then determine how to intentionally proceed in ways that won't require you to compromise your principles. You can often meet the letter of the law while transcending the spirit of the law; that is, you can work within the system, albeit in unexpected ways.

For instance, let's say that you are teaching an 11th-grade English course on American Literature, and the department curriculum requires that you teach *The Crucible* and give a summative assessment to gauge your students' understanding of the play. You have adopted the pose of teaching in ways that make it possible for your students to construct their own knowledge around a particular topic. This commitment implies that your assessment methods will reflect a value for open-ended, inquiry-oriented opportunities for students to express what they have learned. As required,

you assign *The Crucible*, but you decide to use the play as the anchor text in a unit focused on the question of what it means to be an American. You select a range of print-based and multimedia texts related to the unit theme written by diverse authors over time, moving beyond the canon to include texts like Martin Luther King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” the music video “Fight the Power” by Public Enemy, and *Guilty by Suspicion*, a film by Irwin Winkler about a filmmaker consigned to the Hollywood blacklist.

As you consider a summative assessment for the unit, one of your colleagues reminds you that most of the teachers in your department use an exam on *The Crucible* provided in the resources that accompany the required literature textbook. When you take a look, you find a traditional multiple-choice exam on *The Crucible* with items like this hypothetical one:

What is the name of the servant who was fired from John and Elizabeth Proctor’s household?

- A. Rebecca Nurse
- B. Mary Warren
- C. Ruth Putnam
- D. Abigail Williams

The prospect of a ready-made, easily graded test sounds tempting, but on further reflection, you realize that even though answering multiple-choice questions correctly might prove that students had read the play, doing so would require them only to memorize and recall facts. Moreover, giving an objective exam only on *The Crucible* would deny students opportunities to explore the rich array of texts they had read in relation to the unit theme on American identity. Using this test as your final assessment would thus run counter to your constructivist pose for teaching and assessment.

Asking students to create a final project in response to the following prompt, however, would allow them to further develop their thinking:

What does it mean to be an American? Design a project that draws on *The Crucible*, at least four other texts we have read in this unit, and an experience from your own life to demonstrate your consideration of this question. You can choose the form your project will take, but it should incorporate words, audio, and/or images and should inspire your audience to problematize traditional conceptions of American identity. You can work by yourself or in a small group.

To do well on this project, students would still need to incorporate details from the unit texts, but would also need to synthesize those details with elements of their own experiences in order to create a personally meaningful artifact that addresses a question with no definitive answer. Unlike a multiple-choice test, this final assessment comes with no answer key. Rather, students have considerable freedom to determine the content and form of their project and to work with others or by themselves. This project is thus

consistent with the teaching pose described above because it implicitly conveys to students that knowledge is not fixed, but continually developing, and that they are capable of making decisions about their own learning.

The two assessment options also reflect very different views of how you see yourself as a teacher. The multiple-choice test relies on a nameless test-maker who is far removed from your classroom to determine the most important facts students should know about *The Crucible*. The project on American identity, on the other hand, requires you to understand and value your individual students' perspectives. By assigning this project, you've technically worked within the system. You have still met your department's requirement to give a summative assessment over *The Crucible*, a required text in the curriculum. But you haven't compromised your pose about what constitutes meaningful learning for your students because you've viewed assessment as an opportunity for them to construct their own knowledge. By using an active pose as a touchstone, you've maintained your agency as a "deliberative intellectual" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) capable of posing yourself rather than being posed in the expected ways implicit in a particular constraint within your teaching context.

### **Working the System**

In some cases like the one above, it's possible to work within the system and simultaneously maintain your commitment to a given pose. Some instances, however, call for the more radical approach of "working the system" instead. Especially early in your career, when you choose to react to wobble by working the system, it's essential that you have a very firm rationale that is grounded in theory, research, and/or the recommendations of professional organizations, so that you can justify what you're doing and why to those in positions of power over you.

A few years into his teaching career, Antero wobbled around the persistent tracking occurring at his school, which ran counter to an overarching pose that guides his practice as a culturally proactive teacher: He was determined to critique and push back against inequitable schooling practices that compromise marginalized students' access to meaningful learning opportunities and life chances within and beyond school.

Antero and his high school students were part of a "small learning community" (SLC), a school-within-a-school cluster of students with the same group of teachers. The community included the majority of the English language learners (ELLs) at the school. While another SLC offered honors and AP classes, the students in Antero's SLC were not afforded these options. After becoming aware of advocacy efforts used by the College Board at the time to ensure equal access for all students to AP classes, Antero determined to work the system. He urged his 11th-grade students (who were also all of the 11th-grade students in the SLC) to go to their counselor and demand to be placed in AP courses. When the administration insisted that the demand

was too great for one teacher, Antero volunteered to go through the AP training. He also got permission to provide instructional continuity for his students by “looping” the class the subsequent year. This meant that his AP classes included many seniors whom he had taught the previous year. He was thus able to teach his current juniors for two years in a row—once during their junior year and then again during their senior year when a new group of 11th-graders was encouraged to advocate for participation in AP classes in their senior year.

Though Antero’s students did not pass the AP exam during the first year of the experiment, passing a test wasn’t the point of this work. What mattered most was that students *acted like* and *perceived themselves to be* AP students. Even though prior to this experience, the unspoken caste system of urban schooling had labeled them as the ELL students who would pull down the school’s already dismal test scores each year, these students proved themselves able to tackle complicated texts by authors like Faulkner, Woolf, Morrison, and Ellison. They rose to the higher expectations of an AP course and incidentally showed more significant gains in their ELA growth than any of the seniors Antero had taught previously.

Antero’s response to a tracking policy that caused him to wobble by challenging his overarching pose of culturally proactive teaching embodies the advice we gave earlier in this chapter. Rather than being reactionary, Antero stepped back and critically read the inequitable assumptions embedded in his teaching context, which reinforced his conviction that the circumstances were unacceptable. Then, he and his students dismantled the seemingly insurmountable obstacles in their path toward educational equity and access. Antero justified his position with reference to a reputable organization, the College Board. He gave his students their marching orders, which they gladly followed, becoming advocates for their own educational rights in the process. In response to administrative pushback, he proved his willingness to follow through by volunteering for additional AP training and looping with his students the following year. Antero and his students experienced flow by collectively raising their voices to enact transgressive change in a tracked educational system that propagated inequitable conditions for learning.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As you will see in Chapter 1, the above example from Antero’s teaching reflects the overarching pose of being a culturally proactive teacher over the span of one’s career. It ties together the following poses in subsequent chapters that we see as central to this overarching commitment:

- **Teacher as Hacker:** This pose in Chapter 2 focuses on creating and sustaining a dialogic curriculum.

- **Literacy for Civic Engagement:** This pose in Chapter 3 focuses on supporting the development of students' civic identity.
- **Teacher as Writer:** This pose in Chapter 4 focuses on developing an identity as a writer who teaches and a teacher who writes.
- **Teacher as Curator:** This pose in Chapter 5 focuses on increasing powerful, culturally proactive reading choices.
- **Teacher as Designer:** This pose in Chapter 6 focuses on creating equitable learning environments.

Each chapter reflects the P/W/F model. We offer a specific pose at the start of each chapter, provide tools for working through wobble (e.g., thinking strategies, standards, teaching methods), and use a balance of theory and research, classroom examples, and personal experiences to demonstrate how teachers and students in particular contexts have worked toward achieving flow in relation to the pose. Each chapter concludes with a set of “Provocations” and a list of “Connections”—thinking prompts and digital and print resources designed to extend your consideration as a beginning teacher of the themes and issues presented in the chapter.

In the Conclusion we review major themes and make the case for studying the impact that maintaining a lifelong commitment to culturally proactive teaching has on student learning. Finally, at the end of the book we offer two Appendixes rooted in the P/W/F model. Appendix A provides a step-by-step guide to support you in taking up a critical inquiry stance with other colleagues that is based on thorny issues present in your particular teaching context. Appendix B recaps the poses listed above. Depending on the stage of your career, these resources can be used to guide in-class activities in education courses or as a tool for self-sponsored or site-embedded professional development, especially during your first few years of teaching. Appendix C is a template for developing your own poses and supporting the nuanced directions that your classroom will push you toward. Based on the P/W/F framework, this worksheet should allow you to identify additional culturally proactive teaching practices related to areas of your instruction and career that we have not addressed explicitly in this book. You'll also find a free downloadable and printable version of Appendix C online at the Teachers College Press website ([teacherscollegepress.com/](http://teacherscollegepress.com/)).

As a final note, we want to emphasize that the order in which we present the above poses isn't meant to be chronological; nor are the poses themselves meant to be viewed as endpoints you will finally achieve and then—presto!—arrive at teaching perfection. In your work to be a culturally proactive teacher, you're never “finished” with these poses. You'll always experience moments of wobble and continue to grow. Learning entails cognitive movement and is therefore often messy, but also dynamic and real. These poses, then, are touchstones that you will continue to return to in building a lasting and fulfilling career that, to paraphrase Freire (2004), doesn't simply adapt to the world, but transforms it (p. 7).

### PROVOCATIONS

1. Keep a journal or diary (digital or nondigital) and begin listing the areas of your practice that you continue to struggle with. Prioritize those areas that require the most in-depth scrutiny. Can you name these as poses? Begin filling out your own pose using the template from Appendix C.
2. Try jotting brief notes in your daily lesson plans or recording a few words on sticky notes that will later jog your memory about classroom events related to your wobble. If it's easier, you can even record voice memos on your phone or computer and listen to them on your way home to reflect on how your teaching went that day. As you interrogate your wobble by inquiring into your practice, what insights are you finding? Where are you experiencing flow?
3. Use the same process above to reflect on your students' work. Seeing this as data for meaningfully informed wobbling, what are your students producing, and what does their work say about your classroom's culture, your teaching practice, your understanding of who your students are? Don't forget that your students are the best source of information about their own learning. Talk to them and try to find common ground.
4. Seek out allies and mentors in your school or district with whom you can share moments of wobble and celebrate moments of flow. Find contexts where you can interact with others to learn more and share what you've learned, such as conferences and professional networks. Stay current in the profession by reading journals and connecting with experienced teachers in online settings.

### CONNECTIONS

Explore the following resources for further insight into Pose, Wobble, Flow:

Fecho, Bob. (2011). *Teaching for the Students: Habits of Heart, Mind, and Practice in the Engaged Classroom*.

Fecho's book has helped provide a foundational understanding around the concept of "wobble," and continues to remind us to put student needs at the forefront of our teaching decisions.

Goldstein, Dana. (2014). *The Teacher Wars*.

This historical account of U.S. education is a compelling look at the cycles of policy and reform that have shaped the teaching profession. As teachers today wobble with high-stakes testing and shifting definitions of the profession, Goldstein's book offers critical perspective on how these changes have played out in the past.

Singer, Jessica. (2006). *Stirring Up Justice: Writing and Reading to Change the World*.

Books like Singer's take you into the classrooms of teachers today. She offers illustrations of wobble and moments of flow that all tie to student growth and remind readers of the nuanced differences of our own classrooms.

Educators' Blogs:

We find it helpful to regularly read from colleagues who wobble publicly in online spaces (a process we expect our students to do—see Chapter 5). Some teacher blogs you might begin with include [budtheteacher.com](http://budtheteacher.com), [thejosevilson.com](http://thejosevilson.com), and [dogtrax.edublogs.org](http://dogtrax.edublogs.org).

Books on yoga include:

Burgin, Timothy. (2012). *Yoga for Beginners: A Quick-Start Guide to Practicing Yoga for New Students*.

White, Ganga. (2007). *Yoga Beyond Belief: Insights to Awaken and Deepen Your Practice*.

These books provide an accessible introduction to the foundations and philosophy of yoga, terminology, tips and instructions, and photographs of basic yoga poses.