Fruit Salad Language Experience Approach

On Thursday September 13, our afternoon Language and Literacy Practices class began a bit differently than the week before. There was a feeling of excitement in the room as every student proudly held onto a type of fruit they had brought to add to the fruit salad activity we would be doing that day in class. A new student, Amber, was welcomed to the class. Thankfully she had been informed about the class activity prior to the day so she too could bring a fruit and feel involved in this language experience approach activity. Our class is full of unique individuals with different life experiences and preferences and this was evident in the varied assortment of fruit that was brought to be shared with one another. I brought a Red Delicious apple to be cut and added to the fruit salad. A few of my peers had also brought different types of apples to add to be enjoyed in the fruit salad. There were also many other fruits that added different tastes and colours to the bowl, some of these fruits included mangoes, grapes, strawberries, blueberries and kiwis. In order to cut the fruit, we needed a cutting board, some knives and two volunteers to cut up the fruit. Our new student, Amber, and another student named Caitlin were the volunteers and they demonstrated great skill in cutting up all the different kinds of fruits that were brought by the students. While Caitlin and Amber did the cutting, our Professor Barbara McNeil made examples of how this activity could be used as a Language Experience Approach by saying the name of each fruit as it was being cut and getting the class to repeat the names of the fruit. McNeil would also get our class to make connections with the fruit. For example she would ask whether a certain type of fruit would grow here, and students from other countries could explain what types of fruit grow in the country they are from but do not grow here in Canada. At one point during the experience, McNeil stepped outside of the class to wash some fruit. When she left she instructed one of the students, Noah, to take over what she was doing with pronouncing and distinguishing all the different types of fruits. During this time, Noah told us to turn to a partner and discuss what fruit is our favourite and why. I told Carley that although I brought an apple, my favourite fruit was actually a mango because they are so sweet and tasty. When the bowl was full of all the different types of fruits, each student was able to dish out a portion of the fruit salad onto a plate for themselves to enjoy. The fruit salad looked so beautiful with all the colours and it tasted so delicious. This activity made me want to go home and make a big fruit salad all for myself.

This fruit salad activity was an example of the Language Experience Approach. Each student was equally able to get involved in this activity and have a shared experience that they could connect to their own previous experience while also possibly learning about some new words. This type of inclusive activity provides an opportunity for all students to learn together and feel as though they are part of the classroom community regardless of what their previous knowledge about the topic or their level of institutional literacy. Classrooms are often full of great diversity, students with varying levels of literacy may be in one classroom and require wide-ranging needs and approaches to maximize their literacy education. At the end of the article Something Old is New Again, the author states that “A Language Experience Approach offers the classroom teacher the flexibility to select the appropriate skills and strategies needed by the diverse student populations of today.” By allowing students to engage in an activity and showcase what they already know, a classroom teach has the ability to construct lessons and activities that are better suited for the students’ needs. An activity such as the community fruit salad provides the opportunity for many different skills and outcomes to be addressed. This activity helps to build on literacy by allowing students to hear, pronounce and associate to objects words they may have not previously known. It also allows classroom teachers to create a vocabulary list they can use and encourage students to begin developing sentences with these words. Once students create sentences, lessons with proper grammar, punctuation and spelling can be established.