
Except from:
Wink, J. (2004, 3/e, p.136) *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the REAL WORLD*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

The Messenger and the Scribe

How to Do It

- Before the activity, the instructor chooses one piece of text.
- Make copies of the text, and tape them in multiple places on the walls of the classroom.
- Place the students in pairs; one is the messenger, and one is the scribe.
- When the activity begins, all who are messengers run to the wall, read the text, return to the scribe, and repeat the text exactly. The scribe writes exactly what the messenger says.
- Throughout the activity, the instructor can change the roles of the scribes and messengers.
- The instructor needs to stay out of the way. This is lively and fun whether five-year-olds, fifteen-year-olds, or fifty-five-year-olds are doing it.
- When one pair finishes, the activity stops while this pair reads exactly what is written on their paper. If there are any errors, the activity begins again.
- Obviously, this activity works well for listening, for spelling, and for grammar and punctuation.

The Experience

When we did this activity in Arizona, I was not interested in listening, spelling, grammar, or punctuation. I was interested in content. I was interested in an idea. I wanted the group to begin a discussion of parental involvement, so I chose “Models for Parental Involvement” (see Figure 7.3 in Chapter 7). In this case, we placed the copies of text out in the hall, as it was a long Saturday and the building was empty except for us. This made the activity more fun and more challenging. When we finished, the students (adults) discussed ways in which they could adapt this activity to their own context and then slowly began to discuss their various experiences with family involvement in their own community. By the end of the discussion, they were acknowledging the important role they play in improving the quality of parental involvement at their school sites.¹