
Except from:
Wink, J. & Wink D. (2004, pp.1-6) *Teaching Passionately: What's Love Got to Do with It?* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Teaching Passionately – The Spiral of Literacy

*What matters is passion.
(Hillman, 1996, p., 160).*

In this book we will talk about love, learning, and language. We will ask you to think about what you love, and we will ask you to think of ways that you could use that passion to enrich teaching and learning. We will ask you to ponder your own pedagogy.

What's love got to do with it? As we seek to find answers to this central question, we will use visuals to expand our thinking. We have chosen a spiral to capture the idea that at any one time, our understandings are similar to a dot on a continuum of professional growth. The purpose of the spiral is two-fold. First, a spiral provides something solid to grasp, as we reflect; and second, the spiral demonstrates the continuum of learning and developing. For example, think of literacy: How did you learn to read?

Joan asked herself this question, and captured a few of the highlights of development on her own continuum of learning to read.

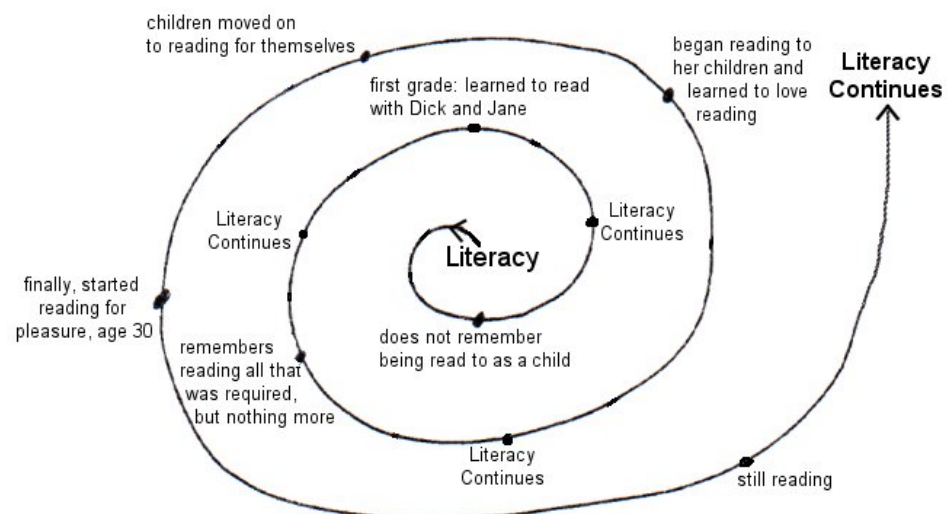


FIGURE 1.1: Joan's Spiral of Literacy

“But, Mom, that’s not right,” said Dawn when she saw Joan’s spiral of literacy development. Dawn quickly grabbed a pen and drew her own spiral of literacy development.

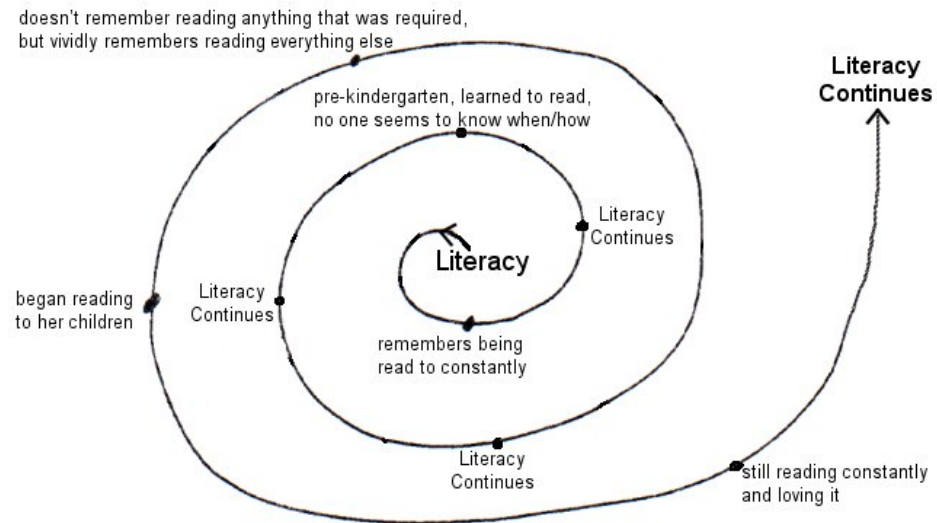


FIGURE 1.2: Dawn's Spiral of Literacy

Joan and Dawn’s spiral of literacy development are each unique. We learn to read in our own way, just as we each develop and learn in our distinctive way. Drawing these literacy spirals made Joan and Dawn reflect more on their own literacy. These stories tell much about the perspectives of authors and where this book will take the readers.

How I Learned to Read: Joan Reflects

I learned to read by way of phonics in the first grade. First, I learned the individual letters and their sounds; from letters and sounds, I moved to individual words; from words, to sentences, to paragraphs, to pages, to stories. I learned to read by building up the parts; bottom to top. Reading specialists would say I was a parts-to-whole reader. Some would say that phonics gets the credit. I slowly and carefully put the puzzle together piece by piece. In school I read every assignment, every chapter, every set of comprehension questions at the end of chapters, every spelling list, and every grammar assignment. I read everything I was told to read; I got good grades and graduated at the top of my high school class. One problem: I hated to read. I read only the exact number of pages assigned; I never took a book home to read for pleasure. I went to college and continued the same pattern. I spent every free moment in the library, got good grades, graduated with honors in literature, and yet I still hated to read.

When my children were babies, I started to read to them. The baby books said I should, so I did. With our first child, Dawn, something started to change: I loved the big black-and-white checkered book, *The Real Mother Goose*. I thought *Winnie the Pooh* had been written just for me. By the time we got to *Charlotte's Web*, I was hooked on books. I used to secretly read *The Secret Garden* even when Dawn was asleep. With our son, Bo, I broadened my literary base. I probably have read *The Three Little Pigs* several thousand times, and I still huff and puff with vigor. *Pecos Bill* was the highlight of Bo's preschool years at home. From there he moved on to BMX magazines, and we both became authorities on racing bikes. After BMX magazines, he moved on to motorcycle books. From there, he jumped right into Stephen King and left me far in the dust. It was at this point in my life that I had to find my own books to read. I was probably about thirty years old.

Dawn and Bo learned to read the opposite way that I did. Reading specialists would say that they were whole-to-part readers. They looked at the picture of the whole puzzle first and then put the pieces together. Do they love to read? Yes. Do they read for pleasure? Yes.

When I first started to notice all of this, it seemed like a contradiction. How could my kids possibly learn to read if they didn't do the same thing I had done? Didn't I need to teach them the sounds, the letters, the words first? However, it was clear to me that they were not interested in the *parts*. They wanted the *whole* story again and again and again. Since that time, I have been very interested in the various ways that children learn to read and read to learn. This is what triggered my interest in holistic and critical teaching and learning. It seems that many kids who were read to as little children, learn to read and love to read. Homes with books and ideas and love seem to produce kids who love to read

Now, Dawn's story continues where Joan ended, as Dawn reflects back on her own experiences from her own perspective.

How I Learned to Read: Dawn Reflects

I don't remember reading too much in school. I'm sure I did, but what I do remember is every *Nancy Drew*, the *Black Stallion* series, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and the *Wizard of Oz* series. I don't ever remember a time that reading has not been central in my life.

In kindergarten I came home crying because the librarian said I couldn't check out *The Secret Garden* because it was too hard for kindergarteners. This same librarian had a rule that you could only check out one book at a time.

So, one day I checked out my one book and shoved three others that I wanted to read inside my T-shirt and headed for the door. Of course I was discovered. I probably weighed 50 pounds at the time and had 15 pounds of books under my little shirt. "Dawn, you are stealing books!" I still remember this large, buxom librarian bearing down on me. It bewildered me that she thought I was stealing. How could she not know that I would just read them and bring them back? One book for the next week would never do. She did not know this and gave me detention for a week, which meant Mom and Bo had detention as well, as we lived an hour out of town and they had to wait for me to drive home.

This centrality of reading born from Mom reading to me from an early age continues to this day in my own house. My three young children and I spend hours a day reading aloud together. At the moment, I wonder how many others have read the entire *Harry Potter* series aloud, two times? While none of my children are reading independently yet, being read to is far and away their favorite activity. Mom's legacy of reading continues.

Stop reading right now. Take a bit of time to reflect on your own literacy development and to capture it on the following spiral.

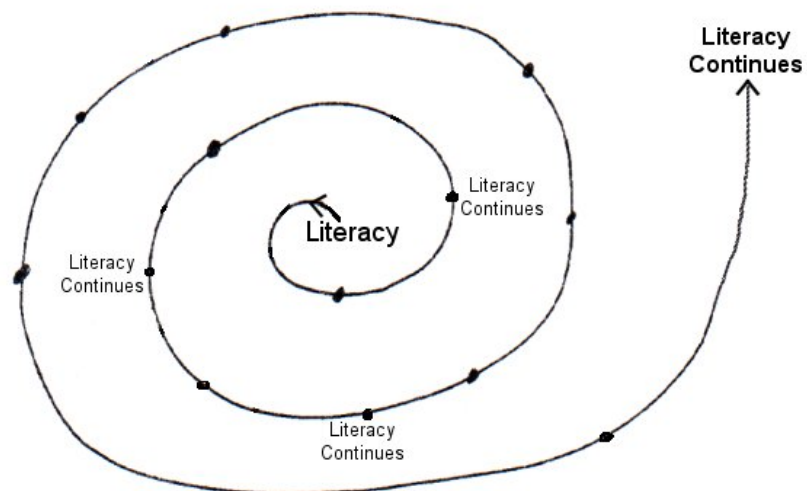
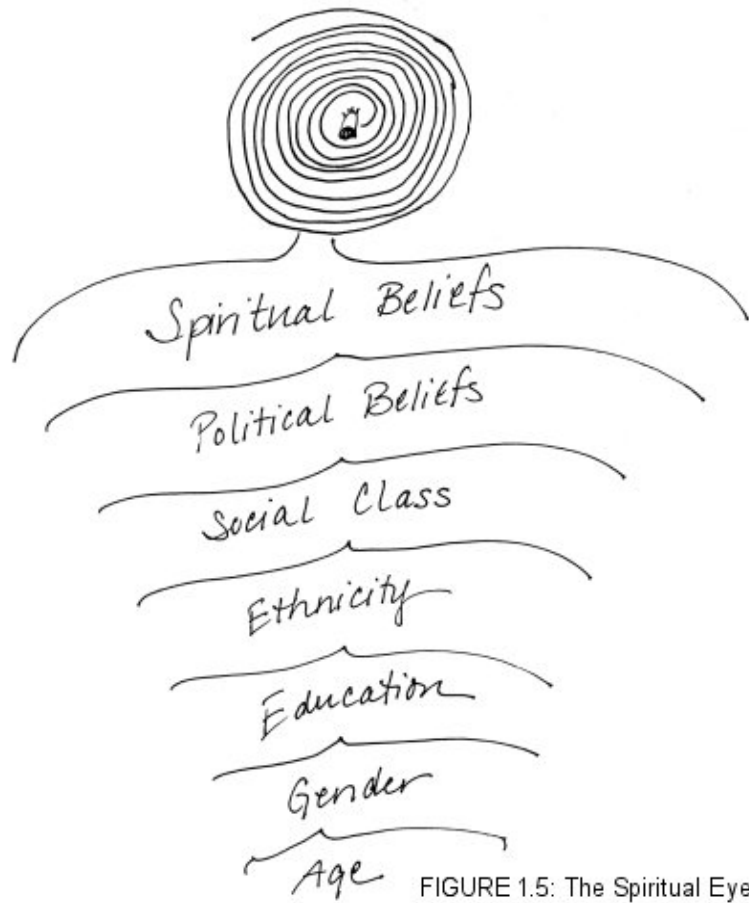


FIGURE 1.3: Your Spiral of Literacy



The spiral of passionate pedagogy and the spiritual eye have much to contribute as we each work towards self and social transformation.