

REFLECTION AND GROWTH IN TEACHING: DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING A
HIGH SCHOOL BIOLOGY AND SOCIETY COURSE USING ACTION RESEARCH

by

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SYNTHESIS

MASTERS OF ARTS

SCIENCE IN A CHANGING WORLD

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May 2018

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Abstract:

The world that we live in is constantly changing and educational systems need to reflect these changes. High stakes testing, stress and anxiety in students, and smartphones in the classroom are all aspects of current schools that move us away from authentic learning. Student choice in education, pursuing answers to real world questions and developing critical and creative thinking skills upends this existing paradigm. To achieve this, teachers must turn to the most important work, which is to *know* each student and give them agency in their education. Teachers no longer need to occupy the center stage of the classroom and instead should be guiding students in their learning. This synthesis uses action research to construct and present a student-centered, process-oriented course titled *Biology and Society*. The course serves high school seniors in a small learning community within the greater Boston area. The synthesis provides a rationale for the course, presents its pedagogical framework, and discusses its future implementation and evaluation. The creation and teaching of this course is a first step toward student-driven learning in which teachers are reflexively asking, “why this class, for this population, at this time?”

