

**Jill Lake**  
**CrCrTh 694**  
**Exit Self Assessment**

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**Describe for each of the 10 + 10 goals**

- a) something that reflects what you have achieved well related to this goal, and
- b) something you have struggled with/ need more help on/ want to work further on.  
(Even though you may have many examples for some items, one is enough.)

**I. "MY SYNTHESIS PRODUCT SHOWS THAT..."**

A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).

+ Yes. I have shown through my product and through my paper that I can convey specific information for a specific purpose for specific audiences. The website I created is written for an audience of teachers, students, parents, and community members. I wrote my synthesis paper for the purpose of explaining the steps in the process of my capstone project for an audience of future CCT students.

Δ I want to work further on learning how to change the voice of my writing. I'm unclear whether I'm able now to consciously change the voice of my writing. I want to look back on my notes from our discussions in 694 about exercises one can engage in to practice writing in a different voice. I will revisit Peter Elbow's book to work on this, as well.

B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

+ I know what other schools across the country, in Canada, and in the U.K. are doing with school forests and with regard to environmental, outdoor and place-based education. I also know of other websites and books about environmental education, outdoor education, how nature benefits children's development, and place-based education.

Δ I don't know much about the kinds of grants that are available to school districts that would like to create programming or infrastructure for their school forests. I would like to learn what grant resources may be available to the Garrison School.

C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

+ Yes. I had an initial focus on the Garrison School Forest, but when I teased out my vision, I realized that I should also present information on the website about the greater Hudson Highlands region. I saw that I needed to address the place where the Garrison School and its forest are situated. I also teased out a plan to use the product of my synthesis project as a portfolio piece to assist in my job search. I came up with a creative way for my project to assist my community and my own goals.

△ My vision for my synthesis paper is ambitious, because I address nine different goals I hope to achieve through the website project and the paper. I am also moving in several different directions in terms of my next steps that will continue after the end of this course. Two directions are personal. They concern my career shift and job search, and my new public service role of serving on the school board. The other directions concern the future of the school forest and how it is utilized. I addressed my work to meet all nine of my goals in the paper, but I'm not sure my discussion of each goal was sufficient.

D. I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

+ Yes. I've read a great deal of research on how time in nature benefits children's health, the ability to focus, creativity, resilience, and even moral values. So, I can state clearly that Forest Fridays are a good idea, and that outdoor education absolutely complements the work being done in classrooms. Further, I can state that providing resources to teachers to help them teach effectively in the School Forest makes sense and provides benefits to teachers and children. It's a useful endeavor. I can also identify the propositions that support preserving the School Forest in perpetuity and expanding it. I can state the counter-propositions to that proposal, as well.

△ I would like to continue to explore interpersonal ways of being persuasive with my argument of propositions in one-to-one conversations and in public speaking. It's important to be able to express the same message in my public speaking, off-the-cuff, as I present in my writing.

E. I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

+ I had a clear vision of what I wanted to produce in terms of my product and paper. I was also clear about the skills that I needed to acquire to accomplish my project. I created a production plan and carried out my work in a sequence. I created deadlines for myself, which I followed.

△ I learned that I'm capable of creating and realizing a very ambitious project, but that I was not realistic about the amount of time I needed to complete all sections of the website. I set an initial website launch date of March 11. I actually launched the complete site on April 6. But, I did have a cushion of time built into my schedule for the semester. As I begin new projects in the future, I need to look carefully at the scope and scale of each project and better estimate the time that will be required. And then, I'll need to add a cushion of time to my estimate. This will be a continuing reflective practice.

F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

+ I learned a great deal that I could not have learned otherwise by going on a Forest Friday outing with students and teachers, by talking with teachers and administrators, and also by interviewing several people with specific expertise and knowledge.

△

I never did interview Craig Watters with the Friends of the American Revolution group. It would

still be beneficial to talk with him. As I move forward with the website and other aspects of making the School Forest a more interpretative learning site, it will be very important to talk with people in person to learn from their specific knowledge.

G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

+ I think so. I've shown that outdoor education benefits children. I've explained that the new administration of the school supports teaching in the School Forest more often, and has launched the Forest Fridays program. I think I've made it clear that the Garrison School's teachers are not all trained in how to teach outdoors. At present, the school does not have an online resource that gathers information relating to instruction in the School Forest together in one place. And, I think I've shown that the information I've found will be useful to teachers and students. So, I think I've shown that I have identified a need, and that I have created a solution for that need.

△ Part of my argument is that the website can play a role in the effort to preserve the School Forest in perpetuity. The link between the product and its potential effect is unclear. I am hopeful that this product helps the cause, but the result remains to be seen.

H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

+ In my paper, I think that my introduction captures the attention and imagination of the reader. I explain what I'm going to talk about, and what sections will follow. I presented nine goals and later in the paper discussed how I have met or am working to meet each goal. I do think that I was able to move the reader along as I presented additional information. I think that the "Taking Myself Seriously," Next Steps," and "Conclusion" sections help the reader appreciate the position I've led him to. The writing on the website grabs the attention of the reader, orients them, moves them along in steps, and helps them appreciate the position I've led them to.

△ The "Process" section of the paper, which discusses some of the steps in my process may be overly long and overly detailed. It was difficult to determine how much detail to share and what to leave out of the paper.

I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

+ By creating the website, I've charted a new path in public participation for myself as a parent in relationship to the Garrison School. I am also now running for election to the school board. And, I've applied to be part of the Good Work Institute: Hudson Valley. So, I am definitely moving into new areas of public participation.

△ I need to be really careful about my communication. I wrote a follow-up email message to the teachers, superintendent, and six parents who had participated in a community forum that I took part in on Monday, May 9. One of the teachers wrote to me and said she was concerned because she felt I singled her out unfairly in my email message. She is a 26-year veteran teacher. I have apologized. And, I expressed my desire, again, to working collaboratively together to develop solutions to

challenges the school faces. I need to keep learning about how to engage and contribute thoughtfully, without being presumptuous and without offending others. It's a continuing practice.

J. To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

+ I have taken stock of my process during the synthesis project. I see that the daily writing was central to the project. It is how I planned the project, engaged in the KAQF process to figure out what I was missing and how I could get that information, and how I planned to synthesize and present the information I collected. I also used my journal to figure out my own schedule of deadlines, and to track my progress on the project.

Δ What needs changing is that I need to continue to work on understanding my research and writing process well enough to accurately estimate the amount of time a project will take. My synthesis product was very ambitious. My initial deadline of March 11 was not reasonable. I was working on the project daily, but could not complete the work by that date. But, I was able to complete it by April 6. So, in my professional life – while engaging in projects for which I'll be paid – I will need to be more accurate about how long work will take, and what is possible by what date.

## **II. DEVELOPING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, INCLUDING TAKING INITIATIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS**

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

+ I integrated into my synthesis work many concepts and skills I learned in my Human Development, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Action Research, Collaboration & Organizational Change, Reflective Practice, Philosophical Thinking, and Dialogue Processes.

Δ I see now that I want to go back to some exercises and practices from the Creative Thinking class. I need to buy the textbook; I had rented it. Unfortunately, the information from the class is no longer accessible through Blackboard.

### **2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.**

+ Yes. I've reflected on what went well for me and what I struggled with in the past. For instance, I realized that I don't find APA style to be intuitive. I had difficulty with it in a past course. So, I felt that it would work better for me to use MLA style for my 694 paper. I had started my writing process for 692 too late. So, I was careful in setting up my own deadlines for completing the website and beginning the paper to make sure that I allowed myself enough time to write. I incorporated many of the processes I learned about in Action Research into my process for completing this synthesis project.

Δ I still find the writing process to be mysterious and miraculous. Even while incorporating Peter Elbow's and Peter Taylor's methods and ideas, it was unclear what I would create. So, I will continue to practice writing and learning how to write.

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.

+ Yes. I did develop efficient ways to organize my time, research, computer access, and bibliographies. I housed my bibliography in Zotero. I used a succession of four paper notebooks for

my daily writing for my synthesis project, which was my record of my ideas, plans, deadlines, and progress. My journals are full of lists, drawings, KAQF noodling, narrative outlines, and daily journal entries. I saved digital resources using Diigo. I found tagging my resources by subject to be very useful. I was also very dedicated and organized with my time. As I worked on the computer in my office, my iPad, and my home computer, I emailed drafts to myself and also catalogued them in Google Drive. I also saved documents on my office and home computers.

Δ Even though I had eliminated Facebook from my iPad and my phone when I took the Reflective Practice class, I sometimes, during my synthesis work, found myself wasting time by scrolling through Facebook and reading my friends' posts. Late in the synthesis project, I deleted Facebook from my phone and iPad again. I see that viewing Facebook provided a way of feeling connected to friends that I was not seeing at all in real life while completing the synthesis work. But I also see that engagement with Facebook was a distraction and a waste of time that I could have spent in another way. This is a weakness and a tendency that I will need to continue to monitor.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

+ I experimented with Zotero and found that it was very helpful to me in creating my bibliography. I continued to use Diigo, which I had experimented with in 692. I tried writing the paper using Scrivener. Contrary to the great reviews of the product, I didn't like the interface. Eventually, I exported all of my writing and worked on the paper in Microsoft Word. Using Weebly to create the website was new to me. I had created websites using Virb, Arlo, and Google Sites. But, I had not created a website using Weebly until I created [www.gufsee.org](http://www.gufsee.org). I learned a lot about the capabilities of the interface and became very adept at using this web developer.

Δ I will learn how to create podcasts so that I can add them to the [gufsee.org](http://gufsee.org) website. I will take a course offered by Creativelive. Then, I'll need to learn how to use the Audacity digital audio editor software.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

+ My husband took care of our sons on weekends so that I could work on my project. I felt very guilty about this, but he assured me that this was what I needed to do. We explained to our sons that there would be an end to this arrangement, and that I would be able to do things with them again after I completed the program in May. Additionally, I was engaged in a job with fewer responsibilities at The New School following a reorganization of staff. It was easy for me to complete my work. I had time to work on my synthesis project during my work day. I cleared my head of anger about past things at the job, and decided to put my energy into my synthesis project. It was helpful to work in this way, because it helped with my home life. It helped me to be present with my family when I was with them. I continued to swim each morning before work. The swimming process helped me to ponder issues with research and writing, and to synthesize ideas. It was essential to my process.

Δ I see now that the course has ended that daily writing is essential for me. I need to continue it so that I can reflect on what I need to be doing. I now have many tasks ahead of me concerning my job search. I also have tasks concerning creating new content for the website, and promoting the website. Additionally, I want to write a first-person piece explaining why I created the website, why parent involvement in schools is important, and why environmental and place-based education is essential for children. So, I see that I have to create structure for myself with lists and self-imposed deadlines. To support this work, I will return to the reflective practice that I developed in spring 2015.

6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

+ I developed good peer relationships with Sara Kaplan and Sandra McCollin, who were my writing partners. They supported me, and I supported them. I am really grateful to them. I also sought advice from the other students in my 694 class, Kaylea Champion, Anne Gladfelter, and Kerri Arruda. I believe I've given good advice to Kaylea, Anne, and Kerri. I've received very important support from the Garrison School's principal, superintendent, and members of the Environmental Education Committee.

Δ I need to ask for the kind of feedback I want. I was not always good at articulating the kind of feedback I hoped to receive. So, as I move forward and engage in other writing projects, I need to remember to specify the type of feedback I seek.

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

+ I went right ahead and began to write copy for the website. I identified many of the problems with the work myself. I received good feedback from the principal, superintendent, teacher reviewers, my instructor, and my peers. I knew that the writing was a process, and that it would get better with time and reflection. I changed early copy I had written for the website near the end of the project, as I saw that I could do so much better. I did not avoid submitting drafts of my paper. I worked with a manuscript editor who gave me useful feedback. So, I was proactive in keeping the process moving.

Δ In terms of an expository problem, I wrote long again. In 692, my paper was more than 4,500 words. The synthesis paper I produced is 50 pages with 23 pages of appendices and works cited list entries. I still need to work on learning how to revise my writing to meet a certain length requirement – and still convey the information I hope to share.

8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

+ Yes. I have revised seriously. It was helpful to receive feedback about the website. Much of the feedback was about the appearance and organization of the home page and the naming of one section. Other feedback helped me to understand that I should launch a complete site with all of the sections I had envisioned originally. It was helpful too, to hear from Peter that I needed to address my goals more fully in the paper. Sara Kaplan helped me to understand that I didn't need to exhaustively outline every detail of my process. I engaged in an enormous amount of reflective inquiry and resulting discovery throughout the writing process for the website and the paper.

Δ As I write application letters for jobs, I will need to continue to make sure I am powerfully conveying what I'm about. I have a lot of writing ahead of me for the job search, and I'll need to revise it just as seriously as I revised the website copy and my paper.

9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work—criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade.

+ I definitely have an internal compass that provides direction for doing good work. I envisioned and produced a 52-page website that is chock full of information. I created the criteria for the resources I chose for the website. I had a very high standard, because I knew that the website would be used as a teaching resource. I created a method for citing sources on the website which is a modification of MLA style. As the website theme is responsive, the layout changes depending on the device on which it is viewed. So, I could not present the sources with a hanging indent. It was not possible. In terms of the paper, I organized it in a way that I felt best explained the scope of my project. I did not organize it in a way that my instructor dictated.

Δ I know that the paper was supposed to be 20-40 pages I had a lot of difficulty cutting my paper and getting it to align with that requirement. So, I did revise, edit, and cut it down, but the final product is longer than the requirement. So, this is an area in which I need to grow and work on. I need to learn how to better shorten my work and still convey what I want to convey.

10. I have approached the CCT synthesis course and the CCT program as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well in the synthesis course and the program as a whole and to suggest directions for their further development.

+ I have definitely approached the course as a work-in-progress. I am very grateful to have been in my cohort, which was a very supportive group. I harbor no criticisms now. My instructor and my

peers helped me to move through periods of doubt and fear, and helped me to produce work that I am very proud of. I am really grateful for the experience.

Δ I see that it will be good to approach many situations in life as works-in-progress. This is a more healthy approach to going through life. If I can apply this idea to my current work at The New School, it will help me to see the good that is happening, and how the institution is evolving. This philosophy will be helpful as I work on the school board, and in whatever new job I take on.