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## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

### Manifesto: The Mad Teacher Liberation Front

—In Imitation of Wendell Berry's Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front  
Rebecca Powell

Love the pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all,  
color-coded curriculum. Want 4 easy steps  
to teach everything but humanity.  
Be afraid to know your students.

Index the lives in the desks. Funnel them  
through the machine of school to college, work,  
and prison. Test for deficiency, delinquency,  
distribution and watch your heart turn  
bad like spoiled milk, until you no longer  
remember why you stand in front of a classroom.

But don't worry. When they want your body  
in support of an unfunded mandate,  
they will call you. When they want you to speak,  
they will script it. So, tsunali, friends, everyday  
teach something that can't be tested. Love your students.  
Love the world. Work for the common good.  
Read a book for the joy of it. Smile at the secretary.

Denounce the system of education and  
hold dear its promise. Hope to know a world  
where children have full bellies and  
become neither the bully nor the cowed.  
Give what no one gave you: permission to fail, to learn.  
Praise the unknown, the unquantified, the intangible.

Ask the questions that lead to better questions.

Call that success.

Say your job is enabling lives

that you do not control,

that will not profit you.

State that in your dossier.

Say the course objectives are achieved

when students become learners.

Put your faith in the resilience of a child and

your money in CSAs.

Expect the whole system to come crashing down,

but work like it never will.

Be joyful though you know all the statistics.

Ask yourself: will this satisfy the

adult this student will become?

Will this disturb the sleep of a mother

about to send her child to school?

Go with your love to the classroom.

Listen to the unspoken. Read between the lines.

Swear allegiance to the lights in students' eyes.

Practice insurrection.



Rebecca Powell teaches and writes on the edge of the Mississippi Sound. She has published on adolescent writing experiences, K-16 writing pedagogy, community literacy and place studies. Current projects include researching the circulation of writing experiences through people's lives and communities and the implications of place studies for teacher education. She practices insurrection in the garden and the kitchen. She can be reached at [rebecca.a.powell@usm.edu](mailto:rebecca.a.powell@usm.edu)