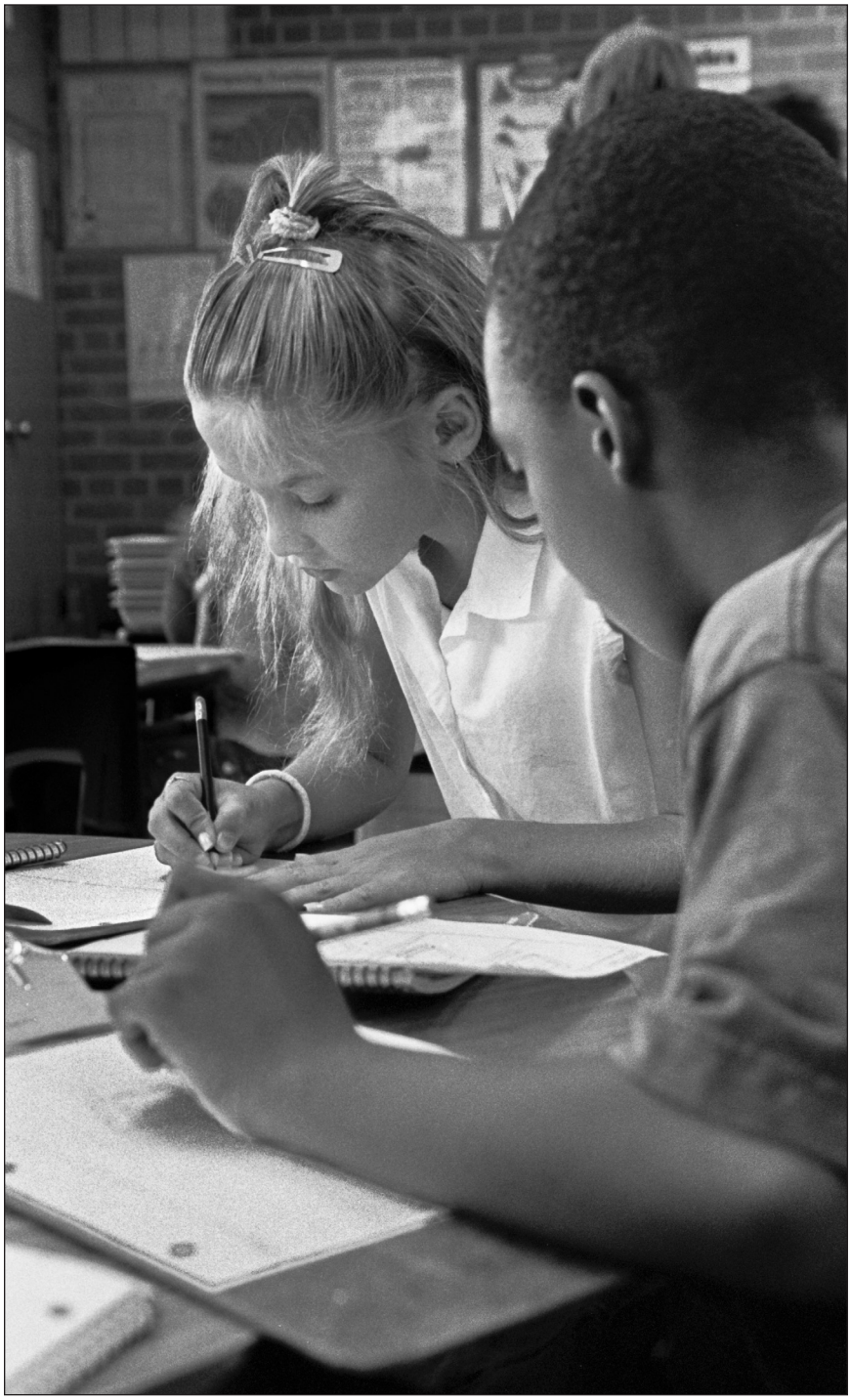
Exploring Inquiry as a Teaching Stance in the Writing Workshop



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An inquiry approach to genre study repositions curriculum as the outcome of instruction rather than as the starting point.

On a Saturday afternoon in January, Emily Steffans went to the library and began searching through the most recent back issues of familiar newspapers and magazines. Emily was preparing to launch a study of op-ed writing in her fifth-grade writing workshop, and she wanted to find some good examples of this kind of writing for the study. She was looking for op-ed pieces by columnists who explore topics she thought might interest her students. The daily offering of opinions about what's happening in our lives is found in these columns, often published with the writer's photograph beside them so readers can see the "voice" behind the writing. Randy Bomer (1995) has said that this type of writing is where "our society entertains its most important conversations" (p. 185). The writing in op-ed columns ranges from reflective commentary—sometimes poignant, sometimes humorous, sometimes both—to the clear, staunch positioning of editorials.

Gathering Texts:	The teacher, often along with students, gathers examples of the kind of writing students will do.
Set the Stage:	The teacher explains that students will be expected to finish a piece of writing that shows the influence of the study.
Immersion:	The teacher and students spend time reading and getting to know the texts they'll study. They make notes of things they notice about how the texts are written. They think about the *process* writers use to craft texts like the ones they are studying.
Close Study:	The class revisits the texts, framing talk with the question, "What did we notice about how these texts are written?" Teacher and students work together to use specific language to say what they know about writing from this close study, *developing curriculum as they go*. The teacher, through modeling, takes a strong lead in helping students envision using what they are learning in their own writing.
Writing under the Influence:	Students (and often the teacher) finish pieces of writing that show the influence of the study in specific ways.

Figure 1. An instructional frame for inquiry about writing

An Inquiry Stance to Teaching

Emily was part of a group of literacy coaches and teachers who came together during the 2003–2004 school year to study curriculum and instruction in writing workshops across a range of grade levels. As the consultant to the group, I chose to focus our work around an instructional frame for whole-class inquiry that would allow us to study a wide variety of genres (Bomer, 1995; Calkins, 1994; Lattimer, 2003) along with writing issues other than genre (Nia, 1999), such as punctuation (Angelillo, 2002), and how to make illustrations work well with written texts (Ray, with Cleaveland, 2004). Figure 1 outlines this instructional frame.

Framing instruction in this way represents an essential stance to teaching and learning, an *inquiry stance,* characterized by repositioning curriculum as the outcome of instruction rather than as the starting point. In this particular set of practices, the noticing and questioning that students engage in around the gathered texts determine what will become important content in the study (the teacher doesn't determine this in advance), and depth rather than coverage is the driving force in the development of this content. The idea of "uncovering curriculum" through inquiry is certainly not new (Harste, 1992; Short & Harste, with Burke, 1996; Short, Schroeder, Laird, Kauffman, Ferguson, & Crawford, 1996; Whitin & Whitin, 1997) but it seems to have taken hold more as a teaching stance in integrated, content area studies. In these studies, writing is used as a tool for learning and as a means to communicate that learning, but in the instructional frame outlined above, an inquiry stance is used to uncover curriculum *about writing itself*.

The purpose of this article is to explain the reasons I believe in the efficacy of an inquiry stance in the teaching of writing and to examine some related issues. But before I do that, I'll return to the story of Emily Steffans and her study of op-ed writing. In addition to the nine days I spent with her and other teachers last year, Emily and I have continued to share thinking about teaching in e-mail exchanges. My own understandings about inquiry have deepened from these exchanges. My hope is that this snapshot of her study will bring life to the framework for inquiry outlined above and serve as a powerful example of it in action.

A Fifth-Grade Study of Op-Ed Writing

At the end of her search, Emily had six op-ed columns she felt could anchor her study (see Figure 2) and two writers who would become mentors for her students: Leonard Pitts of *The Miami Herald* (winner of the 2004 Pulitzer prize for commentary) and Rick Reilly of *Sports Illustrated* (voted "National Sportswriter of the Year" eight times). The topics of the columns she selected ranged from Reilly's thoughts on whether 14-year-old Freddy Adu is ready for a professional soccer career, to Pitts's boisterous commentary on how absurd he finds PJ Squares (ready-made layers for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches), which ends with this thought: "If you're too busy to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you're too busy." Emily photocopied the texts she had selected and made each of her

- **"Ready-made sandwich just too convenient" by Leonard Pitts.** *The Miami Herald.* **Posted on November 17, 2003.** Explores the issues of a time-pressed society and how we can take time-saving conveniences to ridiculous extremes.
- **"Ready Freddy" by Rick Reilly.** *Sports Illustrated.* **December 1, 2003.** Considers whether 14-year-old soccer phenom Freddy Adu is ready to play in a professional soccer league.
- **"Worth the wait" by Rick Reilly.** *Sports Illustrated.* **October 20, 2003.** The story of a 16-year-old with cerebral palsy who runs track for his high school team and reflections on what this story says about life.
- **"A year in the life of broken-down technology" by Leonard Pitts.** *The Miami Herald.* **Posted on December 1, 2003.** Commentary on the high price we sometimes pay for the conveniences of technology in our lives.
- **"Expert testimony" by Rick Reilly.** *Sports Illustrated.* **October 13, 2003.** One of a number of Reilly's columns on the ongoing problems between Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal of the LA Lakers.
- **"The fat of the land" by Rick Reilly.** *Sports Illustrated.* September 16, 2003. Reilly's thoughts on the sedentary lifestyles of many young people and the connection they have to obesity problems.

Figure 2. Texts Emily selected to anchor her study of op-ed writing

fifth graders a packet with their own copies for study.

Over the next few weeks in writing workshop, Emily and her students immersed themselves in reading and rereading these texts along with other op-ed pieces the students found and added to their packets. They used sticky notes and highlighters and notes in the margins to mark what they noticed about *how they were written* (Ray, 1999). As they came together each day, they charted their observations (see Figure 3) and used talk to deepen their understandings about how op-ed writing is crafted effectively. Along the way, they found specific lines of inquiry they wanted to follow, such as why questions are such a common strategy in op-ed pieces and the role of humor in this kind of writing. Emily often modeled how she could try these various techniques in her own writing. Sometimes she invited the children to try things out with her in their writer's notebooks.

As the inquiry progressed, students were also considering topics for the op-ed pieces they would eventually write. Much of this idea-building happened in their writer's notebooks,

Op-Ed pieces might . . .

- ask questions to introduce a topic (start with a lot, then use the op-ed piece to answer them)
- use repeating lines
- shorten topic sentences into one word (more appealing to the reader)
- use one-word questions for first sentence
- exaggerate to really make a point or add humor
- compare the topic to something else (doesn't use the actual word to describe)
- use sarcasm when appropriate
- use lists of adjectives to describe
- interview people related to topic or use quotes from others
- "pull out" a quote and make it bigger
- give solutions if the topic presents a problem
- insert small paragraphs of comments/opinion in between longer paragraphs
- use plain humor
- wait to introduce the topic until the middle so the reader doesn't stop reading because of the topic
- admit when the writer doesn't know the topic
- end with a very personal comment/opinion/idea
- point fingers at people/things that are causes of the problem—but sometimes not directly
- use a title that grabs interest, but doesn't give the topic
- use shocking facts
- use bullets to call attention to ideas
- change point of view if the goal was to make you think
- use personal comparisons
- give facts, both pro and con

Figure 3. Chart of observations from the inquiry

but it also grew from lots of talk and research about their topics. Studying their touchstone texts (Calkins, 1994; Nia, 1999) gave them a feel for what kind of information they would need—quotes, statistics, etc.

Because Emily's students knew they were expected to write something similar to what they had been reading, something that could take its place in their packet of op-ed columns, their inquiry had that wonderful sense of urgency that writers who are expected to write something know so well. When I visited her workshop in February, there was an almost tangible feeling of *living toward something* in the room, reminiscent of the feeling a class has when they are going on a trip or putting on a play. And because Emily had chosen such amazing writers to mentor her students, there seemed also to be a feeling among them that what they would eventually write was going to be *good*. Many wanted to start their drafts right away, but Emily held them off until the inquiry progressed enough that she felt they had a strong vision for the writing they would do.

After lots of study and conferring and time spent fine-tuning their drafts as best they could, Emily's fifth graders celebrated writing their very first op-ed columns, a kind of writing new to most of them only five short weeks before. They had chosen to write about the dangers of low-carb diets, the risks of Internet chat rooms, the controversies of program funding in their local school district, and a rich variety of other topics. Because of the natural range of development in the room, there was certainly a range in quality of writing, but Emily simply let each of her students write an op-ed piece as well as he or she could, and in doing so, made the task achievable for all of them. Figures 4 and 5 show two of her students' columns, selected because they represent a range of development.

Reflecting on the work the class did as a whole, Emily told me that what she loved most was that the op-ed columns really looked like fifth graders wrote them, and they "just sounded so editorial-y."

Other Possible Teaching Stances

Before I explain why I believe an inquiry stance makes sense, I should explain the teaching alternatives to inquiry. One alternative is not to connect the teaching to any real-world (as opposed to school-world) examples of writing at all. Students are given a generic definition of the kind of writing they are to do, such as *persuasive*

What will we do?

I was just thinking about all the things going on in Columbia. It's sort of like what's going on in the country Columbia, with all the drug wars. But thankfully in our city it isn't drugs, but the 4th or 5th Walmart, all the construction and all the crazy bike lanes. You know: city stuff.

But why Walmart just about a mile from another one? Is it for the Laurie's and Kronke's view or convenience? Our Lowe's is so small compared to St. Louis, who probably has the same amount of Walmarts as us. Think about that Walmart.

But then again what's the big deal? Yes, it's a stupid idea, but think about it: It's a WALMART!!!!!! There's no stopping Walmart. Nobody revolted to putting bike lanes in crazy places. Nobody revolted to building those huge apartments behind Smithton! Since when did the smiling yellow guy become everybody's enemy?

Oh, and did you know that Sam Walton once said that if people wanted Walmart out of there, then they would get out of there? Bye, bye Sam, bye, bye rollback dude, bye bye Walmart.

Guess what? Forget about that because they're still building it. Soon our town is going to be in the Guiness Book of World Records for most Walmarts per person! Yep, West Broadway is officially a non-smiley face free zone. Sign and all. But it could still be that somebody revolts or something happens. That'll be the day for the people who have a homemade sign that looks like this:

Walmart on West Broadway ☺	instead of this:	No Walmart on West Broadway ☺

Yes, they are even selling signs for about 5$ that protest against Walmart.

What will it be like in the future? How many of "Sam Walton's Paradises" will we have in Columbia? Hopefully not many more.

Figure 4. Student's finished (to the best of his ability) op-ed piece about a new Walmart

Should We Look Up To Him?

Why do people look up to Shaq. Why doesn't shaqs teammates respect him.

Shaq doesn't get along with he's teammates. Why I don't really know. But I know why he doesn't get alone with kobe. Because when kobe was injured kobe was talking a lot about shaq but shaq was not going for thet so he was sending bad messages back to kobe.

Why do you think Shaq would lose he's job. Well I think that shaq would lose his job because of arguing and threaning his teammates. I think his coach would not put up with it. And he would just throw him out of the game.

Why do you think that shaq does not play well. To give you an example he does more of arguing then playing. But don't get me wrong he can put on a show for you.

I think that shaq shouldn't be on tv because of he's temper problem. You would never know if the camera guy messes up and he start yelling at him.

Why do you think kids look up to him? Only why I look up to him is because he is a good player. But he can be a bad in flues for kids.

Figure 5. Student's finished (to the best of his ability) op-ed piece about Shaquille O'Neal

writing: "trying to convince a reader of your point of view on an issue." This is sometimes followed by having students fill in a graphic organizer, modeling writing, or leading the class in writing together before asking students to write their own.

Another alternative to inquiry is to use quality, real-world examples of writing only to highlight features they want students to attend to in the texts. In this case, teachers have determined ahead of time which aspects of the writing they will be teaching and usually have selected their examples carefully to show these predetermined features. This teaching, which often includes teacher modeling, usually happens in a series of directed lessons. With this alternative, it is possible to plan a series of lessons ahead of time, and even to package them for use in other classrooms.

And then there's inquiry that grows from studying well-written texts with students. The reality is, of course, that teaching often overlaps all three of these approaches at different times in different ways. What matters most is what the basic stance to the teaching will be. Emily's basic stance was to generate the curriculum through inquiry with her students, a stance I see as a critical teaching decision.

Reading like Writers

When teachers immerse students in reading and studying the kind of writing they want them to do, they are actually teaching at two levels. They teach students about the particular genre or writing issue that is the focus of the study, but they also teach students to use a habit of mind that experienced writers engage in all the time. They teach them how to *read like writers* (Smith, 1988), noticing as an insider how things are written. Students learn to look at texts the way a mechanic looks at cars or a musician listens to music, to use the particular knowledge system of a writer (Harste, 1992). Over time, they learn to notice things about writing that other people (who don't write) don't notice, and all along the way this noticing helps them develop a vision for the writing they will do. If Emily had done all the noticing for her students, pointing out the features she wanted them to see in the gathered texts, they would have had no reason to learn to notice text features themselves.

Writers—even experienced writers—will tell you that reading the genre they are getting ready to write is a lifelong habit. In the past two years, I've had to read in this very specific way on three different occasions: twice because I was planning to write in a new genre for me (a foreward and an abstract), and once because I was writing for a journal I don't normally read. In this case, the genre—a professional article—was familiar, but genre is more than just form, it's also a "social category" (Kress, 1999). I wasn't a part of the "society" that reads this journal, so I read back issues to get a feel for it. I was reading to get a clear vision for the kind of thing I wanted to write, and it's the kind of reading Emily was teaching her fifth graders to do with their inquiry.

When I think about an inquiry stance, I always feel like this reason alone—*inquiry teaches students to read and think like writers*—is reason enough to teach from this stance as often as possible. Why? Because so many professional writers give the same advice when asked what a person should do to become a writer—*you have to read,* they say. It is discipline-based inquiry (Berghoff, Borgmann, & Parr, 2003)

that puts reading at the forefront of the teaching and lets students develop a knowledge base about good writing in the same way professional writers develop theirs.

Grounded Teaching

John Dewey (1938) contends, "Anything which can be called a study, whether arithmetic, history, geography, or one of the natural sciences, must be derived from materials which at the outset fall within the scope of ordinary life-experience" (p. 73). While Dewey doesn't include writing in his list, I believe his contention points to the significance of gathering real-world texts for inquiry. The kind of writing Emily wanted to study certainly exists "within the scope of ordinary life experience," so there was no need to look outside that scope for materials.

When the first move in inquiry is to gather real-world texts, it provides some insurance that the teaching will be grounded and, for lack of a better word, *true*. Inevitably, when teachers teach writing without any writing attached to it, they end up teaching things that just aren't true, or at least they aren't true all the time. Edgar Schuster (2004) calls these things "mythrules." Anyone who has moved from a delivery stance to an inquiry stance has stories to tell about having to reconsider the content of his or her teaching. Take, for example, the conventional rule so many of us learned about persuasive writing—state the main idea in the first paragraph and then give the reasons for holding that idea in subsequent paragraphs. But if you actually look at writing of this kind, lots of it isn't written this way at all. Writers sometimes don't state their main idea until the very end, and sometimes they state it right in the middle as a turning point in the text.

There are so many examples like this, particularly in the realm of usage issues. The truth is, writers of op-ed pieces (and many other kinds of writing) often purposefully exploit usage at so many turns as a way of creating voice in their texts (Fletcher, 1993; Romano, 2004). For example, that's exactly what

When teachers give students a simple way to write something, not only are they not true to the product, they aren't true to the process either.

Leonard Pitts (2003) is doing in this excerpt from a column about the Shaquille O'Neal/Kobe Bryant feud over whose team the Lakers is:

> *Sometimes, I think you forget that. You and all the other millionaires who show up at games driving dream cars and leave them trailing dream women. Sometimes, I think you forget what it means when I allow you the privilege of coming into my home. The privilege of my support. (p. A10)*

Pitts makes his sentences work together, sharing understood connections, giving the writing the sound of someone sort of holding forth on an issue, adding a little more "punch" to a point as an afterthought. He and other writers of op-ed pieces do this kind of language work all the time. When teachers teach writing with no writing attached to it, they rarely (if ever) teach *that* about it, and yet it's such a big part of what people who do this kind of writing know well.

In an inquiry stance, teachers let the writing itself shape and define what the content will be, and they are willing to accept the gray area that comes with that. "Inquiry does not narrow our perspective; it gives us more understandings, questions, and possibilities than when we started" (Short, Schroeder, Laird, Kauffman, Ferguson, & Crawford, 1996, p. 8). There isn't just one way to write an op-ed piece, and there aren't just a few simple things to know about this kind of writing. By nature, the content is expansive, nuanced, and full of alternatives. And if teachers try to change it into something simpler because the students are, after all, just ten and eleven years old and doing this kind of writing for the first time, they end up teaching something that just doesn't ring true.

I understand that when teaching is simplified, when children are given a graphic organizer and a few simple guidelines to follow, they sometimes produce tighter, more polished-looking products than the writing I typically see when students write out of inquiry. But when this happens, the very nature of what is being taught has fundamentally changed because writing doesn't exist like that in the world outside school. Edgar Schuster (2004) says he's been looking for a five-paragraph theme in published materials since he started teaching in 1958 and has yet to find *a single one*.

When teachers give students a simple way to write something, not only are they not true to the product, they aren't true to the process either. Outside of school, when faced with tasks that require composition, writers have to figure out how to write things. No one gives them a formula, and the struggle to organize and make everything work together is there anew every time. It is an essential part of the writing process.

In an inquiry stance, teachers help children explore these different alternatives for how to write something, and then they let them do what writers really have to do—make decisions

about how their pieces will go. Does this make it harder on students? Perhaps. But when teachers simply ask them to do it as well as they can and understand that it will take lots of experience for them to get really good at it, it makes it achievable. Then, while students are getting that experience, they are grounded in the realities of real-world writing, both product and process.

Expanding Knowledge Base

As Emily reflected on her study of op-ed writing, she felt she had learned as much as, if not more than, her students. I know this to be true from my own experience with inquiry, and I have heard this reflection echoed often from other teachers. If Emily (or any other teacher) had begun the study by planning out what she wanted to teach from her existing knowledge base, the study would necessarily have been limited to what she knows. And so often as teachers, we don't even realize how limited our knowledge base is until we engage in inquiry with our students.

I believe it's a good thing for us as teachers to feel like we're learning as much as our students during inquiry. As Kathy Short and Carolyn Burke (1991) point out, "For any curricular framework to be useful and generative, it must support all learners in the community (adults and children) in inquiry" (p. 68). And as teachers of writing, we *need* inquiry—whether we embrace it or not—because to be content experts in every single genre of writing, on every aspect of craft, and on every writing process issue that arises is a tall order. But recognizing that we don't have the content expertise we'd like to have in writing doesn't have to limit our teaching or our students' learning. We can have *instructional* expertise instead. Instructional frameworks help teachers plan and implement generative inquiries that can be used to study any aspect of writing. The stack of texts changes, but the way the inquiry happens stays basically the same.

Over time, of course, content expertise is certainly a by-product of instructional expertise. Emily knows a lot more about writing op-ed pieces than she did before this inquiry, and from future studies, she'll learn even more. As a matter of fact, she'll likely come to a place where she could deliver a heady, interesting series of lessons on how to do this kind of writing, attach them all to real-world text examples, and not engage in inquiry with her students at all. But she's not likely to do this. In their wonderful book *Understanding by Design,* Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2001) say, "If students are to understand what is known, they need to simulate or recreate some of the inquiry by which the knowledge was created" (p. 33). Taking the inquiry out of the teaching would diminish students' need to read and think like writers, and would most likely diminish their understanding as well. They would think of their writing instruction as "business as usual" and simply wait for the teacher to tell them what she knows, never understanding how that knowledge came to be.

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The content expertise that teachers acquire as they engage in inquiry with students over time is not wasted, however. Conferring, the one-on-one teaching of individual writers in a workshop, is greatly enhanced as the teacher's knowledge base grows (Anderson, 2000; Ray, with Laminack, 2001). Quite simply, the more teachers know about craft and genre and process, the better they can confer because they have more to offer their students. Content expertise also helps teachers develop minilessons that support the work students do out of the inquiry. Most teachers use the time when students are drafting and revising to teach whole-class lessons on writing issues that might help students write well but, for whatever reason, weren't significant issues in the close study.

Perhaps most important, a growing knowledge base gives teachers "new eyes" to see what students are trying to do in their writing. In the op-ed piece about Shaq and Kobe, for example, Emily understood and appreciated Germion's goals in framing the piece with questions and answers—a crafting technique the class had learned was used frequently in op-ed pieces. Germion was quite intentional in his efforts to use the technique in his own writing. If Emily hadn't recognized this, she might have been struck more by what he didn't do in his piece than by what he did. I am moved by the profound implications of this for the writing lives of children, what it could mean to them if their teachers developed the eyes to see and appreciate what they are trying to do as writers instead of—or at least in addition to—what they haven't done.

Before *Re*vision, Vision

Emily understood how important it was to choose good examples for her study because whatever ended up in her stack of texts would form the vision toward which her students would draft. Once they were immersed in reading these texts, this vision would take shape and would be critical to the whole of the process, but particularly to the drafting and revising the students would eventually do. Emily knew that it would be difficult for her students to *re*vise if they didn't have a vision to start with. Elliott Eisner (2003) says, "The writer starts with vision and ends with words" (p. 342).

Sometimes teachers get frustrated with students because they don't seem to know what to do with revision, but I think it's worth asking, "Have I done enough to help my students develop a strong vision for the writing I'd like them to do?" Writers write well, often even in first drafts, when they have a clear vision for the kind of writing they will do. The immersion stage of inquiry is absolutely critical to the development of this vision, and its absence in the other two stances to the teaching of writing is problematic.

Even when a series of lessons is tied directly to high-quality, real-world text examples, if there isn't a period of *just reading* from a range of texts, I don't believe students get the fullness of vision that comes from immersion (Cambourne, 1988). Lessons like these are designed to draw students' attention to specific qualities in the writing before they have had a chance to just read and get a feel—in a much larger, more visionary sense—for what this kind of writing is like in the world. Lessons like these also narrow the possibilities for the features of texts students might attend to in their reading, forcing students "to operate within the teacher's assumptive bounds" (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984, p. 14) instead of exploring other possibilities they might find on their own.

What about Teacher Modeling?

The importance of students seeing their teachers both writing and modeling writing is well documented in the professional literature about the teaching of writing (Atwell, 1998; Graves, 1989; Routman, 2005). The modeling a teacher does, however, looks different depending on which teaching stance is taken. Sometimes when teachers write, they are trying to create *a model*—more the noun sense of the word than the verb sense. They want their writing to serve as a model for what the students will write. But when teachers work from an inquiry stance, they have decided that the *model* for the writing will come from the stack of gathered texts. And of course it's not just one model—there's a stack of texts there—which is why the word *vision* is probably a better word for what they want their students to have.

> **What Emily was modeling was the *process* she wanted her students to go through rather than the product she wanted them to produce.**

When quality texts anchor the teaching, students don't need their teachers to create a model of what the writing should look like, but this doesn't mean that modeling isn't important. As the inquiry progressed, Emily showed her students how to take what they were learning and turn it into possibilities for their own writing. She let them inside her head as she made decisions while creating her own op-ed piece. What Emily was modeling was the *process* she wanted her students to go through rather than the product she wanted them to produce.

By modeling the process of moving from the study of texts to their own writing, Emily showed her students the "value of the discipline required to learn a discipline" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2001, p. 55). And in a very real way, what Emily was really teaching her students was how to carry on with their learning without needing her. Because she modeled "off" whatever they found in their inquiry and not from her own predetermined qualities of good writing, the students could see how it is that a writer learns to write from *reading* rather than from *teaching*.

Purposeful, Planful Teaching

At the beginning of her study, Emily could not have named the specifics of the content her students would uncover over the course of the next five weeks. But this doesn't mean that her teaching was an act of faith or whimsy, or that Emily wasn't incredibly purposeful about what she wanted to come from this inquiry. The development of curriculum she undertook with her students was "structured for surprise" (Graves, 2001, p. 51).

First, she had very specific, guiding questions she wanted the study to address:

- What kinds of topics are appropriate for op-ed pieces?
- What kinds of prewriting work do writers of op-ed pieces do?
- How are op-ed pieces *crafted* in ways that make them compelling for readers?

Second, while perhaps it required some faith the first time she engaged in inquiry with students, Emily's experience has led her to expect that her blank chart will fill up with students' observations, and her instructional expertise helps her turn those observations into content-specific understandings, strategies, and techniques that address her guiding questions and that her students can use to gain increasing competence as writers. And so, for all of the reasons why the design of this teaching is critical, Emily was comfortable to wait and see what would emerge as important content in the study.

Finally, while it may seem at odds with this "wait and see" stance to content development, Emily was also very planful about the course the study would take. She engaged in what Dorothy Watson called "planning to plan" (Watson, Burke, & Harste, 1989). Knowing that studies of this kind aim for depth, not coverage, Emily determined in advance approximately how much time she would devote to each phase of the inquiry. Close study, particularly, can go on and on without some time parameters. She also developed short assessments to help her students pace themselves through the work of the study and to help her keep a handle on their progress. Figure 6 shows the three assessments she used during the study.

I believe it is incredibly important that teachers are clear and articulate about their purposes and planning in inquiry. Sometimes there is a misconception from those who haven't experienced this kind of teaching that it is somehow "loose" or, perhaps worse, that it lacks rigor. Everyone with a vested interest in the teaching needs to be kept informed about the plans and the progress of the study. Often, students and their contagious enthusiasm are the best harbingers when it comes to helping others understand what's happening in the classroom.

Closing Thoughts

I began this article by saying I wanted to explain the reasons I believe in the efficacy of an inquiry stance in the teaching of writing. *Efficacy.* My Webster's has only one definition for this word: the power to produce an effect. I chose this word with great care, and it would be irresponsible to use it without naming the effects I believe an inquiry stance has the power to produce. In many ways, effects were layered into my reasoning all along—developing habits of mind, clearer visions for writing, etc. I'd like to close with my thoughts on several other effects I believe are possible when a consistent inquiry stance is taken in the

First assessment: Early in the study

- Describe the topic you have chosen for your op-ed piece. Explain it in detail and tell why you have chosen it.
- What material do you already have in your notebook related to your topic? When you finish these questions, put this sheet in your notebook where your topic is.
- Write about the plans for notebook work you want to do to support you in writing your op-ed piece.

Second assessment: As students are drafting

- What op-ed techniques did you use in your editorial? Why did you choose them? Was there an op-ed piece we read that you found particularly helpful to you as a writer?
- Take me to the places in your draft where you tried specific techniques. Put a number by each spot. Walk me through your thinking about using them. Pay special attention here to helping me see how you used what we learned in the study to help you as you drafted.
- What revision have you started already? Did you find yourself changing parts as you wrote them? Have you read it aloud to yourself or to someone else? If you have not done any revising yet, what strategies do you think you'll use?

Third assessment: As students were revising and editing

- You should have read your draft aloud. Tell me what you found out about your draft as you did this. Be specific.
- Take me to the places where you revised. Put a number by each spot. Walk me through your thinking about the changes you made and why you made them.
- Now, editing. As you edited, what types of mistakes did you notice? Was there one type of mistake you noticed more than another? Why do you think that's so?

Figure 6. Emily's three assessments for monitoring pace and progress

teaching of writing. I believe an inquiry stance can produce:

- students who are prepared to meet the demands of writing in a world with constantly evolving conventions and expectations, because what they know about writing is not static; they've learned *how to learn* about writing.
- students who read more critically because they have so much experience thinking about the decision making of the people behind the texts they read.
- teachers who are energized by the teaching of writing, rather than exhausted and frustrated by it, because they are learning and growing with their students.
- teachers who are empowered to demand their right to teach writing in ways that make sense for children, because they have become more articulate about what they know about writing.
- an even greater understanding that writing, in addition to being a tool for learning in content areas, also has a content of its own, one which includes strategies for engaging in the process of writing, but also techniques of genre, form, and style.
- a greater "integrity of our discipline" (Schuster, 2004) as curriculum is aligned more closely with writing in the world outside school.

This last effect leaves us with the enormous challenge of reforming standards and accountability to reflect this same integrity of discipline. My worry is that, at so many turns, reformation seems to happen in the *opposite* direction. My peace of mind comes from knowing lots of people with plenty of stamina who'll keep working to turn it around.

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