

## Growing Reflective Practitioners

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We have come full circle. This final chapter returns to the beginning of *Educators Writing for Change*. Here we gather to think about, write, and revisit teaching events—the same process that brought us together.

“We are teachers,” we say, “not writers.” As we continue to learn and grow through sharing our writing with others, we realize that this process intensifies reflection. We scrutinize our practice and worry over the nuance of words that describe it. We learn to listen to those who read what we have written, those who come with fresh questions and surprising insights.

We are akin to caterpillars, all of us. At some critical moment through our own willpower or through the assistance of others we can enter a chrysalis, evolve through an amorphous state, and emerge changed. When practitioners came to a retreat to write about practice with Joe Check and me, some were able to do that. They moved through a period of writing just to write and of sharing just to share. When they emerged from the cocoon of the retreat (see Figure 11.1) and returned to their schools and classrooms, some felt different. From this first step of a yearlong process intended to nurture education practitioner-writers for publication, they had emerged like delicate butterflies. As evolving reflective practitioners they flew in startling hues and in all of their fragility back to schools, which more often than not are the antithesis of a field of flowers.

The retreat was drawing to a close. We joined in a circle for a final go-round, each taking thirty seconds to give some last thought concerning the work we had done over the past three days. By chance of seating, I was near the end of the group.

**Figure 11.1**  
**Mini-retreats**

Monthly meetings of colleagues—mini-retreats—could serve the same purpose as a weekend retreat detailed within this narrative. At these mini-retreats in school or at the home of a colleague, practitioners can in the same way learn to share and reflect upon written stories from their practice.

When my turn came, I stood, and, as if at an AA meeting, proclaimed, “My name is Simon, and I am a writer.” (*Simon Hole*)

Simon was a practitioner who had written during his university years and, in a different way, as a teacher preparing assignments for his fourth-grade class. This, however, was the first time he had deliberately written about his teaching practice and risked going public with that writing.

Over time, Joe and I, Simon, and other participants have stayed with the process. We have found that writing about practice means traveling backwards to the school or classroom, going beyond the moment to discover what else it holds. Upon further reflection an incident becomes larger than itself:

The difficulty in writing for me isn't to find stories to tell; teaching is a profession that generates stories. Instead, it is to create narratives and understand teaching in a larger sense, in the context of my life, my school, my community, and all the debates and issues surrounding education. (*Steve Dreher*)

In the next section I will describe the process through which we—facilitators and writers—found our way from writing to reflective practice, from thinking about what we say as writers to thinking about what we do as practitioners. It sounds like a process that puts the cart before the horse and, indeed, reflection is a backwards or recursive process.

I was on leave from teaching and working at the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) at Brown University. One day I showed Ted Sizer—founder and director of CES—some writing I had done about my teaching practice. “Would this have any value in our work?” I said.

“Why don’t you gather writers from around the country and use your writing as a catalyst,” he said. I didn’t know exactly what that meant, but as I left his office I knew his words had launched me into a new zone of learning, like none I had experienced in my adult life.

Joe Check, director of the Boston Writing Project, had consulted with Brown University for another project—The Teacher’s Journal—that involved other teacher writers and me. Through funding, by CES and later by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR), we built upon the process we had previously used with that publication. We designed a yearlong experience for a group of 30 practitioners. For each of 2 years, a writers’ conference kicked off the process, which provided professional support for participants as they moved from the initial idea that struck them as worthy of deeper thought to their refined piece of writing, ready for national publication. Teaching within school reform provided a cohesive theme for this work.

Using the CES and AISR professional development mailing lists, we invited potential writers from around the country.

Candidates were sent along by principals like mine, who hoped to get articles written about their schools [that] could be used for publicity and reform. (*Jon Appleby*)

Our Dean of Faculty handed me the invitation, commenting that she knew I liked to write and thought I would enjoy this work. Her recognition carried me for a few days—to be replaced by the enormous fear of being in the company of *real* writers, where I would be revealed as a fraud. (*Peggy Silva*)

I had just been talking about starting a writers’ group in our English Department meeting on one of our fall professional development days. As we exited the meeting to go to lunch, Nancy dragged me over to Betsy, one of her colleagues in the Special Education Department, convinced she’d be interested in joining us in starting a group. Betsy excitedly started digging in

her voluminous pocketbook as she spoke with us. “Well then here, JoAnne,” she said excitedly, pulling an envelope from the bag. “Maybe you’ll want to go to this.” It was the letter about the writers’ conference. It was the letter that changed my life as a teacher and writer from that point forward. (*JoAnne Dowd*)

The invitation to the Writing Within School Reform Retreat was my ticket to a movement for educational change. Writing had never been one of my strengths, but I felt that I had something to say and the conference provided the opportunity for me to say it. I rented a laptop. (*Jan Grant*)

Even as we launched the CES/AISR Writers’ Retreats, Joe and I did not know the power that participants would unleash. Why did practitioners come? Perhaps they saw an opportunity to explore their passions—the frustrations and joys, the dilemmas and breakthroughs, the roadblocks and possibilities—as they worked within the realities of daily life in school and lived with a vision of what might be.

We did know—from Joe’s work with the Boston Writing Project and mine as a secondary school teacher of writing—about the fragile wings of fledgling writers. In order for teachers to write for an audience they needed time away from the classroom, specific writing time, sharing and listening time, and a nurturing environment. Each conference began on a Thursday with a welcoming dinner and a writing session.

I remember the food! As a public school teacher, I was not used to being treated as an honored guest at a banquet, but that’s what this was. One session began in a conference center at Brown University, and we were served fresh salmon. Isn’t it interesting that I remember that meal so clearly? I felt pampered, and knew I wanted to meet Grace and Joe’s expectations. (*Peggy Silva*)

Participants—elementary, middle, and high school teachers and principals—had put in a full day by the time they arrived to work with us. Many had come alone from places like San Diego and Hawaii—on red-eye flights—and from Chicago, Bangor, Maine, and

Kingston, RI. While a few had already written for publication, most had not.

When I heard the sophisticated conversations around me, I became terrified. People were talking about their latest published book, for God's sake! Questions tumbled through my mind: What on earth am I doing here? Is this a challenge certain to end in failure? What shall I say? What will I write? Why did I come? (*Jan Grant*)

As participants finished dessert, Joe "remembered" out loud. He told a story about his stunning discovery, in his 40s, that his father could read and write Slovak. Joe was working with bilingual classrooms at the time, and suddenly realized his own personal connection to bilingual literacy. The purpose of the storytelling was to set the groundwork for reflection and writing in the "I remember" writing activity mentioned in Figure 11.2. When Joe finished his story, he asked practitioners to take 2 minutes to list their own "I remembers" about their own learning. Then he gave clear directions about sharing. "Let's go around the room to share. Just read one 'I remember' without introduction or comment." After the reading, he said, "Take ninety seconds to add to your list." Charged by hearing what others had said, participants wrote.

I had to remove myself from the crowded dinner table to write. I sat on the floor of that fancy hotel in my schoolmarm dress. We had been issued those composition books with the black and white swirly covers. I just started writing and couldn't stop, even when Joe called "time" on us. I just kept remembering things—a flood of memories, good and bad, happy and tragic. I sat there on the floor with tears streaming down my face and dripping onto the page, but I just couldn't stop writing. I must have filled twenty pages in that first few minutes of frantic release. (*JoAnne Dowd*)

As part of the writing process, participants then circled three statements they wanted to think more about. For each of these sentences they developed a paragraph, then they chose one of those paragraphs to share with a partner. The room was alive with the

**Figure 11.2**  
**"I Remember" Writing Activity**

Facilitator "remembers" aloud something about a personal learning experience. The facilitator tells the story behind the event to give participants an opportunity to settle in and make connections between memories and practice. The facilitator leading the process says:

1. Take 2 minutes to write a list of "I remember . . ." about your learning.
2. Let's go around the room to share. Read one "I remember" without introduction or comment.
3. Now take 90 seconds to add to your list.
4. Circle three statements that you want to think more about.
5. Take a total of 10 minutes to write a paragraph about each sentence.
6. Choose one paragraph to share with a partner.
7. Sit alone for 10 more minutes to expand one of your writings.

buzz of people in the process of growing into more deeply reflective individuals who would go public with their work.

I wrote about my grandmother. Joe's memories had triggered an enormous reserve of images for me, and I had tears in my eyes as I wrote. Later on in the school year, our faculty had an art show of sorts, and I proudly placed my writing piece next to the pottery and watercolors on display. (*Peggy Silva*)

To conclude the session, writers sat alone for 10 minutes to expand their writings. By 9:00, they were weary, but each had written and each had shared aloud. They had survived and overcome the anxiety of entering what had felt like a high-risk experience.

For the first conference two published writers joined us as guest

facilitators and models. Each had written from experience in education. Kathleen Cushman, writer/editor of *Horace*, a monthly CES publication, wrote regularly about other practitioners; Mike Rose, author of *Lives on the Boundary* (and currently, *Working Life*) used his own life and teaching practice as the narrative thread that connected his ideas about working with disadvantaged learners.

Both Kathleen and Mike led sessions. Kathleen, for example, led a session on creating images. She read from a text, then asked participants to create their own images. She said: "Take 20 minutes. Find an image. Show it to us. Don't try to tell us what it means or interpret it in any way. Just bring the image to life."

Twenty minutes? I can't do this. It takes me hours to figure out what I want to write about. What am I doing here, anyway? With the fear of being found out, I carried my computer off to a corner to begin. Somehow, as I called up a blank document to the screen, Meghan, my most troubled student, appeared in my mind. I wrote:

Meghan rarely walks through the hallways—she skips. Short even for a fourth grader, her head rises and falls through the crowd of classmates, her impish smile appearing and disappearing, her poorly cut dark hair dancing to the tune of her skips. If I'm close enough to her, I can see a light in her eyes, a sparkle, a rainbow radiating all the promise that should rightfully be in the face of an eight-year-old.

She's a different person when she isn't skipping. Her head hangs low, usually tilted slightly to one side, eyes on the floor. The smile is gone, the spark extinguished from her eyes. The feet shuffle through the motions of taking her from one place to another, the weight of her world so nearly visible on her small shoulders that she seems to shrink.

Kathleen called us back to the circle and asked us to read around. I was near the end, and so, nervous about how my piece would be received, I recall little of what else was read, except that so many of the others had written pages in the time it had taken me to write two short paragraphs. When my turn came, I held my voice still and read.

Kathleen's response, though short, kept me in the room. "Nice. I think I know Meghan." (*Simon Hole*)

Later, Mike Rose asked participants to talk about their writing lives, those lives that most had never considered or talked about, particularly in connection with their professional lives. They talked. He listened.

Deborah Meier, founder of Central Park East Elementary and Secondary Schools in New York City, was writing her first book at the time. She had almost finished *The Power of Their Ideas*, but she was having trouble with the first chapter. So she had joined us as a participant.

Debbie Meier and Mike Rose were authors—of books! What was I doing here? And what were they doing listening to me as if I too were a writer? Looking back, I think I felt bullied into writing. When Grace and Joe asked us to list our plans for writing, I remember talking about gathering first-person narratives from my colleagues and my students about our experiences in starting a school. Mike Rose nodded, and offered concrete suggestions—as if I were actually going to do what I said. Grace expected me to. And so I did. It was that simple, and that complicated.

Grace kept in contact with me and offered me another writers' retreat—if I had a draft of a work-in-process. I wrote a draft, I think, to pretend I was a writer so that I could attend another writing conference. Grace's belief in me came before my own belief in myself. (*Peggy Silva*)

Doubts. Fears. Validation. Support. All of these were part of the process of experiencing what it means to learn among colleagues.

The following year Joe and I began with a new group. This second writers' retreat was partially funded by the National Science Foundation. Some participants from the first year attended and facilitated small group feedback sessions. Since half the participants were math or science teachers, we invited as guest facilitator an eminent scientist who had written for a general audience. Sylvia Earle used her newly published *Sea Change* as the basis for her work with the group. With her we created this writing prompt: "Write about a time when you encountered a critter."

I remember Sylvia Earle coming and sitting on the floor with a small group of us who had shunned the furniture and our



shoes. She did the same. She hunkered down with us, this amazing courageous very public woman, and worked with us as a peer, a colleague, an equal. We shared animal anecdotes from our writing prompt. She shared equally from hers as we did ours. I remember her talking about what it was like to swim with a whale for the first time. I remember her genuine enthusiasm and encouragement for other people's stories of far less exotic experiences with animals like squirrels and mice. (*JoAnne Dowd*)

The prompt was fun. We laughed at snake, turtle, squirrel, and mice stories. As we listened to critter encounters, read aloud, it became evident that these stories would become metaphors for changing practice. We were digging deeper.

Participants had short blocks of time for writing. In small peer editing groups they asked questions about their own writing and their practice. They heard and utilized feedback on their works-in-progress, and they responded to the work of others in meaningful ways using the protocol for peer editing listed in Figure 11.3.

I remember having pastel-colored protocol sheets—structured guides—that we all followed religiously, afraid of offending our fellow fledgling writers, hoping they could hear what we had to say, trying to find a voice, not only in the written word that could be heard but also in the spoken word that could be heard by the new authors. (*JoAnne Dowd*)

Sitting in the lounge of Thayer Street Quad at Brown, I experienced direct peer feedback on my writing, and by indirection on my teaching, for the first time. I was stunned and elated. That experience prefigured and prepared me for coaching a Critical Friends Group and for thinking better, alone and with others, about my work as a teacher. (*Jon Appleby*)

By Saturday, most participants had begun a single piece to work on during the following year. They formed peer support groups for the long haul. By staying with the same writing for a year, they would not only hone and polish it for publication, but they would also delve into every sentence, phrase, and word that spoke about their teaching.

**Figure 11.3**  
**Protocol for Peer Editing**

Each group of three should have a copy of the writing. Each should have read it before coming to the session, but may need to look it over. Groups assign a timekeeper and a facilitator.

1. Members of the group introduce themselves as writers. What work does each have in progress? What challenges are they facing with the work-in-progress? (10 minutes)
2. Individual writers talk about their work-in-progress that is being presented for the group's assistance. What stage of development do they perceive the work to be in? What are the strengths of the work? Where do they need help? What kind of feedback would they like? (10 minutes)
3. Peer editors practice active listening. (They ask questions about the writer's work, rather than telling their own stories.)
4. The two peer editors talk together about the manuscript. The writer "overhears" the conversation, but does not join in. Editors talk specifically about the strengths as they see them. They may raise questions and talk about what they see as possible next steps for revision. Should the writing be split into two or three pieces? Should it be expanded? All of this must be done within the parameters of the kind of feedback requested. (15 minutes)
5. Writer responds to "overheard" conversation followed by a general discussion about the manuscript led by a group facilitator. (20 minutes)
6. This is the time for addressing grammatical problems. *This step should always be done last.*

(Boston Writing Project Response Group Guidelines)

They would ask: Is this what I really mean to say? What does this process mean in terms of my classroom and my students?

On that last morning of the retreat, an editor's panel talked about the realities of publishing in the world at large. A National Public Radio producer/editor, a newspaper reporter/editor, two book editors, and the editor for a periodical spoke and answered questions from aspiring writers. Even though they would write within our safety net of support for a year, they wanted to hear the voices of experience, to know about what lay beyond. The session prompted new questions, such as, What are the political implications of going public with practice?

The question of rejection loomed large, too. Editors said that timing and "fit" to the occasion or publication were key factors in the acceptance/rejection decisions, not some notion of pure quality—Is it good enough? Am I a good enough writer?—what novices to the process had assumed would be the central issue.

The initial retreat had been in October, and the first deadline for works-in-progress was in January. We promised that if writers stayed with the process, draft after draft, they would eventually produce a publishable piece. If they could manage the May deadline, their work would be published in the Annenberg Institute for School Reform publication series, called *Writing Within School Reform*. We had no wiggle room. Our fiscal year ended in June.

We formed a developmental editorial board just as we had with *The Teacher's Journal*. This time it was comprised of Joe and me along with four new practitioner editors from our writers' retreats. Our board sat together in January when the first works-in-progress came in.

I remember thinking that editing was both harder and easier—harder, because I felt an intense obligation and need to be fair to the writers, and easier because the work was not my own. Trying to help others make improvements was part of my own developmental process. (*Jon Appleby*)

By springtime it was clear that some writers needed another round of person-to-person contact, so we planned an April retreat. The admission ticket to that retreat was a work-in-progress.

I loved this, as it put us on truly equal ground. For me this was a key transition point from the larger group, which

wanted to talk about writing to the smaller group willing to risk doing it. I was one of two writers participating from my school. I wrote a draft—my ticket—and my colleague didn't. While I liked my colleague and respected him, I wanted to stop talking and do. I was hooked. (*Jon Appleby*)

I remember showing up at the Alton Jones Retreat Center, awed by its natural beauty and ready to work. In a way I felt like a monk in a cell, observing a vow of silence, except for the brief times we came together for meetings. The superintendent, as a sign of support for the kind of work I and others from my school were engaged in, loaned me his laptop computer. (*JoAnne Dowd*)

Alton Jones was a peaceful escape. I got to sit and stare at water for long periods of time. I had a lot on my mind then. I had a very troubled student at school, and no idea how to help him. Although I kept trying to think of topics to write about, I couldn't stop thinking of this boy. Finally, out of respect for the process, I sat down at my computer and wrote of my frustration with my inability to help this child. When I had to share my writing, I apologized to the group by saying that I had to clear this "cobweb" from my mind before I could really write what I wanted to. Their response to that first draft humbled me. They could see that boy and hear my anguish, not by what I said, but by what I wrote. And so, that group helped me to discover how to write. Antoine Saint Exupery said that what is essential is invisible to the eye. That night I learned that what is essential can be made visible through writing. (*Peggy Silva*)

On the first night of the retreat, participants wrote journal entries and shared with the group. The prompt: In what ways have you seen your work, your colleagues, and yourselves differently since the October retreat?

These are samples of what some participants wrote:

When I wrote my monograph piece it changed the way I looked at school and the way I looked at my colleagues. It most profoundly changed the way I looked at my students. It

helped me to take my students more seriously as collaborators.  
(*Jon Appleby*)

The more of this work I do the more simple and direct my comments on student work. I'm writing to the students rather than to their writing. (*JoAnne Dowd*)

After October, I realized that I "publish" every day when I write to students. My life as a writer deepens my practice. I am more aware of what I do because I'm now thinking of my words as communication with my readers—my students.  
(*Peggy Silva*)

After writing journal entries and sharing, participants told Joe and me what they needed next. Together we constructed an agenda to address those needs.

In addition, throughout the 3 days, Joe and I held individual consultations. I remember knowing that I had to speak with Jon Appleby alone, at length, and waiting for just the right time. Something about the tone of his writing was interfering with his message. It was hard for me to think about what to say to him, how to affirm his writing while suggesting that something significant had to change. I saw his light on and knew he was writing. I screwed up my courage and tapped on his door. Our talk that night about turning inward and writing for ourselves, then turning outward and revising for an audience, formed a basis for the writing group that we still have today—7 years later.

"What worked for you?" we asked participants at the end of the 3-day retreat. They began by thanking us for the one-on-one support. They said that shaping their own agenda gave them an opportunity to write and read at those times most appropriate to their own work habits. They found being on "editorial boards"—on which they reviewed the works of others—was a valuable experience for their work as practitioners back at the workplace. They liked working with protocols—step-by-step guides—for the delicate feedback process. And they enjoyed the problem-solving sessions. At first the problems were technical, then the group uncovered writing problems and issues—focus, responsibility, privacy, politics, despair—which led them to deeper insight into their work both as writers and as practitioners.

“What should we do differently another time?” we asked. The conversation was about computer programs, about computer availability, and about having enough copies of each work for editorial boards. But they also wished that they could extend the process of writing with support to their daily life in schools.

Participants said that writing about their own practice for publication changed their professional lives.

I became a better teacher. I began to share my writing with my kids. (*Jon Appleby*)

My colleague Edorah Frazer and I had documented our work on examining my professional portfolio for career advancement in our high school. What had started out as a joyful writing idea became a painful experience. Grace hung in there with us, encouraging us to keep writing. She helped us discover the courage to open our work to an audience; in doing so, we provoked our colleagues to examine our portfolio process, and we entered a national conversation about helping teachers to learn about themselves and their practice. Without a strong mentor, we would have abandoned the writing, and if we had abandoned the writing, Edorah and I would have abandoned our friendship. The writing provided a bridge between experience and dialogue. (*Peggy Silva*)

Writing about my experiences in the classroom allows me to engage with my students on a lot of new levels. For one, seeing myself as a “writer” allows me a new legitimacy when teaching the writing process. I share pieces of my work with students and tell them that I am writing about them. I include their voices in my work and am currently coauthoring a piece with a student. It certainly makes for much more authentic classroom conversations about the writing process. In addition, by writing about incidents that have powerfully affected me, I can “offer up” my learning to others and look for universal themes and ideas. On a more personal level, writing about the experiences allows me to digest them better and make sense of them for myself. (*JoAnne Dowd*)

Not all those who began the process with Joe and me made their work public in the same way. (See Figure 11.4 for a description of the process for creating a catalyst for reflective practice.) After receiving a year of support, some did not publish their writings about their changing practice in a publication issued by CES, AISR, or EDC. With the confidence that comes with experience, I can say, however, that no one fell by the proverbial wayside. Attendance at a retreat or workshop—going public with writing—impacts the individual. Writing is a reflective process. All participants wrote about practice, shared their writing, and received feedback on it—and by extension on their interpretation of their own practice. All participants carried the experience with them when they returned to the arena of teaching and learning with students.

In 1996 I left AISR to return to the classroom. During this time Education Development Corporation (EDC) picked up the work with practitioner writers for a year. With EDC as our sponsor, Joe and I worked as consultants with guest facilitator Bill Ayers, editor of *A Simple Justice: The Challenge of Small Schools*, and a new group of aspiring writers in education.

Meanwhile, a core group of CES and AISR writers, now colleagues and friends, felt the need to continue our work together. Some of us still work as consultants for AISR. We seize the opportunity to meet—at least four times a year—in Boston, Philadelphia, or wherever we find ourselves, and we bring our writing.

Moving across the country and missing two major meetings of the group gave me a deep sense of personal loss. The work we are doing is so important to me on so many levels, and having been a member of the “founding group,” I felt frustrated and bereft to miss even one important conversation the group was having. We own the work that much. (JoAnne Dowd)

Now—over 8 years after the first writers’ retreat—we call ourselves Educators Writing for Change (EWC). As I write on a foggy morning, I wait for the arrival of a dozen guests for 3 days—old writing friends and new. We come to the group—independently and unfunded—to play with a new idea, to request feedback on a work in progress, and to offer reader response to others. We also come to redefine ourselves as professionals, both individually and as a group.

**Figure 11.4**  
**A Catalyst for Reflective Practice**

A process for creating a group whose purpose is to write for publication as a way into reflective practice.

1. Plan an opening “thinking about practice and writing for publication” retreat of 2 nights and 2 days (Thursday night through Saturday). Include in the plan support for over a year’s time for participants to grow as reflective practitioners and writers for publication. This plan must also include editorial support and publication opportunities at the conclusion of the yearlong process.
2. Gather a group of educators willing to think and write about practice (for a group of 25 or 30, you will need two facilitators).
3. Begin on the first evening with dinner and after-dinner writing prompts, followed by writing and sharing—as a catalyst and entry point for going public with writing.
4. Over 2 days, create opportunities for writers to write and receive feedback on numerous short pieces, from which each will choose one that will lead back into practice and develop as a piece of writing over time.
5. Form peer support groups for the year.
6. Set interim dates for draft submission.
7. Create a developmental editorial board from the group of practitioners to critique writings and assist writers.
8. Offer a second gathering to deepen understanding of both the process of writing and the teaching practice from which the writing springs. A draft of an article is the ticket to the second gathering.



We have grown in our thinking—as practicing educators—about what writing means in our own professional lives and about how it can be a vehicle for better education. Through writing we can share our thinking with others in a way that would otherwise be impossible. With EWC editorial and collegial support, individuals have published widely in educational journals. Some of us are now targeting mainstream publications. Together, we have published *The School Unseen*, our own collection of writings focused on students (see [www.members.tripod.com/Simon\\_Hole/index.html](http://www.members.tripod.com/Simon_Hole/index.html), or e-mail Grace Hall McEntee [gmcente@aol.com](mailto:gmcente@aol.com) for a hard copy). These writings, intended for a public audience, explore issues not ordinarily raised outside the walls of school and classrooms.

We provide roundtables using these writings from *The School Unseen* to share practitioner thinking—our thinking—with others. We believe that educator writers do change their own practice and can change the way schools, classrooms, and kids are seen. Because we so strongly believe, we have dedicated ourselves to continue supporting each other and to release new practitioner writers.

I often puzzle over the question of why so many teachers don't write. I suspect it's because the culture among adults in our schools doesn't allow us to be nurturing. (*Jon Appleby*)

With encouragement, I keep writing because I do believe that I have something to say. (*Jan Grant*)

When I began to write, I found myself trying to understand the "story" of my teaching. What are the themes that run through it? Where are the conflicts and how do I find resolution? Writing about teaching truly is reflective practice. In addition, I find myself better able to understand the struggles that my students are involved in around writing and I'm probably more appreciative of their products. (*Steve Dreher*)

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