WORKING

toward

EQUITY

Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools

Founded in 1991, the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES), is a nonprofit organization that assists urban schools, school districts, and community groups in the work of creating or redesigning schools to elevate overall achievement. Our mission is to create and sustain networks of high-achieving and equitable small schools. We are committed to the transformation of education—to ensure that all students can reach high standards and that no student is poorly served because of her/his race, gender, home language, or economic status. BayCES fulfills its mission by recruiting, developing, and supporting teacher, administrative, and community leaders through on-site coaching, equity-centered professional development, new-school incubation, networking services, and the redesign of school districts.

The Bay Area Writing Project

The Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) is the founding site of the National Writing Project. Established in 1974, BAWP is a collaborative university/schools program on the University of California, Berkeley campus. With its expanding network of exemplary classroom teachers, kindergarten through university, BAWP works to improve writing and the teaching of writing through a wide range of professional development programs. BAWP operates on a teachers-teaching-teachers model that focuses on teacher inquiry and the study of successful classroom practices, and on current theory and research in writing. BAWP conducts summer institutes, school-year programs in schools, youth writing camps, writing retreats for teachers, ongoing teacher research programs, conferences and symposiums, special-interest study groups, and technology integration programs.

National Writing Project

The mission of the National Writing Project (NWP) is to improve the teaching of writing and improve learning in the nation's schools. NWP is a steadily growing network of sites—189 sites in 2005—operating as university/school partnerships and supporting educators in fifty states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Writing project sites share a common philosophy and model for professional development while creating local networks of teachers capable of responding to the strengths, interests, and needs of their local service areas. Through its professional development model, the NWP recognizes the primary importance of teacher knowledge, expertise, and leadership. The NWP believes that access to high-quality educational experiences, and to the teachers who provide them, is a basic right of all learners and a cornerstone of equity. Through its extensive network of teachers, the NWP seeks to promote exemplary instruction of writing in every classroom in America. The NWP values diversity—our own as well as that of our students, their families, and their communities. We recognize that our lives and practices are enriched when those with whom we interact represent diversities of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and language.

The Coalition of Essential Schools

In 1984, Theodore R. Sizer and several colleagues published their findings from *A Study of High Schools*, a five-year investigation of teaching, learning, and school design. This seminal study found that despite variations in location and demography, high schools in America were remarkably similar and simply inadequate. Wary of repeating the dismal historical record of major "top-down" reform initiatives, Sizer chose not to advocate reform based on a single vision or "model" for high schools. He identified a set of common principles, practices, and concepts for effective schools and teaching that each school community could implement according to its strengths and needs. A group of twelve schools in seven states agreed to redesign themselves on the basis of Sizer's ideas and to form the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). Since then, CES has grown into a network of hundreds of schools and more than twenty CES centers across the country. The network supports the continuous growth of large numbers of individual educators and the creation of schools that strive to fully enact CES principles—schools that emphasize equity, personalization, and intellectual vibrancy.

RECOMMENDED USES BY THEMATIC GROUPINGS

Inquiry Groups

Starting an Inquiry Group:

- *Learning to Teach Elementary Mathematics: Inquiry in Preservice Teaching* – Marcie Osinsky
- *A Practical Practice: Shaping and Owning Teacher Research* – Deborah Juarez
- *Working Together: Designing a Districtwide Action Research Plan for Professional Development* – Deborah Green

Incorporating an Equity Focus:

- *Inquiry for Equity: What Does It Mean for Teacher Research?* – Tom Malarkey
- *Building on Success: Changing Our Practice to Better Serve African American Students* – Pirette McKamey
- *Focusing on Equity in an Established Teacher Research Program* – Carol Tateishi
- *Leading from Personal Experience: Autobiography as a Foundation for Developing African American Teacher Leadership* – Gwendolyn Williams
- *Developing a Culture of Inquiry for Equity: One School's Story* – Tanya Friedman

Building Relationships and Trust:

- *Building on Success: Changing Our Practice to Better Serve African American Students* – Pirette McKamey
- *Developing a Culture of Inquiry for Equity: One School's Story* – Tanya Friedman
- *Learning to Listen: Supporting Classroom Teachers Through Collaborative Inquiry* – Oreather J. Bostick-Morgan

- *Leading from Personal Experience: Autobiography as a Foundation for Developing African American Teacher Leadership* – Gwendolyn Williams
- *Focusing on Equity in an Established Teacher Research Program* – Carol Tateishi
- *Partners in Inquiry: Embedding Teacher Inquiry into School Reform* – Marty Williams

Sustaining Inquiry for Equity in Schools:

- *Developing a Culture of Inquiry for Equity: One School's Story* – Tanya Friedman
- *A Practical Practice: Shaping and Owning Teacher Research* – Deborah Juarez

Classroom Inquiry

Using Inquiry to Move Toward Equity in the Classroom:

- *Building on Success: Changing Our Practice to Better Serve African American Students* – Pirette McKamey
- *Learning to Listen: Supporting Classroom Teachers Through Collaborative Inquiry* – Oreather J. Bostick-Morgan
- *Learning to Teach Elementary Mathematics: Inquiry in Preservice Teaching* – Marcie Osinsky
- *An East Oakland Odyssey: Exploring the Love of Reading in a Small School* – Elena Aguilar
- *High School History: Taking Tests* – Robert Roth
- *Partners in Inquiry: Embedding Teacher Inquiry into School Reform* – Marty Williams
- *Finding Myself in Inquiry: A Teacher's Story* – Sarah Capitelli
- *Developing a Culture of Inquiry for Equity: One School's Story* – Tanya Friedman
- *Inquiry for Equity: What Does It Mean for Teacher Research?* – Tom Malarkey

Collecting Multiple Forms of Data:

- *Learning to Listen: Supporting Classroom Teachers Through Collaborative Inquiry* – Oreather J. Bostick-Morgan

- *An East Oakland Odyssey: Exploring the Love of Reading in a Small School* – Elena Aguilar

- *Taking Tests* – Robert Roth

- *Finding Myself in Inquiry: A Teacher's Story* - Sarah Capitelli

- *Learning to Teach Elementary Mathematics: Inquiry in Preservice Teaching* – Marcie Osinsky

Focusing on Specific Content, Grade Levels, or Student Populations:

- *Hearing-Impaired Students: Learning to Listen: Supporting Classroom Teachers Through Collaborative Inquiry* – Oreather J. Bostick-Morgan

- *Middle School Language Arts: An East Oakland Odyssey: Exploring the Love of Reading in a Small School* – Elena Aguilar

- *High School History: Taking Tests* – Robert Roth

- *Finding Myself in Inquiry: A Teacher's Story* – Sarah Capitelli

- *Elementary School Mathematics: Learning to Teach Elementary Mathematics: Inquiry in Preservice Teaching* – Marcie Osinsky

Support Structures for Inquiry

Collaborating with External Partners:

- *Learning to Teach Elementary Mathematics: Inquiry in Preservice Teaching* – Marcie Osinsky

- *A Practical Practice: Shaping and Owning Teacher Research* – Deborah Juarez

- *Partners in Inquiry: Embedding Teacher Inquiry into School Reform* – Marty Williams

- *Focusing on Equity in an Established Teacher Research Program* – Carol Tateishi

- *Developing a Culture of Inquiry for Equity: One School's Story* – Tanya Friedman

- *Leading from Personal Experience: Autobiography as a Foundation for Developing African American Teacher Leadership* – Gwendolyn Williams

- *Learning to Listen: Supporting Classroom Teachers Through Collaborative Inquiry* – Oreather J. Bostick-Morgan

Building Support from Administrators, Policymakers, or Funders:

- *Building on Success: Changing Our Practice to Better Serve African American Students* – Pirette McKamey

- *Working Together: Designing a Districtwide Action Research Plan for Professional Development* – Deborah Green

- *A Practical Practice: Shaping and Owning Teacher Research* – Deborah Juarez

- *Partners in Inquiry: Embedding Teacher Inquiry into School Reform* – Marty Williams

Broadening Inquiry for Equity Work in Schools and Districts:

- *Inquiry for Equity: What Does It Mean for Teacher Research?* – Tom Malarkey

- *Working Together: Designing a Districtwide Action Research Plan for Professional Development* – Deborah Green

- *A Practical Practice: Shaping and Owning Teacher Research* – Deborah Juarez

- *Partners in Inquiry: Embedding Teacher Inquiry into School Reform* – Marty Williams

- *Developing a Culture of Inquiry for Equity: One School's Story* – Tanya Friedman

- *Focusing on Equity in an Established Teacher Research Program* – Carol Tateishi

- *Building on Success: Changing Our Practice to Better Serve African American Students* – Pirette McKamey

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WRITINGS AND RESOURCES FROM
THE TEACHER RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

NWP

N*W*P

National Writing Project, Berkeley 94720
www.writingproject.org

Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

By Linda Friedrich

What is equity? What does it mean to work for equity in schools or to study our teaching with a focus on equity? What does it mean to make questions of equity central in our work as teacher-researchers?

Working Toward Equity: Writings and Resources from the Teacher Research Collaborative grew from these questions and from the work of educators in the Teacher Research Collaborative (TRC).[1] The TRC was a three-year collaboration among teachers, teacher educators, and staff from the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES), the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP), the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), and the National Writing Project (NWP).[2]

These organizations had a joint interest in promoting sustained inquiry by teachers as an important component of professional development and school reform, and they believed that the power of inquiry could be focused on vital educational goals such as equity. The Teacher Research Collaborative thus set about pursuing the following goals:

- to establish an ongoing presence for equity-focused teacher inquiry
- to develop and articulate strategies for using inquiry to improve student learning and achievement
- to share resources that its members had found useful to educators leading teacher inquiry with an equity focus.

This guide is intended to meet the third goal: to serve as a resource to educators—particularly classroom teachers—interested in conducting, leading, and facilitating inquiry for equity.[3] It features practicing teachers' voices and perspectives about their real work in classrooms, schools, districts, and professional development organizations, highlighting promising dimensions of inquiry for equity, reporting on the challenges that arise, and sharing specific practices and tools.

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1 Funding was provided by the Walter S. Johnson Foundation and the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation.

2 Additional information about each organization can be found at: BayCES, www.bayces.org; BAWP, www.bayareawritingproject.org; CES, *www.essentialschools.org*; and NWP, *www.writingproject.org*.

3 No single publication can be all things to all people. The Teacher Research Collaborative planning team considered including a range of resources for initiating teacher inquiry and engaging in explicit dialogue about equity. As we worked with the educators in the TRC, we realized that *Working Toward Equity* would not provide a step-by-step "how to" guide. Fortunately, many excellent resources already offer this kind of support. In appendix A, we list a handful of resources that we have found particularly useful.

Learning from Diverse Perspectives on Equity

From the outset, TRC discussions surfaced participants' range of views about equity, and illustrated their range of experience with addressing inequities. For some, educational equity was already central to their life's work; others were just beginning a journey to understand and address inequity in their practice. The following definitions, drafted and posted during an activity on the first day of the first institute, illustrate our starting points:

"Equity" means equality, the same, equal.

Equity is . . . about outcomes, about excellence, about achievement, about experience, about life choices, about empowerment, about ensuring that every child (person) has the opportunity and support to discover and become their whole, true, brilliant self.

I don't have any idea—it's hard to even imagine, but I guess with no vision it [isn't going to] happen. . . . But it's so hard to define in its utter absence. Don't want to define it in the negative.

These differences sparked lively, and sometimes heated, debate in both small- and whole-group discussions. While recognizing and honoring this diversity of views and experiences, the TRC planning team[4] felt that it was important for our work together to establish some basic assumptions—about the inequities we face, the capacity of all children to learn at high levels, and the ability of educators to work toward equity—to guide our collaboration over the life of the project. *Working Toward Equity* reflects emerging common assumptions, a great diversity of experience, and the promise and challenge of leading inquiry for equity.

The Shape of Collaboration: About the Teacher Research Collaborative

In its first year, 2002–2003, the TRC selected twenty-four early and midcareer educators who were actively involved with the collaborating organizations, and we focused on providing opportunities to hone their leadership capacity. At the first TRC Summer Institute, held at the University of California, Berkeley, in August 2002, these educators engaged in four days of conversation and activities focused on equity and the inequities they experienced in their own professional contexts. They exchanged ideas on how to lead inquiry with an equity focus in their own settings and on how to respond to common challenges in lead-

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4 The members of the TRC Planning Team were Linda Friedrich (NWP), Tom Malarkey (BayCES), Elizabeth Radin Simons (NWP and BayCES), Carol Tateishi (BAWP), and Marty Williams (BAWP).

ing teacher research. And they planned for their ongoing work as leaders in their schools and networks (see appendix B, "2002 TRC Summer Institute Agenda"). These exchanges, whose tenor is captured in the quotes above from the initial TRC conversation about equity, contributed to all participants' and facilitators' knowledge about leading inquiry for equity.

TRC's second and third years focused on creating a set of resources, culminating in this publication. The TRC educators initially developed their essays and resources during a four-day writing retreat in August 2003, modeled after the National Writing Project's professional writing retreats and facilitated by the TRC planning team (see appendix C, "2003 TRC Writing Retreat Agenda").[5] Taking a piece of writing from the kernel of an idea to publication is a long-term, sometimes frustrating process that involves writing multiple drafts. The writing process for TRC participants was particularly challenging because both writers and editors were working to articulate a complex set of ideas, to describe work filled with challenges and sometimes painful emotions, and to create a clear vision for what the publication would become. In order to support the writers, the planning team also held shorter, optional writing retreats during 2003–2004 and, along with a graduate student researcher and two research editors, provided extensive written and oral responses and recommendations to authors' drafts between September 2003 and May 2005.

Throughout the project, TRC educators facilitated and coordinated teacher inquiry groups, shared the results of their research with colleagues inside and outside of their schools, and made recommendations about changes in school program design and policy. They also shared their work during conference presentations and workshops sponsored by the four organizational partners (see timeline for details). They supported each other during local and national meetings, and received support from staff of the organizational partners as well. The TRC Planning Team also spent hours working behind the scenes to integrate the collaborating organizations' unique approaches to inquiry, to support TRC educators in their leadership and writing, and to shape this publication.

Teacher Research Collaborative Timeline

August 2002
TRC Summer Institute, University of California, Berkeley

September 2002–June 2003
TRC educators facilitate 18 groups involving approximately 160 teachers

December 2002 and April 2003
BayCES and BAWP hold two common meetings

February 2003
CES and NWP participants convene at the Urban Ethnography Forum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

November 2002
Presentations at CES Fall Forum and NWP Annual Meeting

February 2003
Presentation at BayCES Small School Symposium

July/August 2003
TRC Writing Retreat, Emeryville, CA

September 2003–June 2004
TRC educators facilitate 25 groups involving approximately 303 teachers

TRC educators and planning team work via phone and email on drafting essays

November 2003
Presentations at CES Fall Forum and NWP Annual Meeting

February 2004
CES and NWP participants convene at the Urban Ethnography Forum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

May 2004
TRC hosts meeting of 17 Bay Area school reform groups to share strategies for conducting inquiry for equity, Oakland, CA

July 2004–May 2005
TRC educators and planning team finalize *Working Toward Equity*

October 2004
Bay Area Conference – Teacher Inquiry and Equity: Sharing Practices and Challenges, University of California, Berkeley

April 2005
Presentation at NWP Urban Sites Meeting, St. Louis, MO

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5   For additional resources for facilitating writing retreats, see the "Tools" section in this guide and the NWP Professional Writing Retreat Handbook, at: *http://www.writingproject.org/pub/nwpr/other/writingretreat.html.*

The Authors: Diverse Backgrounds and Levels of Support

The TRC brought together educators working in a variety of urban and suburban communities across the United States—Boston, New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Atlanta, Tucson, Oakland (CA), and San Francisco. The authors identify as racially and ethnically diverse: nine Caucasians, three African Americans, one Latina, one Asian American, and one biracial/bicultural.[6] Their teaching experience at the beginning of the TRC ranged from four years to more than thirty years. They entered the TRC with differing levels of experience in researching their own practice and leading teacher inquiry, from less than one year to more than twenty years of experience.

The authors also participated in a range of activities and communities that supported the classroom and leadership work they describe. BAWP and BayCES authors took part in ongoing opportunities to learn with and from other teachers in their networks about leading inquiry, using inquiry to address inequities and focus on equity, and developing their own classroom inquiries. The authors whose TRC participation was sponsored by CES and NWP experienced a variety of local support, ranging from occasional to ongoing and intensive. Several authors joined additional outside networks and initiatives to develop their inquiries and hone their leadership skills, and brought this knowledge to bear in the TRC.

The diversity of the authors' views and prior experiences, the organizational differences in approach to teacher inquiry and equity, and the differences in the contexts in which these educators carried out this work have resulted in a rich and varied set of resources rather than a single unified model of teacher inquiry for equity. One illustration of this diversity is the differing language used by different authors to describe their inquiry work, including "teacher research," "teacher inquiry," and "action research." Similarly, authors reference race and ethnicity differently. The TRC planning team opted to maintain this variation in language as a reflection of the authors' diverse experiences.

Equity, Inquiry, and Leadership: How the Resources in This Guide Are Organized

The TRC explored the intersections among equity, inquiry, and leadership in our meetings, conversations, ongoing inquiry groups, and individual research. The essays and resources in *Working Toward Equity* underscore the complexity of each idea. In this introductory section, Malarkey's essay "Inquiry for Equity: What Does It Mean for Teacher Research?" outlines key characteristics of equity, considers how inquiry can contribute to equity, and identifies some of the roles that leaders can play to facilitate this work. Malarkey's essay serves as a useful emerging framework for building inquiry communities whose focus is on achieving more equitable student learning. However, it is important to emphasize that while all the authors share a focus on inquiry and equity, each author defines these ideas for him- or herself. And likewise, some essays are more explicit than others about what inequities were addressed,

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6 Of the twenty-four participants, ten published essays in this guide, which also includes writing from the five members of the TRC Planning Team.

how equity is defined, what inquiry approaches and tools were used, and how leadership was taken. Given the diverse experiences and views of the authors, such variation is not surprising.

The rest of *Working Toward Equity* is organized into three thematic sections, each containing essays that foreground one of the central ideas considered by the TRC, followed by two sets of resources. A guide to the major themes illustrated by the essays can be found in the "Recommended Uses" section inside the front cover.

- Section 1, "Making Equity Explicit in Inquiry," includes three essays in which the authors focus on the importance and the challenges of making equity an explicit focus in their classrooms, their inquiry groups, their schools, and their organizations.

- Section 2, "Examining Questions of Equity in Teaching," includes four essays in which the authors examine how inquiry with an equity focus plays out in the daily life of the classroom.

- Section 3, "Building Inquiry Communities and Leadership for Equity," includes five essays in which authors examine different forms of inquiry communities and explore a range of leadership roles.

- "Further Reading" contains an annotated bibliography of teachers' published writing about their research, preceded by an essay describing the process of compiling and annotating it.

- The "Tools" section contains protocols to support teachers' writing about and discussion of their practice. The tools are a selection of materials that we used and adapted in the TRC. While these tools are not explicitly framed around equity issues, they can easily be modified to support this focus.

We hope that this collaboratively produced collection of essays and resources will inspire and support teacher-researchers and leaders of inquiry for equity.

Linda Friedrich is currently a research associate at the National Writing Project. Prior to joining the NWP, she worked as director of research at the Coalition of Essential Schools. Friedrich facilitated the work of the Teacher Research Collaborative from its inception. Her interest in the role that collaboration can play in strengthening teaching and learning in urban schools started when she helped found and design a collaboration among four professional development organizations in Philadelphia focused on student-centered teaching and learning. She also studied collaboration as part of a national research and evaluation project.

Appendix A: A Few Resources for Getting Started

For starting inquiry and teacher research:

Hubbard, R., and B. Power. 1993. *The Art of Classroom Inquiry*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

MacLean, M., and M. Mohr. 1999. *Teacher-Researchers at Work*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.

For structured discussions of inquiry and student work:

McDonald, J., N. Mohr, A. Dichter, and E. C. McDonald. 2003. *The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

McEntee, G., J. Appleby, J. Dowd, J. Grant, S. Hole, P. Silva, and J. Check. 2003. *At the Heart of Teaching: A Guide to Reflective Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Protocols from National School Reform Faculty:
http://www.nsrfnewyork.org/Resources.htm

Inquiry and Action School Improvement Guide from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform:
http://www.annenberginstitute.org/tools/guide/index.html

Resources from the Coalition of Essential Schools:
http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/resources/resources.html

Resources from the Looking at Student Work Collaborative:
http://www.lasw.org

For engaging in discussions of equity:

Weissglass, J. 1998. *Ripples of Hope: Building Relationships for Educational Change*. UC Santa Barbara, CA: Center for Educational Change in Mathematics and Science.

Useful articles that can be downloaded from the National Coalition for Equity in Education:
http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu/

Downloadable articles by Enid Lee, a leader in antiracist education:
http://www.enidlee.com/enidleereader.htm

Appendix B: 2002 TRC Summer Institute Agenda

Building Teacher Leadership for Inquiry and Equity
Institute Agenda
Wednesday, August 14 – Saturday, August 17

DAY 1 *Wednesday, August 14*	DAY 2 *Thursday, August 15*	DAY 3 *Friday, August 16*	DAY 4 *Saturday, August 17*
A.M. **Framing Our Work for Leadership, Inquiry, and Equity** • Welcome and project overview • Introductions • "A People's History of Teacher Research" • Building a community that supports inquiry for equity	**A.M.** **Framing Questions and Collecting Data with a Focus on Equity** • Read article by teacher-researcher • Discuss formulating equity-focused questions and data collection • Look at different kinds of data and ways teacher-researchers decide on what data to collect for what purposes • Discuss implications of these activities for supporting others	**A.M.** **Leadership for Equity: Facilitating and Sustaining Inquiry Groups** • Develop a working definition of leadership • Panel discussion followed by small-group discussions about facilitating and sustaining equity-focused inquiry groups	**A.M.** **Involving Others in Your School and Network** • Meet in network-based teams to plan for 2002–2003 • Plan for 2002–2003 follow-up meetings and communication
P.M. **Exploring Connections Among Leadership, Inquiry, and Equity** • What do we mean by equity? • Situate <u>ourselves</u> in this work: who we are (background, experience, culture/race, role, etc.), what issues we're wrestling with • Looking ahead to the rest of the week	**P.M.** **Bringing Rigor and an Equity Lens to Analyzing and Interpreting Data** • Identify group's questions about data analysis • Examine teacher-researchers' data analysis strategies • Participate in hands-on data analysis activities	**P.M.** **Going Public: Approaches to Representing and Sharing Inquiry** • Panel presentation about structures and processes for disseminating teacher research • Network-based, small-group discussions and strategy sessions about dissemination	**P.M.** **Planning for this Initiative, 2002–2003** • Individual planning time • Present and get feedback on your plans for leading inquiry groups using a protocol • Final reflections and discussion of next steps

Appendix C: 2003 TRC Writing Retreat Agenda

TRC Summer Writing Retreat – AGENDA
July 30 – August 2, 2003
8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Institute Goals
- Produce a "good" draft of materials
- Clarify vision for the resource guide (i.e., structure, contents, flow)
- Plan for piloting, revision, preliminary dissemination, check-in, additional work

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:30 BREAKFAST	**8:30 BREAKFAST**	**8:30 BREAKFAST**	**8:30 BREAKFAST**
9:00 Welcome and Purposes 9:15 Who's Here – Introductory Activity 9:45 Short writing and sharing in triads	9:00–11:30 Work Time (Schedule Determined by Writing Groups)	9:00–11:30 Work Time (Schedule Determined by Writing Groups)	9:00–11:00 Community Readings by Section
10:15 Overview of the week			
10:30 BREAK			**11:00 BREAK**
10:45 Introduction to the writing retreat			11:15–12:00 Dissemination Opportunities and Follow-up Activities
11:00 Introduction to the Resource Guide			
11:30 What is a Writing Group?	11:30–12:00 CHECK IN: Whole Group	11:30–12:00 CHECK IN: Whole Group	
12:15 LUNCH	**12:00 LUNCH**	**12:00 LUNCH**	**12:00 LUNCH**
1:15 Writing Groups Meet	1:00–4:30 Work Time (Schedule Determined by Writing Groups)	1:00–4:30 Work Time (Schedule Determined by Writing Groups)	1:00–2:00 Work Time for Dissemination Events
2:00 Writing Time: On your own or optional guided writing activity			
3:00 Writing Group Norming and Response Time			2:00–3:00 Revisit Resource Guide
4:30–5:00 CHECK IN: Whole Group	4:30–5:00 CHECK IN: Whole Group	4:30–5:00 CHECK IN: Whole Group	3:00–4:00 Next Steps and Celebration

Inquiry for Equity: What Does It Mean for Teacher Research?

Tom Malarkey draws from his experience as an inquiry coach for the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools to suggest a framework for teacher-researchers and leaders conducting inquiry for equity. Noting that "inquiry does not necessarily lead to equity-oriented learning and results for students," Malarkey first proposes some meanings and characteristics of equity and then explains some of the ways inquiry can contribute to equity. He then offers several specific suggestions for inquiry leaders working to support an equity focus in their school or professional development context. This essay introduces some of the key concepts that inform the work presented in this guide.

By Tom Malarkey

Data-gathering sometimes tells us stories we don't want to hear.

—Kathryn Herr (1999)

In the Teacher Research Collaborative (TRC), we have focused on learning how to foster more-effective teaching and more-equitable results for students. As educators who are concerned about the inequities in our schools, we see inquiry—defined loosely as a process through which teachers study their own practice in order to change and strengthen their teaching—as a valuable tool that can support teachers in becoming more equitable educators and thus can contribute to more equitable achievement for students. Why have we in the TRC come to see inquiry as particularly well suited to address these challenges? Because inquiry can help teachers to spiral deeply into the most difficult dilemmas they face—to ask questions, to face the discomfort of not knowing the answers to those questions, and then to find ways to move forward to address them. Inquiry can interrupt the ways in which our beliefs and practices may unwittingly contribute to the "patterned" failure of many of our students—that is, failure that correlates with racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic background. Ultimately, inquiry can build a sense of efficacy, helping teachers believe, I can help move this child forward; I can learn how to succeed with the students I've found it most difficult to reach.

Inquiry has become an empowering form of professional development in many schools and organizations nationwide.[1] However, inquiry does not necessarily lead to equity-oriented

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1   For a description of three possible types of inquiry for equity in schools, see appendix A.

learning and results for students. A teacher can ask interesting questions—say, about group learning processes in math—without necessarily learning more about how to increase the math success of her low-achieving students in particular. So the critical question becomes, What factors make it more likely that an inquiry process will generate equity-oriented learning for teachers and, ultimately, more equitable results for students?

This essay suggests a general framework for conducting inquiry for equity and for leading groups concerned with the issue. The ideas here emerge from several sources: the work of the TRC, the essays in this guide, and my own experience as a coach at the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) leading, supporting, and learning from teacher inquiry in schools.[2] In this essay I first sketch out some of the meanings and characteristics of equity that influenced and emerged from our work in the TRC. Next, I describe some of the specific ways that inquiry can contribute to equity in schools. And finally, I suggest some approaches to help inquiry leaders support inquiry for equity in their own school and professional-development contexts.

What Do We Mean by *Equity*?

"Educators come to inquiry work with diverse assumptions and understandings of equity."

Participants in the TRC came from different contexts, backgrounds, organizational affiliations, and interests in equity and inquiry. It would have been convenient if all the TRC participants had agreed, summit-style, on a definition of equity—but we haven't and probably never will. From our own experience, we know that educators will come to inquiry work with diverse assumptions and understandings of equity. For instance, some see equity as being about equal access or opportunities, while others focus on equity of outcomes. These differences often do not surface directly; hence we have learned from our work at the TRC the importance of being explicit about what we mean by *equity*. *Equity*, according to our definition, includes the following significant characteristics:

- Equitable **outcomes** for all students in our classrooms, our schools, and the system as a whole, as measured by multiple forms of assessment. This means that student learning and achievement (and success or failure) are not predictable by race, class, language, gender, or other relevant social factors.

- School and classroom environments where students' differences and backgrounds are celebrated and respected and their **unique gifts are cultivated**.

- Teaching **practices** and organizational **policies** that promote these results; that create inclusive, multicultural classrooms and school environments for children and adults; and that interrupt inequitable patterns.

- Individual **awareness and responsibility**; educators who acknowledge the realities of oppression and how it has affected their own and others' lives;

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2 While this framing essay draws on the work of the TRC, it does not necessarily reflect all the various orientations and approaches of the TRC educators in this collection. Some essays are more explicit about the equity dimensions of their work; others are less so. As leaders of this collaborative we felt it was important to include an essay that specifically laid out our (emerging) thinking about equity and inquiry—meanings, practices, and challenges.

- understand how their own background and experience—and that of their students—matters in the educational process;

- work to understand and reduce their own assumptions and biases about those who do not share their race, class, culture, linguistic background, gender, and so on;

- believe that all students are capable of achieving at high levels, and take responsibility for their students' learning, despite the circumstances in students' lives and our society that can make achievement difficult.

Our definitions of equity point to concerns both with equity of results, particularly for students, and with the capacities, understandings, and dispositions that enable a teacher to foster more equitable results. Viewing equity in these ways raises a question: What, then, "counts" as inquiry for equity? Is it inquiry that results in awareness and learning for the teacher, or in tangible results for students? Ultimately, what matters are changes in student learning, experience, and outcomes. On the other hand, through our work in the TRC, we have come to understand that equity involves an educator's journey, an ongoing process of deepening learning and finding ways for bolder and more effective action. Each of us is on our own journey relative to equity, rooted in our particular background and experiences, strengths and weaknesses. We never arrive at some mythical destination called equity. Many equity-oriented inquiry processes do not necessarily bring about measurable changes for students in the short run, but are still significant if they move the teacher closer to equity-centered practice.

The key arbiter of inquiry for equity is *progress*—a movement deeper into our particular challenges and an ongoing transformation of our capacities as educators. Too often, teachers' professional growth is impeded by the conditions of schooling, the shortcomings of schools as workplaces, and the realities of racism and other forms of oppression. As a result of these circumstances, some teachers unfortunately come to accept patterns of student failure as normal and inevitable, beyond their control. The role of inquiry is to help us face these challenges and push us to keep checking our results. This resource guide is filled with examples of educators on this journey who are seeking, and often finding, ways to get more equitable results.

How Can Inquiry Contribute to Equity?

As educators in the TRC, we believe that equity in education is possible. How can inquiry help build this conviction? In the TRC we defined inquiry as systematically investigating one's practice to produce new knowledge, which leads to positive changes that ultimately benefit students. We have seen that this process of asking questions, collecting data, closely examining evidence, and acting on findings has given teachers an opportunity to reflect on and develop their teaching practice in a way that supports all students' learning. Put simply, inquiry has the potential to propel educators to see and act differently with respect to their students and their practice.

"The process of asking questions, collecting data, closely examining evidence, and acting on findings, has given teachers an opportunity to reflect on and develop their teaching practice in a way that supports all students' learning."

To begin with, inquiry can help us to see patterns of inequity in our classrooms and schools. As James Baldwin wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." In order to work toward equity, as a starting point educators should first name and understand the specific inequities present in their own classroom and school contexts. Examining data gives us a better picture of student learning, achievement, and experience, as well as revealing larger patterns of success and failure that we might not have fully recognized. It helps us clarify and state problems. Pirette McKamey's research, for instance, clarified teacher assumptions that were contributing to the persistent failure of many African American students in her high school; Sarah Capitelli's investigations highlighted the inequities in her school's bilingual program and her own role in fostering them.

Second, through inquiry we can turn the lens back on ourselves and recognize *what we don't know*. Because inquiry opens us to deeper learning, it can be a precursor to fundamental shifts in our beliefs and approaches. "Inquiry is basically a challenge to what we think we know," writes spiritual teacher A.H. Almaas (2002). "Through inquiry, you learn how to navigate through your not-knowing." Facing and embracing our own uncertainty as teachers is just as important as developing increased certainty about what does work for us as teachers, and for our students. As Sarah Capitelli writes, "I know that the most important part of my inquiry, and inquiry in general, is the messy part, the 'mucking around,' the parts where I feel uneasy about what I am learning and unsure of how I am going to make sense of it. The most important part is when I do not have any answers, just lots of questions and nothing makes sense."

"Although inquiry can make it more possible to address equity challenges, . . . inquiry does not necessarily lead teachers to address equity issues."

Third, inquiry can help us see our own role as educators in the reproduction of inequitable schooling; we learn to take responsibility for our students' learning, rather than simply see their failure as their fault, or that of their families, the rest of the school, or "the system"— even though these may be contributing factors. Inquiry helps us hold ourselves accountable for student learning. In turn, inquiry helps us engage intellectually in our work and develop theory about how schools and classrooms often fail children, about what *does* work and why, and about how to make change happen in our classrooms and schools. Developing theory, in turn, helps us develop practice, as we examine and make changes in our teaching based on our questions and findings.

Fourth, regular inquiry practice can help build an equity-centered professional learning community where educators can collectively investigate their greatest challenges, bridge their most divisive differences, deal with the strong emotions that inevitably arise in this work, and develop collaborative solutions. The acrimony and silence that characterize many faculty discussions involving race and other equity issues can seriously constrain collective learning and action, whereas dialogue grounded in questions and data tends to produce more honest and generative faculty discussions.

Fifth, inquiry can foster a sense of efficacy and the will to address (and keep addressing) equity challenges in the classroom and school. As one teacher in a BayCES inquiry network wrote, "Inquiry gives me a way to be struggling—and to feel it's possible to make progress with my lowest-achieving students. This used to feel so daunting. Inquiry gives me a set of steps, a structure, and a focus."

Finally, inquiry can help teachers become advocates and leaders for equity in their schools. Since equity is not the norm in most settings, the cause of equity requires advocates and leadership. By creating space for critical reflection and questioning, honest discourse, and focused action, inquiry helps teachers develop the clarity, courage, and humility they need to become leaders for equity in their school community.

How Can Inquiry Leaders Best Support an Equity Focus?

Although inquiry can make it more possible to address equity challenges, some of which are discussed above, inquiry does not *necessarily* lead teachers to address equity issues, nor does it *automatically* produce more equitable and deeper learning for students. Sometimes an intriguing inquiry question may have little connection with the inequities in the teacher's classroom or school. Other times, deeply held but unrecognized assumptions interfere with understanding the real causes of underachievement and seeing how we as educators could change the situation. Thus for inquiry leaders concerned about equity, it is important to approach the process conscious both of how inquiry can open up possibilities to pursue equity *and* of how—and why—equity can often get overlooked in our investigations. In my work with teachers and schools at BayCES, I

> **How can inquiry leaders best support an equity focus?**
>
> - Ask questions that encourage teacher-researchers to look through an equity lens.
>
> - Develop both the "technical" and the "human" dimensions of the inquiry process.
>
> - Consider the importance of each teacher-researcher's identity.
>
> - Remember that results matter in inquiry.

have seen that certain approaches to inquiry can make it more likely that the process will lead to equity-oriented learning for educators. The following suggestions may be useful to inquiry leaders—including those who are not "equity experts"—who are working to support an equity focus in their school or professional development context.

Ask questions that encourage teacher-researchers to look through an equity lens.

A key role of the inquiry leader is supporting teachers in identifying a research focus that both seems central to their practice *and* helps them examine and address inequities in their schools and classrooms. In order for inquiry to be sustained, it must be based on some real passion or curiosity of the teacher-researcher; and in order for inquiry to be a force for equity, it must ultimately address some real inequity in a classroom or school. At BayCES, we have found the metaphor of using an "equity lens" helpful. When looking at any given focus or situation, this means asking questions such as: What are the patterns of achievement here—and which students or groups of students are not achieving well? Which students am I having a harder time reaching? How will pursuing this focus help my lower-achieving students? An assumption here is that by focusing on an equity challenge in one's practice, a teacher will learn to serve *all* students more effectively. By continually asking them questions about their research topic that encourage an equity focus, leaders encourage teacher-researchers to ask these questions of themselves and of each other.

It is important for inquiry leaders to keep in mind that equity-oriented inquiries do not always announce themselves as such. Take, for example, Elena Aguilar's central inquiry question: "How can my students become motivated readers?" On its surface, this question doesn't indicate an equity concern. However, Aguilar's inquiry was actually driven both by her own passion for reading and by a deep conviction that literacy—and reading in

particular—is a fundamental gatekeeper to success for poor urban students in her class-room. Her inquiry leader constantly encouraged her to view her question through an equity lens, by asking questions such as: Which students in my class are struggling to read well? Which students are more challenging for me to motivate to read? Why does reading matter—or not matter—to these students in particular? How will this inquiry question help me better address the needs of my lower-achieving students? As Aguilar articulated her answers, she increasingly appreciated how her inquiry fit into a broader quest for equity at her school.

Some researchers are explicit about their equity concerns from the beginning. Pirette McKamey began with a broad but explicit equity question about the achievement of African American students in her school. Her essay illustrates one way of narrowing a question and applying an equity lens by examining practices that are successful with African American students, and questioning *why* they are successful. On the other hand, in some cases an inquiry does not start with an explicit equity concern (e.g., How can cooperative groups support student learning in algebra?). However, through the inquiry process, and gently prodded by the leader's ongoing equity-focused questions, many teachers come to recognize an equity issue embedded in their question. Or they may discover a new inquiry question altogether as they learn to view their school and classroom through an equity lens.

Often a department, a grade-level team, or the whole school has identified one or more focus areas for their collective change efforts—such as writing skills for English language learners. This collaborative inquiry can lead to individual classroom research that generates significant equity-oriented learning. Working with collaborative groups, inquiry leaders need to ask the same questions they ask when working with individuals, adding questions that highlight links between individual research questions and broader equity issues.

Develop both the "technical" and the "human" dimensions of the inquiry process.

If inquiry is going to consistently serve the purpose of promoting equity, what does it need to look like? For inquiry leaders, it may be helpful to consider what BayCES coaches often refer to as the "technical" and the "human" dimensions of inquiry. We think of these technical and human dimensions as the yang and yin of inquiry: each is involved in the other; each requires the other. The technical dimension comprises the particular steps in an inquiry process and the forms of data that one can use. The human dimension comprises the emotions that inevitably accompany any investigation of one's own practice, particularly when the focus is on inequities and the charged issues of oppression and privilege, failure and success.[3] (For an illustration of the human dimension of inquiry, see Tanya Friedman's essay in this guide.) And when inquiry involves collaboration, which it frequently does, the investigation of equity issues often evokes tension, disagreement, and culturally charged conflicts. Because of the emotional nature of this work, inquiry for equity works best when we acknowledge, anticipate, and make space for both the human and the technical dimensions of the process.

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3   Appendix B offers a set of perspectives from the National Coalition for Equity in Education intended to help schools and communities increase their understanding of the *human dimension* of inquiry. This list may provide the opportunity to dialogue and build shared meanings about beliefs, values, and assumptions that typically are not discussed in schools or other public spaces.

On the technical side, the kind of data one gathers can greatly affect how inquiry contributes to equity. Leaders can help teacher-researchers generate equity-oriented data by asking questions like these:

- To what extent do the data allow you to see how various subgroups of students are doing? Data that are disaggregated by factors like race, language, gender, and socioeconomic status can reveal a great deal about patterns of student achievement and experience.
- To what extent do the data include perspectives and voices other than your own? Our data must stretch us beyond our normal way of seeing things. Therefore, getting data especially from people whose backgrounds, experiences, or positions differ from yours (e.g. students, parents, and so on) is important in inquiry for equity. (For an example of the importance of different perspectives, see Sarah Capitelli's essay.)

On the human side, it's critical to pay attention to how our inquiry processes allow us to surface emotions and address conflict. Inquiry leaders might consider these questions when designing inquiry work:

- Are there aspects of the inquiry process that make space for the various emotions that come up when we are engaged in this work? (These might include journaling, narrative writing, forums that support teachers to speak honestly from their hearts and be listened to without judgment, and those that provide emotional release, such as constructivist listening.)
- If you are working in a group, are there norms or agreements that support equity-oriented dialogue and participation by all, whatever their discourse style? (Pirette McKamey's discussion of a facultywide equity conversation illustrates the importance of this question. See the "Sample Meeting Norms and Procedural Norms" in the "Tools" section for an example of equity-minded norms.)

Consider the importance of each teacher-researcher's identity.

In practitioner inquiry for equity, the identity of the researcher matters as much as that of the research subject. Deep change in a teacher's beliefs and practices generally requires some degree of *self*-examination as part of an inquiry process. Inquiry for equity involves turning the lens back on oneself to reflect on

- who I am (e.g., racial or cultural background, gender, experience as a teacher)
- what I believe (e.g., values and beliefs about how students learn, what role their background plays in their learning, what is possible, what's important in teaching)
- what I do (e.g., teaching practices, assessment practices, communication with families)
- how each of these interacts with and influences the others.

Inquiry leaders will find that the issue of one's personal identity in relation to equity is often emotionally charged. They can support teachers to consider these questions through journaling and other forms of writing, watching and discussing a video of their practice, talking about their own experience in pairs or small groups (listening protocols can be useful), and collecting feedback and data from their students and from others such as parents or colleagues.

It is important to remember that teachers' personal backgrounds do not necessarily determine whether they are more equity-oriented or less so. White teachers and teachers of color alike can carry oppressive beliefs and unintentionally contribute to inequity in their classrooms. And both can become transformative educators who help English language learners, students from low-income families, and students of color to achieve at high levels. However, teachers of color generally have had a lifetime of experiences living with the effects of institutionalized racism and carry different types of awareness of inequities than most white teachers. The inquiry leader's role is to help teachers explore and understand how their particular background and experiences shape their teaching and their relationships with students.

Similarly, it is important to take into account the extent of a teacher's experience when thinking about the role inquiry can play in his or her practice. Inquiry can help new teachers focus their learning amidst the overwhelming multitude of things they need to learn. And it can help more veteran teachers examine practices or beliefs that have become routine in their teaching.

Most inquiry groups, then, will comprise teacher-researchers with diverse professional experiences, social backgrounds, and personalities, and hence various orientations toward equity. In planning inquiry work with a group of educators, the inquiry leader needs to take into account *who* is in the group.

Some participants may come to the inquiry process with real concerns about the challenges facing their lowest-achieving students; an awareness of the systematic role of race, class, and language in the patterned educational disenfranchisement of many groups of students; and perhaps even an awareness of their own role in perpetuating some of these patterns of success and failure. For other teachers, equity may be a peripheral concern. In this case, an early task of the inquiry leader is to help these teachers identify possible links between their potential inquiry questions and inequities in their school context.

And for some teachers and leaders, equity issues are not really on their radar screen at all. They may be in denial about the role schools play in perpetuating inequity ("our school—or my classroom—provides many opportunities to succeed; kids just aren't taking advantage of them"). They may attribute student failure to family background or poverty more generally ("well, there's not much I can do as a teacher"). Or they may just not have learned to recognize the pervasiveness of inequity. A good entry point in working with these teachers can be to use data to identify and acknowledge inequities in their school or classroom context—and demonstrate that such inequities have been ameliorated elsewhere—that is, equity *is* possible. Colleagues tend to have a pivotal effect on one's inquiry process; when they bring perspectives and experiences different from ours, we may have insights we never would have had on our own. It is the role of the inquiry leader to help "create space" for dialogue around the teachers' diverse perspectives in a way that does not usually occur in routine interactions at school. (See Pirette McKamey's and Tanya Friedman's essays for examples of how such space can be intentionally created.)

Finally, it is also important for the inquiry leader to look at who does—and doesn't—practice inquiry in a particular school or organization, and why. Do they tend to be new teachers? Veteran teachers? White teachers? Teachers of color? K–8 teachers? High school teachers? Teachers who can't meet after school or at night? The practice of teacher inquiry will contribute the most to equity when it reaches elementary and high school teachers, teachers of color and white teachers, new and veteran teachers alike.

Remember that results matter in inquiry.

Inquiry leaders must ask themselves, Should we gauge the effectiveness of an inquiry process by its effects on teacher learning and practice—or ultimately by its impact on student learning and achievement? Must an inquiry lead to more equitable results for students in order to be considered a successful equity-oriented inquiry? These are critical and complex questions. In this era of heightened accountability and pressure for measurable gains in student achievement, inquiry advocates are often wary of the press for accountability because it can obscure the complexities of teacher learning and undercut the importance of teachers driving their own learning.[4]

On the one hand, teacher inquiry is ideally about *teacher*-driven professional development, and valuable learning for teachers is not always accompanied by measurable gains for students. As in science, a failed inquiry—one that doesn't produce the results hoped for—is still successful if the inquirer learns from it and valuable knowledge is produced. Thus an inquiry can have a transformative effect on a teacher's practice even though the inquiry itself did not immediately lead to measurably improved results for students. That said, if the aim of inquiry is to serve the purposes of equity, inquiry must ultimately be concerned with results. Teacher learning and satisfaction with the inquiry process are not adequate criteria for the success of an inquiry whose purpose is to make a difference for equity.

"Inquiry for equity involves a kind of 'authentic' accountability."

Through our work in the TRC, we've come to believe there is a middle road between these positions that takes into account the intimate link between teacher learning and student learning. Inquiry for equity involves a kind of "authentic" accountability: it helps teachers reflect upon themselves as educators and as individuals living in a cultural context. This process will ultimately lead them to greater accountability for the learning of their students.

Asking Hard Questions About Our Own Inquiry Work

A central reason that participants in TRC come together to look at and study the intersections of inquiry and equity is our belief that these are critical times for practitioners and advocates of inquiry. In today's climate, there are both opportunities and dangers for the

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4   Inquiry processes can sometimes focus on student outcomes to the exclusion of deep learning for teachers. Increasingly, in districts that deploy a mandated literacy or math curriculum, inquiry is replacing traditional district inservices as the required form of professional development for program implementation. Often these approaches are tightly structured, focus narrowly on using assessment data from the mandated curriculum package, and teach an approach to inquiry that is more "technical" than "human" in its focus.

practice of inquiry. On the one hand, accountability pressures and the emphasis on data can help bring student results and inequities to the forefront of discussions—making inquiry an increasingly relevant practice. On the other hand, accountability policies often work in ways that narrow what counts as results—and how to achieve them. This can mean that "bottom-up" forms of professional development, like inquiry, can be pushed to the side in favor of more "top-down" training on the most recent mandated curriculum packages. The complex knowledge and understandings required to bring about more equitable student learning go beyond narrow accountability measures and more prescribed forms of teacher learning. Good teaching is adaptive—and any approach must be thoughtfully adapted to the particular contexts of a community, school, classroom, and student. Inquiry as a form of teacher learning is very well suited to this complexity. And at the same time, advocates of inquiry—especially in the current policy context—must hold themselves accountable and demonstrate that their work is relevant and is capable of helping effect significant changes both in practice and in results for students.

Inquiry leaders and teacher-researchers work in contexts fraught with challenges and needs: schools that are under-resourced; students who are falling through the cracks; teachers who are often underprepared to face the challenges of urban schools; increasing numbers of students who are poor, of color, and English language learners. If inquiry is going to effectively serve the purposes of equity, we as practitioners and leaders of inquiry must habitually ask questions about our work. Practiced uncritically, any form of professional development has the potential to wind up contributing to the status quo more than transforming it. Teacher-researchers and inquiry leaders alike must regularly ask ourselves: Is my/our inquiry actually helping lead to more equitable outcomes for students? If so, how? If not, why not? These are hard questions because—as Kathryn Herr (1999) points out—for teacher-researchers, data-gathering does not always reveal stories that are easy for us to hear. Inquiring into our practice and holding ourselves accountable for our results requires courage and commitment. Inquiry can be a powerful tool in transforming our schools and classrooms into equitable spaces that foster the success of all children. But for inquiry to fulfill this promise, we must pay attention to how and for what purposes it is practiced, and provide support, both technical and emotional, for teacher-researchers to ask the hard questions. This is the spirit in which the essays in this guide were written.

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Appendix A: Three Types of Inquiry

Three Types of Inquiry for Equity

BayCES
BAY AREA COALITION FOR EQUITABLE SCHOOLS

SCHOOL INQUIRY
(organization)

- ❖ WHO: school community; leadership
- ❖ DATA: school-wide; often quantitative; disaggregated
- ❖ FOCUS: surfacing patterns of achievement and equity; clarifying broader focus areas

COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY
(team/group)

- ❖ WHO: subject area or grade level or topic-alike teams (parents too!)
- ❖ DATA: cross-classrooms; student work; various assessment data…
- ❖ FOCUS: program change

PRACTITIONER INQUIRY
(individual)

- ❖ WHO: teachers (also leaders, counselors, etc.)
- ❖ DATA: from own classroom; assessments; observations; student work; journaling…
- ❖ FOCUS: improving one's own practice

Appendix B: Perspectives on Equity

These perspectives can help schools and communities increase their understanding of the "human" dimension of equity. This list can provide an opportunity to dialogue and build shared meanings about beliefs, values, and assumptions that typically are not discussed in schools or other public spaces.

1. Human beings are born without prejudice. All forms of bias, from extreme bigotry to unaware cultural biases, are acquired—actually imposed on the young person.

2. We are all one species. There is no scientific justification for the notion of race or for claiming the superiority or inferiority of different groups.

3. Many of the assumptions, values, and practices of people and institutions from dominant groups in the society serve to the disadvantage of students from the non-dominant groups.

4. Individual prejudice and institutionalized biases are dysfunctional for individuals, their relationships, and to society as a whole.

5. Systematic mistreatment (such as racism, classism, or sexism) is more than the sum of individual prejudices.

6. Educators are an important force in helping many people overcome the effects of societal bias and discrimination, but schools also serve to perpetuate the inequalities and prejudices in society. Thoughtful action with regard to curriculum, pedagogy, and school policies and organization is necessary to overcome the effects on people and institutions of a long history of prejudice and discrimination.

7. Individuals and groups internalize and transfer the systematic mistreatment. They often act harmfully toward themselves and other members of their group. This process must be identified and eliminated.

8. Racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of bias are serious issues facing U.S. society and education that are usually not discussed. Talking about them is necessary, not to lay blame, but to figure out better ways of raising our children and educating our students.

9. Diverse leadership is absolutely necessary for achieving educational equity. Lack of acceptance, recognition, and support is an impediment to the development of educational leadership among people of color, women, and the working class.

10. To make progress on this very complex problem it will be necessary to improve alliances between people from different backgrounds, experiences, and identities.

11. Discussing and gaining new understandings about the existence and effects of bias and discrimination will usually be accompanied by strong emotions.

12. Attitudes and actions will change if we are listened to attentively and allowed to release our emotions as we work to make sense of our experiences and the experiences of others. Attitudes and actions will be facilitated if we are listened to attentively and allowed to release our emotions as we attempt to make sense of our experiences and the experiences of others.

Making Equity Explicit in Inquiry

Introduction

Tom Malarkey, Section Editor

Inquiry can help educators describe and address inequities in education. However, inquiry processes do not automatically focus on equity issues. While all the essays in this guide focus in some way on the issue of equity, this first section illustrates some ways that issues of equity can be made explicit in teachers' inquiry processes—and some of the opportunities and challenges this focus can create. Each author describes her own inquiry work or leadership and identifies specific inequalities in her context. Two authors (Capitelli and McKamey) focus their inquiries on their school contexts; one (G. Williams) draws on her inquiry leadership work with teachers from various schools. Their questions are pertinent both for teacher-researchers and for leaders who support and facilitate inquiry groups:

- What aspects of equity can be made explicit in inquiry?
- Why make equity an explicit focus in inquiry?
- What is the process of making equity explicit in inquiry?
- What happens when equity becomes explicit in inquiry?

What Aspects of Equity Can Be Made Explicit in Inquiry?

Equity has many dimensions and takes on different meanings in different contexts. These essays suggest various types of equity challenges, and several ways of viewing equity. Two authors (McKamey and G. Williams) address equity through the lens of race; one (Capitelli) focuses on equity in the context of language and culture. All three address equity primarily as an issue of student achievement—and hence teacher practice. Two authors (McKamey and G. Williams) also address adult dimensions of equity—that is, what it means for teachers from different backgrounds to address these issues in their practice. One theme that comes through in these essays is the importance of clarifying what equity means to each of us, given our particular context and particular background and experiences.

Why Make Equity an Explicit Focus in Inquiry?

Teacher-researchers have often addressed issues related to equity—such as detracking, personalization, and culturally relevant pedagogy—without clearly describing these as equity issues. Making equity explicit can signal to others the nature and strength of one's commitment. The authors in this section illustrate how naming an equity issue helps them to squarely face and address some of the most difficult challenges in their practice. Focusing explicitly on equity can surface conflicts and tensions. McKamey's essay, for instance, addresses the challenges of making equity issues public in her school and of expanding the equity conversation to include a larger group of teachers. Together the essays in this section highlight reasons that inquiry can be more effective when it has an explicit connection to equity.

What Is the Process of Making Equity Explicit in Inquiry?

While the authors in this section each articulate a particular equity challenge in the form of an inquiry question, in one inquiry described here (McKamey), a school names a broad equity challenge, and then inquiry provides a forum for teachers to ask what changes they can make in their practice to address that issue in their own classrooms. In another instance (Capitelli), a teacher begins an inquiry by asking a question that's more closely tied to her practice and her identity: "How can I, as a native English speaker, find more effective ways to reach my English language learners?" There are other cases where both happen simultaneously, and the equity dimension of inquiry emerges out of both a larger school issue and personal factors.

What Happens When Equity Becomes Explicit in Inquiry?

When educators choose to name an equity issue explicitly in their inquiry work, they are usually taking a risk. Equity issues are sensitive issues in schools and other organizations. Talking about the realities of race, class, culture, or language in relation to student achievement or teacher practices can provoke strong reactions from colleagues: discomfort, defensiveness, pain, or anger (McKamey). Furthermore, paying close attention to where we're not being successful with students can be painful; seeing how we may be reproducing inequality in our own classroom simply does not feel good. The authors in this section describe how challenging it can be to investigate one's own practice through focusing on issues of equity (Capitelli).

Despite the challenges of making equity issues explicit, the results of this focus can be productive. All three essays provide evidence that this approach can enable new and deeper dialogue among colleagues and can increase the courage and commitment to address inequities. And because of its purposeful nature, inquiry with an equity focus can lead to whole-school changes (Capitelli) in addition to significant changes in teaching practice (Capitelli and McKamey).

Equity issues are complex, persistent, and difficult to change, but as the essays in this section illustrate, making equity explicit in inquiry increases the likelihood of one's inquiry process actually making a difference in this area.

Finding Myself in My Inquiry:
A Teacher's Story

Elementary school teacher and researcher Sarah Capitelli learned the importance of involving others in the interpretation of her teaching practice and research data. In her classroom inquiry, she explored her own and her school's support for Spanish-speaking students to learn English. After she had gathered multiple forms of data on students' participation patterns in her English class, a student survey revealed that her perceptions of class participation were quite different from those of her students and of the teaching assistant who shared the students' Spanish-language culture. Where Capitelli saw resistance and nonparticipation, they saw participation. From her inquiry, Capitelli changed her assumptions and her practice. Here, she identifies writing narratives, gathering multiple forms of data, and interpreting data with colleagues as important aspects of her inquiry practice.

By Sarah Capitelli

I am a first/second grade Spanish bilingual teacher at Melrose Elementary School in Oakland, California. At my school this means that I teach in Spanish for five hours a day and in English, during English language development (ELD), for an hour a day. For the past six years I have been investigating my own ELD practice and the English learning of the students in my classroom. Although my primary focus has been my own classroom, the work I have done has been directly connected to the greater context of the ELD program at my school. Doing this work, I have grown increasingly concerned about a particular group of students in the bilingual program, and I have shared this concern with other teachers. These students have been at Melrose since kindergarten or first grade, yet despite our efforts they are not learning English or Spanish well, and therefore are not successfully making the transition into English instruction in the fourth grade. This situation has been particularly difficult for me. I was drawn to Melrose because of its strong commitment to bilingual education. Both my professional training and my personal values motivated me to work in a bilingual classroom. I was fiercely committed to the idea that bilingual education could work. It was devastating to realize that it was not working for so many students.

In seeking to understand why some students are successful and others are not, I have been looking at and documenting my own ELD practice and the classroom environment that I create for English learning to occur. I have also been collecting various kinds of data (achievement data, teacher interviews, video data, and my own journal) on students who have been struggling with their English learning. My data collection has enabled me to take a deeper look at myself, my teaching, and my assumptions about my students and their

learning. The data have also enabled me to create a profile of successful and unsuccessful students in my school's current ELD program. My analysis of the data has challenged me to question the ways that I teach English and the ways that the schoolwide structure of English instruction supports and does not support English language learners in the bilingual program. This research has resulted in changes to my own practice and to our school structures.

This essay is an attempt to share the beginning of my inquiry story—a story that has not yet ended. My questions have led me to interesting and challenging findings that in turn have led to new questions and a different set of data to analyze and act upon. And since my colleagues at Melrose all engage in inquiry as well, these insights are multiplied. This paper is a window into my inquiry during the 2000–2001 school year: musings about choosing a question, narratives I wrote about my students and myself, and thoughts on my learning. I also reflect on the methods I have used to do my classroom research and how my work has been shaped by—and helped to shape—the context in which I found myself doing this inquiry. In particular, this text highlights the value of inviting different perspectives into my classroom, and describes the ways in which these perspectives challenge my assumptions about my students and myself. My purpose in writing this paper is to provide a window into my life as a teacher-researcher and to share both the complexity of teaching and the complexity of thinking critically about one's teaching.

"I quickly realized that if I wanted to get smarter about my school's ELD program, I first needed to get smarter about my own ELD teaching."

The Power of Questions—Large and Small

I always start with such large questions that if a single piece of classroom research could answer them, schools would not look the way they do. Big issues in schools and in my classroom are the most compelling to me. For instance, I want to know why I can feel so good about the rest of my teaching, while my ELD class is so difficult for me to teach. I want to know why I always have a group of girls in my class who are so quiet and reluctant to participate. I want to know why so many students at my school aren't learning English.

I began my 2000–2001 inquiry with a question that was even larger than these. What would our ELD program need to look like in order to ensure that all students were ready to make the transition to English instruction in fourth grade? I started with this question because, even in my first year teaching, I could see that not enough students were making this transition successfully. As compelling as this question was to me, I did not even know where to begin. I knew so little about my own ELD class, let alone the school's entire ELD program. I quickly realized that if I wanted to get smarter about my school's program, I first needed to get smarter about my own ELD teaching.

Initially, I felt as if it would be giving up to investigate only my own classroom. However, I quickly realized that the questions that I had about my own teaching and students would inform my larger question about the entire school. My classroom inquiry would also help me figure out what I was and was not doing in my classroom that might or might not be supporting students' learning of English.

So I began my research by examining how my students were grouped in their ELD classes—low, medium, and high—and what could help me challenge these groupings. My first

research activity involved a close examination of my interactions with one student, Lilia. Based on notes and artifacts I keep as part of my regular teaching day, I wrote the first narrative shortly after the incident occurred and reworked it while writing this essay. This set me on a path to understanding my approach to English language instruction and my school's bilingual program.

Narrative I: Lilia and Me

Students, all first-graders, hand me their papers as they race toward the door for recess.

The papers were a response to these instructions: "Juan, Danny, Gerardo, Nica, Monica—I want you all to draw a picture of how to make a flower. All of the rest of you need to start with the words. Use your own words and ideas. I don't want you just writing what we all wrote. I want you all to try and write on your own."

As Lila is leaving the room, I reach for her hand, signaling her to stay. I look at the paper and read box number one. It sounds familiar. I read box number two. I find myself getting hot. Frustrated, I look at the board. She has copied word for word what we wrote as a class. I recall the instructions that I gave to the class.

"Did you copy this from the board?" Silence. She looks down at her shoes. High-heeled sandals that sparkle. *Why does her mom let her wear these to school?*

"Did you copy this from the board?" Silence. She bites her lower lip.

"What were the instructions?" Silence.

"Were the instructions to copy the work from the board?" Silence. "Ahora estoy enojada. ¿Copiaste de la pared?"

"Sí." *Finally she is talking.*

"¿Porqué?" Silence. A tear rolls down her cheek.

My God. I know that she can do this. Why won't she try? She never tries. She never takes risks. She is always on the outside.

"Mira. Estoy enojada. No siguiste las instrucciones. Please tell me in your own words what we did first." Silence. Tears are rolling down her cheeks, but she isn't making a sound.

"I'm going to cover up my words, and I want you to look at the picture. Tell me what we did first." *I walk to the board. I am big in the room. She looks so small. Do I always take up this much space?*

I put my hand over the words in the first box. "What did we do first?" Silence. Tears. "Use the pictures, Lilia. You can do it. I know that you know."

Tears. "We got paper," she says.

"Yes." I say trying to find some encouragement in my voice.

"We got some tissue paper."

"Yes. Then what?"

"We folded it."

"And then?"

"We cut the paper."

"You did it! We got some tissue paper. We folded it. We cut the paper. I knew you could do it, and I know that you know how to write some of those ideas and words on your own."

She is still crying. I am walking around the room. She follows me. I can feel her eyes on my back. "You know Lilia, it is really important that you give your best effort during English class. What language do you speak at home?" The tears have stopped. Her cheeks are wet and stained. A small smile creeps across her face.

"When you go home after school and are talking with your mom and Jovany, what language do you use?" She smiles and looks down at her sides.

"Do you speak English or Spanish?"

"Spanish," she says and smiles.

It is the first time I have heard her voice that day that it wasn't full of tears. Now her voice is steady, confident. I say, "It is really important that you practice your English during English class. This is your opportunity to learn English. I want you to leave Melrose speaking and reading and writing in English. I want this for you Lilia."

She looks down. I take her hand. "Let's go outside." Her hand is warm in my hand. When I squeeze her hand, she doesn't squeeze back.

"I know you can do it. The next time we do writing in English class I want you to really try and write on your own. All right Lilia? Can you do that?"

"Yes," she answers.

As I collected additional data and analyzed it with the help of my colleagues, the meaning of this exchange would become much clearer to me.

Narrative II: A Turn in My Inquiry

It is the middle of the school year and I am immersed in my inquiry trying to better understand the tracked ELD class that I teach. The other five hours of the day, homeroom, go so well. But the ELD hour with the lowest-achieving first and second grade students has become a mystery. Frustration, anger, pressure, urgency, and fear are familiar feelings that I am experiencing teaching this class. I suspect that the students feel it, but I am more inclined to blame the structure of the school and the program than to question my own classroom behavior.

I am routinely collecting data on my homeroom students, whom I have labeled "high," "medium," and "low" in their level of English. I write narratives about these students, doing running reading assessments in Spanish and English, and looking at student work. The low students are also in my ELD class, so I observe these students during ELD as well.

The data don't really give me anything new to think about. No matter how I look at it, I still end up seeing groups of high, medium, and low students. Although I worry about the low students, I am also very frustrated with them and their effort. They all have to be pushed so much to participate during class, in both English and Spanish. I often feel that if they just tried harder and participated more, I would see a change in their progress. I express this thought to them often, believing that telling them is a way of supporting them in finding their voice in my classroom.

In the spirit of continuing my inquiry, I decide to collect one more piece of data. So much of my frustration lies in the low students' lack of oral participation in the class. Perhaps if I asked my students to reflect on their own talk in and outside of class, in both Spanish and English, I would be able to show them how their lack of participation affects their achievement. So I design a survey that asks the students to rate how often they talk (a lot, sometimes, once in a while, never) in Spanish and English in various situations—in class on the rug, outside at recess, at their tables (see appendix A). I also ask my instructional assistant Mrs. Lopez, whose cultural and linguistic background is similar to the students', to fill out the surveys based on her observations. Finally, I complete the survey about the students myself.

I expect that the survey responses will provide lots of data to show the students where they need to exert more effort. But I am surprised. I never anticipated that the ways in which I see the students would be different from the ways they see themselves, or that the ways I see these students could be so different from the ways Mrs. Lopez sees them. I read and reread the surveys, turning the circles on the papers around in my mind. I can't get my head around the idea that someone—anyone—could be seeing something different from what I see in the classroom. But over and over again, Mrs. Lopez and the students whom I have labeled as low have rated their participation differently than I have. And more often than not, they gave higher ratings than I did. Suddenly my good intentions are being challenged by discrepancies that I have never made room for in my classroom, in my inquiry, or in my mind.

"I never anticipated that the ways in which I see the students would be different from the ways they see themselves."

It is difficult for me to believe that these discrepancies really exist. Perhaps Mrs. Lopez didn't understand the survey. This is also the first time I have asked the students to do a survey. Maybe they just didn't get what they were supposed to do. I decide to ask one of our support providers at school, Karina, for help. Karina has been assisting me with my inquiry and has a good sense of the ways I am trying to better understand my ELD class. And Karina, like Mrs. Lopez, comes from a cultural and linguistic background similar to the students'. I ask her to talk with the students about their surveys and ask them what they believe I might be thinking of their participation. I think she will be able to get the students to understand what I am experiencing with them in the classroom: that they are not participating and talking enough in class to learn English.

Karina begins to interview the students labeled low. She asks about their survey responses and their ideas about my opinions of their oral participation. One by one the students make it clear that they have indeed understood the survey and that in fact they do think they are talking and participating throughout the day. They see themselves talking with one another on the rug, talking with one another at their tables, and talking when they answer my questions.

And then Karina talks with Lilia. "Sarah, you should listen to my conversation with Lilia."

"Oh yeah? Did she change her responses on her survey?"

"No," Karina answers quietly, looking down at the floor. "Just listen to it." Lilia, as my earlier narrative suggests, is struggling with both her English and Spanish literacy. If she hardly speaks during Spanish instruction, she speaks even less during English class. I feel as if I am always trying to get Lilia to talk more, to share her ideas, and to take risks during class. On good days, you might hear me tell her, "Lilia you have a beautiful voice and wonderful ideas. I just want to hear them." More likely, though, you would hear me demanding that Lilia say something or participate in some way that she wasn't. She is a student whom I worry about and who frustrates me. I often think about her and what she needs to do to be a better student. I hardly ever think about how she is being a good student or what I need to do to be a better teacher.

"I talk in class," I hear Lilia say. "But I know that Ms. Sarah thinks that I don't talk enough. I know that she thinks that I need to do better. But I do talk in class. I do my best." Her voice, loud, strong, and confident, rings in my ears. I play the tape over and over again, hoping that I'm not hearing what I know that I am. Lilia sees herself as a student who does participate and does try hard. She is also seeing things about herself as a student that I am not seeing. Lilia is aware of my frustration with her and my opinion of her as a student, and she doesn't agree with me. Lilia knows things about me that I don't even know about myself. What does this mean for my teaching? What does this mean for my students? What does this mean about me?

> *"I play the tape over and over again, hoping that I'm not hearing what I know that I am."*

Methods: What Is Most Useful for Me

Inquiry has worked for me because it has become part of my classroom practice. I don't think of it as an extra thing that I do, but as part of my teaching, an extension of my practice. I attend to my plan book, to student work, to the school's routine student achievement data, to my report card comments, to my own observations (jotted down on Post-it notes and saved to inspire my written narratives), to student work, and to video that I use as both a teaching and inquiry tool.

The surveys and interviews I collect come after my initial analysis. Writing narratives, sharing my data with others, and reflecting on my research purposes have become critical strategies in analyzing all the data I collect. These "extras" help me push, clarify, and deepen my thinking, often helping me to arrive at unanticipated insights about my students, myself, and my teaching.

I usually write narratives about something that is bothering me in my classroom; so inevitably many of my emotions, perceptions, and even judgments come through in my writing. When I first started analyzing my data in this way, I was preoccupied with conveying what I believed really happened in my classroom. I found myself explaining to my audience (and myself) why, for instance, I thought my ELD students were not doing well. Although I was attempting to present an objective account of my teaching, my accounts were filled with opinion. Then I was lucky enough to work with Peter Zachariou, a writing teacher who taught me the difference between *telling* people about my classroom through writing and *showing* people my

classroom through my writing[1] (see appendix B for a handout similar to one used in the workshop I attended). I learned that before I or anyone else could understand *why* things were happening in my classroom, they first had to see *what* was happening. My shift from telling to showing helped me to see that my narratives were not objective, but I also realized that these narratives would never be objective, that my "showing" always involved some selection of what I showed and of the language in which I reported my observation. And this selection had a lot to do with my feelings. I began to understand that the more I let go of try-

ing to be objective in my narratives, the more revealing my writing actually became. My writing became more honest, more real, and inevitably more useful as a tool for looking at my practice. The narratives about Lilia and me that I include here depend on a lot of show-ing. ("She is still crying. I am walking around the room.") But there are also feelings ("I couldn't get my head around the idea that someone—anyone—could see anything different from what I saw in my class-room") and interpretation ("Lilia knows things about me that I don't even know about myself"). By combining *showing* and *telling* in this way, I have been able to reflect on my own teaching and learning, and my own beliefs and assumptions, and to better understand the con-text in which I work.

> **What inquiry methods are most useful to me:**
>
> 1. Writing narratives about my practice, my students, and my experiences.
>
> 2. Sharing my data with others—colleagues in my school, colleagues beyond my school, my students.
>
> 3. Asking whom these data and analyses serve. Are they helping me address student achievement and equity in my classroom and school?

Because I have come to realize that my analysis is shaped by my own perceptions, beliefs, and experiences, I never look at my data alone. Since my experience with Lilia and my instructional assistant, I always include as part of my analysis the sharing of data, whether it is with my colleagues at school, my teacher research groups, or my stu-dents. My experiences with inquiry have shown me that I tend to organize data based on my viewpoint as a white, well-educated, middle-class woman. When the data are organ-ized this way, which tends to be the way we traditionally organize data in schools, the results often reinforce what I already think I know about my students. In my early research, using preset categories of high, medium, and low obscured what was happening with my students and my teaching. It was only through working with Karina, and then paying atten-tion to what Lilia had to say, that I began to see where I needed to change my assumptions and my practice. Unfortunately, using traditional approaches to data analysis often places sole responsibility for achievement on the students and fails to illuminate what parts the school, the program, or I play in the students' achievement. Accepting this way of thinking, I find myself saying, for instance, "If this group of girls would only participate more in class, their English would improve," rather than, "If this ELD class better met the needs of this group of girls, their English would improve." I can't make changes in my practice, in my program, or at my school until I question this paradigm. I have found that what other peo-ple see in my data is invariably more challenging and compelling than what I see, as the observation of others surfaces the assumptions I may be holding about my students, their learning, and my teaching. These observations also impel me to think differently about my students and myself and, eventually, to take action to change my practice.

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1 "Showing, not telling" as a writing technique was developed by Rebekah Caplan, a teacher-consultant with Bay Area Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project. See her book *Writers in Training* (1984), for more information.

Finally, I always ask myself whom the data and analysis serve. In the end, I want my inquiry to be about student achievement and about creating classroom and school environments where all students, regardless of race, class, gender, and language background can experience success. If my data and my data analysis aren't helping me to create these conditions, I have to go back and rethink my question, reorganize my data, and reconceptualize my analysis. My data must help me to address issues of equity in my classroom and my school. If they do not, my research has not served its purpose.

Finding Myself in My Inquiry

I have been lucky to receive lots of support for my classroom inquiry. Teacher inquiry is a regular part of my school's professional development, and I have participated in a number of teacher inquiry groups outside of my school. These venues have supported me in pursuing my questions about my teaching, and challenged me to dig deeper into my practice and myself.

"I often assumed that if I merely told the students to talk more, they too would learn the rules of school. The truth was that Lilia did have a set of rules for school— they were just different from mine."

I have located myself in my inquiry. Inquiry helps me to solve problems that I identify in my classroom, and by pushing me to recognize my assumptions, allows me to consider the role I play in those problems. I was fixated on the idea that my students, particularly girls, did not talk enough during English class. I was convinced that if I could get them to talk in English, they would learn English. It was not until I looked at the achievement data in conjunction with my narratives and survey results that I was able to recognize that I was operating under assumptions about language use and class participation. I had been assuming that in order to learn English, students had to speak only English during the ELD class. I had also assumed that if they were not speaking in English, they were not talking about the content that we were covering. The truth is I never listened to their conversations in English class. I was so focused on particular types of participation (primarily on the rug and during teacher-directed speaking exercises) that I actually did not know what they were and were not saying. Lilia believed that she was participating and talking. What might I have found out if I had actually listened to her? I was so familiar with the "rules" of school because I was good at them and they reflected my cultural experience. I often assumed that if I merely told the students to talk more, they too would learn the rules. The truth was that Lilia did have a set of rules for school—they were just different from mine. This realization ultimately led me to change my classroom rules about the use of Spanish during the ELD hour. Previously, I had not allowed children to speak Spanish during English class. As a result, the children didn't do a lot of talking. The following year, I decided not to make any rules about my students' talking. I spoke only English during English class, but I let students speak whichever language they chose. As a result, I saw a change during ELD. Students did use Spanish but they used it to talk about the content we were covering in English. And they slowly became more comfortable using their English voice. I have become convinced that it is easier for students to take risks with their English voice if their Spanish voice is close by.

However, at the same time that all the support I received enabled me to look deeply at my practice, it also allowed me to hide certain parts of my inquiry. For instance, I was very public at school about the assessment data I was collecting on my high, medium, and low students, but I was very private about the results of my survey. At the same time, the survey

results were a tool I shared in an inquiry group with my colleagues, but I did not share them in conjunction with my narratives and the assessment data. The difficult work for me is looking at all of my data together. A single type of data sometimes tells me things I already know, sometimes confirms things I suspect, and sometimes shows me something new. Usually, an isolated type of data gives me permission to extricate myself from the student achievement problems. It enables me to point out the equity issues in the school, but it does not encourage me to locate myself in those equity issues. I recognize a problem, but not my role in it. It was not until I began to look at multiple forms of data together that I was able to recognize the issues of inequity that were playing out daily in my practice and may in fact have been affecting students' English language learning.

This is a small piece of a much larger story. Even in writing this short piece it is difficult for me not to jump ahead and tell people where I am right now, where Lilia is, and how different my teaching looks and feels. My inquiry and my inquiry results, which I shared as part of our facultywide presentations, led me to propose and pilot a heterogeneous ELD class the following year. This pilot allowed me to keep my homeroom students all day for both homeroom and ELD. During the year I continued to investigate my ELD practice and the effects that keeping my students in a heterogeneous class for ELD had on my practice and on their learning. Sharing the results of that experiment and working with others who were inquiring about ELD led us to detrack the rest of our ELD program the next year. As I write this now, my school is preparing to reflect on this first year of untracked ELD classes.

I have learned a great deal from doing inquiry into my practice, my classroom, and myself, and I truly believe it can transform the way schools function for our students. Yet I still gravitate toward sharing the results and the successes, while I shy away from sharing my more personal struggles. It is more comfortable to share the successes, to have others say, "You are doing such a great job!" We don't very often hear such praise as teachers. But, despite how uncomfortable it may make me feel, I know that the most important part of inquiry is the messy part, the "mucking around," the part where I feel uneasy about what I'm learning and unsure of how I'm going to make sense of it. The most important part is when nothing makes sense and I do not have any answers, just lots of questions.

Reference

Caplan, R. 1984. *Writers in Training*. Palo Alto: Dale Seymour Publications.

Sarah Capitelli teaches at Melrose Elementary School in Oakland, California, where the entire staff participates in collaborative inquiry. She has taught for six years and has been involved with teacher inquiry for the past five years. A Carnegie Scholar, she has also participated in the Bay Region IV teacher research project and BayCES' Teacher Inquiry Project. Her research questions have emerged out of her concern for the lowest-achieving students at her school and have centered around her English language development (ELD) classroom and her own assumptions about language use. Capitelli is currently in a doctoral program in educational linguistics.

Appendix A: Student Participation Survey

Name: _____

When I'm in class and we're working in Spanish, I talk…

      a lot   sometimes   not very often

When I'm in English class, I talk…

      a lot   sometimes   not very often

When I'm speaking in Spanish I feel like I know

      a lot of things   some things   not very many things

When I'm speaking in English I feel like I know…

      a lot of things   some things   not very many things

When I'm playing with my friends outside we speak in Spanish…

      a lot   sometimes   not very often   never

When I'm playing with my friends outside we speak in English…

      a lot   sometimes   not very often   never

When we're sitting on the rug and working in Spanish, I raise my hand…

      a lot   sometimes   not very often   never

When we're sitting on the rug and working in English, I raise my hand…

      a lot   sometimes   not very often   never

(Sarah Capitelli, Melrose Elementary School. First/Second Grade Bilingual Teacher.)

Appendix B: How to Show

Exploring Your Creative Writing Potential
Instructor: Peter Zachariou, UC Berkeley Extension

How to Show
(revised June 2005)

"Showing" reveals mood, emotions, and/or character by writing what happened, what was said, what the place looked like, what the characters looked like, what they were thinking at the time it happened, what the characters felt *physically* inside. "Showing" is richer than "Telling" because good writing, like real life, implies so much more than a relatively simple telling statement. "Showing" how a character behaves is more engaging than saying, "She was angry."

"Telling" means explaining, commenting on the action—what the action or the dialogue or the place meant, *why* the characters looked the way they did, what they were feeling emotionally, explaining their background, what the story meant. Avoid "Telling."

The Six Basic Ways to Show

Technique	What is Shown	Example
Action (anything that the characters do, i.e., how they behave outwardly)		
Little Actions	Mood, emotion, and/or character	As he spoke, she did not look at him, but watched instead the blue stream of smoke from her cigarette rising in a straight line toward the ceiling. She started tapping her foot.
Big Actions (Dramatic!)	Mood, emotion, and/or character	With a broad sweep of her arm, she pushed all the dinner dishes into the sink, shattering his finest crystal.

Dialogue (anything said out loud, including monologue; with quotation marks)		
Indirect (implicit)	Mood, emotion, and/or character	"I think we need to talk about our relationship."
Direct (explicit)	Mood, emotion, and/or character	"Why don't you just get out of my life!"

Physical Description of Setting (a particular location at a certain time, season, year)		
Reinforcing Details	Context, mood, emotion, character	Outside her bay window, clouds swept over Twin Peaks, darker than the usual fog, blotting out the sun.
Contrasting Details	Context, mood, emotion, character	She could hear children laughing and shouting from the playground nearby.

Physical Description of Characters (what the characters look like)		
Basic Data	Character	His stocky body suggested an athlete, but his once taut muscles had slackened.
Physical Trait	Character, mood, and/or emotion	She flashed her Montana blue eyes at him, as if to say, *Could these eyes lie?*
Mannerism	Character, mood, and/or emotion	With both hands, she lifted loose strands of her hair away from her face and tucked them behind her ears.
Status Details	Character	When she first had seen him, he was stepping out of his old Volvo, his long legs in faded Levi's, his strong back and arms in a plaid flannel shirt, its colors washed out into a blur.

Internal Thinking (what the character is thinking; usually without quotation marks)		
Direct	Character, mood, and/or emotion	What's he up to? [always in present tense]
Indirect	Character, mood, and/or emotion	She wondered why he was bringing it up again.

Internal Physical Sensations (physical sensations that suggest emotional feelings or character reactions)		
Direct	Mood, emotion, and/or character	The muscles in her neck stiffened.
Simile or Metaphor	Mood, emotion, and/or character	Her throat felt dry as [or like] paper. Her chest tightened into an iron shield. [Try to avoid clichés like *heart in my throat*.]

Building on Success:
Changing Our Practice to Better Serve African American Students

In this essay, Pirette McKamey, a high school English teacher in San Francisco, describes several iterations of inquiry work at her school, all focused on improving instruction for African American students and combating low expectations that many teachers may have. Emphasizing the importance of looking at middle-achieving rather than failing African American students to discover more successful teaching practices, McKamey reports in detail on the work of a small collaborative inquiry group composed of teachers who had experienced success with African American students and a willingness to enter into discussions that make race explicit. She also describes the challenges she faced when attempting to bring this work to a schoolwide professional development context. Throughout, McKamey stresses the importance of keeping the focus on "What can I do differently in my teaching to increase the success of African American students?"

By Pirette McKamey

In my sixteen years of teaching, I have spent much time and energy working with and thinking about African American students. In particular, I think about their writing and how I as a teacher can make writing more of a vehicle for their success. This essay describes and reflects on several ways that I and other teachers at Thurgood Marshall Academic High School in San Francisco addressed these issues in our own practice and collaboratively with colleagues. I describe three different contexts in which I have worked to focus teacher professional development on the achievement of African American students: the school's English department; whole-school professional development; and a small, equity-focused inquiry group. In each case, I describe the challenges and successes; I focus on how building on successes (both our own successes as teachers, and the successes of our students) can support changes in teaching practice that result in higher achievement for African American students.

Background

Thurgood Marshall High School is located in the Bayview-Hunters Point district of San Francisco, where in 2000, 47.73 percent of the 33,355 residents were African American. During the 2002–2003 school year, 25.7 percent of the 1,005 students at Thurgood Marshall

Academic High School were African American.[1] The school was opened in 1993 with this mandate:

> Thurgood Marshall Academic High School's mission is to provide a high-quality, college preparatory and academically rigorous program for inner-city youth. One of our primary charges is to increase the academic achievement of historically underrepresented minorities in the fields of science and mathematics. Committed to equity, we will do everything we can to make top-quality education accessible to all students regardless of their prior school experiences.

Shortly after the school had opened and the first students had arrived, it became apparent that hard work, good intentions, careful planning, and a thoughtfully crafted problem-solving approach to meeting the needs of all students were not enough to ensure the success of African American students in particular. Classroom data collected from teachers and schoolwide data collected by administrators revealed what many teachers had already observed: although a visible number of African American students were doing well—getting good grades, graduating, and matriculating into four-year colleges and universities—too many were not doing well enough, not doing well at all, or leaving school because they believed they could not meet the graduation requirement of 280 units (a high standard in a district where most high schools graduated students with 230 units).

During the school's first ten years, the staff responded to the persistent achievement gap between African American and other students in various ways: whole-staff meetings were devoted to the issue; committees were formed; grade-level teams of teachers held meetings to discuss the needs of African American students; departments gathered student data and reviewed teaching strategies; at informal lunchtime meetings, staff discussed the 280-unit requirement, and some suggested modifying the requirement, providing additional student support, or allowing students to leave school if they could not meet the requirement. In short, many teachers and administrators worked long hours on the problem of under-achieving and failing African American students, yet many of these students continued to under-achieve and fail. This dilemma raised a critical question for me: If hard work, good intentions, subject-matter preparedness, dynamism, and administrative support are not adequate tools for increasing teachers' effectiveness in educating African American students, what are?

The English Department Begins to Share Practice and Results—and Issues of Equity Surface

Traditionally, the weekly, one-hour English department meetings at Thurgood Marshall were spent discussing business with a few minutes set aside at the end, right before the start-of-the-school-day bell rang, to discuss teaching concerns. For a few years, we kept a running list of these concerns, which we hoped to address later. Eventually we realized that "later" would never come, so we changed the focus of our meetings from information dissemina-

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1   In addition, 39.6 percent were Chinese, 14.3 percent were Latino, 7.2 percent were Filipino, and 10.5 percent were "other non-white."

tion (which could easily be done through email) to an inquiry-oriented form of curriculum sharing. Once a month at our meetings, one of our thirteen English teachers would share a lesson that had worked well or with which he or she was struggling. After the presenting teacher gave a very short introduction, we would look at student work generated from the lesson. Our goal was to understand the connection between teacher practice and student achievement. For example, after looking closely at a writing prompt and student samples one eleventh grade teacher had brought in, our discussion centered around how to make the expectations for that essay more explicit and how to integrate more scaffolding for concluding paragraphs into the lesson.

After a few sessions, it became clear that while most teachers were following the state and district standards, the efficacy of their instruction varied noticeably. Some teachers had identified components of good academic writing and had been developing lessons that explicitly taught those elements, while others were less skilled and/or experienced in providing students with the tools necessary to write an effective essay.

In order to make our instruction of writing more uniform, and—we hoped—more effective, we spent months of department-meeting time articulating the components of academic writing. Our lists included *introduction, thesis statement, topic sentence, supporting detail, textual evidence, generalization, transition sentence, and concluding paragraph.* Sublists further explained these points; for example, *Introduction—an opening statement which connects the content of the essay to a "truth," or philosophy, or real-life concern; some explanation of why the topic or point of view is important or relevant or timeless; a thesis statement or question.* We created charts delineating which skills would be introduced, practiced, and more deeply explored at each grade level. The process of putting all this information down on paper kept us thinking critically about our teaching of writing. This was important work; however, it was not all we needed to do. In order to begin to understand the reasons for the achievement gap between African American students and other students, we needed to look more closely at our students' grades and at our grading policies.

During the second semester of 2002, we began the process of disaggregating information about the grades we had given our students. With our grade books in hand, we each highlighted all students who had received a D or F in our English classes for the first quarter. We saw what we had seen when we had done this exercise a few times before in whole-school meetings: our African American students had received a disproportionate number of the lowest grades. When we reflected on what accounted for poor grades in our classes, we saw a correlation between assignments not being turned in (homework, or class work that extends to homework, such as essays), absences and tardies, and low grades. Because teacher conversations about grades can be very "pat" ("The student did not hand in any work."), or quite threatening ("He completed all his essays in *my* class."), we decided to limit our focus to identifying "the teacher part" in student grades. We wanted to start a process that would challenge us all to pay attention to the interactions we had with our African American students. What could we notice about what we were doing or not doing?

As a starting point and foundation for the work ahead, we were able to agree that as teachers we do make a difference in the achievement of our African American students. Most of

us agreed that, given hard and focused work, we *could* articulate and put into practice teaching philosophies and strategies that *would* increase the achievement of African American students in our English classes. Based on previous conversations we had had about race, we knew that some of us might find ourselves in deep disagreement with each other, but we considered the work important enough to pursue.

Creating Professional Development Focused on African American Students

We wanted to design a workshop for ourselves in which we would 1) try to understand the ways in which our teaching practices were obstacles to the learning of African American students and 2) determine how to change our practice in order to increase the achievement of African American students in our English classes.[2] Three of us volunteered to collaborate on this project: Alison, a European American English teacher with two years of teaching experience; Cheryl, a European American English teacher and English department head with three years of teaching experience; and myself, an African American English teacher with thirteen years of teaching experience. We knew we would have to plan carefully, and realized that we might need to consult others who had more experience in working effectively with teachers on these issues. We began designing two three-hour workshops that could have an immediate impact on the efficacy of our teaching practices for African American students.

"Thus, we hoped to shift the teacher paradigm from 'If I can change the students, they can improve,' to 'The students can improve, and therefore I must change.'"

This was not easy work. From our initial planning meeting, it was clear that in order to work together we first had to come to some common understandings about African American students at our school. It took us three two-hour planning meetings to agree on these four premises:

1. *Middle-achieving African American students, as opposed to the lowest-achieving African American students, should be at the center of our paradigm for observing and drawing conclusions about our classroom practice.*

2. *By identifying what high-achieving African American students do in our classrooms, we can learn something about the ways in which we need to change our practice to increase the achievement of all African American students.*

3. *Our practice should be informed by current African American student–centered pedagogical theory.*

4. *A 'safe' environment is necessary for effective teachers of African American students to say what they feel needs to be said.*

The rest of this section considers each of these premises in turn; the next section explains how we implemented these premises in our professional-development workshops.

Middle-achieving African American students, as opposed to the lowest-achieving African American students, should be at the center of our paradigm for observing and drawing con-

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2   We thought that it was important to get administrative support for our equity work, so we asked for and received stipends for all the teachers who would attend a workshop to move forward on these ideas.

clusions about our classroom practice. When considering primarily the lowest-achieving students, it is easy to fall into the trap of talking about their lack of skills, motivation, and at-home support instead of the ways in which our teaching practice must change. In contrast, when considering middle-achieving students—students who are receiving C's in class but who could, with some effort on the part of the student and teacher, earn B's or A's—it is much easier to identify their academic strengths and thus develop more effective teaching strategies to build upon those strengths. Considering middle-achieving students would give us the opportunity to change our practice and see improvement in a shorter period of time. This, we reasoned, would go a long way toward dispelling teachers' long-held and unrecognized stereotypes about African American students, as students demonstrated what they could do with teaching practices that met their needs. Thus, we hoped to shift the teacher paradigm from "If I can change the students, they can improve," to "The students can improve and therefore I must change."

By identifying what high-achieving African American students do in our classrooms, we can learn something about the ways in which we need to change our practice to increase the achievement of *all* African American students. By identifying some of the strengths of high-achieving African American students, teachers will discover strengths that also exist in lower-achieving African American students. They can then build upon these strengths, which may include engagement (as measured by classroom participation), discipline (getting the work done), a point of view and voice in their writing, an analytical/critical perspective, a willingness to work cooperatively with other students, leadership roles in academic discussion, and a strong focus on content.

Our practice should be informed by current African American student–centered pedagogical theory. Such theory can be found in articles such as Claude Steele's "Race and the Schooling of Black Americans," and "Thin Ice: 'Stereotype Threat' and Black College Students," as well as Arnetha Ball's "Expository Writing Patterns of African American Students," and "Cultural Preference and the Expository Writing of African American Adolescents." Accessible works like these can provide relevant information to support a change in teaching practices.

At the center of these authors' work is the belief that African American students come to school with academic strengths, both in terms of skills and content. When teachers know more about African American students' knowledge base and preferred learning styles, and understand the students' sociological positioning within schools, they have the potential to develop teaching practices that support African American students.

A "safe" environment is necessary for effective teachers of African American students to say what they feel needs to be said. In order to do this, teachers who already had a certain amount of success with African American students would be empowered to define the agenda for our discussions. For those teachers who still believed that their African American students' lack of success resulted from pathology on the part of the students and their families,

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Premises we agreed on at the outset:

1) Middle-achieving African American students, as opposed to the lowest-achieving African American students, should be at the center of our paradigm for observing and drawing conclusions about our classroom practice.

2) By identifying what high-achieving African American students do in our classrooms, we can learn something about the ways in which we need to change our practice to increase the achievement of all African American students.

3) Our practice should be informed by current African American student–centered pedagogical theory.

4) A "safe" environment is necessary for effective teachers of African American students to say what they feel needs to be said.

the discussions and workshops would focus on ways in which their curriculum and instruction could (and must) be modified.

Implementing Inquiry-Based, Equity-Focused Professional Development

We began the series of two three-hour workshops[3] by introducing, and getting agreement for, the working premise that we could improve our efficacy and therefore the achievement of African American students by looking critically at and modifying our teaching practice and that we could learn from each other and the current research. Our first activity was to brainstorm a list of what we expected our students to be able to do in our classes. The list we created was long and varied and included tasks such as *write cogent paragraphs; respond to quotes from the text; use effective vocabulary; articulate the author's purpose; write a multiparagraph, multidraft essay; complete homework; participate in class discussion.* We then brainstormed what students in our classes needed to know in order to successfully complete those tasks. Again, the list was long and varied and included skills such as *read grade-level appropriate texts, write complex sentences, draw conclusions from text.* Finally, we brainstormed a list of the ways we taught and supported students as they learned what they needed to know in order to successfully complete assignments. This list included *direct instruction; practice in class; individual writing conferences in class, through email, or over the phone; creating structures for helping students organize information and ideas; vocabulary-development with an oral language component; and phone calls home with "good" reports.* Although we as a department had done this sort of information-gathering numerous times, we thought it necessary to start the meeting this way in order to ground our discussions in our own curriculum and instruction, in what we were actually doing or not doing.

From group list-making we moved to individual writing. Teachers were prompted to think of one or two successful African American students in their class (i.e., students who had consistently received a grade of A or B, or students whose achievement had steadily increased), and then to write a profile of the student: *How was the student's engagement in the content of the class made evident? What were the student's work habits as gauged by completed assignments? What else do you notice about the student in your class?* After sharing what they had written with a partner, teachers were asked to write what they did to support that student's success: *What kinds of instruction for, and feedback on, written work were given? What sorts of comments did you verbally make to the student? What kinds of connections have you made with the student's parents?* From the writing and the conversation, we hoped that teachers would begin to see a connection between what they were doing in their classroom and the achievement of individual students; we wanted teachers to begin to identify what they were doing that worked. We asked teachers to report back to the group some of their own strategies and teaching methods that they considered effective.

Thus, we began a draft list of effective strategies and methods of teaching that included *clear written directions, clear expectations, models of "good" writing, instruction in the components of academic writing, personal attention to the student, acknowledgement—private and pub-*

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3   The first workshop was attended by twelve of the thirteen department members.

lic—of the student's strengths in writing and thinking. During these processes, most teachers stayed focused on their own practice; notably, only one teacher needed a reminder not to answer a question about teaching practice with information about what a particular student or groups of students were not doing. Also, most of the teachers willingly made a connection between their practice and the achievement of the highlighted African American student in their class; only a couple of teachers believed that these students came to them already high-achieving and would leave high-achieving regardless of their teaching practices.

In addition to talking about strategies we felt were effective, we heard from the students themselves—in roundtable discussions at the English-department workshop—about what they considered sound teaching and what sorts of strategies had not worked with them. A lot of what they told us we already knew: they wanted clear instruction; interesting, engaging writing assignments; support in successfully completing writing assignments. But some of it we needed to hear again: they wanted to be respected for the work they did do, and they wanted the grading to be fair; that is, they wanted to be given credit for what they did do successfully.

After hearing from the students, we generated a list of the causes for failing or low grades in our classes: *failure to hand in homework, failure to complete class work, incomplete assignments, turned-in assignments that did not meet expectations, poor scores on tests and quizzes,* and *absences.* We then wrote in response to a prompt asking us to consider a middle- to low-achieving African American student in our class who we believed could achieve more. The prompt included multiple questions:

- What kinds of assignments was the student turning in?
- What kinds of assignments was the student not turning in?
- If the student's work often did not meet expectations, in what ways did the work not meet expectations?
- What kinds of assignments that the student turned in did meet expectations?
- If the student was scoring poorly on tests and/or quizzes, on what kinds of tests and/or quizzes was the student scoring poorly?
- On what kinds of test and/or quizzes did the student meet expectations?
- What are some of the responses the student has had to his/her grades and/or comments on his/her papers?

After we wrote, we shared our writing with a partner who listened and asked critical questions: Was there a pattern to the kinds of assignments the student was successfully or unsuccessfully completing? What information was the student imparting with his/her response to his/her grades?[4] From our writing and discussion, we attempted to generalize about the

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4   When a student expresses disagreement or raises a question about a grade, this often means that the student and the teacher are seeing what the student knows in different ways. These disagreements offer an opportunity for the teacher to look more closely at—and to get better at seeing—what students know.

kinds of assignments that many of our low- and middle-achieving African American students were not successfully completing in our classes and, much more difficult, what criteria we were using to grade.

In addition to talking about grades, we talked about homework: what kinds of homework most students did turn in and what kinds of homework too many students did not turn in, how much weight homework carried in our classes, and, as a corollary, how much weight class work carried. We talked about expectations for essays, about the writing process (including rewriting), and about envisioning writing instruction as a yearlong process giving students the opportunity—with instruction, practice, and feedback—to learn how to write an effective essay over the course of the academic year. We came to no decisions about our homework or grading policies, but we did leave each other with a lot to consider. We acknowledged that changing teaching philosophies and practices takes time, and we planned to continue to address these issues in department meetings.

After our discussion, each department member chose an article to read, either Claude Steele's "Race and the Schooling of Black Americans" or an article about the structure of academic writing. We read our selected articles during the workshop and then discussed them with other members who had read the same one. For our final task, we each wrote about ways in which our own curriculum needed to be modified, what we had needed to learn more about, and the immediate changes we could make in our teaching practice to increase the achievement of African American students. When teachers reported back at the end of the second workshop, many expressed a sense of urgency and excitement; we wanted to get back to our classrooms and implement some of the changes we had been thinking about, and we had ideas about how to proceed.

Taking the Work Schoolwide Brings New Challenges

Based on the positive reports we received back from the twelve English teachers at the English department workshops, the teacher/administrator leadership team at Thurgood Marshall decided to design a two-day whole-staff retreat using our English department workshop as a model.

The results of this retreat, as evidenced by teacher feedback throughout the process, were much more mixed. Some teachers, for example, expressed skepticism about the value of the information in articles such as Claude Steele's "Race and the Schooling of Black Americans." In addition, the process of challenging teachers' assumptions was hindered by the planning team's lack of strategizing about what sort of discussion among the teachers would be considered "derailing" and therefore should be discouraged.

During the retreat leadership team's debrief, the three African American teachers who had helped to facilitate the retreat expressed concerns and frustrations differently from the non-African American facilitators. We characterized our experiences in our groups as very hard, frustrating, discouraging, and, at times, "unbelievable." In the group I had worked with during the retreat, one of the European American teachers—a young man with two years' teaching experience—said that he did not believe that things were "that bad" for African American

students any more. When I challenged his assumptions, one of the other European American teachers, also a young man with two years of teaching experience, pointed out that our guidelines stated that everyone would have the opportunity to say what they needed to say. The question remained, however, Whom were those guidelines written to protect?

A few of the non–African American facilitators mentioned that there had been some resistance within their groups to the idea of a retreat dedicated to increasing the achievement of African American students. However, they said that they had not addressed the resistance, but had ignored it. Some said that they did not notice the resistance. One African American facilitator, not a member of the English department, expressed how personally difficult it had been for her to lead a group of non–African American educators. She further explained how much she had learned from the retreat: from reading Claude Steele's article she had understood her own college experience differently. After listening to the facilitators' debrief, a European American veteran teacher with more than twenty years of teaching experience said that she had learned a lot, and that she would not have guessed that the experience of the African American and non–African American facilitators would be so different. She mused that there was something to learn from that, although she did not yet know what it was.

Getting Back to Practice: Creating an Action-Research Group for Equity

During the 2000–2001 school year, I started participating in a teacher research collaborative (TRC) sponsored by the Bay Area Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project. One of the TRC's goals for the second year was to identify and support other educators who might be interested in doing their own classroom inquiry. I was eager to build on the preliminary successes of the English department's equity work. Because of what I had learned from codesigning and cofacilitating whole-school workshops to help increase the achievement of African American students at Thurgood Marshall, I wanted to invite teachers into my research team who possessed certain qualities:

- They had demonstrated some success with African American students, as measured by student opinion.
- They had demonstrated a passion for learning more about effective strategies for teaching African American students, as measured by their involvement with professional development and leadership activities directed at the increased achievement of African American students.
- They had demonstrated a willingness to enter into discussions about pedagogy that made race explicit, as measured by their input and response to staff, department, leadership team, and personal discussions where connections between race and the schooling of African Americans were made explicit.

In addition to these basic criteria, I wanted members who in previous professional interchanges had demonstrated an ability to challenge and change each other. I believed the group should include more than one African American teacher in order to change the traditional dynamic of one African American teacher educating non–African American teach-

ers—a dynamic of which I had been a part during the Thurgood Marshall workshop. And I wanted to keep the group small so that we could do in-depth work.

I invited two teachers from my school who I believed met the criteria: Cheryl, a third-year English teacher and department head; and Daneen, an African American math teacher with two years of teaching experience. Both teachers accepted the invitation and were excited about the work.

The Overall Structure of Our Work

All three of us had previous experience with education groups that had failed because of lack of seriousness as evidenced by absent members, inadequate meeting time, and interruptions if meetings were held at the school site. We decided to meet every other week after school, off campus, for two to three hours. We all pledged to attend the meetings no matter what else was going on in our professional or personal lives.

We agreed to focus our work on improving our practice as teachers of African American students. We would collect anecdotal or quantitative data about our African American students, and focus on their achievement as measured by their skills, concept-mastery, and grades in our classes. After we had gathered what we considered to be adequate information, we would experiment with changes in our practice, and report back to each other. Action was to be at the center of our inquiry; we did not want to wait to act, as too many of our African American students continued to under-achieve and fail. We believed that seeing the improved achievement of African American students in our classes would be the impetus for our continued hard work in the group.

Structuring Inquiry Meetings

We decided to give a fair amount of formal structure to our meetings, because we wanted to have a predictable, rigorous approach to our work. We also did not want to get derailed by conversations that did not center on African American students or on our own practice. We agreed that at every meeting, in order to enhance our sense of personal responsibility to and excitement about the discussion, each of us would address a teaching issue from our own classroom, using a step-by-step protocol. (The appendix provides the full protocol that we used to structure our inquiry conversations.) The teacher would describe how a student or group of students was not achieving well, what she had been doing in her practice, and what she thought was going on—i.e., where she thought her practice might be falling short. The others would take notes and report back, and the presenting teacher would add to or amend her account. Then the other members would discuss what they thought the core issue might be and possible implications, while the presenting teacher listened, took notes, and engaged in the conversation. At the end of each meeting, we suggested next steps to each other, and each committed to making a simple change in our practice, on which we would report back at the following meeting. We took turns taking notes; typed up for the next meeting, these notes provided material for us to make further decisions about how to focus our research.

For example, after explaining how some African American students did just the minimum on a project that the teacher considered to be "easy enough" and "fun," the teacher described what had happened when she asked her students why they had not done better. To her surprise, the students had detailed answers: even though the teacher had prepared well, had provided clear oral and written instructions, and made explicit her expectations, some of the students felt that they had not been given enough guidance or in-class time. In response, for her next project the teacher more thoroughly explained the model, gave students time to digest the information, offered students more individual attention, and allowed for more in-class work time. Many of the African American students who had under-achieved on the last project did much better on this subsequent one, as measured by their perceived effort and higher grades.

After three or four months of using this protocol at our meetings, we paused to review what we had done. We each wanted to develop a clear focus for an action-research project. Referring to the binder of all the meeting notes, we spent several meetings talking through some of issues we had encountered, in order to help each other choose a specific target area. For example, one member had presented several times about aligning her teaching of writing (scaffolding) with her expectations for student writing (rubrics). For her final inquiry she decided to consider what she truly valued as "good writing"—the kind of writing which was, in fact, often done by some of her underachieving and failing African American students—and why she did not give it the credit (grade) she thought it really deserved. Her inquiry focused on redefining "good" academic writing, and creating rubrics that evaluated those qualities. Thus, her inquiry allowed her to recognize and build on the *strengths* of her African American students.

"Teacher communities created to increase the achievement of African American students can be sustained by successes and positive results."

Once each of us had identified a target issue, we spent a few meetings hammering out ways to frame the issue, plans for changing our teaching practice to raise the achievement of our African American students, and ways to collect data on those practices and their results. We used subsequent meetings to discuss the changes we were making in our teaching practice, and the outcomes for students. We also began writing about our inquiries, and we read and discussed anything that a group member brought. Midway through the spring, we each had first drafts[5] in which we did four things:

1. described the issue/situation and why we were compelled to look at it

2. explained the changes we made to this practice

3. shared the data and/or results

4. drew conclusions and articulated our learning about this specific teaching practice and outcome, as well as about our teaching practice in general.

In the course of the year we all made changes in our practice, and saw results with our students. Being able to critically question other's teaching practice allowed us to make deep-

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5   These drafts were published by the Bay Area Writing Project, in an anthology that was shared with other teacher-researchers.

er changes more quickly than we ever could have on our own. Focusing on the strengths and successes of our African American students strengthened our belief in their capacity. And working with a small group of colleagues who shared a commitment to supporting improvements in the achievement of African American students increased our own sense of efficacy and possibility.

Conclusion: The Power of Teacher Communities

The experience of our TRC inquiry group confirms that teacher communities created to increase the achievement of African American students can be sustained by successes and positive results. Working together and guided by questions like, What can I do now? What happened when I did it? What did I learn about my practice and my theories? What can I do next?, teachers can develop curriculum and teaching strategies that better meet the needs of African American students, as measured by increased skills and content attainment as well as grades and test scores. Because the role of the group and the collaboration is critical, it is important to identify and invite teachers who are passionate about their students' learning, open to learning themselves, and willing to make issues about race explicit in their inquiry. As we found, such communities can create a dialogue quite different from the mainstream discourse in our schools, a dialogue that encourages teachers to develop teaching practices that support all students, including African American students.

When a collaborative teacher community focuses on increasing the achievement of African American students, the dialogue can build on questions such as: Do I have enough information in terms of subject matter, teaching strategies and methodologies to develop teaching practices that will include African American students in the learning process? Am I familiar enough with current African American student-centered pedagogical theory to create curriculum that gives African American students access to education? If teachers listen and question with the intent to learn, African American students will provide enough information about what they need in order to succeed in class. I continue to change by listening to my African American students and what they say is happening for them in their learning in my classroom. Collaborative inquiry groups—where teachers encourage each other to listen to students, and talk together about the implications of what they hear—have been a powerful part of my learning process.

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Pirette McKamey now teaches English at Mission High School, a predominately Latino and African American school located in San Francisco. She has been a teacher for the past sixteen years and involved in teacher inquiry groups, sponsored by the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP), for the past four years. The focus of her work has been to work in partnership with other teachers to identify and develop teaching practices that increase the academic achievement of African American and Latino students.

Appendix: Classroom Inquiry Meeting Protocol

1. One member volunteers to go first to explain, describe, and analyze her teaching issue. The focus here is on:

    - the ways in which the teacher is not satisfied with the achievement of a particular student or groups of students (the story)

    - the evidence the teacher has that the student or students are not achieving (grades/participation)

    - what the teacher has been doing (practice)

    - what the teacher thinks might be happening in terms of her practice and student achievement (critique of practice).

2. While the member is speaking, the other two members take notes, but only one of them will report back his/her notes.

3. The recorder reports back the notes to the group and the speaker has the opportunity to clarify, add to and/or change any part of her narrative/analysis: *What I really meant was ... I want to add that ... Now I realize that ...*

4. The other members take notes while the speaker is amending.

5. The members engage in question-asking and conversation in which they seek to discover what the core issue is. *What I really think you're saying is ... Does your question here have to do with the students' preparedness for tests or the weight tests have in the course?* The speaker takes notes while engaging in the conversation.

6. One member takes the notes and types them up for the next meeting. This documentation becomes important later when the group members begin the process of deciding which of their issues they want to use for their action research.

Leading from Personal Experience: Autobiography as a Foundation for Developing African American Teacher Leadership

In her work as director of the Peachtree Urban Writing Project in Atlanta, Gwendolyn Williams discovered that autobiography can be used to empower teachers as leaders. In this essay, she examines her role in developing teacher leadership, particularly the leadership of African American teachers. She describes how she explored the use of autobiography in helping teachers identify themes in their own life histories to draw on as they take leadership for equity and student learning. She shares aspects of her own life history, explaining some ways that she, as a leader, draws on these experiences. And she points to the importance of a learning community to support teachers in their research and journey as teacher-leaders.

By Gwendolyn Williams

Introduction

In 2002, the Peachtree Urban Writing Project of Atlanta (PUWP), a site of the National Writing Project, was invited to participate in the Teacher Research Collaborative (TRC). We joined, looking forward to the opportunity to think about equity and leadership for equity. When Michelle Hayes, a PUWP teacher-consultant, and I returned from the TRC Summer Institute in Berkeley, we were motivated to add another dimension to PUWP's teacher research investigations—an explicit focus on equity. We spearheaded a local group of ten PUWP teacher-consultants, most of whom were African American, to participate in weekly teacher research meetings centered on equity.

As we met and learned about each other's histories, we determined that the PUWP teachers had long experienced discrimination and marginalization and had been required to follow mandates that affected their ability to make decisions about their own teaching. Each of the teachers in our research group had experienced suppression of their knowledge about what good teaching should look like in classrooms. This was due in part to districts attempting to address the needs of students by mandating packaged models for all students. Consequently, as the teachers sought to implement the models, they found themselves suppressing their natural inclination to draw on their own fund of teaching experience.

Through our work with the research group during the next two years, we probed multiple meanings of equity and explored what it meant to bring African American teachers together to move forward in this work toward addressing inequities. Most important for me as an African American director, this work was about building the leadership of African American teachers and gaining greater insight into my own practice as a leader. For my own inquiry, I asked myself, How do African American teachers grow as leaders within the context of equity-focused work? I explored the intersection of autobiography and directed readings, and helped to create a model for nurturing teachers as equity leaders.

The Significance of Autobiography in Developing Teacher-Leaders

In *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer (1998) boldly asserts, "We teach who we are." His words are a call to acknowledge the role and place of autobiography in the construction of the teaching life. In reflecting on my own life, on my experience as a teacher, and on the teacher research community we built at the Peachtree Urban Writing Project, I've come to recognize that it is our personal, situated, life histories that shape our dedication and commitment. In particular, our autobiographies shape our commitment and approach to creating classrooms where all children learn in empowering and affirming ways.

Not too many years ago, my dissertation work focused on four African American PUWP teachers and my mentoring of them into leadership roles in the writing project and their local schools. I looked at the role of autobiography in their developing leadership, and came to understand more fully how my own autobiography had shaped my work as a teacher and as an African American leader of fellow African American teachers. I recognized many of my experiences as common among African American teachers, and I have been able to draw on these in building teacher leadership for equity in my TRC work at PUWP. I share parts of my own autobiography and these common experiences here.

I was the first in my family to go to college. I knew that I was continuing schooling not only for myself, but also for my parents, grandparents, and other members in the community who had identified me as having the potential to succeed. When I left my hometown for Spelman College, my community made sure that I was prepared for college. They gave me sweaters, skirts, underwear, cosmetics, care packages with food, and a set of almost new, white, Lady Baltimore luggage. I was very proud of my nearly new luggage with all the matching pieces that Mrs. Pendleton had bequeathed to me. Never for one minute did I feel that I was not equal to the challenge that was before me. With the support of my family and my community, I arrived at college with all the necessary accoutrements and prepared for the excitement that lay before me.

I had been very active in my church community. Mrs. Pendleton, my Sunday school teacher and the pianist for the church, recognized that I had talent. She had a quiet, discerning demeanor and loved working with the youth. She never raised her voice; was always well-turned-out in her dress and hair style; and always epitomized success, gracefulness, and a genuine desire to develop the best in each child. She challenged me to excel. She coached me in learning "The Creation" by James Weldon Johnson and several poems by Langston Hughes to dramatize in church. I learned to play the piano, sang in the choir, and later

became the pianist for the youth choir. For me, church was the central place to discover, practice, and hone my talents under the gaze of caring elders. I felt nurtured and encouraged by my elders and also my peers and friends.

My elementary teachers were kind and supportive. Mrs. Beyers, my second grade teacher played the piano, showed me an appreciation for music, and taught me to sing. Mrs. Mosley taught me about drama and instilled in me an appreciation of dance. In fourth grade Mrs. Carroll taught me about caring for students: she allowed me more time on a test because I had just returned to school from having the mumps and wasn't feeling well. Mrs. Jackson, my fifth grade teacher, had a real love for places in the world and incited my interest in social studies. Each of these teachers made an impact on my life as they pushed me to do my very best and ignited in me a love for learning. They were also respected members of the community. At that time, teaching was one of the most respected professions in the African American community.

Aspects of my story are echoed in that of my colleague Liz Bland, which I learned about during an interview I did for my dissertation research. Liz is a PUWP teacher-consultant and became a member of our TRC research group. She, like me and others in the group, experienced community support, personal desire to be successful, and a spiritual history of being "raised in the black church." Liz's strong roots helped shape her, and they contributed to her trajectory as a leader and to her commitment as a professional. An excerpt from Liz's autobiographical narrative reflects the essential characteristics of many African American women whose stories I bear witness to:

> My grandmother was a strong force in my life. I enjoyed spending time with her. Because of the relationship that we developed, my grandmother would buy those extra items that I craved as a little girl. She also paid for my piano lessons. Other children in my community could not afford these opportunities, and consequently resented me. I made very good grades in school and was the first and only one in my family to graduate from college. In fact, I graduated salutatorian in my high school class and magna cum laude from my undergraduate college.

Too often, when educational policymakers and administrators consider the qualities of a leader or think about how to support leadership development, they look mainly at conventional areas such as course work, test results, and professional development experiences. Realizing this, I began to theorize that a missing piece for African American teachers is the memory piece—how we draw on personal history and knowledge of our heritage in our evolution as leaders. These memories help create power from within and bring to the surface a spiritual connection that can propel people forward and motivate them to strive for success. My research helped document this important role of personal history in leadership.

Later, in my work with the TRC group, I drew on my research findings about the important link between autobiography and equity. We used our weekly meetings as a time to explore the place of autobiography in the development of teacher-leaders for equity. An important first part in our work was sharing our stories to make sense of inequities we had experienced. In these discussions, teachers looked at their own identities and examined their own personal ways of dealing with the baggage that they brought with them. They asked one another probing questions and tried to "unpack their baggage." Through our work in auto-

"Too often, when educational policymakers and administrators consider the qualities of a leader or how they support leadership development, they look mainly at conventional areas such as course work, test results, and professional development experiences."

biography, we came to understand how personal experience plays an important role in the lives of many who seek to achieve success, in ourselves, and in our students. From that point, we moved toward trying to establish equitable outcomes for students. We shared a deeply pervasive desire to achieve and a connection in the way we viewed the need for equitable outcomes for our students. This common ground allowed us to view the individual needs of our students in a more dynamic way.

We came to a consensus around five questions that would focus our research:

- What is equity?

- What does an equitable outcome mean when working with students in your classroom?

- How do you determine what an equitable outcome should be?

- How do you keep equity at the core of teaching?

- What are the actual strategies to use or concentrate on to place equity at the core of the teaching?

Teachers Learning in Community

Committed to investigating what it meant to examine issues of equity in classroom teaching, we started by defining equity for ourselves. In doing so, we identified the inequities that teachers actually saw in their classrooms, in their buildings, and in their school systems. In one of those early meetings, we listened intently as Lisa Harton spoke passionately about her perception of what equity means:

I believe everyone has an innate sense of what is right. It is what we choose to do when we are presented with situations that test our character that determines the equity in our classrooms. I am always amazed at the rhetoric of my colleagues. "I just don't see color; I treat all of my students the same." But when the going gets rough, our expectations sometimes rise and fall with the roll of the tongue. "Well, you know he's from those apartments," "He's gifted," or "No one in the home speaks English." There are enough labels and preconceived notions to make your head spin.

Lisa said that she was not naïve. She knew there were factors beyond her control that influenced student achievement. However, she chose to focus on factors that she was able to control. She believed that the first and only principle to ensure equity is that the teacher must remain a student. She spoke of her understanding that teacher expertise affects students' learning, and talked about the ways she constantly pushed herself to learn as much as she could to teach effectively. Then, drawing on her autobiography, she shared with us what it was like to be a student when she was growing up. She could vividly recall memories of favorite teachers, boring teachers, even racist teachers, and she used those memories to mold her own practice in the classroom.

As others contributed their stories and perspectives, we began developing a set of framing questions for our research in order to make a bridge between our autobiographical focus and our interest in examining student outcomes. Our focus was to look carefully at how we, as a set of committed African American teachers, worked to achieve equity in our classrooms. We came to consensus around five questions that would focus our research: What is equity? What does an equitable outcome mean when working with students in your classroom? How can you determine what an equitable outcome should be? How do you keep equity at the core of teaching? What are the actual strategies to use or concentrate on to place equity at the core of the teaching?

As we were developing these questions and exploring ideas for individual classroom research questions, we were reading *Living the Questions: A Guide for Teacher-Researchers* (Hubbard and Power 1999) and beginning to think about data. For a number of sessions, as teachers reported on their classrooms and their emerging research questions, they brought in samples of student work and notes of conversations from their students so that the group could see evidence of what was happening in their classrooms. Gradually, people gained knowledge of each member of the group, her teaching situation, her strengths and struggles. The group was transforming itself into a community of learners.

Using a Common Text to Further Develop Our Learning Community

Whenever I attend conferences, I look for resources to support PUWP teacher-consultants. In April 2003, Liz Bland and I attended the National Writing Project's Urban Sites Conference in Santa Barbara and searched for resources to support our growth as teacher-researchers on a mission to promote equitable outcomes for students. The keynote speaker was Carole Edelsky. Liz and I were sitting next to each other and started elbowing each other as Edelsky's comments began to resonate with us. Edelsky said,

> We all have theories about literacy and learning. Whether near the mountains or the sea, in poor communities or rich ones (though as with everything else, it's worse in the poor ones), we are being held hostage by theories about literacy and learning and teaching in general, embedded in No Child Left Behind and woven into Open Court and other scripted programs. Theories matter. They are used to justify political agendas. They shape our visions and our actions.

Edelsky's comments directly spoke to Liz's tension with being required to implement a scripted program in her classroom rather than what she knew was best for her specific students. She was held hostage to a timed, lock-step program where she was not able to provide the extra time and emphasis she felt the children needed, based on her own wisdom and teacher way of knowing.

I was so motivated by Edelsky's speech that I purchased the book she had edited, *Making Justice Our Project* (1999), to help inform our teacher research group's thinking and keep equity on the front burner of our conversations. At the first research group meeting after the conference, I introduced the book and explained my belief that the range of topics on equity in the book would meet our needs. Instead of allowing the teachers to self-select a chapter, I divided the text among the ten teacher-consultants, assigning the chapters to be read based on all I knew about participants' needs and interests. At each succeeding meeting, we discussed one of the chapters and talked about how the reading informed our thinking about equity. It seemed every chapter related strongly to someone's issues and concerns. These conversations were always rich, allowing us to see how equity issues played out in one another's classrooms and helping clarify those that faced us.

My interest in the readings was not only about the content. Participants were working toward writing up their own research, so as we discussed each chapter, we also talked about how it was written. We looked at how the author wrote it, outlined the organization of the chapter, identified powerful quotes, and discussed the chapter's strong features. We always talked about purpose and what the author was trying to communicate.

Throughout, I also modeled connecting the interests of one teacher to the content of another's chapter. Soon, participants were doing this for each other. The connections they were making through the readings were striking. For example, Liz found information in her chapter that related to Deborah Mills' challenges in her classroom, telling Deborah, "This is what you are searching for. The particular author is struggling with the same kind of problem and this is something you can read and find ways to help."

At one of these meetings, Daaiyah Saleem served as discussant for the chapter "¡Sí Se Puede! Teaching for Transformation" (1999), written by NWP teacher-consultants Rebecca Garcia-Gonzalez, Pilar Mejia, and Winnie J. Porter. At the time, Daaiyah was teaching at a local college where she, like the authors, was confronted with the impact of inequity on the lives of students. Her college had a noble mission—to serve the underserved—so it had an open-door policy. But it was, in her words, a challenge to "teach college-level students, sitting in teacher education programs, whose reading comprehension was poor, writing skills seriously underdeveloped, and orality rooted in disenfranchised language cultures."

Daaiyah asked our teacher research group, "What could *they* (her students) teach? *Who* would they teach?" Gonzalez's description of seeing "the oppression in the faces of [her] students; she felt their hopelessness" resonated with Daaiyah. After reading this passage Daaiyah shared, "The African American students who survive educational neglect and miseducation, such as described by Gonzalez, end up at colleges like mine." She wondered what could be done to empower them. Gonzalez wrote, "If I didn't help challenge the status quo, I wouldn't be teaching them what they needed." Like Gonzalez, who knew that "teaching them to read and write was not enough," Daaiyah had that gnawing sense that she needed to do more.

Reading this article and others helped give Daaiyah another language to wrap around the ideas and thoughts with which she'd been wrestling. Daaiyah explained, "There were multiple layers of equity issues inherent in working at this college that I can now name and therefore explore intellectually and practically." From these meetings Daaiyah felt she was able to share crucial questions and critically analyze the texts that she used with her students. As a result of these meetings she also began to involve students in critical literacy, questioning and critically assessing their textbooks in all their classes. They started asking: Whose viewpoint is presented? From what position is the view presented? What other viewpoints are there? What other positions are there? What is my own viewpoint? What are / have been the viewpoints of people who are like me?

Daaiyah's confidence as a leader grew as she developed an understanding of how she might work with her students to address the inequities in their lives. Her increased confidence and the encouragement of our group led her to take on new leadership roles in PUWP, including conducting thoughtful workshop presentations, something she previously didn't see herself as articulate and confident enough to do.

Reflecting on My Inquiry

Revisiting my initial research question, "How do teachers grow as leaders within the context of equity-focused work?" confirmed for me the importance of teachers as leaders and of building supportive communities that help cultivate teachers' talents as leaders. Effective teacher-leaders demonstrate their stake in critical issues in their schools and classrooms by working publicly to address them. In doing so, they seek to make connections with colleagues in their schools, and they rely on being part of a community that supports them and helps them strategize about how best to move forward. In this process, trust is essential. Without it teacher-leaders would not share their concerns or be open to the recommendations of their peers. Through trust and collaboration, effective teacher-leaders create strong connections with colleagues, reveal their own strengths, and grow personally and professionally.

Leadership support, in combination with the teacher-leaders' autobiographies, drive for success, and desire to learn, enabled the ten teachers in our teacher research group to become leaders for others in their buildings. They orchestrated workshops, assisted with school plans, and provided professional development for administrators and other teachers in their districts. The teachers in our research group had commonalities from their African American heritage that they drew on in their transformation as leaders:

- a thirst for knowledge
- a belief that education was a premium to spring them from impoverished situations (an education for freedom)
- strong spiritual roots
- a desire to share and give back support in various situations
- an intrinsic need to trust, care, and lean on each other
- a commitment to expand the learning beyond themselves
- an extension of family support from the community
- a recognition that culture is a predictive variable in their mobility in society.

"I am both teacher and African American, both leader and learner, and I bring who I am to all situations."

However, I believe that the greatest influence on their development as leaders was their own recognition that they needed to gain more skills and knowledge to provide highly educative and equitable experiences for the children in their classrooms.

My inquiry has also helped me to learn about my own practice as a leader. I share the language, culture, and concerns of African American teacher-leaders and use this connection to support their leadership. In spite of their issues at school, I continuously encourage them to meet in their small learning communities and study groups to resolve their concerns about equity. I help them to recognize "that the educational system, more than family, church, or business has become the institution most responsible for the transmission of social inequality" (Swartz 1998, 190).

When asked whether I perform leadership strategies consciously or unconsciously, I say "both." I am both teacher and African American, both leader and learner, and I bring who

I am to all situations. The sum of my spirituality, my experiences, and my learning is inextricably interwoven into the fabric of my leadership decisions. Although I have reasons for what I do, I am not necessarily fixated on a deliberate act. What I do is bring my whole self to nurturing and mentoring teacher-leaders.

My leadership actions, conscious and unconscious, emerge from my beliefs and experiences. As a leader, I can't help but draw on these experiences—those that have empowered me to reach for my full potential as a teacher-leader—and apply these experiences to empower other teachers. For example, I believe that in order to create a country filled with critically thinking adults, we must teach teachers to draw on their strengths. This I do consciously. When I look at teachers, I look for their strengths. I look for what they do well and I try to suggest actions and positions to build on what they do well. There are other actions I take consciously as well. Based on my relationships and knowledge I sometimes assign readings, encourage teachers to assume particular positions of leadership, and support them in their efforts. I also push teachers to analyze the inequities not only in teaching but also in their positions in the school culture. I do this because I strongly believe that we must always be aware that teaching is political.

I take much away from this group and my participation. Being a member of the Peachtree Urban Writing Project played a significant role in developing my ability to foster a culture characterized by support, scaffolding, trust, and honesty. I have grown in my understanding of equity and call attention to it in my day-to-day life. Whatever I do, equity will be threaded into that work.

"The sum of my spirituality, my experiences, and my learning is inextricably interwoven into the fabric of my leadership decisions."

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Gwendolyn Williams began her teaching career in the Atlanta public schools as a middle grades language arts and social studies teacher. Her participation as a Foxfire teacher led her to become involved with action research that focused on leading teacher groups and promoting student constructivist learning. She began her involvement with teacher research while serving as director of the Peachtree Urban Writing Project, where she started to explore how teachers developed as leaders in the writing project and at their school sites. Williams has proudly served on the leadership team of the National Writing Project's Teacher Inquiry Communities Network. She presently serves as an assistant professor of reading and language arts at Spelman College in Atlanta.
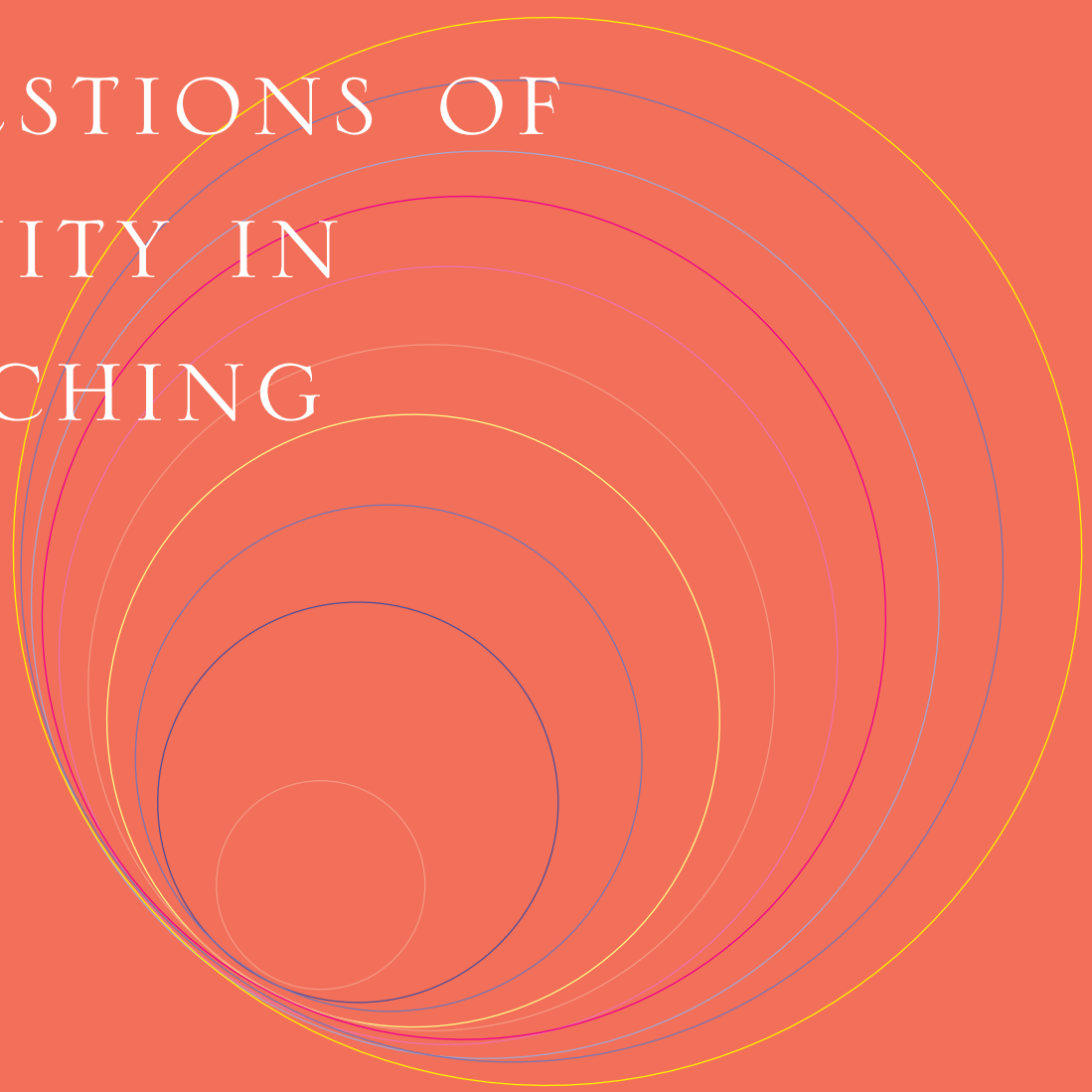
Examining Questions of Equity in Teaching

Introduction

Marty Williams, Section Editor

Teacher inquiry for equity aims to transform schooling by examining and improving teaching and learning in classrooms. The essays in this section document the work of teacher inquirers as they ask and answer questions about teaching practice, student experience, and student learning. The authors use classroom data collected through their everyday work to surface, understand, and address issues of equity.

Why is inquiry vital to improved teaching practice and a move toward equity? One reason is that classroom inquiry helps teachers to learn through their own day-to-day work with students. Teachers can look carefully at the experience of students in the classroom, noticing and documenting what is happening with individual students over time. Taking a close look at the day-to-day work in classrooms also allows teachers to turn the lens on themselves, examining their own assumptions and habits.

In the four essays in this section, inquiry helps teachers to understand students and to develop both the will and the skill to shift teaching practices in ways that make a difference for students. The teacher-inquirers represented in this section include one teacher researching her classrooms in a new small school[1] (Aguilar), one teacher researching his classroom in a traditional high school (Roth), and two long-time teachers writing about their work with colleagues or interns (Bostick-Morgan; Osinsky).

Learning from Students

In their quest for equity, the authors represented in this section pay close attention to students, gathering data about their experiences and learning. One author (Aguilar) engaged in multiyear case studies of particular students to understand these students, their classrooms, and her own teaching. She used student interviews and surveys, audio and video recordings, and her journal entries to better understand a case-study student and to develop approaches to support this student's engagement in reading. She subsequently used her learning to support the engagement of all her students. Another teacher (Roth) used classroom observation and student interview data to understand his students' experience with a particular aspect of his classroom-tests. In a similar fashion, two teacher-leaders—a speech language pathologist and a preservice-teacher educator (Bostick-Morgan; Osinsky)—describe what they learned from research with their "students," in this case the teachers or interns with whom they worked. For these researchers, the inquiry included a second layer, where the researchers helped the teachers/interns with whom they worked to gather data

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1   Oakland's new small schools are part of a growing national movement to develop smaller schools that provide a more equitable and personalized education. The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools has supported many educators in developing and sustaining the small Bay Area schools described in *Working Toward Equity*.

about the students in the classroom. Marcie Osinsky, for example, worked with teacher interns to establish a focus for their observations, videotaped classroom activities of students and teachers, and then reviewed notes and videotapes.

Integrating Research into Classroom Life

In each of these four essays, teacher inquiry is not an add-on activity but part of the fabric of everyday classroom life. It happens as the teachers keep track of the rush of daily activities and in moments of quiet reflection. The authors describe a range of ways that they integrate research into their classrooms.

One way they integrate research into their teaching is through writing. Each teacher-inquirer used reflective writing to document and make sense of her inquiry. Journal writing offered teachers the opportunity to explore critical incidents in their classrooms and construct new knowledge about themselves and their students (Aguilar). Field notes taken quickly in the middle of class can become rich data when reconsidered later (Roth).

While these authors use the data they gather to better understand the students' learning and experience, they also use the data to reflect on and improve their teaching practice. For example, Roth used his observations of students taking history tests to inform his construction of subsequent tests. Osinsky prompted the interns who collaborated with her to recognize the various ways that students understood math and build on them in their teaching. Similarly, Oreather Bostick-Morgan prompted mainstream teachers to incorporate a variety of strategies to help hearing-impaired students learn to read. And Aguilar's inquiry process inspired her to incorporate literature circles and dramatic activities into her curriculum.

Teachers in Inquiry Communities

Having an inquiry community is not the exception in these stories; it's the rule. For some authors, (Aguilar; Osinsky), teacher inquiry for equity is the model for professional development at their school. These teachers receive intensive coaching and support for their research. Other authors (Roth; Bostick-Morgan) are active in writing project teacher inquiry networks that sustain ongoing conversations about classroom practice to support equity. As part of the Teacher Research Collaborative, each teacher-researcher had a professional community with whom they shared the work of their own teacher inquiry, their efforts to lead teacher inquiry for equity at their school sites, and their written questions and discoveries.

The essays that follow represent an articulation of these ongoing collegial conversations and investigations into equitable teaching practices. These vivid portrayals of students working to master academic skills, thoughtful teachers actively examining their practices, and the sense of urgency all bring to their work demonstrate how teacher inquiry can begin to dismantle inequities and build classroom practices that promote equity.

An East Oakland Odyssey: Exploring the Love of Reading in a Small School

Elena Aguilar believes that reading skill is a fundamental issue of equity for her stu-dents, most of whom are from low-income families and are students of color. As a middle school language arts teacher she is, she says, "obsessed" by her inquiry ques-tion: How can I get my students to love to read? As Aguilar shares her three-year inquiry into motivating students to read, she demonstrates the power of the case study: by looking closely at one student's progress she is able to examine a whole area of teaching practice. She describes how literature circles, drama, and multiple readings of texts all increased her case-study student Eddie's engagement and pro-vided an important means of assessing his skills. Using three years' worth of whole-class data, surveys, audio and video recordings, and journal entries, Aguilar empha-sizes the complexity of teaching and the ups and downs of both Eddie's progress and her own development as a teacher-researcher.

By Elena Aguilar

Introduction: "Reading Is Boring"

I am obsessed with teaching my middle school students to love reading. My obsession began when ASCEND, a new small school in Oakland, California, opened in fall 2001.[1] I was the only sixth grade language arts and history teacher, with two classes of twenty-three students each. Although I had taught for five years, I had never taught middle school. As I assessed my students in the beginning of the year, their low skill level—fourth grade level on average—disturbed me. My previous experience teaching third grade had given me ideas for teaching basic language arts skills to struggling students. However, my third-graders had been enthusiastic about everything and delighted in learning. I was not pre-pared for my ASCEND students' negative attitudes toward school.

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[1] In the fall of 2001, ASCEND (A School Cultivating Excellence, Nurturing Diversity) opened with 170 students in kindergarten and second, fourth, and sixth grades. We were one of five New Small Autonomous Schools that opened that year in the Oakland Unified School District to alleviate overcrowding at neighborhood schools and to address inequities in the education system. ASCEND is located in Oakland's predominantly Latino Fruitvale neighborhood, and our student population is around 60 percent Latino, 20 percent Southeast Asian, and 20 percent African American. The majority of our students come from low-income fami-lies, and previously attended local elementary schools with large classes and low test scores. From ASCEND's initial conception, inquiry was a core component of our professional development; by our third year, it was the centerpiece of our professional development model.

Most disturbing to me was the students' attitudes toward reading. On Mondays we regularly had a morning circle to check in about the weekend. Everyone had to share. One after another, students repeated the same thing: "I didn't do anything. It was boring." Week after week, one after another complained of uneventful weekends. Although occasionally someone attended a birthday party or a family event, their assessment of their weekend usually was "boring." Two months after school started, I decided to probe. "What do you mean, you didn't do anything?" I asked Billy,[2] a shy Cambodian boy.

"I didn't do anything," he repeated.

"But what does that mean? Did you sleep? Did you watch TV? Did you eat? Did you take a shower?"

"I did nothing. I lay on my bed and stared at the ceiling," he said.

I was stunned. I blurted out the first thing that came into my mind: "Why didn't you read something?"

"Reading is boring," he said without emotion, and numerous students around the room echoed his sentiments.

Again, I was stunned. I was flooded by memories of my own childhood, of long weekends and summers when I had nothing to do. I was never bored, however, because I read voraciously. Books helped me to understand my social and emotional world; they provided an escape from the chaos in my family; they helped me develop empathy for other people; and they always entertained me. I loved reading, and I still do. I knew at that moment that I needed to do something to teach these students to love reading.

I have now had the rare fortune to teach this group of students for three years as their language arts and history teacher for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.[3] This continuity allowed me to undertake a three-year study of my students' attitudes toward reading. Using data that include surveys and reflections,[4] audio and videotapes, and journal observations, I have looked both at whole-class changes in attitude and at four case-study students in particular. This essay reports a small piece of my broader research, focusing on one case-study student, Eduardo. In many ways Eduardo—Eddie for short—is representative of many other students in my classes. In this essay I describe four critical incidents that illustrate the complicated issues Eddie has with reading and school and that marked turning points in his attitude toward reading. I also explain how Eddie's journey parallels my own, as I have discovered the powerful ways that doing inquiry in the classroom can affect my teaching practice and the success of my students.

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2   All student names in this essay are pseudonyms; teachers' real names are used.

3   I refer to the years I spent with my students by their grade-level year, as follows: sixth grade = 2001–2002; seventh grade = 2002–2003; eighth grade = 2003–2004.

4   Examples of student surveys about reading and literature circles are included in the appendix at the end of this essay.

Ideas About Teaching and Learning

My key notions about teaching and learning came from my own experience as a student, reader, and teacher, and developed as my research progressed. Several basic assumptions have guided my practice: that reading is a social activity, that there is value in multiple readings of a single text, and that young people need to have a "touchstone" book that changes their lives as readers. My own experience as a reader told me that if students read books that they can relate to, books that address issues and topics of primary importance and relevance to them as adolescents, their attitudes toward reading will change. My teaching experience further informed me that multiple assessments give the clearest picture of student capacity, achievement, and learning. As I began teaching middle school, I learned that students need opportunities to discover and practice their own best way of learning. I also learned that skills can be taught more effectively as attitudes toward learning change. Finally, as I became a researcher in my classroom, my teaching was guided by my conviction that teacher inquiry is the most effective way to change teaching practice and, therefore, student outcomes. In this process, I discovered strategic reasons for inviting students into my inquiry as coresearchers. Eddie's story illustrates how I applied these beliefs to change my own teaching practice through inquiry, and how Eddie's attitude toward learning and reading changed in the process.[5]

Eddie: Background

> In every class I've taught, I've had an Eddie. He's the kid in the baggy jeans who pierces his own ear and swaggers in late after lunch. He constantly challenges authority and is often seen as irreverent and disrespectful which gets him "in trouble" a lot. He's also the kid who always asks the "best questions" in class discussions, questions that spark lively debate. He's popular amongst his peers, but loses his temper easily and gets in fights. In other situations, my Eddie would be a gang-leader.
>
> —Journal, 5/16/03

Eddie is a socially self-confident Latino, whom I first assessed as having very low academic skills: his fifth grade results on the California Standards Test (CST) placed him in the category of "Far Below Basic"—the lowest level for fifth-graders statewide.[6] Eddie attended four different elementary schools because his family moved frequently. Although his primary language is Spanish, he was switched back and forth between English-only and Spanish-bilingual classes, most likely hindering the development of his literacy skills. A small motor disability makes Eddie's handwriting indecipherable, and makes him ashamed of anything

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5   Several students captivated my attention from the first time I met them in September 2001. Individually, they posed challenges to my teaching, but they also represented many other students in my classes. In addition to Eddie, my broader research focused on three other students: Tomas, a highly skilled Latino deeply invested in his studies, who struggled with his peers' perceptions of him as a "nerd"; Billy, a Cambodian student who read a year or two above grade level but would rather stare at the ceiling than pick up a book; and Catalina, a low-skilled, quiet Latina who worked hard to please the teacher and whose attitudes, as a result, were challenging to decipher.

6   The CST is a standards-based (criterion-referenced) test. Scores on the CST are categorized as follows: Far Below Basic, Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced.

he writes. Because Eddie was retained in fourth grade, he is a year older than his classmates. He is very aware of his low skill level and has no confidence in doing schoolwork. As a result, he often loudly expresses his dislike for school and disinterest in studying, and most of the time he's been at ASCEND, he has rarely done homework.

However, Eddie is very bright, has sharp analytical skills, and loves to engage in conversations about history and politics. He learns best orally and has an impressive memory for information that he hears. Once when I was noticing his extensive vocabulary, I asked him where he'd heard a certain word. "On TV," he said, making me wonder about the role of TV in his literacy development. Eddie is one of the few students who enjoys long lectures about history and who can maintain his attention in a class discussion long after most students have faded out. Yet when doing desk work, Eddie often appears squirmy and wiggly. He could easily have been assessed as having an attention deficit disorder.

In social situations, with adults or with peers, Eddie is very confident. He is charming and mature, and frequently takes leaderships roles such as speaking to the superintendent or organizing students to perform a play. He is well liked, one of the few students with close friends who are not of his ethnicity. However, Eddie also has a temper and has been involved in several conflicts with students and adults at ASCEND.

Eddie's family lives in a one-bedroom apartment in a rough neighborhood; Eddie sleeps on the couch in a crowded living room where, when he can, he stays up until 2:00 A.M. watching movies. Eddie has been exposed to violence and alcoholism his whole life. His fourth and fifth grade teacher, who is now an administrator at ASCEND, told me she felt that if Eddie had attended any other large middle school, he would have dropped out of school by eighth grade and become involved in gangs. She initially encouraged him to come to ASCEND, where she thought he would be more likely to succeed. Because the challenges Eddie faces are similar to those of many other students who are often overlooked or underserved in urban schools, I have devoted substantial time to understanding him as a student and comprehending his attitudes about reading.

The Social Nature of Reading: Literature Circles Begin—Winter, Sixth Grade

> Today was one of my best days teaching ever! We started literature circles, finally. Carlos, Eddie, and Ernesto were having a wonderful time. They laughed and laughed, kept flipping through *The House on Mango Street*, reading parts to each other, checking what the other had highlighted or underlined, reading parts aloud, laughing. Eddie made text-world connections, and lots of text-self connections.[7] Eddie: "See where she writes that men live on Venus—that's me!" The way he engaged with the writing and analyzed it also struck me. He commented, "This part where she says she's like a 'red balloon with a string hanging from it' really made me think. What did she mean? And have I ever felt like that? I spent a long time thinking about that."

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7 This concept is presented in Harvey and Goudvis, *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* (2000).

> When time was up today, Eddie was one of several kids who loudly begged for more time. After the meeting I surveyed the class and asked students to rate their excitement about starting literature circles. On a scale of 1–6, Eddie wrote in, "A 10!!!!!!!!" which was by far the highest in the class.

—Journal, 2/6/01

For our first experiment with literature circles, all students read *The House on Mango Street*, which was at or below the reading level of most students. I predicted that many students would connect with this lively, engaging book written from a child's perspective and addressing issues of family, identity, immigration, and gender. This first cycle was a great success and literature circles became the cornerstone of my reading program; I hoped they would be a key strategy for changing my students' feelings about reading and, subsequently, for improving their skills.

One of my initial theories about why my students detested reading had to do with their experience and perception of reading as a solitary activity. In a familiar scenario in many classrooms, students read a novel and write a book report, then return the book to the shelf. That defines "reading" for them. Yet I know that when I am excited by something, such as a novel, I want to share it with others. And when I am confused by something, I seek the counsel of my peers. For these reasons, I felt that the social nature of literature circles would be effective for my chatty, preadolescent sixth-graders.

For Eddie, literature circles became essential to changing his attitude about reading and developing his reading skills. Literature circles were new to all my students, and I knew it was vital that Eddie's first experience be positive. That first day, as he discussed *The House on Mango Street*, Eddie discovered that reading could be fun when it is a social event. This was my primary objective in starting literature circles, and the data I collected provided clear evidence that I had accomplished my goal. Furthermore, this first experience was positive for Eddie because he felt successful. This was crucial for him after years of failure in school. However, not only was Eddie able to understand *The House on Mango Street*, but the activity he was asked to do to demonstrate his understanding—discussion—was something at which he was accomplished. Had students been asked to complete a written response to the book, Eddie would not have felt as confident and would not have been as successful in showing his understanding. But because he knows how to talk and is good at social interaction, he enjoyed sharing his connections to the text. From the first day of literature circles, Eddie knew that was a structure in which he felt comfortable and confident, where he could be successful with his peers. And I recognized that students with stronger social skills would be more successful in the literature-circle structure.

Multiple Assessments for Reading

Literature circles give me invaluable assessment data on a student's reading skills. In the beginning of sixth grade, I assessed Eddie at a second or third grade reading level. However, in the first literature circle meeting, I observed his highly developed analytical skills, making me question my earlier assessment. Eddie was one of the only students to cite text and engage directly with it. The questions he posed to his group provoked much deeper conversations than those in other groups. I have since observed this over and over when Eddie par-

ticipates in literature circles. After students read a novel, they complete a project that usually has a central written component. Although Eddie has the necessary skills, more often than not he does not complete it or turns in low-quality work. On in-class essays and quizzes about literature, Eddie usually scores in the low to middle range. When Eddie reads aloud, his fluency skills are weak and he stumbles on many words. Were I to use only these assessment data, I would conclude that his reading skills are low. However, when I observe Eddie discussing literature, I find his comprehension and analytical skills to be exceptionally high. At first I assumed that he could do this only when he was reading texts that he chose. However, on the SAT-9 standardized test at the end of seventh grade, he scored in the 87th percentile in the reading analysis section, higher than any other student in his grade.

For Eddie, literature circles are a safe place where he can improve his reading comprehension. Over the years, he has repeatedly stated in surveys that he likes reading in literature circles because he can get help from his classmates. In a survey at the end of eighth grade, he wrote, "I think that literature circles help me more [than independent reading] because I have some people that I can talk to about a book if I did not understand anything or to share my feelings." My notes from observing Eddie in literature circle discussions confirm that he uses his group to further his learning. I have observed him asking for clarification of plot, for definitions and pronunciations of words, and for alternate analyses of a story. Repeatedly, I have noticed that Eddie is not shy in asking his peers for help and that he frequently does so. Although at the end of eighth grade Eddie still completes very little homework, he always does the reading for literature circles and continues to engage his classmates in lively, text-based discussions of novels. He clearly enjoys reading and is motivated to read when he knows he will have a chance to discuss it with his peers.

The Value of Multiple Readings of One Text: Eddie's Touchstone Book

> My all time favorite book is *That Was Then, This Is Now* because that was the first book that I really got into. This book opened up new thoughts in my mind and made me think of new things.
>
> —Eddie's survey response. April, eighth grade

After *The House on Mango Street*, Eddie selected S.E. Hinton's *That Was Then, This Is Now* for the next literature circle in sixth grade. My notes from the first meeting read, "Antwan, Chai, and LaShawn are retelling sections of the book. Eddie does not participate in this. Unlike him not to talk whenever possible. Did he understand it as well as they did?" Eddie's reflections and my observations show that at first he was not particularly excited about *That Was Then, This Is Now*. In this first reading, I believe that Eddie did not understand the text too well and that he was still anxious about asking for help from a group of students he did not entirely trust. So how and why did this classic in young-adult literature become Eddie's favorite novel, or what I call a *touchstone* book[8] for him?

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8   I derived this term based on students' surveys and reflections, written work, and comments.

In the fall of seventh grade, I selected *That Was Then, This Is Now* to use with the whole class to teach character development. I had loved this book when I was in middle school and thought that my students would enjoy it too. In addition, the small group of students who had read this novel in the sixth grade agreed that the class would like it. Although it takes place in the 1960s in an all-white neighborhood on the East Coast, I thought my students would relate to the book's themes and characters. In this coming-of-age story, two friends confront violence, drugs, gangs, poverty, and family dissolution, and are forced to make extremely difficult decisions. For many of my students, these issues are close to home. In a survey in the fall of eighth grade, exactly half of my students listed *That Was Then, This Is Now* as one of their favorite novels, and at least 40 percent of my students (both boys and girls) cited it as a touchstone book that got them engaged with reading.

The second time Eddie read *That Was Then, This Is Now*, when I taught it as a whole-class book, two things happened. First, he began this reading exercise feeling confident because he had read the book before. In whole-class and small-group discussions, I observed that Eddie had understood the novel better than I originally thought. And having a chance to read it again, to discuss it with the whole class, and to engage in various whole-class activities related to the book allowed Eddie to gain a deep understanding of the novel while interacting socially with others. In one activity students debated the main character's decision to inform the police that his best friend is selling drugs. This loud, passionate, lively argument engaged even the quietest students. And again I found that when reading involved socializing, Eddie was successful and enjoyed reading. While this is true for many of my students, for Eddie it became the impetus to read and not just slough off another homework assignment.

"Eddie's experience with this book also expanded my understanding of how I could change my students' reading attitudes."

The data I gathered about Eddie's several readings of *That Was Then, This Is Now* demonstrate the value of multiple readings of a book, something I encourage my students to do. Eddie was lukewarm about *That Was Then, This Is Now* during the first literature-circle meeting: on the first reading, it was too difficult. But when he read the book the second time, and I asked him what it was like, he said, "Much better. I notice more things."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Like I just noticed that Bryon's mom [a minor character] changed too in the book and I hadn't noticed that before."[9]

Observing Eddie's development in attitude and skills as a result of reading this book was validation that students should be allowed, and even encouraged, to read the same novel two or three times. I ask students to articulate why they want to read a book again when they ask for permission. They usually have very good reasons: to understand it better or because they enjoyed it so much the first time. For Eddie, this is a text he always refers back to when discussing his feelings about reading. In the spring of seventh grade, he declared that he disliked reading, "Except *That Was Then, This Is Now*, that was cool." He has now

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9   From my notes, 10/1/02.

read the book three times. It has become a touchstone text for Eddie, evidence that he might like to read and might be good at it—critical realizations for a reluctant reader. This would not have been the case had he not read it several times.

Eddie's experience with this book also expanded my understanding of how I could change my students' reading attitudes. I suspected that if more of my students were exposed to enough books that they could relate to and that they liked, their attitudes would change. This was challenging, because novels whose content appealed to my students were often written at a level far too advanced for their reading skills; conversely, the themes and plots of novels written at their level often held little interest for them. Yet I knew that many of my reluctant readers were awaiting a key book that would turn them on to reading, as *That Was Then, This Is Now* did for Eddie. Gathering data on my students' reading tastes over the three years, I eventually came to know each one's personal likes and dislikes. In addition to knowing my students, I needed to know young adult literature: In the middle of eighth grade, as I prepared to be out of the classroom on maternity leave for a few months, I asked students to write about what makes a good teacher. I was surprised by how many described a good teacher as one who knows what kind of books her students like. Gradually, the trust that I had always actively pursued from my students came to include their trust that I knew them as learners and as readers. Although at times I made mistakes, I believe that Eddie, like most of my students, really trusted that I would recommend books that he would like.[10]

> *"My research has revealed an undisputable need to teach to different learning modalities, and has pushed me to reflect constantly on students' individual needs."*

Opportunities to Learn Their Best Way: Discovering Drama in Seventh Grade

I understand this stuff better if I have to act it out and I can show you that I understand it this way. I know I'll get a good grade this way.

—Eddie's written response about his final project, seventh grade

In seventh grade, Eddie discovered that he learns best through drama. This was an invaluable lesson for him, and for me. It has allowed him to direct his own learning when he can, which leads to a tremendous feeling of success. It has allowed him to see that to some extent, he is not a failure in school—rather, school fails to provide him with enough opportunities to learn in the way he learns best.

Although students had numerous opportunities to express their learning through visual art, it wasn't until seventh grade that I discovered the power of drama. The first confirmation came as students confronted Karen Cushman's *Matilda Bone*, a historical novel about the Middle Ages that—despite being written for middle school students—was very difficult for them. I chose this book to teach metacognitive strategies in a novel for which students had little or no schema, or background knowledge. One method I used for the first time was

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10 At ASCEND, teachers select the materials we use in our classrooms. This freedom, an enormous advantage of being at a small autonomous school, permitted me to choose hundreds of books for my classroom. I attribute a great deal of the success I have had with my students to this collection, and I am aware that in many public schools, teachers spend their own money to stock their shelves or simply do not have the resources to feed their students' reading interests.

reader's theater, in which students read the entire novel aloud, dramatically reading the dialogue. I also taught reading strategies suggested by Harvey and Goudvis (2000), including visualizing and asking questions to understand the book. Eddie reported that asking questions as he read was most helpful for him when he read alone, but reader's theater really enhanced his comprehension. In a reflection upon completing the book, he wrote, "It was really confusing, but when I heard them reading in Reader's Theatre, I got it. It was like the people in the book were here and I could talk to them and when they read the words their feelings were there and so I understood it."

At the end of the first semester, students put on a play about the Middle Ages. This was an educational and life-changing event for Eddie. He stunned students, parents, and staff with his performance as a fourteenth-century religious fanatic, and felt very proud of himself. In his reflection about the semester, he wrote, "What I learned this semester was that I learn best by acting. When I act I get to be that person and I know how they felt, and I understand history that way."

In the spring of seventh grade, Eddie wrote and performed a play with three other students as a final project. When I asked him why he'd chosen this particular project, he shrugged his shoulders and explained, as if I should know already, that he just learns best by acting. His play revealed something else I hadn't realized about him as a student: not only is he a natural actor, but he also has an intuitive sense for writing scripts. His story flowed well, it had a perfect tension, he developed characters through dialogue and actions; in every way it was an impressive piece of writing. Furthermore, Eddie completed all his homework on time; he was the most invested member of his group; and he received recognition from his peers for his ability to act, write, and direct a group of students—all of which made him very proud. I believe Eddie's success in drama is one of the major factors that has increased his confidence in, and his enjoyment of, learning.

Now at the end of eighth grade, as I reflect on Eddie's experience in my class, I am aware that his participation and involvement, his submission of homework, and his enjoyment of school were clearly at their height when some sort of acting was involved. What I might not have realized, were it not for this inquiry, is that the same is true for several other low-performing students in my class. My research has revealed an indisputable need to teach to different learning modalities, and has pushed me to reflect constantly on students' individual needs.

Students as Co-researchers: "I Don't Like Reading!"—Spring, Seventh Grade

Elena: Who has their permission form to go to Berkeley tomorrow?

Eddie: I'm not going.

Elena: Why?

Eddie: Because I don't like reading and I don't want to waste my money on a book that I'm not going to read. I don't like to read.

[Kids look at me to see how I'm going to respond. Eddie is leaning back in his chair, a little grin on his

> face. I feel like he's waiting to see how I'm going to respond. He's goading me, challenging me. I turn to the whole class.]
>
> Elena: Ok, you guys, I need your help now. What would you do if you were a teacher? How would you respond to what Eddie just said?

—Notes, 4/10/03

In the week before spring break of seventh grade, I organized a field trip to a bookstore so that students could buy a book to read during vacation. As I collected permission forms the day before, Eddie instigated a whole-class conversation about reading. During the discussion I took notes, and as soon as the class left, I transcribed the conversation (above). This incident merits close reflection, as it illustrates many of the complex issues involved in Eddie's attitude toward reading. This discussion was also an inquiry strategy I intentionally used to engage students with me in the puzzle of how to change attitudes about reading. Finally, it was on this day that I first divulged my research project to my students. This critical incident allows me to examine an issue central to Eddie's educational life: the tension inherent in his need for both peer and adult support, and the ways that the two kinds of support motivate him.

The very setting that Eddie chose for this conversation illustrates this internal conflict. On the one hand, he thrives with an audience, particularly an audience of his peers. He clearly wanted to challenge me in front of his classmates, for their entertainment. On the other hand, I believe that Eddie was also testing my affection for him, something he would feel awkward doing in private. Like my entire class, he is well aware of how important it is to me that my students love reading. Julia, the first student to respond to my request for help illustrates this awareness in her response:

> I'd feel really disrespected because we all know that you love to read and that you want us to love to read so I'd feel like he was being disrespectful to me by saying that. We know that you buy a lot of books and you're always telling us about how much you like to read.

Knowing this, I believe the essence of Eddie's question was really, "Will you still love me if I don't like to read?"

Ample research confirms the connection between students' academic success and their need to know that their teacher cares about them. One of my challenges as a teacher is to discover how and when each student wants this affection demonstrated. From the first day I met Eddie, his need for affirmation was glaring, his lack of confidence reflected in his hunched shoulders. However, because of his obvious desire for peer approval, I felt that he would resist my attention in front of his classmates. This turned out to be true. So, while there were many occasions on which I could have publicly recognized his accomplishments, I often refrained or moderated my response. Eddie said repeatedly that he did not want to be seen as a "nerd" or a "teacher's pet," yet he was conflicted. Sometimes he relished it when I praised him in front of the class, basking in my attention. Other times when I recognized him publicly, he became embarrassed and annoyed. The only occasions when Eddie never rebuked my attention were parent conferences with his mother. These were often tense meetings, as I was usu-

ally delivering bad news about Eddie's study habits. However, from my first conversation with his mother, I always also spoke at length of his exceptional abilities, specifically his analytical and verbal skills. I spoke of my confidence in Eddie and of my belief that he could succeed in school. In parent conferences, Eddie wrung his hands anxiously, looked at his shoes, and glanced at his mother, measuring her response to my praise. He clearly wanted and needed that praise in front of the person whose opinion he most values.

From the beginning of his sixth grade year, I sensed Eddie needed to hear me recognize his academic accomplishments and skills, and that he would need to hear affirmations for years. Outside of class, I spent many hours with him and Tomas, his best friend (another of my case-study students) in museums, performances, and restaurants. On many occasions he sought me out to talk, or for comforting. Although I was sure that he knew that I cared about him, I also made it a point to tell him so directly.

However, much to my dismay, my attention and affection were not enough to motivate Eddie to do all his homework. At times I practically begged him to do his work, and offered great rewards if he would accept extra tutoring. I promised food, outings, even a trip to the pyramids in Mexico, but Eddie did not do his homework or come to school early for the tutoring I offered. My desperation made me uncomfortable (and still does), and I questioned my strategies and teaching practices. The support I offered Eddie was not appropriate because I could not extend it to all students, and it made him inordinately important to me as a student. I wondered how much my affection for him and the increased attention he received simply by being a focus in my research awarded him privileges that other students did not receive. My awareness of this inequity raised critical issues for me as a teacher and researcher, and continues to provide important challenges for me to reflect on.

"I have to remind myself that attitudes don't change in one year."

By spring break in seventh grade, I was very frustrated with Eddie. I couldn't figure out how to motivate him. I believe he sensed my frustration, leading him to challenge me in front of his classmates. One discussion he prompted evolved into a debate about the difference between boys and girls in their attitudes toward school; of whether it is necessary for one to like reading or just be good at it; and the significance of elementary school reading experiences. (It was during this discussion that I told my students about my research, describing it as a way to improve my teaching methods.) At times the discussion revolved around Eddie; my students participated by analyzing him. Although I was apprehensive about this, observing him closely to gauge his reactions, I felt the discussion might be useful because of his need for his peers' approval and support. Later that day, I checked in with Eddie about how he had felt about being put on the spot. He admitted to feeling uncomfortable, and again I was not sure that I had done the right thing. I reiterated how much I cared for him and how I just wanted to learn how to teach him better. Although I was left with many uncertainties about that discussion, one thing is sure: the whole class discussed issues that are central to learning, and student participation was at its highest.

Shortly after this discussion, the seventh grade math/science teacher and I discovered something interesting. Even though Eddie enjoys math a great deal more than reading and writing, and even though his skills are much higher in math, he often missed weeks and weeks of homework assignments. Then all of a sudden, in the spring of seventh grade, he started

turning in his math homework—every single assignment. One day his math teacher noticed some negotiations going on between Ernesto, a highly motivated student, and Eddie. She discovered that Ernesto was paying Eddie $1 for each day that he turned in homework. When we probed about what was happening, the boys brushed off our questions and didn't offer details or explanations. We didn't push it, and the homework continued to be turned in on time every day.

I believe that Eddie needs peer approval and encouragement, as long as it permits him to be cool. It was easy for him to say that he was doing homework only because Ernesto was paying him, but several times he boasted that he was the only one in his group to have all his homework turned in. ASCEND immerses students in a culture that praises them for being academic, yet many students struggle to take on an academic identity. Eddie would never have done his homework if I'd paid him; his deal with Ernesto let him fit into his own social world ("I'm only doing it for the money"), but also receive the recognition and approval from teachers and parents that he longs for.

Learning: A Recursive, Nonlinear Growth

One of the most interesting and challenging findings from my inquiry is the recursive non-linearity of learning. Eddie, alternately exhilarating and frustrating, is a prime example. He has gone through periods when he declares he "loves reading!" Then, in his seventh grade end-of-year survey, he rated his enjoyment of reading at a 2 (on a scale of 1–5). This was an all-time low for him, but it made sense, as he had just read a challenging book that he couldn't get into. His enjoyment of reading is still very fragile, and he is easily discouraged by negative experiences.

In the classroom I often assume that change will be steady and straight; drops in attitude and performance cause me great distress. But I have to remind myself that attitudes don't change in one year; they fluctuate depending on many factors. Spending three years as Eddie's teacher has given me a tremendous advantage: I have seen clearly that as Eddie's skills have improved and his confidence has risen, his attitude has changed. And I have also been constantly reminded of the recursive, nonlinear way that most students learn.

An Assessment at the End of Eighth Grade

Eddie was one of ten students caught drinking on campus. When I asked him why he did this, he shrugged and said, "I don't know." He is failing all his classes, never turns in any homework, and seems less and less engaged with school all the time. He vacillates between wanting my attention and resenting it. I keep telling him that I won't give up on him . . . I think he still needs to hear this even though he pretends otherwise. But I am so worried about him. He seems more "at risk" every day. I worry that there won't be a happy end to my inquiry.

—Journal, 3/17/04

As I assess Eddie at the end of eighth grade, I focus first on the glaring negatives. My attention is consumed by the Fs on his report cards and the months of missing homework. More often than not, he seems disengaged with school. In reflections, he writes that he has "stopped caring" and feels he can't change his study habits. When discussing the drinking incident, he implied that this was a common activity for him outside of school. This year I have had bouts of hopelessness when I think about Eddie. I have felt discouraged and wondered if I have to accept that the academic and personal challenges that Eddie faces will defeat our attempts to help him succeed in school.

And yet the data I have collected have shown substantial gains, even when Eddie does no homework and seems disengaged. To begin with, Eddie's attendance record is remarkable: he has missed only two days of school this year. On standardized tests, Eddie has made significant improvement every year; by eighth grade his score on the CST was up to "Basic" (he had scored "Far Below Basic" in fifth grade). In my own assessments of reading, writing, and history, he has also made tremendous progress. In literature circles, Eddie continues to take a leadership role and regularly demonstrates his ability to analyze literature, use literary vocabulary, and instigate thoughtful conversations. His low grades are more a result of his inability to turn in homework and projects than of his skill level.

> **Key factors in Eddie's change of attitude:**
>
> Increased confidence
>
> Opportunities to do what he is good at
>
> Positive experiences in literature circles
>
> Improvement in his reading skills
>
> Support from peers and adults
>
> A "touchstone" book

Furthermore, when I evaluate my inquiry, I must remind myself that my research is about changing attitudes. While I believe that attitude and skill are inextricably linked, I have chosen to approach the development of skills by looking first at improvements in attitude. And Eddie's feelings about reading have changed profoundly, documented not only in his own reflections but also in other data. In the middle of eighth grade, while I was on maternity leave for three months, Eddie did not do any homework. However, my substitute's notes on students' literature-circle projects reported, "Eddie clearly read the book and is excited by it. He dominated the presentation to the class and went on and on about the book." This critical piece of evidence demonstrated Eddie's enthusiasm for reading, even in my absence.

In addition to his feelings about reading, Eddie's attitude has changed in other areas. His academic confidence with his peers is notably higher than when he came to ASCEND. He has become a leader in literature circles, drama, and classroom discussions. On a survey at the end of eighth grade, when asked about the change in his confidence during his three years at ASCEND, Eddie responded that his confidence has "gone way up." He has publicly declared that he aspires "to be like Tomas," his best friend who would rather stay in at lunch and read than hang out with friends. This is something he would never have done in sixth grade, when he was so concerned with appearing cool.

Again and again, I have to remind myself that change is slow and inconsistent. At times its subtleties are obscured or barely recognizable. I remind myself to focus on small, positive things more often: the hour and a half Eddie spent after school cleaning and organizing his messy backpack; his choice to make a scrapbook of his three years at ASCEND, rather than write a play, because as he explained, "I've never done that before." And when students were assigned to do a skit about their literature-circle books, he participated in his own

group's skit and then volunteered to be an extra in two other groups' skits. I frequently see Eddie taking such risks in school now.

At the end of eighth grade, students who were failing were faced with an ultimatum: Turn in all homework for the rest of the year or repeat the eighth grade. Eddie finally began to do all his homework. For the rest of the year, he proudly paraded around, loudly announcing that he had done his homework and berating his friends who did not do theirs. Now at the end of eighth grade, my students are working on a lengthy reflection of their years at ASCEND. In one part, I asked them to reflect on what they had learned in or about language arts. I intentionally left the assignment vague and open. To my delight, a resounding 90 percent of my students are writing about the change in their feelings toward reading. Eddie wrote about "how I learned to love books."

When I reflect on why Eddie's attitude changed, I see a number of key factors: his increased confidence, opportunities to do what he is good at, positive experiences in literature circles, the improvement in his reading skills, the support from peers and adults, and a touchstone book that taught him that reading can be wonderful.

Teacher Inquiry for Equity: Empathy and Hope

To a great extent, I attribute Eddie's change in attitude to my inquiry process. Inquiry was the lens that pushed me to ask questions, and to collect data that informed and shaped my practice. It pushed me to analyze my data, reflect on them, and write about my findings, thus pushing my understanding of Eddie to a deeper level. Inquiry made me feel empowered in the classroom: I was never "at the end of my rope" (a familiar place for many teachers), for there were always more questions to ask. This was critical when dealing with an often-frustrating student like Eddie. Inquiry gave me hope and helped me see the daily successes. Perhaps more than anything, it allowed me to love Eddie, and all of my students, even more, as it exposed the impact on them of our educational, social, economic, and political system. It removed the blame from individuals, and granted those same individuals the power to effect change. Eddie is not lazy or unmotivated or to blame for his failure in school; likewise, it is not my fault that I couldn't turn him into an A student. And thus, for me, inquiry became a process of empathy and hope.

What I recognize now, which I can only touch upon here, is how my inquiry about one student caused deep repercussions in the learning of all my students. In many ways, Eddie's struggles reflect those of many of my students. The measures I took to address his lack of confidence positively impacted Catalina and Billy and Sara and all my students whose confidence was low. Many in my classroom shared Eddie's positive experience in literature circles. The majority of my students attribute the improvement in their reading skills to the development of metacognitive reading strategies. Many of my reluctant readers can trace their change in attitude to their experience with one touchstone book. Although I instituted many changes in my classroom as a result of data I gathered about the whole class, the changes that responded to Eddie's needs in particular also affected the whole class positively.

Next year Eddie will attend a new small high school in Oakland. I have many hopes for him: I hope he will be able to direct his own learning as a result of having learned about his interests and skills as a student. I hope he can reference his years at ASCEND as a touchstone experience in his education—an experience that was positive and supportive. I hope he knows that he can succeed in academic endeavors. I hope he knows how much I care about him and will always care about him. And I hope he continues to read for pleasure and have his mind opened up by literature. On several occasions I have told Eddie that I will "haunt him for years," as I will be keeping track of him in high school and continuing my research on him. Although I feel I have had a happy end to my inquiry, I hope that in four years I will be cheering at Eddie's high school graduation and watching him go to college.

Reading and Equity

> In the beginning of sixth grade when I asked students if they thought they were good readers, Eddie said "no" and wrote, "I read too slow." At the end of seventh grade when I asked the same question, Eddie responded, "I think maybe because I read slow but I understand everything I read and I know how to go back and understand things I didn't get."
>
> —Journal, 2/4/04

The more I reflect on why I am obsessed with my students' attitudes toward reading, the more I realize that this is fundamentally an issue of equity. If students do not enjoy reading or engaging in academics, I doubt that they will be successful as students. If they do not see the purpose of reading, I doubt they will choose to read. The purpose of reading has to become personal and must extend beyond reading to get good grades or reading to pass an exam. Reading can also alleviate pain, loneliness, and suffering—inevitable emotions that might otherwise be remedied with a wide array of unhealthy substances and activities.

Finally, and simply, if students enjoy reading, they will read; as they read, their skills will improve. The longer my students stay below grade level, the more at risk they are of dropping out. In order to improve their skills, I am convinced that they must enjoy reading, as it is hard to get middle school students to do anything that they don't really want to. To middle school students, parents are no longer a threat or a reward, peer pressure is overwhelming, and there is plenty to do that is a lot more fun than studying. Although many middle- or upper-class students who read at grade level may not enjoy reading, for them this attitude is not potentially life-determining. Most likely, with academic and financial support from their parents and schools, they will complete high school and perhaps discover in college, or even after that, that they enjoy reading. My students, in contrast, must learn to love reading, and learn to love learning, now.

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Elena Aguilar is a middle school humanities teacher at ASCEND, a new and autonomous school that is part of the Oakland Public Schools in Oakland, California. Part of ASCEND's mission is to develop an effective and engaging instructional program guided by teacher inquiry and research. Of the 268 students, over 80 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and 59 percent are English language learners. Aguilar has been a teacher for ten years and has been involved with teacher research for the past three. Her research questions have focused on issues of reading. Aguilar is now engaged in a research project on what happens to her forty-five middle school students when they are in high school. This will be a four-year study with the goal of improving ASCEND's middle school program to better prepare students for high school. Aguilar is half Jewish, half Costa Rican, and was born in London, England.

Appendix: Student Surveys About Reading and Literature Circles

Beginning-of-the-Year Reading Survey

1. On a scale of 1–5, how much do you like reading? (1: not at all, 2: sort of/sometimes, 3: most of the time, 4: I like reading, 5: I LOVE reading.)

   1   2   3   4   5

   Explain.

2. Do you think you're a good reader? Explain.

3. What do you think makes a good reader?

4. What did you read in elementary school?

5. Check all the boxes of the kinds of reading you did in elementary school.
   - ❏ Fiction/novels ("chapter books")
   - ❏ Nonfiction
   - ❏ Textbooks
   - ❏ Memoir/biography
   - ❏ Poetry
   - ❏ Newspapers
   - ❏ Magazine articles
   - ❏ Historical fiction
   - ❏ Math
   - ❏ Science
   - ❏ History
   - ❏ Other: _____

6. What kinds of reading homework did you have in elementary school?

7. Name three books that you have read that you liked. Explain why you liked them.

8. Name a book that you have read or heard that you didn't like. Explain why you didn't like it.

9. Who do you know who likes to read?

10. What do you do when you read a book that you really like?

11. What do you do when you don't understand something you read?

History as a Reader

Your assignment is to write your history as a reader. I want you to tell me everything you can about your life as a reader.

In this essay, include the following stories of your life as a reader:

- How you learned to read and your memories of this experience (At home? In school? Was it easy? Hard? What was easy/hard?)
- How you felt about learning to read
- What language you learned to read in
- Your parents' involvement in your learning to read (Did they help you? Did they read with you? Did they read to you?)
- Who you have known who has been a reader (Do your parents like to read? What do they read? Do you have older siblings/friends/cousins who like to read?)
- Any other memories of learning to read
- The first books you remember reading
- Your favorite books from early childhood
- Your feelings about reading in school (Did you like it? Was it hard? Was it fun? Did you like the books you read?)
- Reading aloud (Did your teachers read aloud to you? What books did they read? Did you like it?)
- Genres (What genres have you read? Which ones do you like? Which do you love?)
- Patterns (When you look at your life as a reader, do you see any patterns?)
- Habit changes (Do you see any changes in your reading habits?)
- Feeling changes (Do you see any changes in the way you feel about reading?)
- Favorite books (What are some of your favorite books now?)
- Circumstances (When and where do you read now?)
- Motivation (Why do you read now?)

Use details, examples, and dialogue if necessary. Be creative. Be thorough. Tell me everything. Reveal your deepest, darkest secrets about reading….

Name _____

Date _____

End-of-Year Reading Reflection

On a scale of 1–5, how much do you like reading? (1: not at all, 2: sort of/
sometimes, 3: most of the time, 4: I like reading, 5: I LOVE reading.)

1   2   3   4   5

Explain (Write on the back if necessary).

_____

_____

_____

Since school started this year, have you become more interested in reading?

Yes   Maybe   No

Please explain:

_____

_____

_____

Do you think Literature Circles made you more interested in reading?

Yes   Maybe   No

Why or why not?

_____

_____

Do you think you're a good reader?

_____

_____

_____

What do you think makes a good reader?

_____

_____

_____

Why do you read?

_____

_____

_____

Do you think it's important to LIKE to read, or is it just important to know how to read well? EXPLAIN.

_____

_____

_____

What did you learn about yourself as a reader this year?

_____

_____

Literature Circle Reflection

Book you read:

_____

Members of your group:

_____

1. On a scale of 1–5, how would you rate this LC?
[1=horrible; 2=not very good at all; 3=it was ok; 4=it was great; 5=it was amazing!]

1   2   3   4   5

Please explain your rating:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. On a scale of 1–5, how would you rate the book you read?
[1=horrible; 2=not very good at all; 3=it was ok; 4=it was great; 5=it was amazing!]

1   2   3   4   5

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NAME: _____

WHAT MADE LITERATURE CIRCLES EFFECTIVE?
(At the end of the first year of Literature Circles)

Number these in order of importance:
(1=most important to you, and so on…)

☐ We got to do projects about the books

☐ We got to choose the book to read

☐ We got to be in a group with our friends

☐ They helped me to understand the book better

☐ The books were really interesting

☐ We got to talk about the books

☐ They were fun

☐ We got to tell other people about the books we'd read

Name: _____

What has helped you improve in reading?

Please put these in order of importance to you:

☐ Silent reading

☐ Reading homework

☐ Being read to (Elena reading to you)

☐ Tutoring younger students

☐ Literature circles

☐ Learning how to think about reading / strategies for reading

☐ Choosing your own books to read

☐ Buying your own books

☐ Having books in the classroom to check out

☐ Going to the library to get books

☐ Getting individual help from someone

Anything else:

_____

_____

_____

Please explain your answers:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Taking Tests

Robert Roth believes that classroom tests should be opportunities for students to "unleash their own intellectual power, to find their own intellectual centers"—rather than merely replicating the structure of standardized tests. Here he takes a close look at how his high school history students in San Francisco, California, experience test taking in his classroom. Through informal but detailed classroom observations, Roth uncovers the complicated nature of students' struggles to demonstrate what they have learned and what they understand as they write about significant events in American history. In the process of carefully examining a narrow slice of his classroom practice, Roth questions how he designs and administers tests, what purposes they serve, and how his students experience them. His essay illustrates how collecting data informally from students can support more equitable classroom practice.

By Robert Roth

"A good test can actually motivate and push students, including those who are accustomed to struggling."

Erica[1] is hard at work on the test. For the last fifteen minutes, she hasn't even looked up from her paper. When I stop by her desk, I notice that she has written a three-page response to a short-answer question about Chinese immigration. I urge her to move on. "Erica, that's great. But how are you going to finish? You need to manage your time better." She finally looks up and says, "How can I stop? There's no end to this story." Reggie hasn't written a word. When I come over, he asks me, "What's the name of that guy who was racist to the Chinese?" I answer, "Do you mean Denis Kearny?" He nods and proceeds to write three paragraphs about nativist organizations in the late 1800s.

As a social studies teacher, I have struggled for many years over the issue of giving tests. Obviously, there are plenty of terrible tests, foremost among them the standardized tests our students are too often judged by. These tests pick away at students with the apparent goal of uncovering gaps in students' knowledge. They aim to reveal what students don't know, rather than what they have learned or understood. Administered in an atmosphere of repressive rigidity, where students' questions are not answered and help is not offered, these exams render many students powerless and vulnerable.

Searching for authentic ways to evaluate students' work, I have used a variety of assessment methods including projects, journals, essays, artwork, and poetry. While tests have never been my sole or even main assessment instrument, I have given my share of them. Not

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1   Students are referred to by pseudonym.

multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank, however. I'm talking about tests that call for extensive written response, give students choice in what they can answer, and allow them to demonstrate that they understand the heart of what they have studied. After sixteen years of working in urban schools—where so many students have learned to question their ability and where so many enter my classroom having experienced years of failure—I have found that a good test, bolstered by careful preparation and a supportive testing environment, can actually motivate and push students, including those who are accustomed to struggling. Students can demonstrate what they know about a subject, what they understand about why a historical event took place, and how the past is connected to their own lives. They have an opportunity to shine. A thoughtful test—like a carefully crafted project or essay—can be authentic assessment: a chance for students to develop a sense of their own intellectual capacity, to more rigorously approach the subject, and to refine their knowledge.

Too often, students experience a disconnect between what they learn and what they are tested on. A student once told me he never studied for a chemistry test because "the teacher makes up questions on little things we didn't really study." The test was a mystery to this student, an insoluble puzzle not worth figuring out. On the other hand, when students see the connection between the intellectual work they've done in class and an assessment—whether a test or an essay or a project—their confidence and commitment build.

"If students are engaged and prepared, they can rise to the challenge of a demanding test."

I try to create tests based on what students have actually discussed, reflected upon, and learned in class. For example, by the end of our unit on Chinese immigration, students have uncovered the many ways in which Chinese immigrants experienced discrimination and racism, as well as how they resisted. They know the specifics, not just formulaic statements like "The Chinese were treated badly." They know about the laundry tax, the anti-miscegenation laws, and the attempts to drive Chinese workers from the California mines. They also have brainstormed and discussed the topic of their test essay question, making connections between the experience of the Chinese in the mid-to-late 1800s and the situation facing immigrants today. And they have opinions and feelings about what they have learned.

If students are engaged and prepared, they can rise to the challenge of a demanding test. Momentum builds when students believe they will do well, and as a result they take real pride in the process of studying and mastering the material. They study with each other at lunch, come to my room with questions, and show up ready to try their best on the day of the test. I can't count the times students have told me, "I studied so hard for this test. I was up all night." Whether or not it's true, the point is that they have pride in the work they've done.

So much is involved in the testing process: developing test questions that encourage students to apply and share their knowledge, giving students choice without sacrificing expectations, creating essay questions that encourage critical thought, structuring in-class review time, holding after-school sessions, helping students internalize a deeper sense of their own capacity. And then, of course, there is the day of the test.

Many times, looking out over a room of thirty students taking a test, I have been over-whelmed by how hard they were working. Not a sound in the room, except for pencils meeting paper. I go over the test with them, reminding them to read the directions careful-ly and once more going over the rules: "No talking of any kind. Any question, raise your hand and I'll come over and help. If you have questions, feel free to ask them." Often, there are no questions at the beginning. Students settle in to the test and begin to write. But as I walk the room, the dialogue begins: "What does this word mean?" "Did we study this in class?" For some students, there is frustration. The pencil drops, the head follows, the hand is raised. "I can't do this," followed by a minute of intense back-and-forth. I always have sto-ries in my head after a day of tests: what Diego asked about World War I, what Reggie said after he finished his paper, what Samantha wanted explained about the question on the Harlem Renaissance.

What always strikes me is the intensity of the test-taking experience, both for the students and for myself. By the time students take the test, there have been hours of preparation. Most are ready to give their best and demonstrate what they have learned. They are count-ing on a test that is fair and genuinely reflects what we have studied. But they are also fight-ing their own demons, built up over many difficult years of school.

You can almost feel all of this as students enter the room. When she walks into class, Erica tells me to hand out the papers right away before she forgets everything. Derrell races in and announces that he's studied for ten hours and got only two hours of sleep. Joanna tells me she'll need more time because she knows so much. Andrew wants to know how many ques-tions there are on the test. Manuel asks me to do another review—at least for fifteen min-utes. I say no; we've done enough review.

I'll spend most of the period walking the room, encouraging questions, checking student work, looking for my own mistakes as well as for theirs. Perhaps a question is unclear. Perhaps a student needs a word or two to move forward. Perhaps I haven't taught a partic-ular concept well. So much is at play here: confidence, trust/distrust of the teacher, the rel-ative openness or rigidity of the testing process, students' willingness to ask their questions and my willingness to hear the questions, the pressure of time . . . and more.

This year I decided to observe test taking in my class. I wanted to learn more about how to make the test-taking experience more positive, more secure, and less threatening. I also hoped that a close look would help me understand the strengths and weaknesses of my own approach to testing.

What follows are some initial observations made in one class at Thurgood Marshall Academic High School. During two U.S. history tests, I jotted down brief notes about each interaction with a student. What did the student ask? How did I respond? I also noted the "feel" of what had happened: was the student frustrated, confident, annoyed? These notes were, of necessity, brief, since many hands were up and I had to keep moving around the class. No time to analyze or evaluate. Right after class, during my prep period, I looked at the notes and rewrote them as coherent sentences, so that I would be able to understand them later on; these notes became the following narratives.

Second Period: U.S. History

February 2003 Test: Turn of the Century

The class consists of twenty-five students—a mix of African American, Latino, Filipino, Samoan, Chinese, and Vietnamese eleventh- and twelfth-graders. It's a class I love to teach; the students burst with energy, they actually seem to care about history, and they love to argue and debate. Here is what I observe as I walk around the room:

Steven has one passion in life: break dancing. School is way down on the list. He started off the year truant, and only began coming to class when I told him I was about to call home. He told me, "Forget it, Mr. Roth. They only speak Cantonese. They won't understand a word you say." When I pointed out that we had a Cantonese interpreter who could make the call, he switched gears and promised to improve his attendance. At first he did little or no class work. But that has begun to change. Today his hand is raised continually for the first half hour. He requires assistance on each question, starting off each round with, "I don't get this." Each time I ask him to tell me what he thinks the question means, he explains it accurately. The one question he does not "get" is the one on imperialism. He simply does not understand the concept and cannot give any examples from what we have covered in class. I tell him to skip the question and focus on what he does understand. I promise to be back in about ten minutes and tell him that I expect to see lots of writing on the paper. Fifteen minutes later, when I forget to go back, he calls me over to show me how much work he has done. I look it over and, imperialism notwithstanding, I realize that he will pass the test.

Jamal—inquisitive, highly articulate—is one of the intellectual leaders in the class. Not the most disciplined student, he gets B's instead of the A's he could earn, but is at the center of every class discussion and prides himself on his knowledge of history. He turns in his paper early for me to look at. I've warned him about his tendency to rush and cut too many corners, so he tells me, "Don't worry, I'm not done. I just want to know if I'm doing it right." I notice that he has misread a question about "urban inhabitants" and has instead answered with a page about European immigrants. Upon checking other students' papers, I see that at least five other students have made the same mistake. The problem? I've never used the word *inhabitant* either as a vocabulary word or in my own descriptions of urban life. And five students are seeing the word *immigrant* instead. I stop the class briefly and point this out. There are a few groans—but everyone keeps working.

Deandra has recently been diagnosed with a learning disability. She works hard, turns in homework, and has good attendance, but her comprehension shows big gaps, despite one-on-one conferencing and in-class help. We go back a ways, since I was her teacher in middle school. Nearly every week, she stays after class to remind me of something that happened "back in the day." As I walk by her desk, I see that she has answered a question about the Spanish-American War with two paragraphs about European immigrants. I ask her if she remembers anything about the Spanish-American War and she says, "Yes, that's when the United States took over all of Spain and the Spanish people came over here. Really . . . I just don't get it." Despite doing most of her class work and homework, Deandra is lost. She had missed two days during the time we studied the Spanish-American War. Even with the class review session, she hasn't picked up any basic understanding.

Shakira—free-spirited, engaged, and self-aware—has defined a unique space for herself within the class. She has made it clear that she believes in gay rights and women's rights and that she has absolutely no problem defending those stands in the heat of classroom debate. She has started off by writing one page (both sides) on the slogan, "Remember the Maine." When I go by her desk, I point out that this is only an identification question, not worth many points on the test. "I know," she responds, "but I have a lot to say. I really found that story interesting. Don't stress, Mr. Roth, I'll get it done."

Marcus prides himself on his knowledge of black history. Thoughtful and deliberate, he takes a long time to complete any piece of work. He has not written a word about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. This is odd, because we'd had a long discussion in class, worked on an information sheet, read a poem, done some real work. And, as usual, Marcus was a chief participant, opinionated, his hand raised, making the connection to sweatshops today. I ask him why he's left the question blank. He says, "Don't you remember? I got that one wrong." I remembered. He'd said in class that the exit doors were locked to prevent journalists from getting in. Actually, they were locked to prevent union organizers from meeting with the young women workers. A relatively minor point, but it had stuck with him. I remind him how much he did understand. He reluctantly begins writing, and ends up with a single paragraph about the fire.

Peter has struggled throughout his high school career. He once told me that he had "always sucked" in school. As usual, he has finished first. Not a good sign. Questions are half-answered, and his one-page essay is only one paragraph. I ask him if he knows anything else about the essay topic, the experience of Chinese immigrants in California. He says he does, but he's too tired to write. I insist that he write what he knows. He works on it carefully for the next ten minutes, but he's still the first one finished.

Joanna is retaking this eleventh grade class after failing it last year. She asks me if I can check her essay on Manifest Destiny. The essay question: *In what ways was turn-of-the-century (1900) imperialism consistent with or different from the earlier idea of Manifest Destiny?* Her essay describes U.S. actions in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, but there's no mention anywhere of Manifest Destiny. I tell her that the essay shows real knowledge but doesn't address the central question. She says, "I left out the part about Manifest Destiny because I wasn't here when we covered that. I don't remember anything at all about it." I ask her if there are any other essay choices that she does understand, and she agrees to work on another question. I wish I had noticed this much earlier.

Ryan is an outstanding, engaged student with a learning disability that impacts his reading and writing. He always asks critical questions, takes the discussion deeper, and wants to know more. I watch him write carefully for one hour and, finally, put down his pencil. I know him well; he's given his maximum effort. As he turns in his paper, he whispers, "I knew everything. I never wrote so much in my life. If I don't get an A on this test, it is impossible for me to ever get one." He has definitely transferred the pressure back to me. When I look at his paper, his answers look fine, but he's left out two major short-answer questions.

Rafael asks "Can I do this test on another day?" I say no. Then he asks if he can use his notes. I say no. Then he asks if he can go to the bathroom. I sit down next to him and ask him what's up. He says he's going to fail the test because his attendance has been bad, and he's been shuffling between one house in the Mission District [of San Francisco] and one in Oakland, and he didn't study because he lost all his notes. I tell him we'll sit down after class and sort all this out. Then he asks if I can help him with some of the questions. We pick out a few questions that he can answer, and he begins.

April 2003 Test: The Great Depression

Not as many questions this time. The students appear more relaxed, more self-reliant, ready. Again, I walk around the room taking quick notes on what I observe.

Ryan asks if the Dust Bowl included the Great Plains. I ask him what area was affected by the dust storms. He says, "From Texas to North Dakota." I ask, "Does that include the Great Plains?" He says, "Yes."

Mario always tries to convince me that, despite evidence to the contrary, he is really a terrible student. "If you could only see me in other classes, you'd know what I mean." He asks me if this test will affect his grade. I tell him, "Yes," and he responds, "I'm doomed." I laugh. I ask him if he needs any help. He responds, "Never," and I laugh again. "I'm cool with this stuff, except I don't know nothing about farmers." Ten minutes later he asks me over to have me read aloud the question about farmers during the Great Depression. I ask him to read it aloud to me, and he does. Later, he asks me to read his answer. He actually knows a great deal about farmers.

"Why should the dialogue stop when the testing begins?"

Test Taking and Learning

Although these are merely anecdotes, as observations deriving from my inquiry into testing they nevertheless raise some important concerns. Teaching involves so much communication between students and teachers—a process often truncated by a test. Yet why should the dialogue stop when the testing begins? My inquiry has strengthened my conviction that authentic testing—testing that encourages this dialogue to continue—can deepen the learning for both the students and the teacher.

In every school where I've taught, students feel vulnerable and defensive about tests. I have found, in the course of many years teaching in urban schools, that bright and creative students are often convinced that their ideas do not "fit" with school. They become less sure of themselves over time, rather than more confident. When Erica spends "too much time" on the question about Chinese immigration, she is, perhaps, not using the best test-taking strategy. But she is also discovering and reveling in her intellectual capacity. She knows important information, can spin a story around that information, and understands its historical significance. For her—and for me—that is valuable.

What I found most interesting were the ways in which some of the most engaged students subverted the carefully prepared test I presented to them. Shakira wrote at length about

"Remember the Maine" because the story captured her interest. When we studied the Spanish-American War, she was upset that the *Maine* explosion was used as a pretext to go to war. She believed that similar pretexts were taking us into war against Iraq. "Remember the Maine" was important to her, and she was determined to explain it—even if it didn't get her that much credit. Similarly, Erica had internalized the story of Chinese immigrants and connected it with her own experience as a child of Central American immigrants. She did have "a lot to say," much more than I had asked. Both students determined their own focus and refused to tailor it to the constraints of the test. This presents a challenge: how to fully acknowledge what students have learned, and not simply dismiss their efforts as "poor time management" or "lack of test-taking skills."

Some might argue that these students are not being prepared for the rigors of more traditional testing, that they will fare poorly in classes where teachers expect them to answer test questions without any test-prep sessions or any support during the test itself. But I think students have had plenty of experience *not* getting help; they don't need more of that from my class. Too often, they have had their confidence undermined, not enhanced, and their academic strengths invalidated. I would rather not replicate the alienation and disconnectedness of the standardized testing process.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what social studies teachers in urban schools are being urged to replicate. Our administrators are far more focused on "measurable" assessments than on something more intangible such as student engagement or intellectual excitement. Our blackboards are supposed to be uniformly configured to show the standard taught each day, along with a measurable aim. Our curriculum has to cover all the standards assessed on the latest STAR test. With newly developed computer programs, it is now possible to print out multiple-choice tests one after another, all standards-based, and then feed the results into a scanner that can track and disaggregate student data. Since the standards-based tests are multiple choice, this often becomes the preferred teaching format, and is otherwise known as "teaching to the test."

In the face of these pressures, many teachers are struggling to develop and maintain a different model, one that connects assessment with intellectual discovery and achievement. I want tests to be an extension of my classroom, part of a dialogue that takes place the whole year, part of a process in which students can show academic knowledge, experience their own intellect, and develop confidence. In the end, I am convinced this will engender self-reliance in other test-taking situations. Will it also translate into higher scores on standardized tests? Given the barren quality of those exams, who knows? But I do know that students who begin to take pride in their own intellectual capacity will be far more able to negotiate the difficult twists and turns of college academic life.

Since beginning to write this essay, I have, of course, given more tests—and continued to observe. My notes from the last exam included the following reminders to myself: teach what the words *support* and *oppose* mean, clarify again the difference between *analyze* and *describe*, explain again the concept of chronology and why certain dates are historical markers. After the next test, there will be new questions, new challenges, new adjustments to make.

"What is clear is the need to learn from our students and to pay close attention as they respond to our assessments."

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When the test is done, of course, you have to grade it. How do I respond to Shakira, who wrote two pages on one question and left out others? Should Deandra or Rafael be able to take a make-up test? How will Ryan react to his grade of B? In fact, should he get a B? How do these tests fit within an overall assessment plan? Such questions present themselves over and over again throughout the course of the year, with few ready-made answers. What stands out, however, is the importance of fostering a supportive, encouraging environment in which students feel connected to their teacher and able to access what they really have learned. What is clear is the need to learn from our students, and to pay close attention as they respond to our assessments. How much are we missing when we don't listen to and watch our students during the test-taking process? And equally importantly: How much do we learn when we do listen?

Robert Roth *teaches social studies at Thurgood Marshall Academic High School, a predominantly Asian American and African American school in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood of San Francisco, California. Roth has been a teacher for the past seventeen years, and has been involved with teacher inquiry for the past eight years. His experience as a teacher-researcher has centered within the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP), a site of the National Writing Project. He has been a facilitator in the development of BAWP's teacher research program, participating in several of its projects and serving as a mentor in its urban program. As a longtime community activist, Roth has always seen his teaching within the framework of the fight for social justice and equity. His research has included an examination of his own work in teaching a research paper at the middle school level, and interviews with his students about their own views of "good" and "bad" teaching.*

Learning to Listen: Supporting Classroom Teachers Through Collaborative Inquiry

In order to effectively promote change, Oreather Bostick-Morgan had to learn how to "do research with teachers, not on teachers." Here Bostick-Morgan, a speech language pathologist in an elementary school in a large southern metropolitan city, first discusses the reading needs of hearing-impaired students in mainstream classes. Next, she relates how she learned to coach two teachers, one new and one veteran, who had hearing-impaired students mainstreamed into their classes, giving detailed attention to collaborative projects she engaged in with these teachers. She explains how the inquiry process helped the teachers address the needs of students who were not learning to read through a phonics-based approach.

By Oreather J. Bostick-Morgan

We don't all wear a size nine shoe—and there is no **only** answer.

—Author version of traditional saying

"Teachers often document the behaviors of hearing-impaired students but miss the reasons behind the behaviors."

As a speech language pathologist who works with hearing-impaired students, I am concerned about the inequity of systemic reform initiatives that mandate teaching all students in the same way. I worry when schools select one specific reading program, one specific math program, or one scripted teaching method for all students without regard for their individual needs. While these decisions can negatively affect many students, they pose particularly significant problems for hearing-impaired students learning to read. And equity is seriously compromised when the requirements of the hearing-impaired are not met.

Teachers often document the *behaviors* of hearing-impaired students but miss the *reasons* behind the behaviors. This is especially true when collaboration is lacking between teachers and specialists such as the speech language pathologist, audiologist, or other professionals with the expertise or time to consistently observe for miscues. In order to provide equitable learning environments for students with hearing impairments and auditory processing problems, teachers must have at their disposal—and be free to employ—a variety of instructional strategies.

In this essay I share some of the lessons I have learned, as a participant in a research group, about the effectiveness of collaborating with teachers rather than coming in as an outside expert in an attempt to "correct" them. My experience illustrates the importance of building trusting relationships with teachers when using inquiry as a way of building teachers' capacity to teach students with special needs; it also demonstrates the important role my inquiry group has played in my development as a researcher and as a leader of teacher research.

My elementary school[1] serves the greatest number of hearing-impaired students in the district because of its central location: hearing-impaired students are bused here so that they will have peer support. Approximately twenty-three students with hearing impairments are enrolled each year, either in self-contained classes of six to eight students or through some combination of regular classes, pull-out services, and in-class assistance from a teacher of the hearing-impaired. At this school there are four teachers of the hearing-impaired, one speech language pathologist (myself), two American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, and three paraprofessionals who support students' educational needs.

My Research Questions

Those of us who have taught for many years have reaped both the benefit and the pain of periodic curricular change. These changes have often left us struggling to accommodate students who become disenfranchised despite the fact that these changes were ostensibly implemented to include them. Because whole-school reform initiatives are often implemented with little regard for individualization, some students are left floundering.

Hearing-impaired students are different from each other. They have varying degrees of hearing loss and experience various types of learning challenges in mainstream classrooms. Some use oral speech (they have some residual hearing and use speech as their primary mode of communication); some sign in ASL (the primary language of the deaf, which is not in English word order); some use SYMCOM (signing and speaking simultaneously); and some use Signing Exact English (signs in English word order).

The variations in this population's individual needs, along with my trepidations about some of the initiatives currently being implemented in schools across the nation, led me to ask: Are packaged whole-school reforms really designed to be successful for all students, or just for some? I also asked, Why are some students failing to learn phonics? Is phonics-based instruction the only way to effectively teach reading? Shouldn't general education also address the needs of students who cannot learn to read through a phonics-based approach? Below I describe the steps I took to address some of these concerns, first through conversations with fellow speech language pathologists and then through my involvement with a teacher research initiative. I hope that by describing my own inquiry, I can challenge other

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1 This school is located in a large southern metropolitan city with a diverse population. The demographics of the school, however, do not reflect this diversity because of the thrust over the past three years to "reinvent" the neighborhoods. Enrollment averages 325 students, 96 percent of whom are black and 4 percent of whom are Hispanic. The majority (98 percent) are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

educators to become researchers by looking at their own practices. I provide teachers with strategies, learned from my own experiences, to help them avoid some of the pitfalls of the process of engaging in the frightening "R" word, *research*. In particular, I describe how collaboration, trust-building, and participation in a research group can benefit a teacher-researcher.

My Assumptions

Because of my personal background as a child of a deaf adult and my professional expertise as a speech language pathologist (SLP), I thought that I already knew the answer to the question, Why are students failing to learn to read through phonics? I felt that one significant reason was that teachers frequently use the schwa vowel when teaching phonics. This common practice of adding the {uh} sound to voiceless consonants makes the consonant sound easier to hear but distorts the way it is produced, and thus interferes with sound blending, speech mastery, and eventually reading fluency. I assumed that if only teachers were made aware of the adverse effects of this practice, the reading achievement of hearing-impaired students would improve.

In addition to drawing on my own professional knowledge, I discussed my opinion of the schwa—as well as other phonics-related issues—with some SLP colleagues. We concluded that some hearing-impaired (and some hearing) students struggle with concepts such as the schwa that are integral to phonics-based programs. We also discussed teacher preparedness and teaching methodologies, noting some of the difficulties we observed classroom teachers encountering as they taught phonics. For instance, SLPs tend to teach phonics analytically, using verbal, tactile, and visual cues to help students learn how and where in the mouth to produce sounds. These are not approaches that most classroom teachers are familiar with.

"I . . . was observing the teacher with the intent of figuring out how to 'fix' her."

All right, I will admit it. As I entered classrooms where hearing-impaired students were mainstreamed, I closely observed the methodology of the teacher because of my concern that these students need to receive equitable opportunities to be successful. I was observing the teacher with the intent of figuring out how to "fix" her—my approach was to blame the teacher for the students' failure, and my solution was to be an outside expert and show her what she was doing wrong.

The "Outside Expert"

My sensitivity to the educational barriers facing hearing-impaired students led me on a campaign to provide their teachers with the information they would need. I gave teachers a handout (Anderson 1996) explaining facts that impact the lives of hearing- impaired children. One extremely significant fact is the high correlation between a student's degree of hearing loss and his or her language delay and performance on language tests: almost half of all students with hearing loss of thirty decibels or greater in one ear are retained or referred for additional support in school (the appendix shows this correlation). These astounding data are crucial as we set expectations for this particular population to master phonemic awareness and

phonics-based programs. The data are also important in raising teachers' awareness of the importance of identifying students who may be mildly hearing-impaired.

As a speech language pathologist, I am used to considering the needs of hearing-impaired students as I teach, and I wanted to share my expertise with other teachers. For example, even students with mild hearing losses rely heavily on quiet learning environments and visual cues for understanding oral communication. The information they get from speech-reading is often context driven, so they need to be seated close enough to the teacher to effectively use their residual hearing. They need carpeted floors to dampen the noises of feet shuffling, pencils dropping, and chairs scraping, because their hearing aids amplify all sounds. Voicing cues can help them differentiate words that sound very similar (e.g. *bay, may, pay*). (Many teachers haven't been taught to automatically think about factors that may cause miscues, and don't realize that words that are made with sounds that *look* alike on the face are very difficult for hearing-impaired students to understand unless they are placed in context.) Even when a teacher realizes that there are perplexed looks on students' faces and asks, "Did you understand?" hearing-impaired students often smile and nod because they don't know what they were supposed to understand, or they actually think they did understand.

From my observations, it was clear to me that equitable outcomes for the hearing-impaired in mainstream classrooms were currently not treated as a priority—nor even being adequately and proactively addressed. I knew that these students needed more than what was included in a scripted program, and that the teachers needed to be able to modify the script in order to employ strategies that would help them. To me, the solution seemed simple: teachers could be exposed to the specialized knowledge and equitable practices they needed, during a workshop on how to modify the general-education setting for students with auditory processing problems, language processing problems, or hearing impairments. However, through my work with a research group, I was about to discover that I had completely overlooked a key factor to success: an outside expert does not change practice by providing information alone.

My (Re)search for Answers—a Rocky Beginning

As I continued my search for strategies to support our struggling readers, Gwendolyn Williams, director of the Peachtree Urban Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project, invited me to participate in a new teacher research initiative. I joined a group of Peachtree Urban Writing Project scholars, where I would research a topic of my own interest. I began delving into the issues of phonemic awareness and phonics. I wanted to determine the most effective teaching strategies for educating students who were being failed by phonics-based programs—many of whom were deaf or hearing-impaired, or had other learning deficits. I also wanted to ask pointed questions that would increase administrators' awareness of our diverse populations and their needs, to help them make better-informed decisions about curricular initiatives. Becoming part of a group of teachers investigating their own practices provided a forum for me to test my beliefs. In the teacher research I felt safe, and was also stretched to look more critically at what I thought I knew.

My next step as a teacher-researcher was to begin looking at the practices of teachers at my school. Armed with questions that I thought would be helpful, I attempted to engage them in a discussion of their teaching practices. One of the first obstacles I encountered in my research was the fact that several teachers regarded my queries as invasive of their domains. It seemed to them that I was overstepping my boundaries by asking about students who were not "my students." They knew that I was investigating their practices, and feared I would share their shortcomings with the administration. I was about to learn why I was facing this problem: I had not taken the time to create trusting relationships with them.

Moving Toward Collaboration

The next time our research group met, I shared the concerns of the teachers and my failure to gain the data I needed. Our inquiry leader Gwen Williams quietly offered the first valuable lesson I was to learn about doing research in schools: "You must learn how to be collaborative and how to do research *with* teachers, not *on* teachers. You must create a community with teachers so they can learn to trust you. If they don't trust you, then they will not share what is important to them."

This advice was profound. Research *with* teachers instead of *on* teachers, hmmm—a morsel to ponder. But how do I develop trust? Gwen had more advice: "Communicate your intentions; let them see your passion; be respectful and honest."

I returned to school determined to be more communicative, and enlisted the principal in my quest. I thought now I was on my way. Surely with the principal telling them that we were going to do this, the teachers would see it was a great idea and be glad to share their data so that I could analyze the data and tell the teachers what they were doing wrong. Oops! I had fallen into the "power trap" and didn't realize that this strategy was doomed. Although I thought I had heard what our research director said, I hadn't internalized it. This second attempt proved to be similar to my first experience with the classroom teachers.

In fact, this time there was even less cooperation than before, so back I went to my research group seeking answers. They shared some beliefs that helped me to structure my research, principles that have become second nature to me now:

- Respect the teachers and the process.
- Listen intently; give *them* the chance to tell you what the issues are.
- Begin and end with questions instead of answers.
- Communicate about everything.
- Build a relationship that encourages buy-in.
- Make sure both the teacher and the students are engaged in the research process as collaborators.

Being in a research group that was responsive to my needs as a researcher and my development as a collaborator helped me realize I needed to take some foundational steps before

I could seriously begin to look at the needs of the students. I had to make my research effort a "we-search" collaborative, engaging both the teachers and the students. On the advice of my research group, I stepped back from thinking I already understood how to fix the problem and knew what kinds of information I needed to collect from teachers in order to do so. I began to really listen to the teachers and the students. I tried to set aside my own biases and preconceptions, knowing that these could adversely affect the gathering of accurate data. I stopped working in isolation and provided teachers with oral progress comments on the students I saw during pull-out therapy. I began asking if the problems these students faced were typical of other students in the class. When possible, the teacher and I would select a peer tutor to assist a struggling student with speech and language skills. I began systematically following up with the teachers to jointly monitor student progress.

Building a Working Collaboration

Two teachers emerged as ongoing collaborators in this endeavor. One was a veteran teacher who had worked twenty years as a teacher in Africa before returning to the United States. She was in her fourteenth year at our school as a third grade teacher and very confident of her ability to teach reading. The second participant, a relatively new teacher, was in her second year of teaching second-graders. My approach was different for each teacher because of their different levels of prior knowledge, but with both teachers I continued to notice that the more collaborative and communicative I became, the more willing they were to share what they noticed about their students. (I refer to the teachers as the veteran teacher and the novice teacher from here forward.)

I began by spending a few minutes on alternating Mondays in each teacher's classroom. I explained the need to do this by saying that I needed to assist two of my students in carrying their speech and language lessons over into their regular curriculum. Each Monday I sat with a group of four students, always including one student from my caseload. At the end of the day, I would return and discuss with the teacher what I observed, and strategize with her how we might address the students' challenges. As I became a partner with these teachers, I also assisted in administering the Basic Literacy Tests and became an eager participant in analyzing the results.

The Novice Teacher: From Modeling to Team Teaching

The novice teacher was very tentative about what was going on in her classroom. She described the students as failing to attend to her. She complained, "If I have said this once, I have said it a thousand times; they just don't listen. We just went over that last week." As we built camaraderie, she began to share some of her own weaknesses. Because she had never been taught to teach phonics, she depended heavily on the teacher's guide. The perfect opportunity to begin a collaborative inquiry arose when we placed one of my students, Tevin,[2] in her room. Tevin had severe language and articulation deficits.

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2   Students are referred to by pseudonym.

After observing class one day, I said to the novice teacher, "When I sat with Tevin, Paul, Kerry, and Angelo today I noticed that Tevin was not the only one who was having difficulty decoding /str/ blends. Kerry also seems to miss more information when you walk around the room. Today he said to me, 'I heard what she said, but I can't say that sound, and it didn't make sense.' When he realizes that he has a miscue he gets stuck and then misses other information." Then I asked her permission to present a minilesson to work on that one skill with all of the students. This strategy served several purposes: It lessened the feeling of isolation students had when they were pulled out from their classes for extra instruction. It shifted the burden of responsibility temporarily off the teacher, who did not have the experiential knowledge of alternate strategies to help the students decode /str/ blends. Finally, it allowed me to model for the teacher a process of unobtrusive questioning to check student comprehension. After this, I began team teaching with her on a regular basis, and modeling some strategies to help her succeed with struggling students.[3]

The novice teacher and I began to have conversations about reading, teaching, and learning. For instance, we talked extensively about phonemic awareness and how it differs from phonics. These discussions were invaluable for building a relationship, as well as for imparting additional knowledge. As we built mutual respect and trust, the novice teacher was receptive when I shared articles from the book *Teaching Struggling Readers*, edited by Richard Allington (1998). I also provided her with handouts describing strategies for teaching students with hearing losses, auditory processing deficits, and language processing deficits. It was wonderful for me to watch as she began ensuring that the struggling students were included in classroom dialogues and that they truly understood what was happening around them or were provided additional tutorial time and individualized instruction.

The Veteran Teacher: Coteaching

The veteran teacher was articulate, soft spoken, and analytical. Her lengthy experience had given her strength and self-confidence as a teacher. In our conversations together, we realized that phonemic awareness was a problem for several students. For instance, she noted the failure of struggling students to engage in word and finger plays. On one occasion she had asked the students if they remembered some of the finger plays (Five Little Ducks; Hickory, Dickory, Dock) that helped them practice rhyming words and prepared them for reading, and she was surprised when they did not. We agreed that, for whatever reasons, several of her students had not "broken the code" for words that sound the same except for beginning or ending sounds. Their vocabularies were limited (often two or more years delayed), and they had major difficulties with sound blending when words were presented syllabically.

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3 The minilessons I modeled included
- oral motor posturing for targeted sounds
- word plays for sound-letter associations
- listening with your eyes, ears, and hands (air writing)
- "skating" on blends (especially str)
- multimodality teaching (using writing to aid retention)

Our discussions were rich with literacy strategies she was already using in her classroom, and some that I was able to share with her. As we talked about the difficulties that specific students were having, she realized she employed an "auditory verbal" method for teaching phonics (the teacher models a sound and asks the students to repeat it). I suggested we try a verbotonal method (for example, the child places a hand before the teacher's lips to feel the sound of /p/, and then before her own lips as she makes the sound herself) and tactile method (the child touches the teacher's nose, and then his own, when the /m/ is made, to feel the tone) for the students who were struggling. Eventually I asked if she would agree to coteaching with me periodically so that I could watch some of the other struggling students, and we could talk about them in our next discussions to strategize how we could meet their needs. She was excited about this team-teaching approach.

While participating in her class, I took notes, which I fleshed out later as I talked with her. Listening to the students, I picked up some really interesting information about them that we might otherwise easily have missed. For instance, one of the students had hearing loss in one ear and wore a hearing aid. The noise from the air conditioner, periodic noises when students dropped things on the tiled floor, and the sounds of students talking around the room were all amplified by his hearing aid and competed for his attention. Therefore he missed important chunks of information he would have otherwise absorbed. When asked specific questions, he often seemed distracted, responding "What you say? I didn't hear you." What he really meant was, "I'm confused because I missed a part of what you said so I didn't understand your comment or direction."

"We also gave him words to use that would more accurately describe the exact problem he was having."

The teacher was becoming more and more exasperated because she often missed the clues that indicated why this student gave a specific response. As I explained to her how these noises affected him, she repeatedly said, "Without you here, I would have totally misunderstood that. I have often taken for granted that if I give this child preferential seating, because he has one fairly good ear, he should be able to understand me. I never knew how much he was missing, and I feel so guilty for failing him." She was relieved to understand why the student had such difficulty with sound-blending in phonics, and she began to ask him to repeat what he thought he heard. This example illustrates how my learning to collaborate with the teachers enabled us both to learn by listening to students. As we talked and strategized about this hearing-impaired student, I was grateful to my research group for suggesting and supporting this collaborative approach.

Direct Work with Students

It was exciting to see both teachers growing in their knowledge of the requirements of the hearing-impaired, becoming increasingly responsive to the needs of their students, and being more open for collaboration. We decided it was time to expand the "we-search" collaborative, to help students take more responsibility for their own learning. We decided to share what we were learning with the regular and special-education students we were observing. Quick individualized conferences made the greatest impact. For example, we might say, "Tevin, you seem to have a hard time learning new information in a noisy spot and you get off task. Would you like to move to a quieter area for a few minutes until you learn to say these words?" He learned to ask for clarification, for a peer tutor, or to move to

a quieter space to better understand instruction. We also gave him words to use that would more accurately describe the exact problem he was having (e.g., "Did I hear you say . . . ?"). Through miniconferences like this, I was able to see the direct effect of collaborative inquiry on students.

Sharing What We Learned

As March approached, with testing imminent, the two teachers and I began meeting for a few minutes after school to talk about some of our findings before we would no longer have the luxury of consistent meetings. (During testing, the teachers' time is taken up with groups that meet after school for test preparation.) Each of us had developed our own list of "ah ha!" moments to share; I was overwhelmed by how appreciative they were that I had become a resource both for them and for the students. The novice teacher wrote,

> I have learned so much this year. Every new teacher should have a mentor who can come into their rooms and share strategies that will help the students. It was a great experience to have someone who looks beyond the lesson planned and knows how to delve into the why of a student's failure to catch on.

It was also informative for me to note what each of the teachers learned in this process. The veteran teacher said she valued learning to be more systematic in observing students, and to try different instructional modalities:

> One of the most valuable things I learned was to be more systematic in how I observe my students. It is not enough to know that Tevin isn't getting the information and needs more individualization; it is so important to have someone with the knowledge to intervene when he needs the intervention. Sometimes I would find myself noting a need to go back and explain something just for him, but the time just seems to get away from me and I can't go back.

> The three students who needed more than an auditory visual approach were the ones who became quickly bored with any activity that was not hands-on. [However,] planning hands-on activities for them wasn't enough because just as you planned something hands-on, what they really needed was a different approach, such as the tactile.

Like the veteran teacher, the novice teacher valued her new understanding of the importance of different teaching modes for hearing-impaired students. She also appreciated learning how to get beyond the scripted teacher manual and think about her students' individual needs:

> I now understand that some children hear the words but they aren't being defiant when they can't give it back. We have to teach those students in a different way.

> Our talks about things that work and trying them in class really helped me bring together the research and what works in my class. More importantly, I know that just because something is written in a book doesn't mean that it will work for my class. All of my students are individuals and I need to look at their learning that same way.

Through our collaboration, both teachers developed an awareness of the specific needs of hearing-impaired students—an awareness that will ultimately help the teachers better iden-

tify and meet the individual needs of all students in their classes. They learned how to recognize and interpret students' behaviors not as defiant, but as representing a lack of understanding, and they learned strategies to better serve them. Furthermore, the novice teacher developed a new stance toward curriculum, gaining the confidence to modify or augment scripted lessons to meet students' particular needs.

What I Learned

In the process of partnering with these teachers, I learned to question my own assumptions. I discovered that my original assumption—that many of the problems facing hearing-impaired students could be solved by eliminating use of the schwa—did not hold true. Review of assessment results did show that while some students overused the schwa, it did not turn out to be the culprit for those who evidenced the greatest difficulty mastering reading. The majority of the students who had the greatest difficulty were also unable to accurately identify word patterns, or words that were different only if the final sound was different. These students sought the teacher's attention repeatedly, with positive or negative attention grabbers.

"I could not have done [this] without the support of my research group. They asked questions, made suggestions, shared their own experiences, offered support, and encouraged me to develop my skills as a leader of teacher research."

I learned that collaborating with teachers on research can provide them with opportunities to reflect on their instructional practices, and help them find new ways to meet the needs of struggling students. Although phonemic awareness and phonics are two of the most necessary structures for reading success, my research confirmed that not all students may be able to derive benefit from them. Students may have auditory processing problems, hearing losses, cognitive deficits, lack of sufficient systematic exposure, or difficulty concentrating in noisy environments; whatever the reason they struggle with reading, we need to remain open-minded and provide equitable opportunities for learning. Just as we don't all wear a size nine shoe, phonics-based approaches to reading will not work for all students. My research suggests that inquiry may be a good way for schools to look at their populations and fit the model to the child, not the child to the model.

I also learned that equity is about sharing instructional tools with general-education teachers, to help them work with hearing-impaired students in their classes. And I learned that it requires a safe environment, such as a trusting relationship, for teachers to examine issues that they can change in their own classrooms. The teachers had to be coinvestigators about their own classroom practices; simply providing them with information was not the way for them to internalize the changes that would ensure equitable learning in their classrooms.

I believe that I learned more from this experience than anyone. I learned about leadership through inquiry, particularly the importance of taking a collaborative approach. However, I could not have done that without the support of my research group. They asked questions, made suggestions, shared their own experiences, offered support, and encouraged me to develop my skills as a leader of teacher research.

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Oreather J. Bostick-Morgan, a twenty-three-year veteran speech language pathologist, credits the Peachtree Urban Writing Project for engaging her in investigating her own practices through systematic journaling, thereby leading her to the Teacher Research Collaborative. Her passion for educating students with hearing impairments arose from her childhood experiences with her deaf mother and her professional experiences with deaf and hearing-impaired students. This passion is at the heart of her research into equitable practices for deaf and hearing-impaired students.

Appendix: The Impact of Hearing Loss on Language Delay

The Impact of Hearing Loss on Language Delay

Degree of Loss		Language Delay in Years
15–26 decibels	Within normal limits	1.2 years' delay
27–40 decibels	Mild loss: 25–40 db	2.0 years' delay Hears conversation; may need some type of amplification
41–55 decibels	Moderate loss: 41–70 db	2.9 years' delay Develops speech and language but requires amplification; voicing and resonance are often adversely impacted
56–70 decibels	Severe loss: 71–90 db	3.5+ years' delay Requires amplification, auditory management, and professional assistance
90+ decibels	Profound loss: 90+db	Requires auditory and language support, amplification, and, in some instances, cochlear implants

Learning to Teach Elementary Mathematics: Inquiry in Preservice Teaching

Preservice teacher educator Marcie Osinsky engaged in collaborative inquiry with teaching interns in a Massachusetts teacher education program. Here she describes how, by debriefing videotaped segments of their elementary school mathematics classroom teaching, she and the interns inquired into issues of teaching and equity. Drawing on vignettes about two teacher interns, Osinsky illustrates how she supported the participants in the program to identify and develop their own mathematical content knowledge as well as explore the racial and cultural assumptions they brought into their classrooms. This process affected the teaching and learning in the interns' classrooms as well as the structure of the teacher education program.

By Marcie Osinsky

It was October. Kevin,[1] a six-year-old African American boy, sat on the rug during the first grade math lesson. He was raising his hand with enough excitement and energy to lift his body from the ground. While the teaching intern, Kate, a young white woman, listened to another student explain her answer, he spoke aloud his strategy for solving the addition problem: "You say 2 in your head and then you say, 3, 4, 5, 6, 'cause you are adding four more." On his face was a look of satisfaction, as he articulated his new method for approaching the problem. He looked around to see if his words were having an impact. Kate was still talking to the other child, repeating the question. Kevin then slid his body over to the side of the rug area and became involved in playing with the papers that were tacked to the wall. Kate had three more students share strategies and then ended the lesson.

My role as supervisor was to collect data during the lesson. Before each lesson, the teaching intern and I would establish a focus. Kate's focus question for this lesson was How am I engaging the students and helping them to explain their thinking?

After the lesson Kate met me in the library to debrief. She was somewhat harried and anxious, expressing her disappointment in the lesson. She wanted all the students to share their ideas and listen to each other. She was frustrated, saying that Kevin was disengaged, distracted, and unable to listen to the other students. I read my notes, playing back her words and actions, as well as the responses of the children. The notes showed that Kevin was listening, and was not initially disengaged.

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1   Students are identified by pseudonym.

Her perception of his behavior began to change when she recognized that she had missed an opportunity to validate his strategy and therefore keep him engaged in the lesson. As we talked, clarifying the concepts in the math unit about combining numbers, we noted the progress he was making: "He used to solve 2 + 4 by counting 1, 2,—3, 4, 5, 6. Today was the first time he started at 2 and 'counted on' the numbers being added." Then Kate said, "I didn't realize that he had made that leap in understanding in his answer. He's been listening more than I knew." At that moment, her focus became less on managing his behavior and more on listening to his thinking and learning. "For the next observation," she said, "will you write down what the students are saying, so I can try to understand their thinking? I don't want to miss the ideas."

Introduction

Working with teaching interns like Kate brings me back to an image of myself as a first-year teacher of first- and second-graders. It was twenty years ago and I was sitting around a small circular table with my colleagues, at one of the weekly meetings where we discussed the work of our students and reflected on our math teaching. The teachers in the school were making a commitment to teach algebra to all the students, as algebra was the gatekeeper to higher-level mathematics and a vehicle for future educational and economic access. In the local high school, students of color were not represented in advanced mathematics classes; ending the practice of "tracking" and preparing all our students to enter advanced math classes was a larger equity issue. The school was committed to figuring out what it would take to ensure that all students learned algebra.

At this particular meeting we were discussing how to teach the concept of equivalence to first-graders. I was thinking about Marcus, who could easily answer 3 + 3 = 6, but when he saw __ + 3 = 6, he said "9." I was wondering how the work I did with my first-graders related to math achievement in middle and high school. I was also realizing that I knew only the algebraic formulas I had memorized in eighth grade. Talking with my colleagues about how my students approached the math work, looking at achievement data, and examining the curriculum were important parts of my own teacher education. As I learned about the importance of algebra, I was raising questions about how my own knowledge and practice connected to the learning experiences of my first grade students. As I reflected with my colleagues, I was learning ways to engage my students meaningfully in my math classroom and explore the connections between their achievement and a larger vision of access to mathematics education.

This memory reminds me of how important it is to help teachers like Kate link a vision of equity with the day-to-day practice of engaging students in meaningful learning. Kate often spoke about her commitment to equity. Now, as she began her teaching career, I wanted to help her participate in a teaching community where she could reflect on the experiences of students in the classroom and ask questions about equity, access, and achievement in our teaching.

The Context of My Inquiry

My early years of teaching, at a school that was committed to equity and valued reflection and inquiry in teachers, inform my current work as a teacher educator supervising teaching interns from a local college program in their work at an urban science-and-math elementary school. The school has a mission to provide academic excellence for all students. There and at the college, mentor teachers, professors, and I are exploring ways to support and train new teachers who believe in the lives and minds of their students, who understand the context of urban schools, and who make a commitment to engage in the day-to-day intellectual work of teaching math in a serious way. Our goal is to develop a program where new teachers learn to teach an engaging and challenging mathematics curriculum, where they are equipped with both content and pedagogical knowledge, and where they recognize issues of inequity in their daily practice. In my role as a supervisor, I conduct inquiry into math teaching, collecting data about students' experiences and learning during math lessons. Examining these data with key questions in mind is a central part of our interns' teaching preparation. This essay describes how sharing the inquiry process with interns provides opportunities for examining their teaching decisions—reflecting on the thinking behind those decisions and the impact of those decisions on their students' learning.

In preservice training, content and equity issues are often discussed separately, but in the actual teaching and learning, they are inextricably linked. Equitable teaching depends on strong content knowledge, reflection on one's actions and underlying assumptions, building meaningful relationships with students that convey commitment to their success, and recognizing one's responsibility to find ways for each child to learn. The teaching interns we hire share a passion for making a difference in the lives of children with diverse types of experience and knowledge. Some come with experience working in after-school programs and community agencies in urban areas, as well as strong mathematical knowledge and education. Others come less prepared for the task of teaching elementary-level mathematics in an urban school. Whatever their entry point, we are finding that inquiry enriches the experience of preservice teachers.

"In preservice training, content and equity issues are often discussed separately, but in the actual teaching and learning, they are inextricably linked."

Teacher Knowledge of Mathematics: A Matter of Social Justice

"Why do I have to learn math if I know I will only be teaching in a kindergarten classroom?"

—Teaching Intern

Many of our interns want to become teachers because they enjoy working with children; they want to make a difference in the lives of children and families. However, those who come to work in the elementary grades often say that they are "math phobic" or do not have strong skills in math. Since many interns are themselves afraid of not understanding math concepts, they often cannot see that young children have the capacity to grapple with these concepts. Even confident interns who have been successful in math may face challenges when they are asked to teach math in a way that is different from how they themselves were taught, or if their knowledge does not include a solid understanding of mathematical concepts.

Our goals are to create a program that reveals the complexity of the early-elementary math curriculum and to help interns develop the knowledge and skills they need to responsibly teach all students. We found that gaps in the interns' content knowledge—particularly when they lacked conceptual understanding—often made it difficult for them to grasp a student's line of thinking or to explore multiple ways to approach a problem. Thus a lack of teacher knowledge can limit students' learning and achievement. We were hoping to address the equity challenge presented by this issue: that of preparing interns to teach mathematics effectively to all students. In order to address this challenge, a math professor from the college, the school math coach, and I began to develop a model for the teacher-intern program that included math self-assessment, a mathematics seminar, and classroom teaching experiences supported by a series of planning, observation, and debriefing sessions with us, their coaches.

When we started the program four years ago, the interns began the year by taking a mathematics assessment to identify their own areas of strength and weakness. They assessed their own knowledge of math concepts and completed a series of math problems that were aligned with the general elementary curriculum as prescribed by National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards. However, there was no way to include more math work in the interns' course load. So we took some time in our weekly site-based seminar to review math concepts and to investigate and complete the lessons in the curriculum they were expected to teach. We chose concepts that the assessments identified as most challenging: mental math, fractions and percents, strategies for multiplication and division. We also chose areas that were often difficult for the students at each particular grade level: subtraction, fractions and percents. Each week we met to explore mathematical concepts and to create a community where the teaching interns learned together.

Over the next four years we transformed our model. Since the mathematical knowledge required for teaching is extensive, the seminar was clearly not enough. If we were serious about our commitment to teaching all students mathematics because of its "gatekeeping" function in society, then all interns needed further study of mathematics to prepare them for the task. We advocated for the college course work to include more mathematics content. At the school site we recognized that the interns needed support preparing for and analyzing the teaching and learning in their classrooms. Inquiry, into both math lessons and teaching decisions, became the focus of our work as we supported lesson-planning and analyzed student work and math conversations from lessons the interns had taught.

Why Inquiry?

The first goal of the inquiry process was to gather information about how students in the interns' classes were developing mathematical understanding and knowledge. The interns shared their challenges in understanding children's thinking and relating the students' responses to the stated learning goals and essential concepts of the lesson. The interns needed opportunities to tease out their students' answers and to design the next step or question based on students' learning needs.

The second goal of the inquiry was for interns to be reflective about themselves and their own teaching practice, especially issues of engagement in, and access to, a curriculum that

supported high student achievement. Videotaping was an important part of the inquiry; it allowed the interns to see patterns in students who got their attention and in their own ways of responding to each student's thinking. The videotape slowed down teaching moments, allowing us to see what might have been missed and to rethink what had happened. The video-debrief conversations challenged interns to examine the lens through which they approached their teaching and their students. The interns were asked to reflect on the ways in which their beliefs and actions expanded or limited students' possibilities for achievement. We were making transparent the lens and the thinking process behind their teaching decisions.

Using Inquiry to Understand Math Thinking and Examine Teaching Decisions

When we began using short videos of lessons the teaching interns had presented, we noticed that many interns had difficulty recognizing the ways that students displayed an understanding of mathematics in their responses. Consequently, interns often missed opportunities to support students' understanding, or to affirm and challenge students to expand their thinking. So we created debrief questions to help build awareness:

> **Debrief questions to help build awareness and promote reflection, when viewing videotape**
>
> What do you see/hear the students doing/saying?
>
> What does that tell you about their understanding?
>
> What did you do?
>
> How did that support the students' learning at that time?

- What do you see/hear the students doing/saying?

- What does that tell you about their understanding?

- What did you do?

- How did that support the students' learning at that time?

Capturing and slowing down the lesson in this way allowed the interns to focus on the students' thinking, and on their own subsequent teaching decisions. It also allowed them to see patterns that emerged in their practice, and in the students' learning successes and challenges. Below I present a vignette from a videotaped lesson, followed by a discussion of how we debriefed the tape and the lesson.

> During a lesson in a first grade class, Larissa, a Cape Verdean teaching intern, called repeatedly on Tomas, a six-year-old Puerto Rican child who was having difficulty sitting and staying focused on the rug. Larissa had asked, "How many hands are there in this room?" and the students were engaged in solving the problem. Tomas sat right next to Larissa, and was moving about trying to maintain her attention. She asked him to show how he would solve the problem. He got up and walked around the rug area counting "2, 4, 6, 8, 10 . . . " as he pointed to each child.

At the other end of the rug sat Tiffany, an African American girl who up until this point had been listening and quietly discussing the problem with the friend next to her. As Tomas passed Tiffany, she raised her hand and waited to be called on. After Tomas was finished Tiffany was called on and said, "We could line up and count all the hands on one side and then all the hands on the other." Larissa smiled and then immediately refocused the whole class on Tomas' strategy.

A video clip of this lesson provided Larissa with the opportunity to investigate the students' thinking more explicitly and to reexamine her understanding of her students' strategies and her own teaching decisions. When we debriefed this lesson, Larissa said she was having difficulty keeping Tomas engaged throughout the day. She was pleased by his involvement in this lesson, and by his use of a "counting by twos" strategy for finding the total number of hands in the classroom. As we watched the videotape together, she expressed surprise at Tiffany's answer, and remarked at how sophisticated it was; she did not recall Tiffany's strategy. We talked about the interesting discussions she could have led reflecting on the two strategies: "Two groups of nineteen, or nineteen groups of two. . . . Counting by twos nineteen times or counting nineteen, two times. Are they the same? What do the students notice about the numbers?" Larissa began to wonder how she could have led this discussion and what the other children had been thinking. She also began to question her focus on Tomas and to examine why she did not follow up on Tiffany's answer. Was it because she was thinking of only one way to solve the problem—counting by twos? Was it because she was trying so hard to keep Tomas engaged? How could she challenge Tiffany and the other students by exploring multiple strategies further? In other words, the inquiry process led to more questions—questions that were clearly linked to Larissa's ability and willingness to make teaching decisions that supported and challenged a range of students.

Larissa's inquiry stance also allowed her to reflect on her own experience in relation to math, an important aspect of understanding her approach to her students and the curriculum. "I loved math as a child in Cape Verde," she recalled, "and I was always good at math. As a young girl I was always encouraged in math too." However, like many interns, Larissa talked about how this curriculum differed from the ways she had been taught mathematics. She remembered being taught one method in Cape Verde, and then another as a child in U.S. schools. Like many interns, she observed that this curriculum demanded a shift from procedural learning to conceptual understanding.

"Debriefing encouraged Larissa to think about the ways in which aspects of her own identity influenced her perspective and her actions."

Using Inquiry to Understand Oneself as a Teacher

As we observed videotapes, we asked the interns to explore the "why" behind their teaching decisions. This exploration led us to questions about the values and assumptions underlying these decisions. The interns began to reflect on who they were and how their life experiences affected their teaching. Exploring issues of identity, culture, and race became a vehicle for further examining their assumptions about students and their learning experiences in the classroom.

For example, debriefing encouraged Larissa to think about the ways in which aspects of her own identity influenced her perspective and her actions. The video—in combination with the questions she was led to ask when she watched it—helped her to self-understanding. After the debriefing, she commented,

> I was surprised that I paid all my attention to Tomas' thinking. As a black woman, I feel I try to be attentive to issues of race. I firmly believed that I would not respond more to boys than to girls, but when I noticed it in the videotape . . . I can see myself, as the little girl in math—being really thoughtful and quick to understand the concept. I can see the way I was taught as a woman to be attentive

to others, as I am now, a mom of three boys focused on their needs. I will definitely be aware of this as I continue to work in the classroom.

As Larissa reflected on herself as a teacher, she examined how her own identity (including race, gender, culture, and family) influenced her teaching instincts and decisions. This examination helped her understand how she was responding to individual students, and encouraged her to raise questions about the experiences and beliefs that guide her practice.

The story of Kate from the vignette that opened this essay provides another example of how inquiry can expand a teacher's understanding of herself and her practice. Kate's inquiry into the experience of one child in her classroom illustrates a change in her understanding of a teacher's responsibility to motivate and engage students in the learning of mathematics and to take an active role in teaching in a way that supports each child's engagement and achievement. Although Kate's inquiry focused on only one child, it demonstrates a shift in her understanding of her role as she sharpened her observational skills to better understand his thinking and experience in her class. By focusing on Kevin's behavior, Kate had been missing an opportunity to affirm his mathematical understanding. Her initial assumption was that Kevin was not able to listen to the other students during the math conversation. But in debriefing that lesson, she recognized that she had missed his contribution, that he had developed new understanding to offer his classmates, and that her assumption was incorrect.

As Kate took on whole-class teaching responsibilities, she encountered more challenges. At first she was quick to punish and was easily frustrated with "disruptive" behaviors, for which she blamed the students. She did not easily recognize what role she played, nor what role her own assumptions played, in the dynamic. After a particularly hard day, we decided to collect more data on another African American boy in the class, Mark, who repeatedly resisted working whenever she was teaching. She kept a record of when he was on track, when he felt successful, and his moments of tension or "acting up." She videotaped sections of her lessons each day, watching them with a careful eye on when Mark was engaged and how she responded, and also on what she said and did at times when he was not engaged. Lastly, she noted the behaviors of the rest of the class during these lessons. The video clips showed that when Mark felt confident, and when he clearly understood the entry point for the lesson, he was focused and on task. When there was ambiguity in the lesson, or when he had difficulty connecting the lesson to what he knew, he was anxious and quick to create a diversion. Kate saw that she was quicker to respond to Mark's "off-task" behaviors, than to those of other students.

The video clips also showed Kate that when she was confident and clear in the lesson, she was able to be patient, ask focusing questions, and firmly convey her expectation that Mark engage in the lesson. When she had carefully planned the lesson with enough scaffolding around new concepts, she was able to facilitate Mark's learning. If she did not have a good understanding of what he needed as a learner, he became anxious, confused, or restless; then her anxiety also went up and her responses were negative and urgent, focusing on controlling his behavior rather than teaching him math. I encouraged her to reflect on questions such as: What was her understanding of the motivation for his behavior? What were her expectations for Mark in math? What were her assumptions about Mark's skills and knowledge? I also encouraged her to reflect on the role that identity and race played in her interactions with Mark. How did race and racism play a role in the assumptions she had? How did her own

identity as a white woman impact her understanding of Mark as a learner in the class? In the larger world? How could she listen to and learn more about his experiences?

Slowly, Kate began to examine her attitudes and beliefs about Mark. Watching the tapes helped Kate to see that her ability to be clear about the learning goals of the lesson—and what those goals meant specifically for Mark—played a role in creating a successful learning situation for him. She also began to see a pattern of focusing on his negative behaviors more often than those of other students, further isolating him from the classroom community. As she examined why this was happening, she recognized that her frustration was aggravated when Mark did not understand because she personalized his behavior; that is, she experienced it as a reflection of her own capabilities. Kate was beginning to recognize some of her assumptions and to take a different stance toward her students' learning.

At the end of the semester she was able to articulate her new understanding:

> I had to put my own feelings about the student aside (he doesn't care, he can't do this) because they were not accurate. I had to keep watching my responses to him . . . to his behavior and to his thinking. . . . I had to help him make connections to the math . . . to take what he did understand and affirm it. I had to, it was my job to, push ahead and get to know what helped him feel successful . . . to learn. . . . He was resilient, coming in each day and approaching his learning anew, but I had to be resilient too—and persistent, in understanding his thinking and teaching him.

Conclusion

Over the years I have learned a great deal about using inquiry to support teaching interns, about my role as a supervisor, and about working collaboratively with a college faculty member to support interns in their mathematics teaching. In this essay, I have focused on inquiry as an approach that is particularly well-suited to help teaching interns address issues of meaningful engagement and access to a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which are important aspects of equity.

The stories of two teaching interns, Larissa and Kate, illustrate the power of an inquiry-focused approach in helping interns reflect on their math teaching. The interplay of content knowledge, knowledge of effective pedagogy, and knowledge of oneself and one's students affects the decisions teachers make about how to teach. Inquiry can play an important role in increasing new teachers' abilities to reflect on classroom data, to tease apart a lesson, and to raise questions that challenge them to explore new ways to meet the needs of their students.

Using an inquiry approach, collecting and analyzing data in this way, reshaped my role as a supervisor. In the beginning, teaching interns would always say, "Oh, that lesson went well," or "That lesson did not go well," and then they would ask me what I thought. Having the video and data enabled me to say, "Let's both look and see what we see in the data in relation to your question," and to focus explicitly on the experience of the children and the teaching decisions that the intern made in the moment. In this way, the interns were challenged to relook at what the children were saying and doing and to take responsibility for assessing and raising questions about their teaching decisions.

As a third important dimension of this work, my collaboration with a college math professor developed into shared responsibility for student achievement in mathematics. Teaching interns often comment that what they learn in college classes does not align with what they are experiencing in the schools. In a school committed to equity, staff and administrators thus feel constant pressure to educate new teachers to ensure the success of all children. It is encouraging when colleges and universities are also committed to the preparation of teachers to ensure the achievement of children in urban schools. We had always recognized the challenges teachers face in adapting their content knowledge to teaching mathematics in elementary schools; this collaborative experience confirmed the need both for a stronger mathematics component of teacher preparation at the college and for the college professor to better understand the experiences of students and interns in the schools. After our two-year collaboration, the math professor went back to the college to propose a new mathematics course sequence for undergraduates who declare education as their concentration.[2]

When Kate and Larissa graduated from the program with their cohort of teachers, they left with lists of next steps for their own learning. They left talking about what it meant to them to be an effective teacher in an urban school. They left framing the successes of their students in ways that honored the children and identified the components in their classrooms and curricula that supported them to achieve these successes. As I continue to support beginning teachers, I am struck by the complexity of their work to understand themselves, to know the content they are teaching, and to motivate and challenge their students to achieve. I have come to see inquiry, framed by a focus on equity, as a powerful tool to help them in that work.

"Having the video and data enabled me to say, 'Let's both look and see what we see in the data in relation to your question.'"

Marcie Osinsky began her education career as a first and second grade teacher in the Cambridge, Massachusetts, public schools. Her experiences there led her to explore how school partnerships with community and educational institutions can support teacher preparation, student achievement, and the role of teacher leadership in urban schools. To continue this exploration she became a liaison between Wheelock College and the Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School in the Boston public schools, and a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools as well as the Boston Pilot Schools Network of the Center for Collaborative Education. In her role as a liaison, she worked with college faculty and public school educators to design a yearlong internship program focusing on mathematics and equity. In keeping with this focus, she has been examining teaching, observation, and feedback methods for new teachers. Currently, she is working as the curriculum director for the Boston Teacher Residency Program.

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2   The sequence includes three math courses focusing on mathematical content for teaching, with a math methods course as well. These courses could pave the way for similar graduate courses in the future.

Building Inquiry Communities and Leadership for Equity

Introduction

Linda Friedrich, Elizabeth Radin Simons, and Carol Tateishi, Section Editors

Any teacher who has been part of a successful collaboration with a friend, on a grade level team, or in an inquiry group, knows that two minds are more than twice as good as one. The essays in this section demonstrate that the benefits of teacher research multiply in collaborative groups. A research group whose members share a commitment to looking closely at their practice, at themselves, and at the cultural perspectives they bring to their work can challenge group members' assumptions, spark ideas, and instigate improvements in practice. Building this type of community and working together toward more equitable outcomes for students takes sustained attention and leadership. The five authors featured in this section speak with passion about what it takes to establish and sustain such communities.

Forms of Inquiry Communities

Teacher research communities come in myriad configurations and sizes. The essays in this section portray four types of collaborative inquiry communities: a subset of teachers from a large school (M. Williams); a schoolwide collaboration in a small school (Friedman and Juarez); a districtwide opportunity for professional development (Green); and a cross-school inquiry group facilitated by an external partner (Tateishi).

What do these collaborative inquiry groups have in common? Most significantly, each has the end goal of improved teaching and more equitable learning. To achieve this goal, each roughly follows a cycle of identifying a problem or question, taking action, collecting data, analyzing them, and arriving at findings. In order to support a rich analysis of data and discussion in a short period of time, three groups (Friedman, Tateishi, M. Williams) use protocols for examining student work or sharing inquiry.[1] Finally, each group disseminates its findings, either informally or through published writing.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions of Collaborative Leaders

Each author in this section serves as an inquiry group leader/facilitator, taking the initiative to call meetings, often taking responsibility for planning the agenda and activities; facilitating or cofacilitating the meeting; and keeping the group on course. These leaders include three full-time classroom teachers (Friedman, Green, Juarez), one writing project director (Tateishi), and one writing project co-director serving as a school coach (M. Williams). While the leaders take responsibility for convening the group's work, each takes a collabo-

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1   For examples of protocols, please see Carini and Himley 2000 and the Looking at Student Work website: *http://www.lasw.org/protocols.html*

rative approach to leadership. The purposes of this collaborative approach include creating sustainable school-based leadership for research (Juarez, M. Williams); developing a range of culturally sensitive leadership practices (Tateishi); and benefiting from other leaders' knowledge and experience (Friedman).

The essays in this section highlight three critical areas of expertise needed to lead inquiry for equity: inquiry tools and processes, understanding of equity, and facilitation skills.

- Inquiry tools and processes: Leaders need experience with and knowledge of the tools and processes that support teacher inquiry (Friedman, Green, Juarez).

- Understanding of equity: Leaders should examine their own assumptions and personal history, and how these influence their teaching and leadership. They should support others in the group to do so as well. They must also bring a range of cultural practices and understandings to group leadership (Friedman, Tateishi).

- Facilitation skills: Leaders should plan and facilitate straightforward, flexible meetings focused on teaching and student learning (Friedman, Green, Juarez, M. Williams).

With a collaborative leadership approach, these areas of expertise need not reside in a single individual; leaders can rely on one another for support.

Collaborating with External Partners

While the essays throughout this guide illustrate teachers' central roles in leading inquiry for equity, the articles in this section also acknowledge the important leadership roles played by external partners. The essays in this section point to five roles that external partners can play in launching and sustaining inquiry:

- Introducing a range of approaches and resources for conducting and leading inquiry (Friedman, Green, Juarez, Tateishi)

- Fostering honest conversations about equity (Friedman, Tateishi)

- Securing funding for stipends and food (Juarez, Tateishi, M. Williams)

- Facilitating research meetings (Friedman, M. Williams)

- Bringing together teachers from across schools, communities; and states to engage them in a larger movement (Green, Tateishi, M. Williams).

With support from an external partner or through site-based collaboration, each author has taken an important leadership role in a teacher research community. The essays in this section shed light on the role of the leader as well as on the benefits and challenges of participating in various types of teacher research communities.

References

Carini, P., and M. Himley. 2000. *From Another Angle: Children's Strengths and School Standards: The Prospect Center's Descriptive Review of the Child.* New York: Teachers College Press.

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Developing a Culture of Inquiry for Equity: One School's Story

The San Francisco Community School has developed a schoolwide culture that uses teachers' inquiries into their own practice to work for more equitable outcomes for students. Here, Tanya Friedman examines the nine-year process that has produced this culture, emphasizing the importance of educators critically examining their assumptions, biases, and most cherished teaching practices as they work to ensure that all students learn. Friedman describes a range of inquiry processes that she and her colleagues have used over the years in their K–8 school—from multiyear, whole-school investigations of a core curriculum area to individual minicycles of two to four weeks, each focusing on a single teaching challenge. While there is no single inquiry structure that works for all teachers, notes Friedman, the key to making progress on raising student achievement comes from the continued willingness of staff to look at hard questions about teaching and to support each other in that process.

By Tanya Friedman

"The culture of inquiry for equity . . . enables us to interrupt inequitable patterns of student achievement."

I am fortunate to teach and learn in a school community where equity—all students meeting high standards of achievement and having positive and affirming school experiences—is our explicit goal. In 1996 when I joined San Francisco Community School, this vision of an equitable learning environment was gaining clarity and becoming our focus. We began searching for a path to help us get there. We have not found a single or direct path to equity, but we have experienced a shift in our adult culture, in how we look at our school and our classrooms, and in what we do with what we see. These shifts were the beginning of our transformation to a culture of equity-focused inquiry, a culture that is helping us get closer to our goal.

I believe that the culture of inquiry for equity at San Francisco Community School enables us to interrupt inequitable patterns of student achievement more successfully than any particular practices or policies. This success would not have occurred if we had focused on teacher inquiry without equity or on equity without using the tools and approach of inquiry. In this article, I share our experiences of learning to create, nurture, and sustain this culture—the conditions and strategies that help us to teach for equity. Although we've found no single model or perfect approach to inquiry for equity, I hope our story demonstrates the benefits of creating space for doing this work.

San Francisco Community School

This is my ninth year working at San Francisco Community School (SFC); for six of those years (the first three and the last three) I have worked as a classroom teacher and for three of those years (the middle three) I served as head teacher. San Francisco Community School is a K–8, teacher-run public school of three hundred students, grades K–8. All of our classrooms are multiage; we are organized as K–1, 2–3, 4–5, and 6–7–8.

Our student population is about 40 percent Latino, 20 percent Asian, 20 percent African American, and 20 percent white. Almost three-quarters of our students qualify for free and reduced-fee lunch, and almost half are limited English speakers. In each of our classrooms there are students living in poverty and students living in upper middle-class homes; students whose family members did not complete high school and students whose family members have graduate degrees.

Our faculty and staff (seventeen certificated teachers and thirteen support staff) is 15 percent Latino, 10 percent Asian, 30 percent African American and 45 percent white. We come from a range of class backgrounds, though the majority grew up in middle-class homes. Rather than a principal, we have a head teacher who serves a three-year term as the instructional leader of the school. The position rotates among experienced faculty members. An important part of our hiring criteria focuses on a candidate's understanding of equity and commitment to working toward equitable student achievement.

"It wouldn't happen if we focused on teacher inquiry without equity or if we focused on equity without using the tools and approach of inquiry."

Establishing a Foundation for Inquiry for Equity: Connecting Schoolwide Data Analysis with Classroom Inquiry

Although the culture of inquiry for equity at SFC—our particular structures, practices, and norms—evolved out of the specific experiences, personal commitments, and unique personalities of the teachers most involved in developing it, two external organizations played important roles in its development. In 1996, my first year at SFC, we joined the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC).[1] I learned about inquiry through a BASRC group that was exploring aspects of whole-school change that might affect student results. The group helped me connect my actions to a larger vision while pushing me to uncover my assumptions and clarify my theories. It was my first experience of how deep the intellectual life of a teacher could be. I wanted SFC to provide a professional space for all of our teachers that was as supportive and challenging as the BASRC group was for me.

In 1997, our school joined the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES),[2] a regional school-reform organization with a focus on equity. Over the past seven years, our partnership with BayCES has helped us to face the equity gap in new ways. In our partnership's

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1 More information about the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) can be found at *www.basrc.org.*

2 More information about the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) can be found at www.bayces.org. BayCES is one of the four partner organizations that form the Teacher Research Collaborative.

first year, a team participated in BayCES' weeklong summer institute, where we examined results of our writing assessments and uncovered disturbing achievement patterns. In every classroom, there was a clear pattern of African American and Latino students not meeting our school standards. In every classroom, white students were the only students who achieved the highest level on the writing rubric. We were devastated. While each of us could name reasons why our own students hadn't achieved the standards, there was no way to talk our way around the whole-school picture.

Uncovering that pattern of inequity, as we were learning how to conduct data-based inquiry inextricably linked inquiry and equity for me. Out of that weeklong experience, our professional development team developed a whole-school data-based inquiry about writing instruction. We planned whole-school strategies—common use of rubrics and frequent opportunities to write and revise—to help students meet standards. As a faculty, we spent two full days a year (one in the fall and one in the spring) calibrating our writing standards from kindergarten through eighth grade and scoring writing by every student. We analyzed data from these whole-school scores to adjust our instruction.

> **We've found three elements to be especially important in developing and sustaining a culture that supports inquiry for equity.**
>
> Create structures and support for teachers to reflect on how issues of race, class, and culture play out in their own lives, in the school, and in the classroom.
>
> Offer a variety of structures and entry points for equity-driven inquiry.
>
> Dedicate time, space, and support for both formal and informal inquiry.

To make this whole-school inquiry feel present and alive in our classrooms, we also devised "minicycles," which framed the whole-school inquiry at the classroom level. We asked teachers to choose students from our underserved groups whose writing had not met the standards and to design strategies aimed at strengthening their skills. To help us think strategically and systematically about why students weren't achieving, we each picked one focus student and conducted an inquiry about that student. We devised a research question, planned out strategies and data-collection procedures, and recorded our hunches and challenges. By sharing strategies, seeking information from the students' previous teachers, and asking each other questions, we began to take collective responsibility for the students who were not meeting the standards. Our classroom inquiries, along with our whole-school work, improved students' writing performance and allowed us to trace which strategies worked most effectively with which students. For five years in a row we closed the equity gap in writing achievement on school and district assessments.

This first schoolwide inquiry impacted our school culture in at least two important ways. First, it established that our purpose for inquiry is to create equity. Second, it initiated our practice of collecting and disaggregating data, no matter how small the numbers. For me, equitable achievement began to seem possible, even just around the corner.

Despite the benefits of this inquiry, our ongoing work has revealed the complexity and difficulty of creating equity in achievement and school experience. While we still have more questions than answers, we've found three elements to be especially important in developing and sustaining a culture that supports inquiry for equity:

- Create structures and support for teachers to reflect on how issues of race, class, and culture play out in their own lives, in the school, and in the classroom.

- Offer a variety of structures and entry points for equity-driven inquiry.
- Dedicate time, space, and support for both formal and informal inquiry.

Structures and Support for Explicit Work on Equity

I have come to believe that the most significant factor in determining whether classroom inquiry will bring about changes that lead to equity is structured time for teachers to reflect on how their experiences and beliefs impact their practice and their interactions with students. Through our work with BayCES, we learned about the tools and structures of constructivist listening[3]—a form of listening designed to support individuals to gain a deeper understanding of their own biases, assumptions, and reactions while supporting a community to build alliances across race, class, and cultural differences. In a constructivist listening session, each speaker has a designated amount of time to speak on a topic of concern, while the other participants listen without offering judgments, interpretations, advice, or personal responses. (See appendix B for details.) When our school counselor and I first practiced constructivist listening at a BayCES retreat in 2001, we saw how we were able to connect our prior experiences to what we believed and how we acted, while simultaneously being exposed to a wide range of other people's stories and experiences. It seemed like the missing piece to our model of inquiry.

Since then, an overwhelming majority of our staff has embraced the opportunity to reflect on how our beliefs and prior experiences affect our interactions with students and with each other. Instead of blaming students or giving up, teachers try to understand the role their own beliefs and behaviors play in students' lack of success. Once a teacher acknowledges her part, she can start a meaningful inquiry. For example, through participating in constructivist listening, one teacher recognized that she had a pattern of consistently engaging in power struggles with African American girls. To understand the roots of these power struggles, she examined her expectations of African American girls, her own childhood, and her experiences with anger. She also looked at aspects of her teaching style and practice that sometimes sparked power struggles. After this investigation, she changed her practice in important ways—from creating more concrete classroom leadership opportunities to modeling ways for students to rephrase questions or complaints that sounded disrespectful to her.

As our research group came to share community and trust, we started turning to each other for help in changing practices. When a colleague recognized a pattern of Latino boys being unmotivated in his class, he asked another colleague to observe his classroom. He knew that his own school experiences shaped his view of his students and his reactions to their apparent lack of motivation. His colleague's observations helped him identify how he unintentionally communicated low expectations. In order for teachers to ask each other for help—and give each other honest feedback—we need to have a high level of trust among ourselves.

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3 Constructivist listening was developed by Julian Weissglass, professor of education at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and director of the National Coalition for Equity in Education (NCEE). For more information about constructivist listening, see *http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu/articles/constructivistlistening.pdf*

My own experience also illustrates the importance of confronting hidden beliefs and assumptions. After engaging in inquiry for several years, in 2002 I began to ask myself, What am I willing to learn from my inquiry? I learned to ask myself this question from hearing myself ask it of my colleagues. I recognized that the individual inquiries that leveraged the greatest change were those in which the teacher was willing to learn that she was making mistakes, missing important pieces of data, or looking through biased lenses. As I looked at data about Iris, a second grade English language learner who had repeated kindergarten and was still about a year below level in literacy, something shifted in me. (See appendix C for details about my cycle of inquiry with Iris.) I asked myself: What am I willing to see in the data? Am I just seeing what I expect to see? Am I really willing to hear Iris's answers? Which practices am I willing to change or to give up altogether? And I asked colleagues to look with me.

Because of this new stance, I tried to open myself up, to see the unexpected in Iris's data. I noticed two important things about Iris and her learning that I might previously have overlooked. First, I observed that Iris's comprehension improved dramatically when she read with a partner. To my surprise, it didn't matter whom she read with—whether she read with another second-grader at her own level, a second-grader at a higher level, or a first-grader at a lower level, she engaged the text more meaningfully and comprehended more. This challenged my assumptions about how best to partner students for collaborative work. What I learned from Iris also prompted me to set aside more time for partner reading, during which students took turns reading and spent a lot of time talking about their books. In order to do this, I had to reduce the time dedicated to independent reading, a practice I'd considered successful in my classroom for seven years.

"What am I willing to see in the data? Am I just seeing what I expect to see?"

Second, I was struck by Iris's description of herself as a weak student. I realized that my carefully constructed reading groups weren't serving her well and might even be contributing to her negative image of herself. I approached Iris with a new plan: she and Carlos, another second-grader who read below level, would join a new group with second-graders who read several levels ahead of them, but they would need to preview the book before the group met and occasionally meet with me in addition to their regular reading-group time. These changes felt like a big risk to me. What if I wasted weeks of reading instruction and Iris's reading didn't improve? Worse, what if I was setting her up to feel even less confident? But these doubts weren't realized. Instead, I noticed an immediate positive change in her affect and performance. Months later, she referred to the time when she moved reading groups as when she "started to get smart." And she scored in the 80th percentile on the second grade CAT-6.[4]

Because of Iris, aspects of my reading instruction will forever be more complex; but more significantly, she transformed how I look at data and how I listen to my own questions. Opportunities to examine my own assumptions and to challenge practices I considered effective and grounded in sound theory were key to promoting this learning.

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4 California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition. See *http://www.startest.org/pdfs/posttestguide.pdf* for more information.

These stories illustrate how SFC teachers' examination of our assumptions—about students, ourselves, and effective teaching practices—affected classroom inquiries that ultimately changed our practices and contributed to student learning. Our use of constructivist listening practices has fostered a culture in which teachers regularly have protected time and space to talk about the emotional content of our work and about how our experiences shape our beliefs and actions. I believe that such structured time for teachers, whether or not constructivist listening is used, is essential for building trust, which in turn allows teachers to ask hard questions, to take risks, and to make necessary mistakes. Without protected time and safe space, it is too easy to gloss over this step amidst all the things that need changing in our classrooms and schools. This kind of self-reflection is the heart of a culture of inquiry for equity.

A Variety of Structures and Entry Points for Equity-Driven Inquiry

For a long time, I felt that it was important for every SFC teacher to participate in the same inquiry process. I believed that if we kept revising our approach we would find a model that would meet each individual's needs. I no longer believe that a single best model exists. Different approaches work well for different people at different times, depending on what they are investigating, whom they are working with, their comfort level with inquiry, their teaching experience, and their individual styles. Each year our professional development team modifies the inquiry structures that the whole staff uses. In particular, we adjust and modify

- the focus of the inquiry
- the locus of the inquiry—who decides the focus, and where it happens
- the length of time an individual or team stays with a specific topic.

Choosing a Focus for Inquiry

Our first inquiries each focused on one student and one learning outcome. This worked well when teachers had a very clear standard they wanted a student to reach. The goal was for the teacher to learn one thing that worked—even one thing that didn't work. Our assumption was that strategies that are successful with one focus student—using songs to memorize multiplication facts, adjusting a peer-editing process to learn language mechanics, creating a home-school journal to build a relationship around reading—would likely be successful with other focus students. These inquiries helped develop teachers' sense of confidence with inquiry because success or lack of it was measurable and concrete.

We also used content-focused inquiries, where teachers began with a question about how to teach a particular standard or subject so that every student would master it. These inquiries have often generated important ideas that we could apply across disciplines and across grade levels. For example, during a middle school teacher's inquiry into what practices supported her struggling students to master complex learning standards, she developed a theory about prerequisite skills. During a series of scientific investigations in which students were to discover for themselves an understanding of buoyancy, she noticed that none of her focus students were discovering the theory. After a few days, she realized that

her focus students weren't using their scales accurately. Without this prerequisite skill, they didn't have a way to figure out the higher-level concept. We began wondering what other prerequisite skills were hindering our focus students from mastering complex standards and began to incorporate prerequisite skill assessment into our project planning.

The Locus of Inquiry: Who Decides the Inquiry Focus and Where It Happens

Each year the professional development team decides whether classroom inquiries will stem from the whole-school focus or whether we will structure support for teachers to select their own inquiry topics.[5] Both approaches have strengths and limitations. When there are clear links among everyone's inquiries, it is easier to learn together, to push each other, and to support each other. Informal conversations about our inquiries are richer and more frequent when we share a focus than when we pursue individual questions. A common focus facilitates communication with our students' families. We've experienced success in two school-wide inquiries: one about writing strategies to close the achievement and experience gap, and another about reading comprehension strategies. However, sometimes the schoolwide focus isn't what is most pressing to a particular teacher or a particular team. In these cases, teachers sometimes walk through the motions of the inquiry without delving into it deeply.

We've noticed advantages and disadvantages to a more individualized approach to classroom inquiry, as well. We have found that teachers often invest more in self-determined questions. For example, a kindergarten teacher's interest in how classroom power dynamics affected his students' learning inspired an inquiry that brought about significant changes in his instruction. These changes contributed to more equitable reading readiness levels than his classes had achieved in previous years. In my experience, inquiries rooted in a teacher's passion or immediate concerns are more likely to result in major changes to practice. When teachers devise their own questions, however, it can be difficult to support each individual inquiry. In our experience, without structured support, many teachers struggle and feel ineffective, while some don't conduct inquiry at all. Inquiry leaders at SFC also struggle with the question of whether a particular inquiry is likely to lead to equity, and who makes this determination.

To balance the pros and cons of whole-school and individual inquiry approaches, we sometimes engage in collaborative inquiry by grade-level teams. It's easier for three or four people to agree on a common question and to keep a focus on equity, especially when their students are similar ages. Grade-level teams often have particular achievement gaps or instructional weaknesses that team inquiry can address more effectively than whole-school inquiry or individual inquiry.

Inquiry Length

Over the years, we have planned very short minicycles, and we have pursued multiyear inquiries. (For one example of the many recording tools we developed to document our minicycles, see appendix A.) Minicycles, which typically last two to four weeks, can sup-

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5   The professional development team uses data from multiple sources to choose a focus for the school. We try to stay with the same focus until data show significant changes and promising practices seem sustainable, often from three to five years.

port a teacher's sense of efficacy about using inquiry. For example, a teacher who did a mini-cycle on teaching multiplication facts to a struggling math student tried a different technique each week for three weeks. This inquiry provided clear data about this student's learning style, and reinforced the power of systematically examining a practice. These short cycles offer teachers the flexibility to address immediate teaching challenges, provide immediate data-based feedback on how a particular strategy works, and help teachers identify larger questions to pursue over a longer time period. Sometimes, however, the short cycles feel too abbreviated and disjointed, and don't allow teachers to investigate deeper questions, so we have also experimented with yearlong inquiries.

Our first yearlong cycles of inquiry started with our participation in BayCES' Teacher Inquiry Project (TIP) in 2000–2001.[6] Almost half of SFC's teachers voluntarily participated and conducted full-year inquiries for the first time. At the end of the year, when we presented at school, our colleagues were impressed by the depth of our learning and wanted to try this approach. The next year, each teacher followed one student's progress over the year. We carefully chose students who were underachieving and who also represented the groups of students we were consistently underserving. These inquiries helped all of us learn about our focus students' unique learning styles.

Some teachers found that their investigations changed how they taught all students. For example, one teacher tracked her interactions with her focus student. Over time, her analysis of each incident allowed her to notice how she and her student reacted to each other. She learned which approaches were effective, when he was most likely to act out, and how his behavior was connected with his academic learning. For instance, on days when his homework was incomplete, he was particularly volatile until he finished it. And the further behind he was on an assignment or in his progress toward meeting a standard, the more anxious she became about failing him. The anxieties of both the teacher and the student often snowballed into conflicts. The long-term nature of her inquiry allowed the teacher to see larger patterns that she might have missed in a shorter cycle and gave her insights that allowed her to overhaul many classroom systems. One important change she made was creating time for students to complete homework before school began. While many teachers valued the depth of learning resulting from full-year inquiries, others found them hard to track and too slow to make a difference for students. These differences among teachers' perspectives highlight the importance of flexibility and multiple approaches.

Time and Space for Formal and Informal Equity-Focused Inquiry

While we have established a variety of formal inquiry structures, opportunities for less formal conversations have been essential in the development of our culture of inquiry for

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6   The TIP network provided instruction on classroom research, which we were excited about since our minicycles were improvised based on what we had learned about whole-school inquiry. It also provided opportunities for SFC teachers to network with teachers from three other Bay Area schools. On TIP network days, our school team met with teams from the other schools in the BayCES TIP network. Seeing how other schools supported inquiry gave us some insight into the benefits and challenges of different models and of our own. On the best TIP days, we had a taste of the kind of culture of inquiry we wanted to develop at SFC.

equity. I believe, in fact, that our culture of inquiry for equity really grew up in the intersections of formal and informal inquiry. The SFC teachers who first started meeting for monthly dinners through the BayCES TIP network have continued these get-togethers for many years. Our dinner conversations, which typically involve six to eight teachers, have contributed to my understanding of the need for both formal and informal structures of inquiry. When I look over agendas and notes from these meetings, I am struck by the combination of structure and spontaneity. For the most part, we structure our predinner work according to an agenda, with designated time periods allotted for different activities (though we follow our agenda loosely, bowing more to hunger or the timing of dinner). We engage in a combination of individual reflection, partner work, and whole-group time to give each other feedback on data, classroom videos, interviews, or assessment questions. At dinner, we usually discuss an open-ended question, tying it back to equity and inquiry, though not necessarily to anyone's specific inquiry. We often linger over the dinner table long past the agenda's ending time. The conversations frequently turn philosophical and abstract, but we always find ourselves coming back to what we are learning from our students, what we are learning about teaching, and what we are learning about ourselves. The format for the dinners continues to evolve; what remains constant is the beneficial support they provide for examining the intersection of equity and inquiry.

Several of our dinner conversations remain touchstones for how we talk about equity-driven inquiry and how I think about teaching. Recently, during a feedback session on a teacher's current inquiry about how to engage reluctant readers, someone asked her about her own reading preferences. This question referenced a dinner conversation from four years ago, when we talked about why we read and what was personally meaningful to us about reading. We shocked ourselves with the diversity of our responses. Some of us preferred to read for pleasure, others only read nonfiction and news for information, while still others primarily saw reading as a tool to learn how to do something. I realized in that discussion that I had to change my reading program to support all the ways reading might be important to my students.

Many dinner conversations turn into discussions about race, class, and culture. As we build stronger and stronger relationships, we ask each other questions about our assumptions and push each other to see our data differently. What does it mean that white teachers struggle so much with the behavior of some African American students? How does the fact that most credentialed teachers grew up in middle-class homes while most classified staff grew up in working-class homes affect school culture? How were our expectations for how families should stay in contact with school informed by our cultural backgrounds? Perhaps even more important than the content of our questions is that these informal dinners allow us to ask ourselves hard questions—and to ask them out loud. We expose more and more of how our feelings, reactions, and assumptions influence our practice. We share how it feels to discover that our instruction is not always equitable. We talk about what it feels like to fail with a child or a group of children, and to watch the equity gap widen. We also talk about our visions for ourselves as teachers—how we imagine that leaders for equity teach.

These less-formal conversations about equity and inquiry have been as important to developing our culture as any of the more-formal structures or approaches we use. It became more and more important to the TIP team, many of whom served on SFC's professional

development team, that we create opportunities for the whole staff to talk about the personal dimension of teaching for equity. We experienced the benefits of a culture of inquiry for equity and wanted to share it and sustain it.

Bringing Together the Elements of an Inquiry-for-Equity Culture: Our Current Approach

Our current approach to inquiry locates structures of support and types of inquiry in different places. The *professional development team* carries out whole-school inquiry. At our meetings, we set the agenda for staff meetings, reflect on teacher self-assessments, and analyze student outcomes. We determine which aspect of project-based learning the staff needs to focus on based on our data and revise the adult learning plan for the year as needed. We expect that all teachers will learn and incorporate new strategies, reflect on what happens, and analyze student data, but we know not all teachers will make these understandings the focus of their classroom inquiry.

Grade-level teams work together to choose a focus area for their inquiry, because so many teachers find independent inquiry isolating and frustrating. Each team chooses whether to conceive of their grade-level team inquiry as a yearlong cycle, a series of separate minicycles, or something in between. And we continue to have *TIP team* dinners for individual teachers who seek additional support or have questions that don't fit into the whole-school or team inquiries. *Study groups* meet monthly to investigate an aspect of equitable schooling. These groups decide what structures best serve their learning—constructivist listening, dialogue, or a cycle of inquiry. All members of our staff—from classroom teachers to the custodian to yard supervisors—participate in these groups.

We will continue adapting our approach to inquiry for equity to support our community of educators to

- look at multiple sources of data to identify the ways we are not serving our students, particularly those who traditionally are underserved and who underperform

- ask ourselves what we need to learn (as a community and as individuals) in order to better understand what is and what isn't working for our students, and what we need to learn and do to achieve better results

- talk with each other about what's not working in our own classrooms and how we see our beliefs, backgrounds, personalities, and values interfering with the kind of interactions and instruction we want to deliver.

Conclusion

We continue to build our adult culture of inquiry for equity at SFC in order to achieve our goal of equity for students. We know that in order to transform student achievement and school experience, we need to transform our classrooms, our school, and ourselves. We need to continue to engage in inquiries, formal and informal, that help us see our students, our practice, and ourselves with more clarity and with more complexity. In order to do that,

we need to immerse ourselves in a culture that honors and supports our questions, that provides different ways for us to engage our questions, and that creates space for experiencing and reflecting on the emotions, expectations, and assumptions that accompany this work. My assessment of the health of our culture of equity-driven inquiry is based on my own experience with my classroom and students. When I begin a new inquiry, if I feel resistant to change or reluctant to unpack my assumptions and actions, it is a sign for me that the interplay of equity and inquiry, of support and urgency, is in disequilibrium. When I feel willing to transform my instruction—to give up familiar structures and practices, to look at something or someone in a completely new way, to take risks, to learn something uncomfortable about myself—then I believe our culture is healthy.

When I see and hear my colleagues engage in formal and informal inquiry, investigate foundational pieces of practice, take risks with instruction, work to build alliances, or ask how their assumptions affect their instruction and possibilities for equitable and excellent achievement, then I believe that our culture of inquiry for equity is working—it is supporting and compelling teachers to change their practices in ways that will lead to more equitable results.

Reference

Weissglass, J. 1990. "Constructivist Listening for Empowerment and Change." *The Educational Forum* 54 (4): 351–370.

Tanya Friedman has been learning about equity and inquiry for the past nine years at San Francisco Community School, where she teaches second and third grade. As a teacher-leader, Friedman focuses her research on how teacher inquiry can support teachers to change their practice to create better and more equitable results for all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved. As a classroom teacher, she focuses her research on accelerating students' academic achievement through positive, culturally congruent relationships with school and learning. She is currently investigating the relationship between how students conceive of powerful thinking and what they achieve academically.

Appendix A: San Francisco Community School Inquiry Minicycle

Name:

DLT question for minicycle #3:

⇩

My question:

What I am going to do: (strategies)	What I am going to collect: (data)

⟷

My hypothesis and hunches:

Challenges I anticipate and SUPPORT that I would like:

Appendix B: Introduction to Constructivist Listening

There are many forms of dialogue between individuals. Among these are conversational, informative, and give-and-take discussions. Based on our assumptions about people, there is another form of communication that needs to occur—one in which people can construct understandings and deal with their feelings. This form, called constructivist listening, can take place in a dyad, support group, or personal experience panel.

It is necessary to create relationships safe enough that colleagues can express their deepest feelings and be listened to, knowing that they will not be criticized or ridiculed. To develop our own thinking it is important to have a place where colleagues listen to us without judgment while we explore our ideas.

Structures in Support of Constructivist Listening

Dyads: The simplest structure is a dyad, which is the exchange of constructivist listening between two people:

> I agree to listen and think about you for a fixed period of time in exchange for you doing the same for me. I keep in my mind that my listening is for your benefit so I do not ask questions for my information.

Support Groups: A facilitator is responsible for seeing that the guidelines are followed and for asking questions when necessary. The leader often suggests a topic for the support group, but the choice of what to talk about is up to each talker. Support groups are useful in building a sense of community, helping people learn how to listen, and providing safety to begin to look at an issue that will be worked on more in a dyad.

Personal Experience Panels: A small number (three to five) of people have a limited amount of time (four to six minutes) to share their experiences related to a topic (for example, gender bias, leadership, teaching in diverse classrooms) with a larger group of people.

Guidelines for All Support Structures

- Each person is given equal time to talk. *Everyone deserves attention.*
- The listener(s) do not interpret, paraphrase, analyze, give advice, or break in with a personal story. *People are capable of solving their own problems.*
- Confidentiality is maintained. (The listener doesn't talk about what the talker has said to anyone else or bring it up to the talker afterward.) *A person needs to be assured of confidentiality in order to be authentic. Also one's feelings at any moment are not representative of one's rational thinking (or perhaps even of one's feelings five minutes later).*
- The talker(s) do not criticize or complain about the listener(s) or about mutual colleagues during their time to talk. *A person cannot listen well when he or she is feeling attacked or defensive. Problems are to be addressed in a different structure, based in dialogue.*

Appendix C: Target Student Cycle of Inquiry

Target Student Cycle of Inquiry

Current Situation

Iris is an 8-year-old Latina second-grader. She repeated kindergarten. Began second grade below level (at level 1-1). Knows reading strategies—uses with support. Spanish speaker. Speaks slowly and carefully in English. Lack of confidence. Very connected to family. Family very connected to school. Loves school.

Root Causes

Impact of kindergarten retention on her self-perception as a learner.

Language issues: vocabulary and language structure limited in English.

Reflection and Changes in Classroom Practice

Iris's oral language is stronger than I first thought. Confidence issues are deeper. New questions … Role of relationship in her learning? What does she think about her learning?

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Theory of Action

If I accelerate Iris's academic language acquisition, her reading will follow. If I support Iris's confidence and help build her sense of herself as a proficient, independent learner, she will progress and continue to love school.

Strategy

Inquiry focus and case study with support from BayCES coach (Michelle).

Close contact with mom.

Language acquisition emphasis.

Goals

Iris will read above level 22 by June—be above second grade exit level.

Iris will feel more confident about herself as a learner.

Developed by Tanya Friedman (San Francisco Community School) from BayCES Cycle of Inquiry © 2003. Used with permission.

A Practical Practice: Shaping and Owning Teacher Research

Effective teacher research, according to Deborah Juarez, is action-oriented, focused on improving student learning, and sustained by an on-site staff community. Here Juarez, a teacher and researcher in Oakland, California, lays out her vision for teacher research and describes an example of its practice. Juarez believes that teacher research must be teacher owned, and she outlines some of the problems she has encountered when working with outside support organizations, in particular university–school partnerships. She shares her experiences as a leader of teacher research in her new small school—a high school she and her colleagues designed using action research as the primary form of teacher professional development. She provides insight into the process, challenges, and rewards of leading inquiry groups and supporting teacher ownership of the work.

By Deborah Juarez

"I want to consider the shape teacher research takes when it is truly owned by classroom teachers."

Background

At Mandela High School, a small school in its first year in Oakland, California, my colleagues and I engage in teacher research on a regular basis. It serves as our support for professional growth and is an essential part of our collaborative culture. Three years ago when Carol Tateishi, the director of the Bay Area Writing Project (a site of the National Writing Project), asked me to introduce teacher research to interested colleagues at my site, I didn't foresee such a result. Though it had long been my view that teacher research could be an effective support for professional growth, I didn't expect it to catch on and shape the collaborative culture of our school, nor did I expect the practice to sustain itself once writing project funding ended. At that time I said little to promote the practice of research as a way to improve teaching. Instead, I let the practice speak for itself.

In my view, teacher inquiry needs to be owned by teachers, as opposed to being facilitated and controlled by university–school collaborations. In many university–school partnership models, what counts as inquiry is often based on the written research product produced by the research process, not the research process itself. The focus on the research product can sometimes obscure what I believe should be most central to teacher research—student learning and student outcomes.

Overall I am interested in uncovering how teacher research can be sustained, and what it looks like, without external support. I want to consider the shape that teacher research takes

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when it is truly owned by classroom teachers. In this essay, my goal is to describe our school's model for school-based teacher research, a model that is focused on improving teaching and student learning, and is not dependent on external support. I begin with my background and experience with teacher research, move to the background and experience of my school, and end with our current involvement in teacher research.

My History with Teacher Research

To describe teacher research more fully at Mandela I must first describe my own experience with it, which informed my thinking and objectives as I modeled the practice for my colleagues. In 1993 I was invited into a university-teacher collaborative named the Multicultural Collaborative for Literacy and Secondary Schools (M-CLASS), funded through the Center for the Study of Writing at the University of California, Berkeley. University staff intended to study the research practice of twenty-four novice teacher-researchers at four urban sites across the country, while the teachers researched a question around the themes of multiculturalism and literacy. Mind you, I had never heard of "teacher research" before, nor did I like the sound of it, but as a fourth-year teacher honored to be invited and hungry for professional growth opportunities of all sorts, I found the initial description of the practice more intriguing than repelling.

"Teacher research," I was told, "complements teaching—it is formalized reflective practice." Growth in practice is thus the outcome of conscious and deliberate reflection. I was introduced to the British-based model of "action research," the practice of "trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge" (Kemmis and McTaggart 1982). With its focus on action and improvement, this type of research contrasted with my perception of research as "controlled." By its definition, teacher action research allowed for trial and error, intervention, and movement toward a desired outcome. These practices, which traditional research lacked, were closely aligned with teaching. The action research practice was further described as the result of a grassroots movement generated by teachers. From this description of teacher involvement, I formalized an ideal of teacher research as inclusive, practical, and teacher owned.

Some Thoughts on External Support for Teacher Research

In the years since that initial description, I've examined teacher research in this country and concluded that it does not have the characteristics of a "movement," and it certainly is not "grassroots." A common support for teacher research in this country is through a school–university partnership. I credit university scholars for introducing teachers like myself to the practice of teacher research and for building my leadership capacity as a facilitator of the practice. However, I have also felt conflicted about their involvement, no matter how democratic their intent. As a teacher with an ongoing involvement in a university scholar–teacher collaborative, I have experienced dependency in all stages of our relationship, despite the deliberate efforts by university colleagues to empower teachers as facilitators and grant writers. Even when I participated as a teacher-leader with an on-site group, I depended on funding to entice involvement.

In addition, with external support came external requirements: publication, presentations, or reports of progress, all of which told me that dissemination of teacher knowledge was the main objective of inquiry practice. Although I understood the importance of elevating teacher perspective through publishing research, I noticed that this objective did little to entice involvement in the research practice, or for that matter, to reshape our professional growth culture as a teacher-owned movement like that in Britain. I wondered how the practice could sustain itself without outside support.

I began to ask, out loud, Are we missing some big point? Over and over I heard teacher-researchers saying the same things: they saw value in formalized reflection and collaboration, they felt transformed by the practice of research, and they experienced improvements in their teaching. The collaborative process of sharing and supportive feedback enabled reciprocal teaching among colleagues, allowing novice and veteran teachers to learn from one another. These were the "side benefits." However, in my experience, becoming a better teacher was never named as the primary objective of our research. I was rarely asked to name my own objective, and when I was, my objective of improved teaching was often met with resistance, as though I was opposed to writing, publication, the elevation of teacher knowledge, or "rigor" in the work.

I was developing a position about external support: that the best support prepares teachers for a future of no support. Though I had no experience without external support, I continued to wonder: What might compel teacher ownership of action research? How could teacher research establish and sustain itself as part of a school's teacher culture without external support? How would teachers shape this practice if they had ownership of it?

A Pivotal Experience as a Short-Term Outside Facilitator

Through my experiences and the reflective skills that I developed doing teacher research, I began to answer the above questions. About eight years after my initial introduction to teacher research with M-CLASS, because of my experience as a teacher-researcher and my role as a writing project teacher-consultant, I was asked to facilitate a group of novice teacher-researchers at Roosevelt Middle School in Oakland. Our time together was to start in the middle of the school year and be limited to approximately fifteen hours. I had never before experienced the process in such a limited way—some of my fellow researchers used as much time just to fully flesh out a question.

Despite limited time, I wanted teachers to experience the research process fully—beginning, middle, and end. To prepare, I collected tools for approaching the process: handouts and articles covering the action research description, types of data and methods of analysis, protocols for discussion and feedback, and a variety of published examples.[1] The three-hour monthly meeting times that I had experienced for my own research did not fit the needs of some teachers in the group, so we decided on shorter meetings every two weeks.

"Over and over I heard teacher-researchers saying the same things: they saw value in formalized reflection and collaboration, they felt transformed by the practice of research, and they experienced improvements in their teaching."

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1   Please see the "BayCES Teacher Inquiry Protocol" in the "Tools" section of this guide as an example of a resource that we found useful and adaptable to our specific needs.

After the initial introductory meeting, in which five interested teachers committed to the group, I helped participants focus on an issue of concern. We framed questions that force an action, using the stem "What happens when . . . ?" and I pushed them into data collection.

What I witnessed was nothing less than amazing. One teacher began with a belief that his African American male students didn't care about their grades. He took action-providing assessment on a weekly basis—and found these students and others regularly clamoring to the posting site to look for their grades under their assigned code numbers. After noting that ongoing assessment seemed to motivate some students to improve while other students showed no change, he arranged a weekly tutorial (which took place during P.E.) and provided tutoring to failing students. During this time he came to our meetings with anecdotal data about the improved performance of his African American male students: one student had completed his first essay ever through tutorial support, and others had completed their first essays without tutorial support.

"Ongoing reflection gave them a sense of greater control of their teaching."

I was impressed. From the first-year teacher who developed checklists to train her ELD students in peer assessment to the science teacher who discovered that clearly outlined steps in lab helped to engage students in the activity, I was witness to great shifts in practice by all five participants. I knew then what inspired the grassroots involvement I had heard about but had never seen. Like the British teachers who practice action research, the Roosevelt teachers took action to address an area of concern. In each inquiry meeting, we engaged in a minicycle of inquiry, sharing questions, data, and suggestions. The teachers left with ideas on how to improve their practice and move closer to the objective of better student performance. Of course, it was the *action* part of research that inspired grassroots involvement-improved practice is every teacher's ongoing professional goal. To validate the expense of their inservice, Roosevelt teachers shared their data with the staff. However, I couldn't help but think that the value of their experience was better measured in the classroom, among their students. This experience confirmed to me that professional growth objectives of improved teacher practice / improved student performance are achievable through the practice of teacher research. It makes sense—both for those British teachers and for me—that these objectives would be the primary impetus for teachers to become involved in teacher research.

Despite our successes, as an outside facilitator, I worried that the momentum of research at Roosevelt would be lost when I left the school. I was ready for a new challenge: taking leadership from the inside at my own school to create a teacher-owned model of research aimed at improving student learning.

Bringing Teacher Research to a Large High School Going Small

In 2001, when Bay Area Writing Project directors asked me to form a group of teacher-researchers at my own school, Fremont High School, I knew what I wanted my colleagues to experience. When the group started, Fremont was beginning to be restructured from a large high school into five small, interconnected schools that operate autonomously but share common resources and space. I wanted to align our professional growth objectives with the action research model, and I wanted to support the ongoing needs of teacher prac-

titioners by meeting more frequently to create momentum in the work. And, though "rigor" had never been defined for me, I knew how I would define it to my group: movement toward improved practice / improved student outcomes. I planned facilitation with all of this in mind. Though writing project financial support required us to focus on writing in our research and to produce a written report on our work, I found three colleagues to join the research group: a veteran math teacher, Ellen Salazar; a fairly new social studies teacher, Patricia Arabia; and our high school curriculum coach, Emily Filloy.

In our first year of teacher research, we met once a week during a forty-five-minute lunch period. Limited by time, only one or two teachers shared at each session, and I focused on facilitating the group rather than sharing my own research. I elected to write about the process myself to fulfill the writing project's written report requirement.

This first year, Ellen utilized writing in her math classes to get her students to describe what they knew (or didn't know). Patricia, frustrated by her history students' inability to structure their thinking in a linear manner, provided writing instruction, using teacher-made check-lists and rubrics to guide their thinking. Emily focused on the use of particular reading strategies across disciplines and their impact on student learning. I did not pressure the three to write about their experiences, even though they had a lot to say. I interviewed my colleagues to determine the impact of the teacher research practice. They articulated what I too had experienced: ongoing reflection gave them a sense of greater control of their teaching; collaborative exchange provided ongoing support; and the safety of our community allowed them to take risks they might not otherwise have taken. On their own, without any prompting from me, they collectively announced, "We need to keep doing this."

"The safety of our community allowed them to take risks they might not otherwise have taken."

That year I was engaged in another common endeavor with these same colleagues and others: small-school design. Ellen, our math teacher, put two and two together and determined the important role teacher research could play in the design of our school. After all, one of our reform objectives was a professional collaborative culture; inclusion of the teacher research practice would support this objective. With this in mind, the teacher research group collectively introduced teacher research to other design team members. Our design team enthusiastically accepted the idea. I was charged with facilitating a second year of teacher research and incorporating teacher research into the professional-growth planning of our small school, Mandela High School.

Mandela High School—a New, Small, Interconnected School

Mandela High School, one of five interconnected small schools at the former Fremont High School campus, has approximately 250 students in ninth and tenth grades, with room to grow to a student body of 400 as we add eleventh and twelfth grades over the next two years. Our school's demographics closely resemble Fremont High School demographics of previous years: 54 percent Latino, 30 percent African American, 15 percent Asian/Pacific-Islander, and 1 percent white. Students throughout Fremont's campus score far below the 50th percentile on standardized tests, an issue of great concern to us.

Mandela High School, unlike other schools located at the same site, is not a career themed school. Our electives and activities are intended to promote lifelong learning. Paulo Freire's calling to "read the word" and "read the world" describes our literacy-building objective and also the critical pedagogy we want to practice to empower our students and expand their worldview. Such is our mission, and we are currently shaping the outcome. Fremont High School, like many under-performing schools, has seen its share of unsuccessful reform attempts, and the small-school concept is yet another attempt at reform. Successful reform requires conscious and deliberate shifts in practice; to sustain such shifts requires the conscious reflection that teacher research is all about.

Teacher Research Tool Kit: The toolkit is the curriculum support for the teacher research process. Included in the toolkit are articles/handouts focused on

teacher research and its purpose

what data are and how to manage them

developing a question

collaboration and vulnerability

data analysis, triangulation of data

protocols for discussion and feedback

writing and other forms of "publication"

data-driven decision making

teacher research process papers, published articles

Traditional Professional Development Versus Teacher Research

I have come to view teacher research as a support for professional growth, even though it doesn't look like typical professional development for teachers. Generally, discipline-specific workshops, often facilitated by outsiders, were the norm of my experience in Oakland. Yet I often found these experiences wasted, as participants didn't apply workshop learning to their teaching. I began to wonder, How might teacher research support the reform objectives at our new school? The teacher research process had built-in accountability owing to ongoing expectation in the exchange process, and I considered this fact as I planned the role of teacher research at Mandela. More than anything, I wanted this research practice to sustain itself in the internal structure of our school; I wanted it to make practical sense on a number of levels, and I wanted it to immediately reveal itself as a practical use of our time.

I noted that our curricular focus on literacy could be supported through the teacher research practice, as could structural changes like our new homework policy (weekly sheets stamped upon homework completion) and our parent communication efforts. It made sense to me that teacher research could drive our reforms. With this in mind, I wrote up an implementation plan for teacher research at Mandela High School (see appendix A: Overview of Teacher Research Process at Mandela). I connected the research process to decision making to further establish the centrality of teacher research in our work. Teacher research was not meant to be just one more reform; it was meant to be the practice that supported all our improvement efforts.

In our teacher research implementation plan, I purposely focused on building the leadership capacity of my colleagues (see appendix B: Teacher Research Leadership Model). As a teacher with a full schedule in a school with limited resources, I could foresee a need to share the facilitation of this work. With the help of a "teacher research tool kit" I wanted to explicitly outline the research process so that anyone could assume facilitation. If facilitation each year involved training a cofacilitator, then leadership responsibility could be shared and rotated among Mandela teachers. So many times I have seen a program leave when the teacher in charge leaves. For teacher research to become a permanent feature at Mandela, its facilitation had to belong to all.

Teachers' Research Questions

I began the school year, the first year of our small school, with the research question, "What happens when teacher research is the professional growth practice at a small school?" I chose this question because I wanted to monitor our research practice, study its impact, and assess its support for our work. I wanted to take note of what was needed to yield a practical alignment between teacher research and our reform objectives and of how we could best use our time.

At midyear there was much to report. Most teachers had developed questions that centered on their individual interests, were aligned with our reform objectives, and suggested changes in teaching. Isabel, for example, was studying how her teacher-made participation rubric affected participation in her Spanish class. Craig's question focused on the impact of providing immediate homework assessment in his social studies class. Paul was exploring ways his science curriculum could be more directly tied to his students' lives. Tony was studying the effect of increased peer-support on student learning in his geometry class. Kevin's work included group collaboration as he and other tenth grade teachers practiced common literacy strategies across disciplines and researched their effectiveness. We also had whole-school studies, including Patricia's focus on the effectiveness of a whole-school homework policy and Robin's assessment of reform progress based on students' perspectives.

Using Whole-School Data

Mandela's initial teacher research calendar supported teachers' individual classroom research and designated time for collaborative decision making based on the research in our last weeks of school. Ellen's whole-school focus helped me to see the benefits of examining schoolwide data and research questions throughout the school year, and the importance of ongoing collaborative decision-making opportunities. As a math teacher who loves to play with numbers, Ellen knew from the onset that she would deal with whole-school data. She began before our professional development days, collecting data about our detention policy to answer questions about our use and enforcement of it. Ellen requested staff time to address this whole-school concern, so I realized early on that our teacher research calendar needed to include time for discussion and decision making based on schoolwide data.

I quickly saw the benefits of including a whole-school data focus. With one person in charge of schoolwide data collection, whole-school research required our collective input in shaping an action. I felt our collaboration to be strongest during these discussions. For example, at the end of our first grading period Ellen shared schoolwide grading data that she disaggregated in a number of ways. By examining grades by teacher and discipline, we discovered that math teachers gave the highest percentage of failing grades. Through discussion we determined that although objective assessment is every teacher's goal, in some disciplines teachers are more prone to subjective grading. "He's improving," or "He really shows effort" is generally not factored into a math grade. However, owing to the low literacy levels of our students, effort and improvement often influence the grades teachers give in other disciplines. Our discussion about grades, in combination with the students' low test scores, led us to recognize that while our students got the lowest grades in math, they were

doing poorly in all disciplines. They needed extra support. As a result, we opened an additional after-school tutoring opportunity, employed peer tutors, and publicized this resource to parents of failing students. Ellen further disaggregated the data to show concentrations of failing students (students with four to five D or F grades) in particular classes. These concentrations helped us to understand why teachers experienced particular difficulty with some classes. Ellen, for example, had a class with seventeen failing students, making the teaching and learning more difficult for the collective twenty-five. As experienced teachers, we recognized that a critical mass of successful students in each class supports peer learning and enables teachers to deliver a common curriculum with similar momentum across classes. Unless additional support is provided in a low-performing class, a more conscious effort to create heterogeneous classes is needed. This issue could not be immediately addressed, but we agreed to respond to this concern in the following year's programming.

Ellen's data also raised our awareness of our students with only one D or F grade. Because we view such students as generally proactive learners, we had to consider how we could better support them toward improvement. We also discussed ways to shape our school culture and community to address learner apathy. We agreed to an ongoing system of rewards and recognition, more school events, and more parent involvement.

We continue to examine grade data and discuss ways to improve student achievement schoolwide. In addition to the schoolwide decisions (for example about heterogeneous classrooms and learner apathy), I imagine that some teachers made individual decisions as they compared their grading patterns and policies and considered questions like: Is our grading aligned with our learning objectives? How explicit is our grading criteria? Are we holding high enough standards? In any case, Ellen's thoughtful manipulation of the data gave us food for thought and an opportunity to make informed decisions collectively. The experience with these data played an important role in shaping our collaborative culture.

What I've Learned Leading Inquiry at My School

At this point I could very well brag, "Well, look at my school; we've got it together," and leave it at that. I would, if I didn't understand the recursive nature of teaching and teacher research. My question, What happens when teacher research becomes the professional growth practice at a small school? begs for an ongoing look at a practice that requires modifications to maximize its effectiveness. My analysis of our current research practice takes into account our implementation objectives, the reality of our very busy schedules, and the ideal of teacher research as a practical, sustainable, collaborative professional-growth practice. In the midst of my research, I've already noted some possible shifts that might better support our teacher research practice next year. Here is a preliminary list of lessons that I plan to share with my colleagues at the end of this school year:

1. *Start early*. Teacher research should begin with the school year. Because our professional growth days did not begin until the second marking period, our curricular reform objectives were not driven through a sustained research focus. A research focus on our newly adopted strategies could have made us more accountable to them and helped us to effectively integrate them into our teaching.

2. *Take ownership of the calendar.* Teacher research practice requires fixed meeting times. Our calendar of established meetings seemed to exist in theory only. Not everyone had access to the calendar, and there was no one with clear responsibility for maintaining it. Early teacher research meetings were cancelled or rescheduled, slowing momentum. I blame myself in part for not taking charge and for not establishing ongoing meetings with my principal to address the plan I had drawn up. But I had anticipated commitment to the initial schedule in the form of a reminder: "You're on this Wednesday. What's the plan?" New in the role of leader, I was waiting for permission to show authority. Not so next year.

3. *Redesign the plan as needed.* For example, early in the school year I discovered the importance of time for examination of schoolwide data. Ellen and Patricia's research in particular required ongoing collective analysis and whole-staff decision making, something I had not anticipated in the original design. We gave time to this, but it happened more as an afterthought than a plan. Ideally it should be incorporated into ongoing meetings. Without this time, we miss the opportunity for ongoing collaborative input that could help us respond to our challenges. For example, shortcomings in our homework policy have not yet been addressed because we have not yet established sufficient time for this type of collaborative discussion.

4. *Keep the focus on improved teaching.* I learned that form can obstruct content. The objective of teacher research is improved practice / improved student outcomes. And in our desire to formalize the structure of the meetings (through inclusion of meeting objectives, check-ins, self-assessments, and the like) we may have obscured the natural alignment of teacher research with improving teaching. Limiting discussion of articles, tools, and other structural supports and highlighting the work itself—reflection on teaching and collaborative exchange—will allow the practice to speak for itself and support teaching. "Just do it" is next year's plan.

5. *Keep the planning simple.* At times I had a sense of "the more explanation, the more complication." On top of this, excessive planning diminished time I had for grading papers and developing lessons. My experience with teacher research is that planning can be as simple or as complicated as one desires, but for a lead facilitator with a teacher's schedule, a "less is more" approach is practical. Hence my design plan for next year's meetings proposes following a simple protocol, incorporating tools and information, and relying on the process of group questioning and feedback to support a participant's research presentation. The need for a lead facilitator may continue, so rotation into this role is a fair expectation. If this is the case, not only should the job look easy, it should be easy. I've been told on more than one occasion that real facilitation allows the group to run itself; I think that an established structure goes a long way toward achieving this goal.

Concluding Thoughts

In our small-school design team, my Mandela colleagues and I committed to dual roles, as teacher and leader, and also to the development of a collaborative culture. Our principal, Robin Glover, in her first year as an administrator, engaged us in leadership because she believed in shared decision making and teacher ownership of small schools. It makes sense

that our opportunity for professional growth would be teacher-determined and teacher-facilitated. Because of our focus on reform, we were expecting to make shifts in practice. The tool we needed revealed itself to us! Practical, empowering, and free, teacher research at Mandela is an expression of our confidence; its practice suggests that everything we need we have already.

No matter what model of teacher research I practiced, who controlled it, or how long my commitment, it has always made practical sense to me. I began with an action research model—for me, teacher research has always been about trying out new practice and moving practice toward mastery through a sustained reflective process. As an added benefit, teacher research enables a collegial exchange—reciprocal teaching and learning—that teaches us far more than we could ever learn on our own. I would practice teacher research even if my findings affected only those within the four walls of my school.

My experience of teacher research at Mandela High School represents to me the juncture of idealism and reality I have long sought—producing the teacher ownership to which I aspired. When teacher research practice met teaching practice at Mandela, a practical partnership evolved. And because the Mandela High School vision held a place for teacher leadership and teacher control, teacher research evolved to become teacher-owned and focused on student learning.

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Deborah Juarez was introduced to teacher research twelve years ago as a fourth-year English teacher in Oakland. Since that original inquiry experience, in which she asked, What happens when race, culture, and class become explicit topics in the classroom? equity has been an ongoing theme in her research. Three years ago she introduced teacher research to the staff of her small school, and this practice is currently in place as their professional development.

Appendix A: Overview of Teacher Research Process at Mandela

Integral to the structure of Mandela High School is the inquiry process, a process which supports ongoing assessment of structural practice and standards-based teacher practice. Incorporating the inquiry process into the functioning of Mandela High School will

1) Drive designated curricular reforms through theme-based inquiry (example: writing across the curriculum)
2) Promote a culture of professional growth and collaboration through individual reflective practice and ongoing reflective exchange
3) Inform discussion and decision-making involving designs of whole-school systems and practices
4) Build the leadership capacity of practitioners who master the process, engage in decision-making, and take on leadership roles with the process.

The objective of the inquiry process is twofold: improved teacher practice and improved school structural features to improve student achievement. Thus inquiry practitioners will formulate questions focused on this result. In development of an inquiry focus, practitioners will identify specific achievement goals and the strategies being assessed. Inquiry questions will focus on individual practice rooted in school vision and student outcomes (possibly theme-based) or selected whole-school systems or practices (which require assessment to determine effectiveness).

Teachers, counselors, and administrators will engage in the inquiry process through individual practice and whole-group exchange. Whole-group exchange is the driving force behind individual inquiry; it promotes accountability, provides supportive feedback for practitioners, and supports an ongoing focus on inquiry work. Group meetings will take place twice a month. Accommodations will be made at the beginning of the school year to provide time for teacher research meetings. Once inservice Wednesdays begin in mid-October, the group will meet during that time for the remainder of the school year.

A write-up of findings or other form of reporting is another expected outcome of this process. Making our research public will definitely include year-end reporting to parents and the larger community but could also include networking with other schools engaged in research practice; article publication; small-school conference sessions; or teacher research conference workshops. The research group will discuss and select the reporting method(s).

The remaining two-plus Wednesdays will be devoted to decision making related to examined practices. Four questions for decision-making will be addressed:

1) Have curricular reform practices been satisfactorily implemented (or is continued focus required)? Have curricular reform practices achieved desired results or do findings indicate otherwise?
2) Have individual practices achieved desired results? (If so, should certain individual practices be implemented schoolwide?)
3) Have certain structural practices proven effective (or do these practices require replacement or modification)?
4) As a structure, the teacher inquiry process will require examination: How can the inquiry process be improved to better inform decision making and/or promote professional growth (keeping in mind the objective of high student achievement)?

Teacher Research Timeline and Agenda, 2003–2004

September   Introduction to teacher research: what, why and how, writing
             activity and whole group share

             Question development: the goal and action (strategy), data
             collection, writing activity and whole group share

October   Protocol usage and feedback modeled; whole group exchange

November   Teacher research writings: an examination of the process; small-
             group exchange

December   Data analysis; small-group exchange

January   Data analysis; small-group exchange

February   Teacher research articles: some common elements; writing activity

             Assignment: process paper due April____; small group exchange

March   Process paper samples; small group exchange

             A focus on findings; small group exchange

April   Process papers shared

             "Publication" design

May   Decision-making focus

June   Examination of inquiry process

Appendix B: Teacher Research Leadership Model, 2003–2004

At Mandela High, teacher research leadership includes two levels of leadership: lead facilitator and co-facilitator roles. A description of these roles and particular responsibilities of each are described below.

Lead facilitator oversees the yearlong teacher research process and assumes responsibility in the following areas:
   a) timeline design (meeting dates/objectives and deadlines within the school year)
   b) inservice design and facilitation (focusing on specific aspects of the teacher research process)
   c) facilitation in large or small group protocol exchange (which includes modeling of feedback)
   d) coaching of individual teachers (determined by need or request)
   e) documentation of process (agenda items, handouts, audio-tapes of meetings)
   f) selection of cofacilitators and assignment of responsibilities
   g) ongoing training/support of cofacilitators in all areas of responsibility

Cofacilitators support the lead facilitator in different areas of responsibility, (a) to (e). Selection of cofacilitators happens at the beginning of the year. Initial responsibilities include one or two tasks [(e) or (d) for example] with increasing responsibility as the year progresses (determined by support needs of lead facilitator and/or cofacilitator "readiness").

Leadership development: Research practitioners will be moved into leadership positions as they gain experience from the practice of teacher research and participation in the model. The lead facilitator designs cofacilitation for the year, connecting particular individuals with particular duties, rotating and/or increasing duties, while providing support. The goal is the rotation of the lead facilitator each year.

Cofacilitation Plan for 2003–2004: Cofacilitators Ellen, Patricia, and Leslie rotate through these duties: coaching, small- and large-group facilitation, and inservice design (with lead facilitator). Cofacilitators design the rotation of duties using the timeline, and provide a copy to the lead. Remaining practitioners are encouraged to volunteer themselves in any of these areas based on readiness or interest.

Partners in Inquiry: Embedding Teacher Inquiry into School Reform

Marty Williams, a writing project co-director, cofacilitated a three-year partnership between a local writing project site and a high school in San Francisco. The partnership, funded by a federal grant, provided a range of support to teachers and administrators focused on improving literacy. One major focus of the work included a teacher inquiry group. This essay illustrates how the partnership's teacher inquiry work and a belief in teachers as change agents contributed to literacy reform in a struggling urban high school. Williams explores the dynamics of the school partnership over a three-year period and reflects on how such partnerships can shape both the school and the professional development organization.

By Marty Williams

"How come almost everyone who writes about school reform works someplace other than a school?"

—Teacher-writer JoAnne Dowd quoted in an article on school reform by
Boston Writing Project Director Joe Check (2002)

Often the last person to be heard from in discussions of school reform is the teacher. While many school reform efforts include the notions that teachers must work together collegially and that change in schools and outcomes for students are related to what happens in classrooms, there are few examples of teachers and classroom practice leading school reform efforts. Indeed, classroom practice is often overlooked in favor of changes in school structure and the school day. If classroom practice has been identified as a focus, the reforms often take the form of a set of imported mandates for change or prescribed "teacher-proof" curricula. In the past decade or so, however, there has been a growing movement within school reform that supports teachers as reflective practitioners.

The three-year partnership between the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP), a site of the National Writing Project, and Balboa High School in San Francisco is the story of how a belief in teachers as knowledge makers and change agents, coupled with the practice of teacher inquiry, can support reform in a struggling urban high school. I will take a look at how BAWP and Balboa came together, the program we designed and carried out over a three-year period, and some of the lessons learned from this partnership.

In the fall of 1999, Carol Tateishi and I, director and co-director of the Bay Area Writing Project, prepared to meet Balboa High School teachers. In the spring of 1998, administra-

tive staff at Balboa had applied for and received a three-year Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) grant focused on literacy improvement from the state of California. They had selected the Bay Area Writing Project as their primary support provider. For the next three years, BAWP would be intimately involved with Balboa teachers in a small Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG). The history of the Teacher Inquiry Group at Balboa is one slice of the school's entire CSRD reform effort, but one that shines a light on ways in which teacher inquiry can engage and propel changes in the day-to-day workings of a school.

Context for the Work: Bay Area Writing Project

Education reform organizations come and go. The Bay Area Writing Project, however, has been around for more than thirty years and has, since its inception in 1974, placed teachers at the center of its work. Over these three decades BAWP's primary contribution to school reform has been twofold: 1) improving teaching and learning in individual classrooms, and 2) sharing effective teaching practices through networks of teachers and professional development programs. In recent years, whole-school reform initiatives have shaped BAWP's professional development offerings. BAWP strives to use its collective knowledge and expertise in effective teaching of writing to support large-scale change efforts aimed at addressing and reducing long-standing inequities in academic achievement. BAWP has increased its professional development programs in the large urban districts in the San Francisco Bay Area and focused on issues affecting second language learners and all students struggling with academic discourse and writing.

Balboa High School

Balboa High School, founded in 1928, occupies a full city block in a working-class residential neighborhood in the southeast sector of San Francisco. A staff of more than seventy-five serve a diverse student population of about one thousand students, a lively mix of San Francisco's long-rooted ethnic populations and newer immigrants: African American, Asian, Filipino, and Latino students. Each group comprises 20 to 30 percent of the school's population. In 2003, more than half of the students qualified for free and reduced-fee lunch, about a quarter lived on their own without parents or guardians, and many were brand new to this country.

Once highly regarded as one of San Francisco Unified School District's (SFUSD) college preparatory high schools, in more recent years Balboa has struggled with low test scores, declining graduation rates, and difficulties meeting the educational needs of its students. In 1996 SFUSD designated Balboa as severely underperforming, and amid much local controversy, slated it for "reconstitution."[1] A new administrative and teaching staff was hired, including some former staff who applied for positions and were rehired. A clear majority of the staff was new to the school, and many were new to teaching, choosing the challenge of Balboa with energy and idealism. Three years after reconstitution, many of these teachers

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1   *http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/may97/reconst_5-27.html*

and administrators had come and gone. With an entirely new administrative team (new both to the school and to administration), a large group of new teachers, and lingering feelings of blame for the challenges and struggles facing the school, Balboa headed into a second major wave of reform.

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Grant

The CSRD grant gave Balboa teachers the opportunity and resources to address literacy schoolwide. It aimed to improve parent involvement and communication structures within the school community in order to increase the reading and writing capabilities of Balboa students. Another important goal for both BAWP and Balboa was to keep current teachers at the school and to support their teaching. Balboa had already lost a number of good teachers in the previous couple of years, and the school wanted to hold on to the ones it now had. With these overarching goals in mind, site administrators and BAWP met to work out the key activities of the grant, which included 1) hiring a site literacy specialist (an exemplary teacher on staff who would leave her classroom responsibilities to oversee the schoolwide effort), 2) creating the Literacy Leadership Team (a voluntary group of teachers who would be trained by BAWP), and 3) receiving technical assistance from BAWP.

Balboa chose BAWP as its primary support provider because of the writing project's model of professional development—teachers teaching teachers. BAWP wanted teachers at Balboa to be the primary shapers of the effort to improve student literacy. The literacy specialist would play a key role in guiding the school toward achieving the literacy goals at the heart of Balboa's site plan and its CSRD grant efforts. BAWP teacher-consultant Helen Duffy and I would serve as coordinators and coaches for BAWP's work at the school. The first year Balboa used its grant money to buy books for students and pay teachers to design curriculum for these books. They hired a consultant to support teachers in classroom management and a parent literacy specialist to increase parent involvement in student learning and literacy. They also sent teachers to professional development in advanced placement courses, purchased a comprehensive reading assessment program, and published a student datebook that included student writing. In addition, teachers were paid for time spent in designing curriculum to accompany the new books they had purchased. Also that year, Balboa began organizing teachers and students into small learning communities. All ninth and tenth grade students were enrolled in small learning communities with a focus on academics, service learning, and career/college exploration. In eleventh and twelfth grade, students chose one of several thematic academic pathways: Law; Communication Arts; Health and Science; Wilderness Arts and Literacy Collaborative (Environmental Studies); and International Studies.

"BAWP wanted teachers at Balboa to be the primary shapers of the effort to improve student literacy."

Beginnings of the Partnership: Where the Rubber Meets the Road

I remember well BAWP's first meeting with Balboa teachers in September 1999. Carol and I got off at the wrong subway station and had to charge on foot the mile and a half to the school. A couple of minutes late, but quite warmed up and ready to talk about our work together, we spoke with the teachers assembled in the library. We learned that many teachers felt burned by groups coming from outside and telling them what they needed to do to

make their school better, and they were tired of having professional development crammed down their throats. Few teachers knew about the CSRD grant, and fewer had been closely involved in the drawing up of their school site plan for the year. We tried to communicate to teachers that BAWP was not coming in to tell them what to do, but to help them do what *they* wanted and could do for their students.

Over the next couple of months, Carol, Helen, and I met several times with the administration, a few teacher-leaders from the school, and members of SFUSD's professional development team to agree to a purpose and parameters for our work together. Both the principal and assistant principal were new in their positions, and none of us had been part of writing the grant the previous spring. By early December 1999, we had hammered out a plan for BAWP's work during the first year of the CSRD grant. Our work would focus on writing in all content areas.

One of BAWP's first contributions was to plan for a schoolwide professional development day in December. We organized a menu of BAWP workshops focused on writing across the disciplines. As Carol, Helen, and I participated in the professional development day, we realized that this form of inservice—workshops by exemplary classroom teachers on specific strategies to improve the teaching of writing or to use writing to learn—was too close to what teachers had complained about in our first meeting: outside experts dropping into their school with advice. We wanted the work to grow out of and support the leadership of Balboa's resilient and talented teachers.

The CSRD planning team put together the Literacy Leadership Team (LLT), a small voluntary team from across the disciplines charged with helping to lead the first year's work. (The CSRD planning team included Carol, Helen, and me, as well as teacher-leaders from Balboa, the assistant principal, and the newly identified literacy specialist.) For once it seemed the school had the money to help support teacher leadership, and we were counting on the LLT to get the literacy work off to a strong start.

Year One: 1999–2000

Teacher-Leaders: Testing the Waters, Getting Their Feet Wet

In January of 2000 the LLT held a one-day miniretreat away from the school site at the Marin Headlands Institute just across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. That day the group identified several areas of work to take on. The teachers looked at structures and processes to support literacy that could be put into place at the school, including a bookroom inventory and guidelines for purchasing and using new trade books. Each teacher decided on an area of his or her classroom practice to take a closer look at, creating the starting point for the BAWP-supported teacher inquiry at Balboa. The LLT had two core responsibilities: first, selecting instructional resources and second, designing curriculum to meet the goals for the grant, and participating in the teacher inquiry group led by BAWP.

We left the retreat with a plan and immediate steps to take. LLT members led and participated in lively debates, and they ordered books to support literacy in classrooms across the disciplines. The LLT met once a month to look at curricular materials and make decisions

about book purchases, and BAWP guided them in their review and selection. The team met a second time each month to focus on classroom inquiry. During the inquiry sessions the group gathered over snacks for about an hour and a half at the end of the day to write and to talk about their teaching and learning and to get ideas from their colleagues about how to proceed. Because the group was large and members had different days available to meet, Helen and I split them up and each facilitated a smaller group. We communicated regularly by email and telephone about what was happening in both groups and tried, as much as possible, to use the same reading materials and timelines for the teacher inquiries.

At each session teachers arrived with *Teacher-Researchers at Work* by Marion MacLean and Marian Mohr (1999). Helen and I proposed a semester-long timeline, adapted from the book, as well as a selection of short readings. These were lively meetings as teachers reflected in writing and talk about their classroom teaching.

The topics for inquiry all focused on literacy but were distinctly embedded in each teacher's classroom preoccupations. The question, what is an appropriate balance between visual and written texts as part of a process to understand a concept? came from an art teacher, and What is an effective model for peer response and revision for my students? from an English teacher. Two special education teachers collaborated on a question, Is a social studies/literature collaboration going to improve reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and conceptual understanding for the students we share? Another English teacher focused on his current vocabulary development program, wondering if it was effective, for whom it was successful or unsuccessful, and why. An ESL teacher wanted to know what she could do to develop fluency for reluctant writers and decided to focus on two or three students who were conducting a letter exchange with students from a nearby middle school.

"The topics for inquiry all focused on literacy but were distinctly embedded in each teacher's classroom pre-occupations."

One of the critical activities of the LLT—an activity that shaped much of the future work of the partnership—was the year-end poster share-fair held in the library on a professional development day in May. The share-fair provided LLT teachers with an opportunity to share their questions and the initial findings of their inquiries with the entire staff of Balboa. For teachers, the share-fair was a welcome relief compared to other whole-staff professional development sessions. For an hour and a half, teachers wandered from one LLT teacher's station to another, examining displays of student writing and assignments, and talking about the student artifacts and the LLT teachers' questions and learnings. Some stayed at one station the full time, talking in depth with that teacher and the assembled teachers from across grades and disciplines. It was the first professional development the teachers at Balboa had experienced for quite some time that centered on teachers' day-to-day preoccupations with students. In the words of one teacher,

> It inspired other people to focus upon the aspects of their teaching that they might feel weak and want to improve on . . . a forum for acknowledgement of teachers just day in and day out doing their thing and the tiny successes that really make their whole year . . . [2]

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2   From a taped interview with a teacher at Balboa High School.

The period for the inquiry was brief, January to May, and it was sandwiched in between a thousand and one other activities, but this experience of sharing their research—and their teaching—with one another was fresh and inspiring for the teachers. It set the tone as we picked up again in the fall of 2000.

Year Two: 2000–2001

Teacher Inquiry Group: A Learning Community, an Oasis

Reflecting on the first year of the partnership, Helen wrote that the LLT was "confounded by the multiple tasks that the group was being asked to perform: teacher inquiry, decision making about the distribution of resources, and decisions about professional development activities at the school."[3] We began year two by prioritizing the teacher inquiry work for the LLT. We moved the responsibility for some of the CSRD grant's demands to other teacher groups at Balboa. For example, departments and small learning communities assumed responsibility for administering and scoring reading and writing assessments. In addition, BAWP met individually with the Social Studies Department and the Science Department faculties to discuss the inclusion of writing in these curricular areas.

The LLT reshaped and renamed itself as the Teacher Inquiry Group (TIG), a voluntary group with a single focus on teacher inquiry. New teachers joined, drawn by the energy of the previous spring's share-fair. Some teachers from year one decided not to pursue teacher inquiry, and some began with the group in the fall but fell away after the first or second meeting. The final group of twelve, representing teachers of English / language arts, special ed, mathematics, science, reading, and electives, made up the TIG, which met once a month after school for about an hour and a half to two hours. Helen and I began the group by proposing a year-long timeline, again borrowed from *Teacher-Researchers at Work*. CSRD funds paid TIG participants the SFUSD hourly stipend for their time.

About a month into the school year, a two-day retreat with other California Writing Project (CWP) sites helped shape the second year's partnership.[4] Three TIG members accompanied me to the retreat, which focused on CWP sites' partnerships with schools and districts. This gathering provided teachers the opportunity to present to other CWP directors and teachers what we were up to in our BAWP/Balboa Partnership: what they hoped for from the partnership and the steps we were taking together to get there. In a sense, they were for the first time going public outside their school sharing Balboa's teacher inquiries and explaining their place in the school's reform efforts.

The meeting afforded the teachers a much-needed and rarely experienced opportunity to meet and write and talk with each other, in an extended fashion, about their work. One of the Balboa teachers, still new to the school and relatively new to teaching, admitted she had

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3 Excerpted from an unpublished article by Helen Duffy, BAWP teacher-consultant.

4 The thirty-year-old California Writing Project (CWP) is a network of seventeen regional sites, nine housed on University of California campuses and eight on California State University campuses.

been uncomfortable with her part in the share-fair the previous spring. She felt that with many more-experienced teachers at Balboa, she was uneasy placing herself in what she perceived as the "expert's" role. Rethinking how the TIG might present its work to the rest of the faculty, she proposed a midyear sharing of questions rather than a summative year-end session. She hoped to invite other teachers to give advice, opinions, and suggestions about where the inquiry should go. Her idea expressed the desire to share the power of inquiry and collegial reflection with all of the teachers at her school, regardless of whether or not they participated in the TIG. We decided that rather than remaining isolated from other teachers at the school, during this second year of the partnership the TIG would open up its process of inquiry to all teachers, and we proposed this midyear invitational dialogue as both the form and content for the upcoming professional development day.

Back at Balboa, the idea of a midyear sharing was well received. While involved teachers were beginning to count on the TIG as an oasis where they could share ideas and questions about their teaching practice, some were concerned that nonparticipating teachers might perceive the small group as elitist. They wanted to build collegial connections with teachers across the school. They thought recasting their sharing as an invitation for others to join the conversation at a staff development day in March rather than presenting findings in June might help.

As facilitators, both Helen and I assumed that an entire school year devoted to inquiry would be much more productive than the rushed investigations of the spring semester the year before. In the early months of the school year, TIG members continued their classroom inquiries and met to share and fine-tune their most pressing questions. Yet they struggled with systematic collecting of data or evidence related to their research, and questions changed from meeting to meeting. Teachers arrived wanting to talk about what had most recently occurred in their classrooms, but without much to report on their inquiries. By December, inertia set in as TIG members got stuck trying to perfect their questions, and lost the momentum to move from questions to collecting and looking at data from their classrooms.

Our growing familiarity with the day-to-day challenges facing TIG members kept Helen and me from insisting that they adhere to our agreed-upon timeline. We wanted to be flexible and find ways to adapt the process. Another BAWP teacher-consultant passed along to me a protocol for structured conversations that she had used with teachers at her school site. Like so many important tools shared by teachers, it came to me as a crumpled photocopy—an article by Simon Hole and Grace McEntee, "Reflection Is at the Heart of Practice" (1999). (See appendix A and B for the protocol for shared reflection and the protocol for individual reflection that we adapted from this article.)

Anxious to get the TIG back on track, Helen and I introduced the protocol for shared reflection at our December meeting. As in our other meetings, group members first wrote for about ten minutes. This time they wrote about an incident from their teaching day—perhaps an encounter with a student, a conversation with a colleague, or simply something surprising or lamentable or worth celebrating that remained in their minds from the day or the past week. After a brief sharing of these anecdotes, we chose one, by consensus, for closer investigation. The author of the anecdote had a few minutes to read what she had written and to talk a bit more about what had happened. Other members of the group asked clarifying

questions until they felt they had a full sense of the incident. Then the author listened while the other group members discussed the anecdote's significance and implications for teaching practice. The group made connections to their own teaching and made suggestions for next steps. At the end, the anecdote's author shared insights she had gained from listening to her colleagues discuss her situation. Finally, the group discussed how the protocol had worked for them. All of this happened in the space of an hour, helping teachers move efficiently from the hubbub of the day to deep shared reflection about significant issues.

The first time I facilitated the protocol, I felt that the group had chosen the wrong story. It didn't seem rich or representative of the issues I was hearing about from teachers and I worried that it wouldn't yield much of import. However, after the group discussion, I realized it didn't matter which story was chosen because each one was rooted in realities from the daily life at the school and, under close scrutiny, revealed essential issues that required teacher intervention. The TIG teachers brought their own burning issues to the discussion and their probing questions brought out hidden and important threads in the story. Often the story shared by a colleague and the ensuing discussion of its implications for teaching helped another teacher think about his or her teaching and inquiry in a new way. One teacher's use of student interviews to probe her students' understanding of their academic growth led another teacher to give her students a survey about the effectiveness of some of her classroom practices and the use of class time. Another teacher, hearing from others about how they assessed students along the way, changed the way he conducted weekly quizzes in his classroom.

"They decided to share process rather than product."

The TIG had awakened! Reinvigorated by hearing one another talk freshly and honestly about their teaching challenges, the group members sharpened their focus on inquiry and rededicated themselves to collecting data from their classrooms. They also began to plan how they might best share their works in progress with their colleagues in March.

It became evident that the TIG was making a significant contribution to how administrators and teachers across the school thought about staff development. The enthusiastic evaluations from the previous spring's share-fair, as well as the positive reports about the value of the TIG from its participants, led the assistant principal to invite the TIG teachers to coordinate the two whole-school professional development days remaining in the year. During an afternoon professional development day in March 2001, the TIG shared their midyear inquiries with the rest of the staff. Following their plan to discuss work in progress, TIG teachers asked colleagues about their own promising classroom practices and insights, and requested suggestions about where to go next with their inquiries. Folks clustered around the small display stations and talked with individual teachers about their inquiry and their classrooms. TIG teachers created a short evaluation to get feedback from other teachers about the structure and content of the day. Typical responses were like these:

> I think this was an excellent idea. It opens the doors for dialogue, free sharing of ideas, and inspiration, most of all—camaraderie.

> We could do this all next year for our P.D. Thanks for your time—I want to be part of this group!

As spring went on, the TIG continued to meet, regularly using the protocol for shared reflection. They were also moving toward analyzing the data they had collected so that they could write about their findings for the year. The second professional development day they were to coordinate fell in May, near the end of the school year. Initially TIG teachers intended to share their final reflections on their inquiries for the year, but several balked, feeling they hadn't yet added substantially to what they had shared in March. They decided to share process rather than product, and led the entire staff in the use of the protocol for shared reflection. A member of the TIG group facilitated each small group. The time passed quickly as small groups of teachers engaged in earnest collegial discussions of classroom dilemmas. In their evaluations, teachers overwhelmingly requested this kind of rich exchange focused on immediate classroom teaching as their primary form of professional development at Balboa High School.

In May we reflected on the year. The twelve teachers in the TIG had taken responsibility for two days of highly praised professional development. The administration asked them to be a professional development planning team for the next school year. TIG teachers were ambivalent about accepting this offer. They identified the TIG as an oasis, a sanctuary, a place they could come to and really be themselves, and they didn't want to lose that by becoming a staff development task force. They decided the TIG should continue to focus on inquiry, and interested individual teachers could take up the challenge of helping to plan the professional development. They clung with intensity to their right to meet as an inquiry group, unfettered by the demands to structure support for the whole school. The TIG depended on money from the CSRD grant and facilitation support from BAWP, but the work belonged to the teachers. The competing needs and, in this case, a genuine desire on the part of the administration to involve teachers in their professional development, were threatening the one island of sanity the TIG teachers had been able to create for themselves.

"Time passed quickly as small groups of teachers engaged in earnest collegial discussions of classroom dilemmas."

Year Three: 2001–2002

BAWP's Teacher Research in Urban Schools: Collaboration for Knowing

For the third year, the last year of the CSRD grant, the TIG was able to remain an inquiry group. The administration also worked with individual teacher-leaders from the TIG to plan professional development for the school. The practice of inquiry and collegial sharing was becoming an important part of how the school community envisioned and conducted professional development.

During this third year of our partnership with Balboa, BAWP received a grant from the Spencer Foundation to continue to develop our teacher research program in urban schools. The money from the grant supported a group of thirteen teacher research group facilitators and thirty-seven participating teachers who met in site-based teacher research groups.[5] Balboa's TIG became part of that network, and a TIG member from the previous year

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5 See the essays by Tateishi, McKamey, Juarez, and Roth in this book for examples of work that was supported by the Spencer Foundation grant.

became a cofacilitator with Helen and me of Balboa's TIG. Now Balboa teachers had their own sanctuary at home, plus a larger network of like-minded teacher-researchers from around the Bay Area with whom they could share their work.

One Saturday in January 2002, Balboa teachers gathered with other Bay Area teacher-researchers in BAWP's network. They participated in workshops on data collection and data analysis and discussed their works in progress in small groups. In May, each TIG member contributed a piece of writing to the BAWP publication *Working Papers of Teacher Researchers*, and the group gathered with teachers in the Spencer Foundation grant network to share and comment upon each other's inquiry and writing.

At our final meeting with Balboa teachers in May 2002, we acknowledged the end of the three-year CSRD grant that had provided financial support for BAWP to facilitate teacher inquiry at Balboa. While BAWP would look for ways to continue our partnership with Balboa, we were at an ending point. When Balboa wrote up its findings for the three years of the CSRD grant, teachers and administrators articulated the impact of BAWP and the Teacher Inquiry Group on the school as a whole. The report chronicled the ups and downs of student achievement, grades, test scores, and the like, noting that while we always hope for miraculous improvements, it almost never happens quickly. Despite some notable gains in achievement, many Balboa students continued to struggle with basic academic literacy. However, the exodus of teachers had slowed, and although a few teachers left the school right after the end of the grant, most teachers involved in the TIG remain at Balboa today.

Learnings

So how do we understand the impact of the BAWP-supported teacher inquiry for three years at Balboa? In a meeting in fall of 2003 with Balboa's principal, two TIG teachers described the teacher inquiry with BAWP as the most powerful professional development they had ever experienced. They identified teacher inquiry with BAWP as changing their notions of what professional development could be. They claimed inquiry as essential to the work of the small learning communities and recommended it as the way to support teachers new to the school. They also itemized what they had learned about examining their own teaching practice and sharing it with others. The TIG teachers mentioned how important it was to have other eyes to help analyze problems of student achievement and faltering teaching practices, as well as to help identify particular strengths of students, curriculum, and teaching approaches. They highlighted the way in which regular opportunities, small and large, to discuss teaching with colleagues supported their effectiveness in the classroom. They stressed the importance of creating collegial connections around the school, both as a way of building and sustaining morale through the teaching year and as a way of mentoring individuals who are new to teaching or new to the school. Overall, they emphasized the power of the TIG in helping them to better understand and change what was happening for students in their classrooms. Carol and I also pointed to the importance of TIG teachers writing about their inquiry and practice, creating permanent documents to be shared with other teachers.

The impact of teacher inquiry can be seen on the overall school culture at Balboa: BAWP and the processes and tools we helped develop with teachers have allowed the collabora-

tion across the school and within small learning communities to deepen and continue. As outsiders with a philosophy of drawing on the expertise of the Balboa teachers, we helped identify teacher-leaders who informed the large decisions that affect their school, their students, and their teaching and learning as professionals.

The collaboration between BAWP and the TIG has also changed how professional development is carried out at Balboa, in both content and form. The school developed ways to encourage and provide opportunities for collegial conversations about teaching and learning that could feed back into classrooms. The Teacher Inquiry Group created new ways teachers could talk to each other about teaching. Teachers who participated in the TIG discovered the power of writing up their reflections, observations, and discoveries about teaching and learning. Finally, teachers, with the time and opportunity to reflect on what was and was not happening in their classrooms, were able to make incremental changes in their teaching practices that had an impact on student learning.

We have seen many improvements at Balboa since the start of our partnership. By 2004, more than 90 percent of Balboa teachers were fully credentialed, compared to about 75 percent in 1999. The four-year estimated dropout rate for students decreased, with nearly 22 percent of students dropping out in 1998–1999 to fewer than 10 percent dropping out in 2002–2003. From having only 67 percent of its student body participate in the school's state-mandated tests in 1999, Balboa now has 99 percent of students participating.

We have been heartened by Balboa students' incremental but steady growth in achievement on reading and language arts tests. In 1999–2000, 9.3 percent of all students scored at or above the 50th percentile in reading; in 2004 that jumped to 26.6 percent. Additionally, fewer students scored below and far below basic on the English language arts test. The school's Academic Performance Index (API) rose, and while Balboa still received the lowest ranking on a scale of 1–10, in 2004 the California Department of Education removed Balboa from its list of underperforming schools.[6] Balboa had made adequate yearly progress for the first time in many years. Also in 2004, 67 percent of Balboa seniors graduated having completed the course requirements for admission to either the California State University or University of California school systems. Thirty-three percent of that year's graduating class went on to college.

BAWP's Teacher Research Program

BAWP's partnership with Balboa and the story it tells has informed BAWP's teacher research programs, giving us three years of intense involvement in an urban school to examine closely as we continue to develop our program. The three years at Balboa confirmed our belief that a teacher inquiry approach is one of the strongest forms of professional development. Our partnership with Balboa teachers has also raised and answered some questions for us at BAWP about how our programs fit within the context of whole-school reform. The chal-

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6   As part of its assessment system, the state gives each school in California a score and rank on its Academic Performance Index
     (API). The numbers are based on a compilation of results from a range of mandated standardized tests.

lenges and opportunities at Balboa have helped us think about the kind of structures and resources that are needed by teachers in highly impacted urban schools.

Teacher inquiry is now woven into most of BAWP's professional development work that takes place at school sites. Rather than simply bringing workshops highlighting effective classroom approaches, BAWP teacher-consultants are able to guide teachers through analyses of their own student work in order to plan more effective instruction. In the year since the partnership with Balboa, I have developed a series of questions that I and others at BAWP bring to schools early on in our collaborative work (see sidebar). These questions are designed to help us understand what structures and processes to support teacher inquiry already exist in the schools. While these questions are not a direct result of the collaboration with Balboa, they build on the understandings of school-based inquiry that were gained there.

We know that, while the role of the insider/outsider occupies a delicate position, it allows the consultant to offer valuable assistance to teachers. Inside enough to know the day-to-day challenges and richness of a school site, BAWP also offered outside perceptions and perspectives, and opportunities to place the school site efforts in a larger context. We brought experience in teacher research and help in facilitating the work of the TIG. We brought snacks and journals, articles and books, agendas and writing prompts. We brought timelines and designated meeting times and the reminder to begin with reflection.

> **Questions to consider when starting school–based teacher inquiry**
>
> How do you currently draw from your existing knowledge pool, from teachers?
>
> What systems are in place to learn from teachers' work?
>
> How is teacher reflection encouraged at your school?
>
> How do you define your professional learning goals?
>
> When are you able to spend time on matters that relate to student achievement?
>
> What are you doing already?

From BAWP's perspective, it was important for Balboa to select its own support provider and to have the accompanying CSRD financial resources to support the collaborative development of a program. Money paid for BAWP's time, which allowed the site to work closely with Balboa for three years, and it paid teachers for theirs. Money purchased new sets of books and time to create curriculum. There was money for substitute teachers so that TIG members could be released for a day to share their inquiries with other teachers. New opportunities for collaboration opened up, within and throughout the school community. TIG members had the means to get away from school, to meet with teachers from other schools and districts to discover they were not alone in their thinking and working. Throughout this process, the thoughtful support from Balboa's administrators and the schoolwide focus on improving literacy gave TIG members a larger purpose for their individual classroom efforts.

We also learned from the tension between BAWP's plan to develop school-site leaders to lead teacher inquiry and the teachers' need to pursue their own research with their students. The Balboa teacher cofacilitating the TIG struggled to balance the competing demands on her time: her teaching, her research, her leadership role in her small learning community and the TIG, and increasing requests for her leadership throughout the school. While it was challenging for her, it cemented the importance of the TIG as a homegrown leadership group for Balboa.

While certainly not a quick fix for a whole school's problems, teacher inquiry can help to grow a school culture that challenges inequities for students. It is slow, and we need to carry out the careful nurturing of the teachers who will create an equitable school, always paying attention to what is happening for students here and now. We believe teacher inquiry, with a focus on making a difference for students, makes this growth possible. The opportunity to engage in a multiyear effort with teachers at Balboa moved our thinking at BAWP forward to inform our continuing efforts to construct a viable structure and support for teacher inquiry for equity in urban schools.

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Marty Williams is currently co-director of the Bay Area Writing Project where for the past seven years she has coordinated the project's contracted professional development programs to improve the teaching of writing in schools throughout the San Francisco Bay Area counties. She has been a reading and writing teacher for more than twenty-six years, and has been actively involved in urban school reform for most of that time. Teacher research has been an inseparable part of her educational practice, and she continues to work with teachers on the use of inquiry as professional development. Williams has worked in community-based, out-of-school literacy projects, in popular education projects, at New College of California, and, for sixteen years, as a teacher in the San Francisco Unified School District. She is a poet and, with the Bay Area Writing Project, has developed many opportunities for teachers who are also writers to write and publicly share their writing.

Appendix A: Protocol for Shared Reflection

This protocol adapted from S. Hole and G. McEntee's "Reflection is at the Heart of Practice" [ASCD's *Educational Leadership* 56 (8) 34-7] appeared on these pages. The full article can be found on the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) website at *www.ascd.org.*

Appendix B: Protocol for Individual Reflection

This protocol adapted from S. Hole and G. McEntee's "Reflection is at the Heart of Practice" [ASCD's *Educational Leadership* 56 (8) 34-7] appeared on these pages. The full article can be found on the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) website at *www.ascd.org*.

Working Together: Designing a Districtwide Action Research Plan for Professional Development

In Tucson, Arizona, a group of teachers, working with a supportive district administrator, established teacher research as a districtwide option for teachers' ongoing professional development. The teacher research plan was intended to help teachers better understand and meet the needs of the district's mostly low-income and Hispanic students. Here Deborah Green tells the story of how the new teacher research program was established, emphasizing the importance of careful planning, background research, hands-on experience, and plenty of time to introduce and explain the process.

By Deborah Green

Introduction

My belief in the power of teacher inquiry to improve classroom practice was put to the test four years ago, when I began working with a small group of teachers in my district to investigate the possibility of using action research as a districtwide professional development program. These four years have been rich ones for me, as I've learned that teacher inquiry affects students and teachers alike. I've learned that when teacher inquiry is offered as a form of professional development, it can build a community of learners by creating time and space for teachers to be reflective, to look closely at student work, and to collaborate with other educators. Through thoughtful inquiry, teachers can improve their knowledge of their students and their understanding of the curriculum; they can consider different ways of assessing what students have learned; they can question whether or not students know something; and they can examine their own role in developing *all* students' understanding. As a professional development model, teacher inquiry also builds strong bonds among teachers, which can have a positive impact on their classrooms.

My school district is located in Tucson, Arizona, sixty miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border. As one of seven districts in the city, it serves a community that is primarily low-income and Hispanic (see appendix A for student population demographics).

A large percentage of our students speak Spanish as their first language and come from homes where Spanish is the only language spoken. Meeting the needs of students who don't speak English has become a challenge, particularly since Arizona recently passed a law prohibiting bilingual education. The district also has high dropout and transient rates. Not only do many students move from one school to another, but children often come to school having missed anywhere from weeks to years of formal schooling. All of these conditions cre-

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Planning Districtwide Action Research: Our Yearly Goals

Year One

Find out everything we could about action research.

Find out if action research would benefit students, and if it is something teachers could do or would want to do.

Evaluate action research in relation to Career Ladder criteria for professional development programs.

Year Two

Create a cadre of trainers/leaders.

Identify elements that would be used to create our action research program.

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ate pressing equity issues in our classrooms, which teachers must deal with on a daily basis. These issues are woven throughout this essay.

In this essay, I describe a design for a districtwide plan for teacher inquiry—a plan that offers teachers a choice in their learning. Teacher choice begins at the district level in Tucson, where we have the option of being involved in Career Ladder, a performance-based compensation program that provides teachers with opportunities for continued professional development. Teachers can also take advantage of more traditional professional development offerings, in which the district administration addresses issues such as poverty, bilingual education, and the readiness skills of students through skills-based professional development.

My involvement with what came to be called the Action Research Plan began when I responded to an email from the Career Ladder office inviting teachers to serve on a committee to investigate action research as another option in Career Ladder's professional development program. Initially, nineteen teachers responded to this email, including teachers from kindergarten through middle school as well as three librarians. Several of us came from science or medical backgrounds, and we felt that we had a good understanding of the research process. All of us were looking for a new challenge or a more meaningful way of looking at what was going on in our classrooms.

To be honest, none of us really understood the magnitude of the job we had taken on. Over the next years we would immerse ourselves in the theory and practice of teacher research, design a multifaceted program with an embedded leadership strand, and begin to see the fruits of our collective labor. At every turn, we were faced with a steep learning curve that helped deepen our reflections and contributed to our own development as leaders.

The First Year—Investigating the Process

In our first year we were charged with the task of finding out everything we could about action research. Our goal was to find out if this approach would benefit students, and if it was something that teachers could do or would want to do. We also had to keep in mind Career Ladder's criteria for professional development, which included thirty hours of instruction and an accountability component, requiring written documentation.

We began our work by reading *Guiding School Improvement With Action Research* by Richard Sagor (2000), and other articles about professional development and the role of action research in school improvement. We met once a month to discuss these readings, which helped us define action research—and specifically teacher research. The texts also gave us a common vocabulary for discussing our work, and a way of comparing action research programs outside our Career Ladder program. Along the way, many of us realized we had been doing research in our classrooms for years, but had never had a name for the

journaling and data-collecting we had done, nor a clear purpose for what we were doing. We just knew it helped us understand our students better.

Beyond reading and talking about action research, we felt that it was important to have first-hand knowledge of the process. We thought that conducting our own research would give us a much clearer understanding of action research and what it involved. For this we turned to the Southern Arizona Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project, at the University of Arizona. Four teachers (including me) volunteered to participate in its yearlong Teacher Research and Inquiry Institute (TRI). Participating in the TRI would give us the vital experience of doing action research, and we could see if the course might meet Career Ladder's professional development requirements.

At the monthly district meetings, those of us who had volunteered to join the TRI—we eventually became known by the committee as the "seniors"—reported back, discussed what we had learned, and talked about the research we were doing in our classrooms. Our work covered a wide range of topics. I spent that year investigating what would happen if I increased dialogue and storytelling before writing assignments. Would my second-graders' writing—especially that of my second language learners—improve? A middle school teacher investigated ways of increasing the involvement of parents whose children had missed one or more years of school. Another middle school teacher looked at how students assessed their own work.

However, our inquiries went beyond what we learned about our students, about doing teacher research, and about our own classroom practice. Of particular importance, we learned the value of collaborating with other teacher researchers. This realization was a critical point in our work together as a committee. We ended the year understanding the power of collaboration and action research in the lives and work of teachers—and saw their potential role in the professional development offerings of our district. Action research was a vehicle through which the district could improve equity in instruction by giving teachers support and time to look at their own instructional practices, explore curriculum issues, conduct case studies, and work on schoolwide improvement plans. We also concluded that the existing TRI would be a beneficial component of our final program, because as an established course, it had a level of expertise we didn't yet have within the district. The TRI directors had already put together a comprehensive curriculum to guide teachers through the entire process: finding a question to research, collecting and analyzing data, locating references and resources, and writing a final report.

Examine other models of districtwide action research programs.

Year Three

Explore staff development possibilities that include teacher research and collaborative support groups.

Provide leadership roles for district teachers.

Educate district leaders about teacher research to help refocus their thinking about staff development and garner their support.

Create a model for Career Ladder through which all district teachers would have the option to participate in teacher research.

Year Four

Work in progress: continue to revise program and respond to emerging challenges.

The Second Year—Learning the Skills of Teacher Research

Building on what we had learned in the first year from our reading, research, and discussions, as well as from our experience in the TRI, we began our second year believing that in order to create and facilitate an action research program for the district, it was important for all of us on the committee to have a clear understanding of what was involved: not only what models were already out there, but also what doing action research was really like. That year, all ten members of the pilot committee (including the four seniors) attended the TRI with the idea that if we were going to be inquiry leaders, we needed to understand first-hand the process of doing action research. In addition, we continued to meet monthly with the Career Ladder director to share what we were learning and talk about what the final district program might look like.

We set three goals for our second year:

- to create a cadre of trainers/leaders
- to identify elements that would be used to create our action research program
- to examine other models of districtwide action research programs.

"If we were going to be inquiry leaders, we needed to understand firsthand the process of doing action research."

It was a year of hard work and reflection. In addition to our regular teaching duties, each of us attended the TRI, conducted our own research, reflected on our professional practice, and gathered information about other action research programs. We met regularly as a committee, kept notes, and discussed the role of the facilitator. We had many conversations, formal and informal, about what the final program would look like.

By the end of the year we had agreed on two critical things: the program must be voluntary, and the training process for inquiry leaders would take at least two years. We had all taken part in programs that had been mandated by the district. We knew the resistance and lack of buy-in these mandated programs elicited, and their failure, in many cases, to bring about real change. We also now knew, from our experience as researchers, how much time and dedication would be needed for the program to be successful. By making action research voluntary, we believed we would avoid resistance and gain the cooperation the program would need in order to succeed. The requirement for at least two years of leadership training also came out of our own experience. At the end of the first year, each of us felt we were just getting a handle on the inquiry process; in no way did we believe we were ready to guide someone else through it.

The Third Year—Putting the Program Together

The third year of the pilot project was key in the development of our district's teacher research model. The four senior TRI participants from our ten-member pilot group had spent a week prior to the new school year at a workshop for coaches sponsored by the Southern Arizona Writing Project. This training showed us ways to support one another in the teacher research process. We took turns conducting the group meetings, which provided an opportunity to hone our facilitation skills. These skills were crucial, as we knew that we would all be playing strong leadership roles in the districtwide teacher research process.

Our goal in the third year was to create a new paradigm in district/teacher partnerships. Specifically, we wanted

- to explore staff development possibilities that included teacher research and collaborative support groups
- to provide leadership roles for district teachers
- to educate district leaders about teacher research in order to help refocus their thinking about staff development and garner their support
- to create a model for Career Ladder through which all district teachers would have the option to participate in teacher research.

These were lofty goals, but we were ready to take on the challenge.

That year, the four of us who had initially participated in the TRI attended the National Writing Project Annual Meeting in Atlanta, where we presented our work. That presentation helped to solidify our vision. We received helpful feedback from conference participants and learned about other teacher research programs throughout the country. With this knowledge, we further brainstormed what the districtwide Career Ladder alternative program might look like. For several hours, we huddled under the steps of an escalator at the convention center with large sheets of butcher paper. Together we created a working copy of the new program. We struggled with how to meet all Career Ladder requirements, especially documentation. What kind of written documentation could we reasonably ask people to do? How could we get teachers to share their work with other teachers in the district, and should this be a requirement? We knew that trying something new can be scary and that committing oneself to something new for a whole school year can be even scarier. So we looked at different models of teacher research to see how to make the process manageable and understandable within the school year. Then, with the help of the rest of the committee, we arrived at our final draft, which included five inquiry options ranging from a single eight-week mini-inquiry to a full two-year leadership training cycle. We hoped that, having a range of options to choose from, teachers would be more willing to take a risk and try action research (appendix B includes the application and list of options for 2003–2004).

The end of the year brought us together frequently to discuss how we might share this new teacher research program with our teachers and administrators. We were concerned about how to share our knowledge of teacher research with teachers, knowing that it is often difficult for teachers to view change positively. We also knew that our teachers often have far too many professional development initiatives and options to consider. Would they want one more? How might new teachers look at teacher research, when they are often paralyzed by the overwhelming teaching task ahead of them? Early experiences sharing what we had learned with teacher colleagues had taught us that we needed to balance our enthusiasm with ample information, and provide the time for teachers to process that information before asking them to commit to a new program.

At the beginning of the 2003 school year, the Career Ladder office presented district teachers with an opportunity to sample the variety of alternatives available to them through a dis-

trictwide Career Ladder Fair. Our pilot group attended this fair to explain the teacher research options to attendees. At the same time, the Career Ladder director, Cheryl Siqueiros, presented the model and rationale to district administrators. We were finally ready to implement the program that had been in the making for three years.

The Fourth Year—Our Work in Progress

Our implementation year got off to a good start. Fifteen teachers ranging from kindergarten to middle school signed up. Fourteen of these chose to do three eight-week mini-inquiries, and one chose to participate in the Teacher Research Institute. The fourteen teachers in the mini-inquiry cycles were divided into three teacher research support groups, by school location. Each teacher had his or her own research question. Most questions focused on English language learners (ELL)[1]; however, one teacher focused on developing math skills in his self-contained special-education class.

Each teacher was expected to attend at least three meetings per eight-week period. All three groups got together once every eight weeks to share their work with one another. At the end of the year, participants shared their work with administrators and other interested teachers in a program that included roundtable presentations and panel discussions.

"The work that each of these teachers did was remarkable."

The work that each of these teachers did was remarkable. Their confidence in themselves as researchers and their understanding of their students grew dramatically over the year. For example, a teacher whose students had all been identified as having severe learning disabilities (SLD) began the year asking if an electronic device would help his SLD students master math facts. By the end of the year, he was exploring what types of problem solving in higher-level math his SLD students could do if they were given calculators to perform basic math functions. For the first time in his teaching career, his students were successfully exploring perimeter, area, and volume.

As inspiring as this year was, however, we encountered several challenges along the way as we worked to get this new program up and running. Among these were:

- *Maintaining communication among facilitators.* Although we were all attending monthly planning meetings, we discovered that we often left meetings with differing understandings. To resolve this, one member volunteered to take detailed notes and share them with the rest of us.

- *Establishing clearly defined roles for facilitators.* The role of the facilitator is evolving into one that could be called "participant instructor": we have to do our own research at the same time that we are providing workshops and small-group guidance. We are working to come up with a system that meets the needs not only of the participants but also of the facilitators.

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1 Our population is 98 percent Hispanic, and a large majority of this group speak English as their second language. Of those who speak English as their first language, many speak nonacademic English and cannot pass the language proficiency test. Since Arizona now has a law against bilingual education, this issue is at the forefront of many teachers' concerns.

- *Ensuring effective planning and focus for each meeting.* Some facilitators and partici- pants enjoyed having the freedom to make last-minute changes in the agenda or sched- ule of meetings. Others were very uncomfortable with this practice and wanted meeting dates and agenda topics to be set in advance.

- *Considering the implications of group composition.* We had divided the groups up by site, thinking it would be easier for people at the same site to meet regularly together. However, one group was already meeting two hours a week at their school and asked to be split up in order to get a different perspective on their work.

- *Managing time constraints.* The challenge of teaching research techniques and expecting teachers to conduct research all within an eight-week time period is one we are contin- uing to address. We have experimented with running three consecutive minicycles so that teachers become increasingly comfortable with the research techniques, allowing a stronger focus on the research question itself.

- *Coordinating options.* We hope to find a way to do this more systematically in the future.

Our pilot group planned to meet during the summer to consider these challenges, and to assemble a more solid curriculum for next year.

Suggestions for Others Thinking About Leading Teacher Research

In addition to allowing sufficient time for the processes of program and leadership develop- ment (our journey illustrates the need for this) and thinking through the challenges listed in the section above, I would like to offer these suggestions to others who may be thinking about leading teacher research at the district level:

- Have someone on the inside, such as a principal or an administrator, act as an advocate; this is key to the success of the program.

- Consider outside networks for support; we found it very helpful to have the Southern Arizona Writing Project as an outside resource in planning curriculum and as an option for teachers in the program.

- Be open to suggestions from the participants to modify the program to meet their needs.

- Provide a mechanism, like a binder or handbook, to help participants make sense of the curriculum/program, and for reference later on.

- Provide a book such as *Living the Questions* by Ruth Hubbard and Brenda Power (1999) for participants to use as a reference.

Our journey over the past four years has confirmed our belief that inquiry can provide teachers with meaningful and productive methods for solving problems and working with students. As I sat with participating teachers at the end of this year, I heard them talk about the gratification of being in control of their own professional development and using sys- tematic methods to find answers to the questions that face them each day in their class- rooms. They also talked about how much they appreciated being able to take a project through a full year, allowing them to reflect on their own practices and make changes along the way to better meet the needs of their students. Throughout this journey my colleagues and I worked together, supported each other to overcome the inevitable doubts and frustra-

tions that arose, and had the help of a program director who believed in us. This collaboration and mutual support has given us confidence in our knowledge that the work we are doing is important to students and fellow teachers, and we look forward to being part of the action research program for years to come.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the other seniors in our pilot group—Deborah Dimmett, Suzanne Kaplan, and Deborah Vath—for their support and contributions to this project.

References

Hubbard, R., and B. Power. 1999. *Living the Questions.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

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Deborah Green has been teaching for twelve years at Liberty Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, where 95 percent of the students qualify for free/reduced-price lunch and 92 percent are Hispanic/Latino. She participated in the Teacher Research Institute sponsored by the Southern Arizona Writing Project and has been involved with teacher research for the past eight years. She helped design, and continues to lead, a districtwide program that offers teacher research as an alternative option for professional development. Her teacher inquiry questions arise from her desire to maintain students' cultural identity within a traditional school setting and have included looking at how oral language affects writing for students whose first language is not English.

Appendix A: Student Population Demographics, Sunnyside District

Ethnicity

School	Year	Total	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Am	White
District Total	1998–99	14502	0.7	2.7	80.6	4.5	11.5
District Total	1999–00	14700	0.5	2.7	81.6	4.5	10.7
District Total	2000–01	14747	0.6	2.7	82.2	4.4	10
District Total	2001–02	14948	0.6	2.4	84	4.3	8.7
District Total	2002–03	15491	0.6	2.1	85.4	4.3	7.5

Gender

School	Year	Total	Male %	Female %
District Total	1998–99	14502	51.7	48.3
District Total	1999–00	14700	51.6	48.4
District Total	2000–01	14747	51.4	48.6
District Total	2001–02	14948	51.3	48.7
District Total	2002–03	15491	51.7	48.3

Free and Reduced-Fee Lunch

School	Year	% Free Lunch	% Reduced-Fee Lunch	% Pay Lunch
District Total	1998–99	60.3	6.8	32.9
District Total	1999–00	61.2	7	31.8
District Total	2000–01	60.2	9.4	30.4
District Total	2001–02	65.7	9.8	24.4
District Total	2002–03	67.3	9.7	23

Graduation Rates

School	Ethnicity	1998–99 %	1999–00 %	2000–01 %	2001–02 %	2002–03 %
District Total	ALL Graduates	53	58	55	61	58
District Total	Asian	67	60	67	67	86
District Total	Black	65	66	65	52	37
District Total	Hispanic	51	58	57	61	58
District Total	Native American	42	44	36	42	43
District Total	White	61	61	52	68	65

English Language Learners

School	Grade	1998–99	1999–00	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03
District Total	All Grades	29.8	29.7	34.6	35.7	35.6

For additional information go to:
http://www.susd12.org/departments/research_eval/default.asp

Appendix B: Sunnyside Career Ladder Application for Action Research Option

SUNNYSIDE CAREER LADDER
APPLICATION FOR ACTION RESEARCH OPTION

Date _____
Name _____
School _____
Grade Level and/or Subjects Taught _____
Career Ladder Level _____

REQUIREMENTS
Applicants must:
- Be a Career Ladder Level II OR III teacher in good standing
- Attend regularly scheduled after-school meetings
- Maintain required documentation
- Meet all the prerequisites

Applying for: ____Option 1 ____Option 2 ____Option 3 ____Option 4
____Option 5 ____Career Ladder Responsibility Option

Please respond by completing the following statements:

1. Teacher Research interests me because . . .

2. What coursework, district staff development or training have you attended that would assist you in participating in an Action Research Alternative?

3. If you have participated in Action Research, describe the experience.

I acknowledge the teacher's interest and support participation in Action Research.

_____
Principal's signature   Date

This completed application must be received in the Career Ladder Office no later than:
_____

2003–2004 Teacher Research Options

Teachers wishing to use teacher research as a career ladder alternative may choose one of the following options. *First year Level II must participate in one eight-week mini-inquiry (as a Career Ladder Responsibility) prior to participating in any of the options.*

Option 1: Teacher Research Institute (full year)
- *Prerequisite:* CL requirements are maintained in good standing.
- *Focus:* The focus will be on learning the process of teacher research in one's own class or school. Teachers may select this option only once at the district's expense. Any teachers who are interested in developing a leadership component for this career ladder alternative will need to select this option.
- *Documentation:* A final in-depth report that includes data and findings from the teacher's research.
- *Responsible Party:* Southern Arizona Writing Project, Teacher Research & Inquiry Institute. (Optional 3 Graduate credits from U of A at participant expense).
- Meetings: Monthly Saturday meetings (usually 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.).
- *Career Ladder Responsibility:* Individual Presentation – district focus.

Option 2: Three eight-week mini-inquiries
- *Prerequisite:* CL requirements are maintained in good standing.
- *Focus:* The focus will be a scaled-down version of the yearlong teacher research model. Participants apply an inquiry model that begins with identifying a problem or concern by using a reflective protocol. The problem or concern is normally smaller in scope than the problem or concern identified in the yearlong teacher research model.
- *Documentation:* Three working papers that describe the problem, the approach, data collected, impact on student progress, impact on teaching practices, findings, and a bibliography citing at least two sources. One final reflection paper (at end of year) that summarizes the research experience with citations from the participant's journal.
- *Responsible Party:* Lead Teacher Researchers/Career Ladder.
- *Meetings:* A minimum of three meetings per eight-week session, approximately two hours each, after contract time.
- *Career Ladder Responsibility:* Individual Presentation – district focus.

Option 3: Teacher Research (yearlong)
- *This option is for teachers who have previous experience with teacher research.*
- *Prerequisite:* CL requirements maintained in good standing. One full-year Teacher Research & Inquiry Institute or three eight-week mini-inquiries or comparable coursework.
- *Documentation:* A final in-depth report that includes data collected and concludes findings from the teacher's research.
- *Responsible Party:* Lead Teacher Researchers/Career Ladder.
- *Meetings:* Monthly meetings.
- *Career Ladder Responsibility:* Individual Presentation – district focus.

Option 4: Teacher Researcher Practicum
- *Prerequisite:* CL requirements maintained in good standing. One full-year Teacher Research and Inquiry Institute and desire to become a Lead Teacher Researcher.
- *Focus:* The focus of this option is to receive leadership training for teachers who are interested in leading teacher research groups. The teacher researcher practicum would require the participant to co-direct three eight-week mini-inquiry groups.
- *Documentation:* Practicum participants will submit meeting dates, detailed plans for each meeting (specific agenda), and a roster of attendants for each meeting. Participants will write a reflective log for each meeting. A mini-inquiry working paper will be submitted to document student achievement.
- *Responsible Party:* Lead Teacher Researchers/Career Ladder.
- *Meetings:* Three meetings per eight-week session. Additional meetings may need to be scheduled with the teacher-consultant.
- *Career Ladder Responsibility:* Individual Presentation – district focus.

Option 5: Lead Teacher Researchers
- *Prerequisite:* CL requirements maintained in good standing. Two full-year Teacher Research Institute OR one full-year Teacher Research Institute and one year Teacher Researcher Practicum OR one full-year Teacher Research Institute and Critical Friends Training.
- *Focus:* The focus of this option is to provide leadership training for teachers who are leading teacher research groups. Trainers will coach and model the inquiry process, reflect on practices, monitor and provide feedback to participants in the practicums.
- *Documentation:* Trainers will submit syllabus, training/meeting dates, detailed agendas for each meeting, a roster of attendants for each meeting, a reflective log for each coaching session, and a mini-inquiry working paper.
- *Responsible Party:* Career Ladder Office/Individual Sites.
- *Meetings:* Minimum of once a month.
- *Career Ladder Responsibility:* Individual/Group Presentation – district focus.

Leadership Strand
- *The following leadership strand is particularly applicable for Level III teachers:*
  - Year 1: Teacher Research & Inquiry Institute
  - Year 2: Teacher Researcher Practicum
  - Year 3: Lead Teacher Researcher: Lead mini-inquiry sessions or full-year inquiries. Lead practicum participants.

Focusing on Equity in an Established Teacher Research Program

Carol Tateishi, director of a local writing project, describes how her site's commitment to an increased diversity of teacher participants and a greater focus on equity changed their teacher research program. The site used a two-year grant from the Spencer Foundation to establish a multicultural leadership team of teachers, who then met regularly while leading equity-focused inquiry groups at urban schools. Tateishi shares eight lessons she has drawn from the site's effort to improve the teacher research program and concludes with a brief description of continued challenges for this work in the current educational environment.

By Carol Tateishi

What happens when an established writing project site undertakes an overhaul of its teacher research program by broadening its purpose to include equity and by setting as its goal a greater understanding of what contributes to successful inquiry groups in urban schools? As director of the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP), a site of the National Writing Project, this has been my research question for the past many years as I've worked with a strong and wonderful group of BAWP teacher-consultants, who are experienced in conducting classroom research.[1] Together we have reinvented much of BAWP's teacher research program. This essay is the story of these efforts.

Historical Context

Even though classroom research has been part of BAWP's history from its inception, the pointed focus on equity in its teacher research program is a recent development. The seeds of this focus had been sown in the late 1980s, when BAWP leaders had begun to increase the project's focus on teacher diversity and develop programs that addressed the needs of urban teachers and schools. I came on as BAWP director in 1991, primarily because I believed that the time was right to make diversity the central thrust of the work of the Bay Area Writing Project. I believed BAWP's programs would not be effective in reaching a diverse student population until the teacher-consultant corps was more inclusive and diverse. Since its inception in 1974, BAWP had created a professional home for classroom teachers and had nurtured the

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1 BAWP teacher-consultants are teachers who have participated in BAWP's Invitational Summer Institute, an intensive five-week program that is the key component of the writing project model. Teachers are selected for their excellence in teaching writing.

leadership and spirit of hundreds of Bay Area educators. Yet, within this vibrant and caring community, many teachers of color and teachers working in high-poverty communities continued to feel uncertain about whether the tent was big enough to include them as full members. My desire to address this challenge was the deciding factor in my decision to take the position.

This was at a time in the early 1990s when the achievement gap between African American and white students was increasingly discussed publicly and when the numbers of Latino and Southeast Asian students were increasing in urban schools unprepared to meet their language needs. Urban schools in general were losing ground. How could the Bay Area Writing Project address these challenges? We needed the input and leadership of teachers committed to urban schools, particularly teachers of color and teachers who shared common cultural values with the students in these schools.

In my first months as director, I was lucky to hear a speech by University of California Vice President Joyce Justus. At that time, Justus was both a UC vice president and the executive director of the California Subject Matter Projects of which BAWP was one. She was also among the few people of color I had encountered at this level of administration in the university. Justus offered a spirited defense of the role of diversity in California schools, stating that "diversity and quality are inextricably linked; no greatness without diversity." Justus also described the task ahead: to define the relationship between quality and diversity. Justus's words gave me the rich and broad rationale I needed as I gathered teacher-leaders from BAWP and the larger community to realize this vision of diversity at BAWP.

To support our commitment to increase diversity at BAWP, we engaged in a myriad of activities. Here are some examples:

- attending district principals' meetings to explain BAWP's intentions regarding teacher diversity and to encourage teacher nominations for our site's invitational summer institute

- revising our "request for nominations" letter to BAWP teacher-consultants, making the teacher diversity goal and its reasons explicit

- contacting classroom teachers of color whose good work I had learned about, to encourage them to become involved in BAWP through the summer institute

- participating in various programs such as the National Writing Project's Urban Sites Network

- applying for and receiving a federal grant for a three-year program to work with teachers of English language learners in San Francisco.

Perhaps most importantly, in addition to each of these particular activities, we made the issues and concerns of urban teachers the focus of many of our programs.

New leadership emerged from urban teachers of color, and their perspectives began to shape much of BAWP's work. By 2004, our data provided evidence that this push to increase diversity at BAWP had made a significant difference: in the seventeen years

between 1974 and 1991, thirty-seven teachers of color had become BAWP teacher-consultants; in twelve years, between 1992 and 2004, one hundred teachers of color had become teacher-consultants. Many of these teachers were bilingual with roots in local communities. This same push has attracted many other teachers dedicated to issues of equity, including more white teachers teaching in urban schools.

But numbers don't mean much in and of themselves. The meaning lies in the difference made through this broader and more inclusive representation of classroom teachers. Most markedly for BAWP, this difference showed itself in the complexity of the issues and questions about writing that participants raised. In our institutes, teachers were asking why most of the writing research focused on white, middle-class classrooms. Or, when research did focus on African American students, why were so few studies conducted by African American researchers? BAWP teachers also questioned some of the writing project's standard teaching practices, asking for whom and in what context a practice works best or how to adapt a practice for students for whom academic language was a secondary discourse. Clearly, we as a writing project had a lot to learn.

BAWP's Teacher Research Program

This brings us to BAWP's teacher research program, which has a long and productive history. Teacher research started at BAWP in the mid-1970s with individual BAWP teacher-consultants conducting studies in their classrooms. Many of these studies were published as BAWP monographs, a popular series for teachers about the pedagogy of writing. By 1983, BAWP leaders recognized the need for a teacher research community and initiated a program for teacher-consultants that brought individual teacher-researchers together for regular meetings on campus. Over time, as these teacher-consultants gained experience as teacher-researchers, they understood the transformative nature of classroom research and felt a compelling need to move opportunities for research to a broader arena. We wanted to bring teacher research to the Bay Area schools we work with through our extensive professional development programs. We were particularly interested in reaching schools identified by the state as "underperforming" and located in low-income communities of color.

The greater diversity of participating teachers in our programs also began to call into question how we worked on research. For example, our new teacher research leaders wanted to involve their colleagues in leadership rather than individually lead a research group. We began asking ourselves questions: Whose perspective and leadership should guide the research work? Are current leaders able to move the program in new directions? How does the program need to change so that teachers of any experience level can benefit? And, most important: Research for what? How would teachers' time and effort in classroom research make a difference for their students? We knew our current model could not respond adequately to these questions; thus a new vision of a teacher research program began emerging.

A Teacher Research Program Focused on Equity

By the late 1990s, BAWP's teacher research program was in transition. A small band of long-

"The meaning lies in the difference made through this broader and more inclusive representation of classroom teachers. Most markedly for BAWP, this difference showed itself in the complexity of the issues and questions about writing that participants raised."

time BAWP teacher-researchers and I agreed that we needed the time and support to step back from the program, understand its strengths and weaknesses, and forge a new model—one that fostered leadership anchored in urban schools and built BAWP's capacity to use teacher research as an important component of professional development in these schools. We applied for and received a Spencer Foundation Practitioner Research Communication and Mentoring Grant that gave us two years to build our program.

A vision crystallized as we worked through our first year with the grant. This vision introduced equity as an explicit focus of research and placed importance on teachers of color as leaders. As a result of the increased diversity of BAWP teacher-consultants, by the late 1990s, I was able to recruit a racially diverse team of experienced BAWP teacher-researchers—elementary through university teachers, 50 percent of whom were teachers of color—to explore ways that practitioner research could foster improved teaching and learning and promote school change. Marty Williams, BAWP co-director, and I were also active participants. Most of the team taught in "underperforming" schools and were highly committed to issues of social justice.

The program model we created the second year of the Spencer grant, and that we continue to refine, included the following meetings and activities:

BAWP leadership team meetings including an August mini-institute and five school-year meetings of the leadership team, held on campus

Monthly or biweekly meetings of research groups at school sites

A midyear retreat held in January on campus that involved all school participants and leadership team members

A culminating spring symposium in April held on campus for all participants, leaders, and invited guests

Publication of *Working Papers of Teacher Researchers* by the end of the second semester.

In the second year of the grant, we reconfigured the BAWP leadership team to include a diverse group of twelve teacher-researchers.[2]

By early fall of that year, the twelve leadership team members established teacher research groups (two of which were co-led) at ten schools, elementary through community college, involving a total of thirty-seven participants.[3] The Spencer grant made it possible to give stipends to the team leaders and to the participating teachers at their sites, and also to hold full network events and to publish a "works-in-progress" volume at the end of the year.

As our Spencer grant came to an end, BAWP became a member of the Teacher Research Collaborative (TRC) and benefited from a push to articulate more fully the place of equity in our teacher research program. The TRC also supported the leadership development of members of our leadership team. Six leaders, five of whom were teachers of color, continued as leaders in BAWP's TRC program.

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2 The twelve members of the new BAWP leadership team were Adela Arriaga, Sim Chiang, Helen Duffy, Deborah Juarez, Susan Katz, Pirette McKamey, Lisa Morehouse, Peggy Riley, Robert Roth, Lynn Scott, Carol Tateishi, and Marty Williams.

3 Participants included groups in San Francisco at Thurgood Marshall High School, Mission High School, Balboa High School, the University of San Francisco, and a cross-school group that included McAteer High School, MLK Middle School, and Southeast County Community School; groups in Oakland at Fremont High School, Maxwell Park Elementary School, and Laney Community College; and groups at UC Berkeley and Las Positas Community College in Livermore.

Description of Equity-Focused Teacher Research Program

The program model we created the second year of the Spencer Foundation grant, and that we continue to refine, included the following meetings and activities:

1. BAWP leadership team meetings, including an August mini-institute and five school-year meetings of the leadership team, held on the UC Berkeley campus.

2. Monthly or biweekly meetings of research groups at school sites.

3. A midyear retreat held on campus in January that involved all school participants and leadership-team members.

4. A culminating spring symposium in April held on campus for all participants, leaders, and invited guests.

5. Publication of *Working Papers of Teacher Researchers* by the end of the second semester.

A more complete description of these components follows, based on the 2002–2003 program.

1. *Leadership Team Meetings*

   Each member of the BAWP leadership team, including Marty and me, facilitated (or cofacilitated) a teacher research group at a local site. Facilitators operated on two levels: the organizational/institutional level of the Bay Area Writing Project and the local school site level. In the organizational capacity, members worked collaboratively to develop a model and materials for training and mentoring new BAWP members to lead teacher research in urban schools. Leadership team members also collaborated by trying out materials from a facilitator's binder that included methodology, suggested activities, readings, protocols, and more; we engaged in problem solving as a team, shared successful approaches, and designed the midyear retreat and the spring symposium.

   The second level of responsibility for leadership team members was at the school site. Here each leader served as the facilitator of a school group—building communities of teacher-researchers, providing instruction about classroom research, and mentoring potential new leaders. The leaders engaged in research about their teacher research group and some leaders also conducted their own classroom research.

   At BAWP leadership team meetings, the diversity of the group played an important role throughout the year. For starters, no single way of running a meeting dominated. While this might not sound like much, social and cultural assumptions abound in these settings, with the dominant group usually taking for granted that its way of interacting and relating to others is the norm. This practice of diverse approaches to running a meeting paralleled our need to learn from each other about culturally influenced experiences that students brought to school that could affect whether and how they learned.

2. *Research Group Meetings at Local School Sites*

   Because we were using the year to garner more knowledge of what contributes to successful inquiry groups in urban schools, members of the leadership team gave themselves great leeway in structuring each school-group's timeline, meeting times, and local means of dissemination. This provided the opportunity for us to see many models at work. On

average, groups met at least once a month at their local schools. All groups tried out a number of common writing activities, inquiry protocols, and research methods. Almost every group also came up with useful adaptations and innovations to these processes. We believe it is significant (based on years of past experience) that no leadership-team member dropped out during the year, especially given the stressful working conditions at many of the schools.

3. *Midyear Retreat*

In January, the leadership team held a Saturday retreat on the UC Berkeley campus that brought together the full network of thirty-seven participants. The retreat included time for everyone to a) share their inquiries and the workings of their local groups, b) participate in a choice of small-group sessions (Charting Your Data, Writing as a Way into Data Analysis, Planning for Data Collection, and Using Protocols in Data Analysis), c) participate in guided writing, and d) work in their site groups. This retreat, held on a gloomy, rainy day in Berkeley, created a spot of sunshine. In our first activity, a quick go-around, each teacher briefly described his or her question and each school group said a few words about its collaboration. As we went around the room, the enthusiasm of the teachers' presentations gained momentum, filling the room with the power of urban teachers asking serious questions about their students' learning and their teaching. With the final question, everyone broke out in spontaneous applause, moved by the experience of being in a room with close to forty other teachers who cared as deeply as they did about the students they taught. As the day progressed, participants made good, practical use of the small-group time, the topics of which had been generated by the leadership team. No one had anticipated the importance of this midyear event. A community formed that day, one that reenergized people and helped sustain them over the coming semester.

4. *Spring Symposium*

Held in April at the UC Berkeley Alumni House, this event served as a culminating celebration of work completed during the year with a chance to evaluate and learn from it. This time it was a beautiful, sunny day and participants eagerly came to see one another again and to share their work. The leadership team had planned the day with different team members responsible for different parts of the program. The symposium opened with a focus on data collection and analysis, highlighting the work of three of the participating teacher-researchers. While it might seem strange to spend time on these nuts-and-bolts topics at the end of the year, leadership team members knew their group members were at the point where they could appreciate the work done by their fellow teacher-researchers, having just completed data analysis themselves. Each presenter's short session illuminated the use of different kinds of data and data analysis—videotape, audiotaped interviews, and student writing. The presenters spoke honestly about the ups and downs of their work and, in doing so, shared their passion for their students and their sense of accomplishment in their research. People took notes and thought about how they might use what they learned in their studies next year. We passed out their published writing in a professional-looking, spiral-bound publication, titled *Working Papers of Teacher Researchers*. In small groups, teachers read full papers and discussed them using guidelines developed by the leadership team. The day also included reflective analyses by two members of the leadership team, a discussion of possibilities for the next year,

"As we went around the room, the enthusiasm of the teachers' presentations gained momentum, filling the room with the power of urban teachers asking serious questions about their students' learning and their teaching. With the final question, everyone broke out in spontaneous applause."

evaluations, and plenty of time for written reflections.

5. *Works-in-Progress Publication*

   All participants had drafts started, and twenty-nine completed them in time for the publication deadline. The collection of writings provided a realistic snapshot of what is possible amid fairly difficult teaching contexts when teachers are given opportunities and support to look closely at some aspect of their classroom practice. Participants included new teachers still completing their credentials as well as veteran teachers conducting classroom inquiries for the first time. Some of the pieces were clearly research reports—their research methodology and research stance were apparent—while others were reflective essays.

6. *Other Work Generated During the Year*

   In addition to the components described above, the leadership team also offered presentations about research to the faculties of several schools, developed and taught a new course on teacher research with academic credit provided by UC Berkeley Extended Education, and revised the BAWP teacher research program's facilitator's notebook.

What Have We Learned?

Our effort to refocus our research program on equity and to better understand how to support change in urban schools has taught us a number of lessons that help guide our continued work. I hope these understandings will help others to design equity-focused teacher research programs.

A shared commitment to equitable teaching provides a powerful focus for research.

Perhaps our most important learning has to do with importance of a shared commitment to equitable teaching as the purpose for engaging in research. During the many years of BAWP's teacher research program prior to this work, teachers came to the program mainly to learn how to do classroom research, to expand their sense of professionalism, to contribute to the research knowledge in the field, and to become better teachers. While these purposes were certainly shared by participants in our new program, we found that, in many cases, they were not the starting point. Rather, a compelling mission brought educators to this work: participants were committed to teaching that led to equitable outcomes for their students, and they perceived teacher research as supporting this mission. However, the explicit focuses of this mission varied widely across groups. At one end of the continuum, equity was a clear focus. For example, in the cross-school group in San Francisco led by Robert Roth, members began by establishing principles for their work related to common beliefs around social justice; at Thurgood Marshall High School, Pirette McKamey and her group came together to look closely at the school's teaching of African American students; and at Mandela High School, Deborah Juarez and her colleagues put equity of student outcomes at the center of every aspect of their research. At the other end of the continuum, teacher research methodology tended to take the foreground, and BAWP facilitators wrestled with creating entry points for issues of equity. In the middle of the continuum, for instance at Balboa High School, leaders found the focus on equity was more implicit than explicit. (For details about experiences in several of these schools, see the essays by Roth,

"Participants were committed to teaching that led to equitable outcomes for their students, and they perceived teacher research as supporting this mission."

McKamey, Juarez, and M. Williams in this collection.)

No matter where a school fell on this continuum, a shared research purpose, focused on equity, made a positive difference. This added dimension provided reasons for teachers at each school to spend time together, to learn research methodology, to write about what they learned, and to share their inquiries with colleagues at their schools. We also learned that this shared purpose was instrumental in attracting other faculty members to teacher research. Framing the work in terms of important school issues larger than those of individual teachers' classrooms was key to the high interest participants' colleagues showed for the work.

Preparing to lead equity-focused teacher research requires new approaches.

Here I want to elaborate a bit on what has changed at the Bay Area Writing Project as a result of this project. As I stated earlier, through our changes to the program, we shifted our focus specifically to urban schools and looked to deepen our understanding of ways to make teacher research a fully realized component of BAWP's professional development programs. We moved from the development of autonomous, individual teacher-researchers to the development of communities of teacher-researchers within the specific social contexts of their schools. Likewise, our question "inquiry for what?" now focused not on teacher-researchers' individual products and their potential contribution to the field but on the potential of the research to contribute to equitable outcomes for students and to the larger goals and concerns of school communities. This reframing of our approach to teacher research has had great implications for the design and implementation of BAWP's programs in schools, and it dovetails with our efforts over the past three years to build ongoing partnerships with schools and promote homegrown leadership at school sites.

These years have given us time to build a flexible model of shared inquiry at schools with a range of research-based tools, strategies, and activities as resources to draw on. Most importantly, we have also developed an approach and model for training new facilitators and developing their leadership.

BAWP's "teachers-teaching-teachers" approach is useful for promoting equity in leadership.

At the outset, members of the leadership team made a decision to use BAWP's model of "teachers teaching teachers" as a central governing principle of our work together as leaders. While we used many common processes and procedures at our leadership meetings, each meeting drew on the particular skills and expertise of different members, and, most importantly, their differing social and cultural ways of leading and interacting. In addition, this nonhierarchical, flattened model of leadership reflected a belief that teacher-leaders for equity (at BAWP and at each school) needed to experience equity themselves in their new roles. Thus facilitators also used a nonhierarchical model of leadership with their school groups. They provided direct and explicit instruction as needed, and the network as a whole had common deadlines and expectations for work. But they also invited members of their groups into the thinking and planning, for example by cocreating tools, processes, and procedures. We found that this approach developed clear ownership of the program by team leaders and encouraged school groups to take increased ownership not only of their group's

work but also of their school's professional development.

Diverse leaders bring a variety of approaches to leadership.

One way to go about developing leaders of teacher research is to teach them to do this, this, and this. Another way, the way we chose, was through shared inquiry. We invited a diverse group of people into the leadership of BAWP's teacher research program and cocreated the process. We provided the building materials—the readings, the methods, the resources— and the overall purpose and goals there. With this as a foundation, we then encouraged adaptation and innovation. While our network of teacher research groups shared common activities, research methodology, deadlines, and expectations, each of us as facilitators was encouraged to find our own best ways of working at our sites and to regularly share these evolving approaches at our leadership team meetings. This pushed us to different ways of leading. For example, after Deborah Juarez's group was established, the members began rotating leadership roles. In Robert Roth's multischool group, members created norms and principles to guide the group's work. New research group activities and processes emerged as well, useful to the network at large. In Pirette McKamey's group, the members created a turn-taking process for taking notes and documenting their meetings that others could try out; Marty Williams and Helen Duffy refined a reflective protocol that became a standard tool for all of us; and I adapted Jerry Harste's "mini-inquiry" activity in a way that was immediately useful for others.[4]

We leadership team members learned a lot about teacher research through the experience of facilitating it. We allowed ourselves to wrestle with tough issues and topics we didn't necessarily agree on, and opened ourselves to other people's ideas and an understanding that not all the edges needed to be smoothed over. The differences among our perspectives and knowledge about students' home cultures, for example, signaled a need to talk through these perspectives and educate one another. There were also differences about how to proceed. During an early meeting, a facilitator introduced a particular protocol and a number of people resisted the process. From this we realized that we couldn't assume we all valued the same processes, and that discussion was needed. Experiencing this kind of discourse in the facilitators' meetings made it possible to allow similar conversations in our school groups and made us more conscious of the varying knowledge and experiences others might bring to our groups.

Membership in a larger community provides participants validation of their concerns and support for their research.

We learned a great deal from the success of the January midyear retreat and the April celebratory meeting. Just as it was important for participants to be part of research groups that shared ideas and issues larger than themselves and their individual classrooms, within the network as a whole, it was a powerful experience for groups of teachers to be part of a larger community with shared goals. Many came from schools that are regularly trashed in local

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4   For details about mini-inquiry, please see Harste 1999. Also, see my description under the heading "*Mini-inquiry helps groups gain momentum.*"

newspapers, and whose students are considered deficient in the public eye. Being a participant in this program elevated status of their work. They found a community that acknowledged their day-to-day efforts as significant and believed that their classroom practices, their concerns, and their students were worth researching.

Public sharing increases accountability and effectiveness.

Built into the leadership team was the expectation of publicly sharing one's ongoing work with a number of audiences: the leadership team; one's own local school group and local faculty; the full network of teacher-researchers; and readers of our written publication. This public accountability upped the ante in a number of respects as participants worked to make their work understandable to others and make wise choices in how they used their data and wrote about their students. The public sharing also helped participants use their meeting time effectively, meet deadlines, and, from the beginning, think about how to represent their work to different audiences.

Mini-inquiry helps groups gain momentum.

The mini-inquiry approach mentioned earlier deserves a bit more comment. We found that a mini-inquiry is a very effective format for encouraging participants to start the research process. This low-stakes, nonthreatening activity proved critical for many who initially saw research as something only done by university professors or an elite group of teachers. As described by Harste (1999), mini-inquiry projects are "quick investigations of issues that are raised through professional readings, conversations, or occurrences in classrooms . . . [T]heir inherent simplicity helps to ensure that inquiry is seen as a way of life rather than a big deal" (68–69). In the teacher research group I facilitated at Maxwell Park School in Oakland, participants were daunted by the idea of a research question worthy of a yearlong study, but eager to pay close attention for two to three weeks to some of their real questions. For example, one teacher wanted to learn more about who played with whom during recess. After two weeks of observation, her mini-inquiry blossomed into a full-fledged study of race and gender in playground activities. What began as a mini-inquiry revealed patterns that had implications for school climate concerns. Frequently, the mini-inquiry led to longer-term, meaningful research.

Writing is an essential support for learning.

At the Bay Area Writing Project, writing is so much the air that we breathe that we sometimes lose sight of the vital role it plays in our work. Writing was an essential tool for learning that we built into every leadership team meeting and that leaders built into their local inquiry sessions as a regular activity. To inform our uses of writing, we drew on texts by Langer and Applebee (1987) and George Hillocks (1995). The texts emphasize the importance of writing for learning and inquiry and provide frameworks for its use. The product of a final written document was also important. Through writing, participants pulled together their work, analyzed their data, put it into language useful to others, and were able to have their studies examined by others. In doing so, participants experienced the critical thinking processes and the writing skills needed by their own students, who often struggle with the demands of academic writing.

Concluding Comments

It would probably not surprise many to learn that BAWP's teacher research program is still evolving. We have, at this point, established a foothold in the world of teacher research for equity, and we've laid down a number of promising pathways to pursue. We also have a working model to share and some ideas about what is important to the work and why. As we look to the future, though, we continue to face a number of challenges:

- Funding is important, and in the coming year, we do not have special funds to support the program. We are currently considering ways to sustain the program without special funds.

- Teacher turnover can be high in urban schools, and it can be hard to maintain momentum when a group is unstable.

- Teachers in urban schools, particularly those involved in reform, are tremendously overextended and are pushed to find time to conduct classroom research.

Amid these challenges, I take heart knowing that the teacher research program BAWP now promotes is worthy of teachers' time, and that through teachers' work, we may all learn more about improving the academic achievement of struggling students. BAWP is about teacher leadership in improving the teaching of writing, and a teacher research program focused on equity serves this goal in powerful ways.

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Carol Tateishi began her work in education as a middle school English teacher, teaching for fifteen years in California and two years with immigrant students in London. For the past fifteen years, she has served as the director of the Bay Area Writing Project, working with teachers and schools throughout the eight Bay Area counties. During her tenure, she has guided BAWP's efforts to increase the diversity of its teacher-leaders and develop programs that address the needs and interests of urban teachers. While her interest in teacher research dates back to the mid-1980s, her involvement began in earnest when, as BAWP's director, she came to understand more fully the significance of classroom research for teachers and their students and the role writing projects can play in supporting this work. Tateishi is a member of the National Writing Project Task Force and coordinates the NWP's Professional Writing Retreats, a program that encourages and supports teacher-researchers and others in the publication of their work.

FURTHER READING
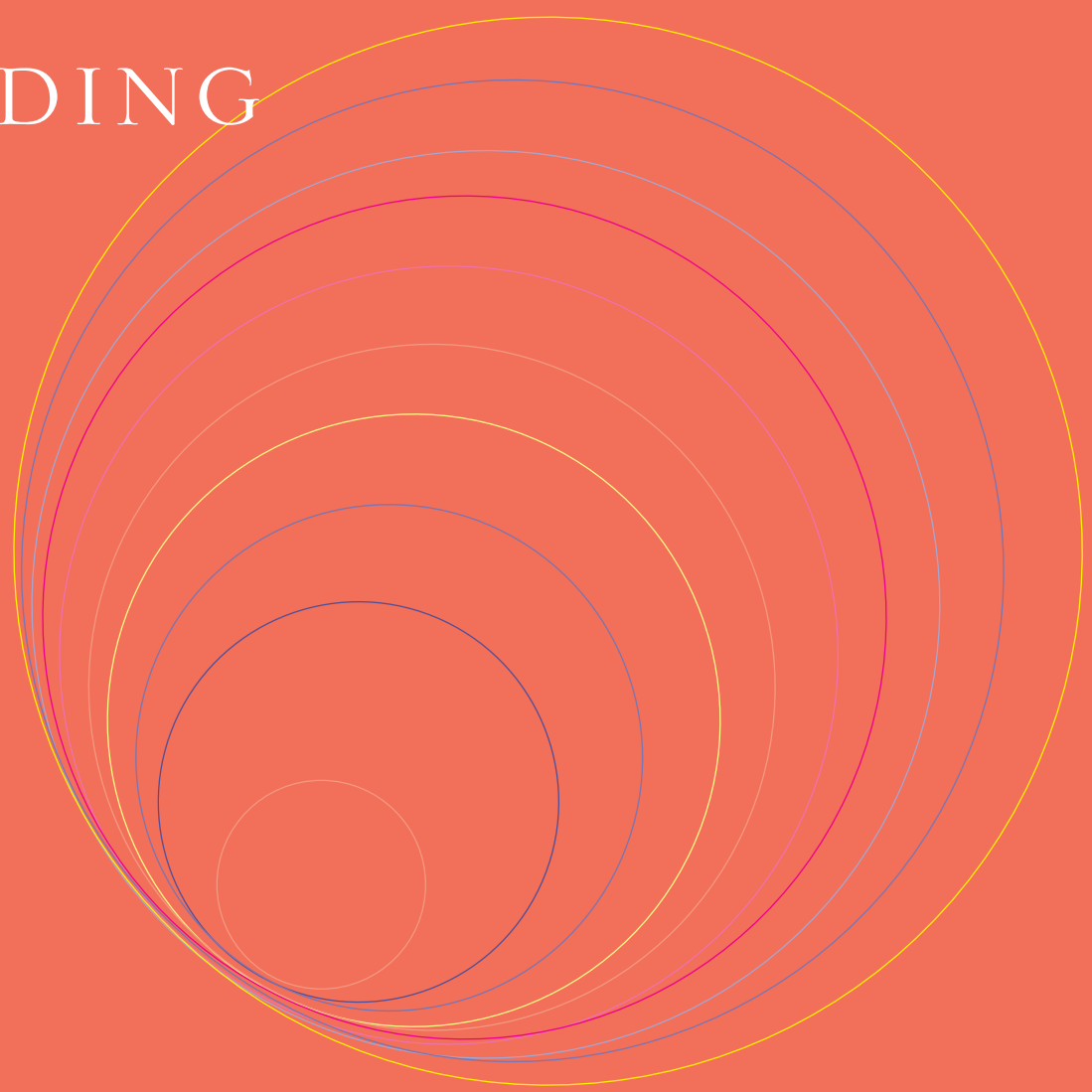
Starting an Annotated Bibliography of Teacher Research for an Urban K–8 School

In her work supporting teacher-researchers, school inquiry coach Elizabeth Radin Simons has often wished for an annotated bibliography of the growing literature of research by teachers, to use with teacher-inquirers as a source of both inspiration and solid teacher knowledge gained through classroom research. As a member of the TRC Planning Team, Simons had the opportunity to start this bibliography, which she tailored to the questions she heard from the teachers at ASCEND, a K–8 school in a low-income, working-class area of Oakland, California. This bibliography, a bare-bones beginning, is offered as a work in progress. It begins with a brief narrative essay in which Simons explains the process of compiling the bibliography.

By Elizabeth Radin Simons

Introduction

For years I've admired the practical and important teacher research coming from teachers working full-time in urban schools, who manage to find the time not only to do some "systematic and intentional research"—to use Cochran-Smith and Lytle's phrase (1993, 23–24)—but to write about it as well. A credit to their profession, these teachers are contributing to a growing body of knowledge about teaching and learning coming not from the university or from policymakers, but from classroom teachers. I was introduced to teacher research through the Bay Area Writing Project in the 1980s. My interest grew into something of a passion in the years from 1993 to 1999 when, with Sarah Freedman, a UC Berkeley professor, I codirected the Multicultural Collaborative for Literacy in Secondary Schools (M-CLASS).[1] Since 2000, with my colleague and fellow coach Tom Malarkey at the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES), I have continued to support teachers doing research.

Usually described by one of three names—teacher research, teacher inquiry, or action research—the practice of teacher research (even though most teachers in this country have probably never heard of it) is widespread in teacher-credential programs, in school-reform work, at National Writing Project sites, at the Coalition of Essential Schools, and in schools and school districts throughout the country.

> *"For years I've admired the practical and important teacher research coming from teachers working full-time in urban schools."*

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1 The M-CLASS book *Inside City Schools: Investigating Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms* (Freedman et al. 1999) features articles by classroom teachers.

The genre of research written by teachers is distinguished from university research by teachers' depth of knowledge of their classrooms and students. Only teachers, who are with their students daily, year in and year out, have access to the rich and subtle data that underlie their studies. Teachers are there through the daily routines and continuous learning, and also at the unpredictable moments of challenge and breakthrough. The best teacher research articles and books are often written in a passionate first-person voice; they make compelling literature, with surprises at every turn about what students and teachers are feeling, thinking, and learning. Like good university research, teacher research is grounded in theory—drawn from university research or from teaching experience, or from a combination of these. But an important difference from university research is in the type of questions that are asked. Teachers ask questions that emerge from their authentic classroom challenges: How can I make my students learn to love reading? What can I learn about my own practice by researching four case-study students over three years? Why can't my students understand math word problems, even if they know the literal meaning of the words in the problem? These questions, which are fundamental to the achievement of their particular students, also resonate with national educational challenges. Teachers obsessed with such questions come up with research findings that can contribute to the achievement of their own students *and* to the larger body of educational knowledge and policy.

For a number of years I've wanted to read through the teacher research literature and assemble a bibliography. I've had in mind a specific kind of bibliography, one I've often wished I had when supporting an inquiry group or a teacher engaged in inquiry. I long for this bibliography, for example, when talking with a third grade teacher who is researching writers' workshops in an urban school. At that moment I may not have time for a library search, but I know that somewhere there exists a teacher research article on third grade writing workshops in an urban, multicultural classroom.

As part of the Teacher Research Collaborative (TRC) planning team, I naïvely took on as my project creating such a bibliography. But as I began to understand the scope of the project, I felt guilty each time we met and I reported on my meager progress. Things weren't going well. The project was unwieldy and complicated. In one of my moments of desperation, my colleagues reminded me that my role was simply to start or pilot a bibliography.[2] What a relief! The bibliography that follows this essay is the result of these efforts.

For several reasons we wanted to include in this bibliography as much research that is written primarily by teachers—rather than university professors—as possible. First, teacher-authored articles inspire teachers, whether they have never heard about teacher research, are considering teacher research for the first time, or are already doing research. Second, teacher-authored articles serve as models for teachers who are not enrolled in university programs but want to write about their research. Third, these articles are a rich source of pedagogical information, in both their content and references. Finally, articles written by teach-

"Only teachers, who are with their students daily, year in and year out, have access to the rich and subtle data that underlie their studies."

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2   We also set a long-term TRC goal of building the bibliography I dream about. It will be an interactive, online, bibliographic resource: facilitators of teacher research groups, teacher-researchers, and others could find books and articles, add comments about whether they found a book or article useful or not (think amazon.com!), add new descriptors, and—most important—add new entries. In other words, this bibliography will be an ongoing and collaborative endeavor.

ers introduce other teachers to the impressive national and international teacher research movement, and invite them to participate.

Context: A Bibliography for ASCEND School

As a school coach at BayCES, I've been providing support for inquiry at the ASCEND school in Oakland, California, for three years. ASCEND, a new, small, autonomous school, opened in the fall of 2001. It currently has about 270 students, and that number will grow to 400 when its new building is completed in 2006. The student population is 62 percent Latino, 20 percent Asian, 17 percent African American, and 1 percent other. Teachers "loop," or stay with their students for two years. When teachers are hired at ASCEND, which in its development stage was called "The School for Inquiry," they commit to making classroom inquiry part of their professional development. As a BayCES coach, I spend one day a week at ASCEND, where one of my roles is to support teacher inquiry. The teachers meet twice a month for two hours to work on their inquiry, sometimes as a whole staff but more often in smaller, cross-grade focus groups.

In the 2003–2004 academic year, four of the more experienced teacher-inquirers—Davina Katz, Elena Aguilar, Hatti Saunders, and Stephanie Sisk-Hilton—designed and led the teacher inquiry work at ASCEND. (Elena has contributed an essay to this guide.) Early in our planning, these four teachers said they wanted to read more teacher research in general, and in particular more research related to their inquiry questions. We also planned to incorporate more writing into the inquiry process, and wanted the teachers to be reading models of teacher research. I agreed to start looking for articles.

What was I looking for? ASCEND teachers and staff do their inquiry in four small groups, each with a focus: arts/family, math, English-language development, and literacy. The teachers' questions and focus areas were one guide in my quest for articles. But I also had a guiding framework. The ASCEND staff had begun to work with BayCES on issues of equity in student achievement, focusing on the role played by race, class, gender, and culture (of both students and teachers) in teaching and learning. So I was particularly interested in articles that included an equity perspective. I looked for articles by white teachers and teachers of color alike who were studying and reflecting on their assumptions about students of color and their families. Mostly, however, I was not aware of the race or ethnicity of the authors unless they mentioned it in their article or biographic note.

How I've Used the Articles

To date I've used the articles in three ways. We copied five or six articles that we believed would be of special interest to the whole staff, and handed them out at several meetings. Teachers each then chose one article to read and discuss in small groups, both as a model of writing and for its content; teachers reveled in the luxury of having reading time during a staff meeting.

Besides this more formal use of the articles, I regularly gave articles to individuals as I came across them. For the most part, I have found that teachers read the articles and incorporate the ideas they get from them into their teaching and inquiry.[3] One teacher, for example, whose inquiry is on how to encourage quiet Latinas in her class to participate in whole-class discussions, read the article by Goldstone that appears in the bibliography, and got the idea to involve the girls' mothers in her inquiry. She called a meeting with the mothers, where she shared her concern and explained why she wanted the girls to speak more. She asked the mothers about their own experiences in school, and they told her they had never been encouraged to speak up. This teacher found her work with mothers to be a critical and ongoing component to fostering change in the girls' behavior.

A third way I've used these articles is as models of written teacher research. The teachers at ASCEND write about their inquiry twice a year. In January they write a midyear process report, which they share with their colleagues. At the end of the year they write at some length, using these prompts:

- your question
- your process and what data you collected
- your data analysis
- a change you made in your teaching as a result of your inquiry
- a challenge for the ASCEND community that comes out of your inquiry
- a finding—something you learned or any piece of information that you would like to be included in a collection of "teacher knowledge about teaching at ASCEND."

"I started by asking my friends for references."

I was very impressed with these reports, and I believe that the quality of the writing may have been influenced by their reading of teacher research. Another measure, I think, of the articles' impact is that four teachers are spending time over the summer working on articles to submit for publication.

Finding the Books and Articles

What I'm about to report is no model of how to do research. I sporadically looked for articles while I was working at two jobs; I looked when I had a free moment or needed a specific article. I didn't keep a good record of the bibliographies or the websites I scanned. I do have all my notes, however, and hope, at some future date, to pull them together in an orderly fashion. For now, then, this is an overview of my process.

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3   As I've prepared this bibliography, rereading many of the articles I handed out to teachers, I've been thinking, How can I make these a more accessible resource for overworked teachers? Noticing in the articles information and ideas that teachers who read them did not incorporate in their inquiry, I'm formulating a plan to highlight key points in the article, or write a note about why I think the teacher might find it particularly fascinating—and then have a five-minute chat with the person about it.

I started by asking my friends for references. Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, director of national programs and site development at the National Writing Project, suggested I look in the NWP library at *Teacher Research: The Journal of Classroom Inquiry*, edited by Ruth Shagoury Hubbard and Brenda Miller Power.[4] Although the NWP library had only a few issues, these contained exactly what I was looking for: articles written by teachers with a wide range of experience both in teaching and in teacher research. I used some of them right away in my coaching at ASCEND.

I reviewed bibliographies, including one I had saved a few years ago from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) website, compiled by Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle. The best articles for my purposes from this twenty-six-page bibliography were published in the journal *Language Arts*, which turned out to be a rich source of teacher research. The National Writing Project Teacher Inquiry Communities network has an annotated bibliography on the NWP website, a useful resource listing books and giving Web links to teacher research resources. I followed up on the Web links, used ERIC and the NCTE website, found teacher research sites from search engines, and got books from the UC Berkeley library. (Most of the websites focus on how to do teacher research. One exception is *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research* from the University of Toronto, which yielded a number of articles. The CRESS center[5] at the University of California, Davis, also has an archive of research articles written by K–12 teachers across the disciplines.) I looked at books that I'd used in the past, notably Cityscape (Banford et al. 1996), *Class Acts* (Hall, Campbell, and Miech 1997), and the Practitioner Inquiry Series from Teachers College Press. Whenever I read an article, I also checked its bibliography for more sources.

At first I thought I would limit my search to the work of classroom teachers who were not in graduate programs or getting Ph.D.s, since I wanted a more grassroots teacher voice. But much excellent teacher research is done in graduate programs, so I included these researchers. I came across many enticing titles that I didn't pursue because they didn't fit my particular needs, but which, in another life, I would love to have time to search out and read. In fact, I didn't have time to read everything that looked relevant and interesting, and I came away with a to-do list of articles to read and books to check out. These were often in journals from areas such as emotional behavior or staff development, and were on topics such as building learning communities through teacher research, or multisite parent-teacher action research projects.

"From my cursory look at websites, I noticed a growing corpus of teacher research, but this research is not indexed and is therefore difficult to find."

A Few Things I Noticed

Most bibliographies devoted to teacher research cite primarily the work of professors studying and supporting teacher research, and a growing literature on how to do teacher research. Much of this work is excellent, but articles by teachers, as opposed to college and university researchers, represent a small portion of the literature.

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4 Unfortunately, the journal was discontinued after six years.

5 Cooperative Research and Extension Services for Schools.

From my cursory look at websites, I noticed a growing corpus of teacher research, but this research is not indexed and is therefore difficult to find. In fact, the genre is somewhat murky; often articles that I have included in this bibliography aren't specifically described as teacher research by the author, yet they clearly fit into the genre. In short, it will take some detective work to ferret out an extensive bibliography of teacher research.

In articles by teachers, I seldom found references or citations to other teacher research. References to published teacher research are mostly limited to citations of each other by the authors of different chapters in a book resulting from a particular project. This general lack of cross-referencing speaks to another potential function of a bibliography of teacher research.

The Bibliographic Descriptors

Coming up with descriptors has been a challenge. Because I want them to serve multiple purposes, I have changed them several times and am still not satisfied. This is the current working list of descriptors:

"This has been a personal adventure for me."

- Citation: author, date, title, publisher or journal, page numbers, etc.
- Author (information about)
- Grade
- Demographics (school or classroom)
- Bilingual (if relevant)
- Research focus/question
- Equity focus
- Content area (e.g., language arts, math)
- Description of the study
- Type of research (e.g., whole-class, case study, qualitative, quantitative)
- Data
- Student achievement/outcomes
- Other findings
- References (if references are cited or if there is a literature review)
- Recommendation (when and for whom this article could be useful)
- Online availability

These descriptors cover the annotation basics of author, grade, and topic. And because I know that classroom teachers often do not have access to journals, this bibliography includes URLs for articles that can be found online. Unfortunately, the entries are not always parallel; for example, I know quite a bit about some authors, little about others. I have a "bilingual" descriptor mostly because 70 percent of ASCEND students are second-language

learners. When I shared an earlier draft of this bibliography with some ASCEND teachers, they said they also wanted to know what the article was about, so I added the "description of the study" descriptor. I kept trying to make the descriptors easy to use, because even though ASCEND teachers appreciated having articles given to them, they said they weren't sure if they would have time to search a bibliography. (Some had had negative experiences using the ERIC database.) They thought that this bibliography would be a great tool for teachers leading inquiry groups, if they had the time to use it and if it were organized in a way that made it easy to access.

While I would like the bibliography to be objective, I've found that goal difficult to achieve. For example, I wanted to include issues of equity. Often authors do not explicitly name their work as equity focused, and while I might call an article equity focused, I have no idea if the author would agree. I would also like these articles to be informational resources for teachers on research in the area they are studying, so one descriptor indicates whether the article includes something akin to a reference list or a literature review. The other descriptors are, I hope, self-explanatory.

It is important to make clear that the descriptors do not include a critique of the research. While I believe critique to be imperative if teacher research is to achieve the stature it deserves, that is not within the scope of this project. Of course, by choosing not to include certain articles, I have already engaged in one form of critique. However, if this were a university project, it would include explicit critiques of each article—something I presently leave up to the readers.

Final Thoughts

My TRC colleagues asked me how my process of assembling this bibliography might serve as a model for others who want to create a bibliography for a particular group of teachers. My first response was that this has been a personal adventure for me. I enjoy reading teacher research; I enjoy discovering a great article that I know will excite a teacher. I've been watching the evolution of teacher inquiry at ASCEND. The time seemed right to ramp up our reading, so we did. Certainly the teachers who were planning and leading the four inquiry groups at ASCEND did not have the time to do the literature searches that I did. I was in a lucky position, since seeking out the articles fulfilled part of two jobs at once, that as an NWP member of the TRC, and that as a BayCES coach at ASCEND.

I chose books that serve my work, so this is admittedly an idiosyncratic list, and what I have included is a tiny fraction of the potential corpus. The list is tailored to the teachers at ASCEND; its usefulness to others will depend on their focuses and questions. For example, the kindergarten teacher was interested in integrating visual and performing arts into her curriculum, so the kindergarten articles tend to be about art. Some articles are classics of teacher research; others are probably seldom read or used. Anyone doing or leading teacher research knows that good articles are a godsend. My hope is that this bibliography will be a useful beginning resource.

"Anyone doing or leading teacher research knows that good articles are a godsend."

References

Banford, H., M. Berkman, C. Chin, C. Cziko, B. Fecho, D. Jumpp, C. Miller, and M. Resnick. 1996. *Cityscapes: Eight Views from the Urban Classroom*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.

Cochran-Smith, M., and S. Lytle. 1993. *Inside/Outside: Teacher Research and Knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Freedman, S.W., E.R. Simons, J.S. Kalnin, A. Casareno, and the M-CLASS Teachers. 1999. *Inside City Schools: Investigating Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hall, I., C.H. Campbell, and E.J. Miech, eds. 1997. *Class Acts: Teachers Reflect on Their Own Classroom Practice*. Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review.

Elizabeth (Liz) R. Simons taught high school history in New York City and Newton, Massachusetts, before moving to California, where she attended the University of California, Berkeley, and received a Ph.D. in interdisciplinary studies. For several years she pursued research, directing the Minority Education Project for the late John Ogbu, professor at UC Berkeley. She then turned to school reform work and for six years was a high school coordinator for the University of California's Puente Project. More recently she worked at the National Writing Project, editing its monograph series, National Writing Project at Work. She is currently a school coach for the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools. Simons is the author of Student Worlds, Student Words: Teaching Writing Through Folklore *(Heinemann, 1990) and, with Sarah Freedman, Julie Kalnin, and the M-CLASS teachers, coauthor of* Inside City Schools: Investigating Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms *(Teachers College Press, 1999).*

Annotated Bibliography of Teacher Research

This bibliography—a work in progress—was originally created for use at ASCEND, an urban K–8 school. It is organized alphabetically by author's last name. Each citation uses the following descriptors:

- Citation: author, date, source, page numbers, etc.
- Author (information about)
- Grade
- Demographics (school or classroom)
- Bilingual (if relevant)
- Research focus/question
- Equity focus
- Content area (e.g., language arts, math)
- Description of the study
- Type of research (e.g. whole class, case study, qualitative, quantitative)
- Data (e.g., surveys, interviews, student test scores)
- Student achievement/outcomes
- Other findings
- References (if references are cited or if there is a literature review)
- Recommendations (when and for whom this article could be useful)
- Online availability

Allen, Andrew. 1997. "Creating Space for Discussions about Social Justice and Equity in an Elementary Classroom." *Language Arts* 74 (7): 518–524.

Author: Toronto primary school teacher with research interests in race, class, gender, social justice, and marginalization.

Grade: 2.

Demographics: "Culturally, racially, and religiously diverse, working-class, urban community. . . . immigrant and/or working class from the Caribbean, East Africa, and South and East Asia." Toronto, Canada.

Research questions:

– "Do elementary students come to school already aware of the social inequities in their environment?"

– "Is there a need to raise these issues in an elementary classroom . . . and are students at this stage developmentally capable of recognizing and dealing with bias in the classroom materials or the curriculum?"

– "How [teachers] . . . can identify, respond to, and facilitate the taking up of these issues with children."

Equity focus: Social justice and equity in an elementary classroom.

Content area: Bias and racism in the curriculum, the media.

Description of the study: Allen decided that as a teacher he had to be proactive about equity and social justice in his classroom. He writes, "My approach to anti-racist/anti-biased education includes the following steps: helping students identify and name bias in classroom learning materials, allowing time for discussions and taking up social issues in the classroom, and encouraging students to respond to inequities and validating the voices and perspectives of each student." For example, his second grade black students uncovered one hidden message in the curriculum: blacks were more likely to be characterized as poor in their readings.

Type of research: Whole-class study based on several years of teaching, uses the development of one student as an example.

Data: Teacher journal, classroom observation, curriculum, social justice curriculum.

Student achievement/outcomes: Students develop a common language about bias and equity, and the concepts become integrated into the curriculum.

References: References on the role of institutions promoting injustice, development of stereotypes, racial attitudes and identity.

Recommendation: Teachers and inquiry group leaders interested in strategies and background on helping students use their "natural sense of fairness as a foundation for constructing an anti-racist/anti-bias curriculum."

Online availability: Yes. Go to *www.NCTE.org*; search the phrase "creating space for discussions." View abstract free. Full text available only to *Language Arts* subscribers. $25/year for NCTE members, $75/year for nonmembers.

Ballenger, Cynthia. 2003. "Because You Like Us: The Language of Control." *In Education Policy and Practice: Bridging the Divide*, **edited by S. Plaut and N.S. Sharkey. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review.**

Author: Literacy teacher of the 3rd and 4th grade in a diverse urban school, a researcher at the Chechen Konnen Center for Science Education Reform, and a member of the Brookline Teacher-Research Seminar.

Grade: Preschool.

Demographics: Haitian preschoolers in a urban school.

Research question: "In this article, I will discuss the process I went through in learning to control a class of four-year-old Haitian children." Or "What was it that Haitian teachers did that I did not do?"

Equity focus: Young Haitian students misbehaving because North American teacher did not understand Haitian cultural approach to disciplining bad behavior.

Content area: Discipline

Description of the study: Engaging narrative about a white middle-class teacher learning the culture of her students through inquiry. Ballenger transcribed successful disciplinary exchanges between Haitian children and their Haitian teachers. She showed these exchanges to her teacher research group and to Haitian teachers, and analyzed the differences between her disciplinary practices and those of the Haitian teachers in order to change her teaching.

Type of research: Whole-class study.

Data: Interviews, observations, transcripts of dialogue, vignettes.

Student achievement/outcomes: Well-behaved preschool children.

Other findings: Role of language in social control.

References: Academic references on language, social control, and socialization.

Recommendations:

– Teachers and inquiry group leaders looking for an engaging narrative about a white middle-class teacher learning the culture of her students through inquiry.

– Teachers researching how to teach children of cultures and ethnicities different from their own.

– A model for teacher inquiry.

Online availability: No. Originally published in *Harvard Educational Review* (Summer 1992) 62 (2): 199–208. *HER* online archives go back only to Winter 1993.

Ballenger, Cindy. 1996. "Oral Preparation for Literature: Text and Interpretation in a Haitian Preschool." *Teacher Research* 4 (1): 85–103.

Author: Literacy teacher of the 3rd and 4th grade in a diverse urban school, a researcher at the Chechen Konnen Center for Science Education Reform, and a member of the Brookline Teacher-Research Seminar.

Grade: Preschool.

Demographics: Haitian children in an urban school.

Research focus/question: Ballenger, who is white and middle class, looks at the difference between her understanding of the meaning of books and storytelling and that of her students, who are from Haitian immigrant families.

Equity focus: Researching students' cultural values and behavior, which differ from the teacher's, in order to better understand baffling student behavior and to better teach the students.

Content area: Literacy, preschool reading, and storytelling.

Description of study: Ballenger, whose past teaching experience was with middle-class students, was dismayed by what she at first perceived as a disrespect for books and an inability to listen and respond properly to storybook reading. Through her inquiry, Ballenger learned why her students' interaction with books was so different from hers, why it baffled and frustrated her. She also learned the ways in which their experience of books was similar to hers.

Type of research: Whole-class study.

Data: Observational journals/field notes (which are good models of journals), audiotapes, transcriptions of tapes.

Student achievement/outcomes: Student literacy behavior understood and appreciated by the teacher.

Other findings: Understanding different cultural ideas of reading.

References: Academic references on literacy and students of color.

Recommendations:

– Teachers and inquiry groups researching cultural differences between themselves and their students.

– As a model of teacher research.

Online availability: No. Journal is out of print. To purchase journal reprints, back volumes, and back issues go to *http://www.periodicals.com* and click on search stock/T/Teacher Research.

Banford, Howard. 1996. "The Blooming of Maricar: The Writing Workshop and the Phantom Student." In *Cityscapes*, **edited by H. Banford, M. Berkman, C. Chin, C. Cziko, B. Fecho, D. Jumpp, C. Miller, and M. Resnick, 3–24. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.**

Grade: 2.

Bilingual: Study of student whose home language is Tagalog.

Research focus/question: "I wanted to see writing workshop through her (Maricar, a quiet Philippina) eyes. I was interested in how writing workshop met her needs and the needs of others like her, and what a close look at Maricar could teach me about improving writing workshop and student learning in general."

Equity focus: Quiet, low-achieving immigrant girl.

Content area: Language arts, writers' workshop.

Description of the study: "Every teacher has a student like Maricar. She is the quiet girl, the one I could not remember when I sat down to make out the seating chart three weeks into the semester. She is, in the expression I learned from my Urban Sites colleague Marceline Torres, one of those 'phantom students,' one of those children whose voices are heard little or not at all in the whole class discussions and daily classroom work." This yearlong study of a below-average, quiet girl whose home language is not English, traces the development of her writing and social skills through writing workshop.

Type of research: Case study.

Data: Student writing from 86 writing workshop sessions, audiotapes of her response group, interviews with the student, and teacher's journal of his observations.

Student achievement/outcomes: Banford writes, "Maricar grew in ways I would not have anticipated." She grew from a below-average (the slowest writer he had ever seen) to an average writer.

Recommendations:

– Teachers and inquiry leaders looking for a useful model for introducing teacher research to teachers.

– A good model study of a quiet, elementary-school Asian American female student, and a good study of writers' workshop.

Online availability: No.

Carter, Marlene, 2001. "Just Getting By: Middle-Class African American Males Who Are Not Reaching Their Academic Potential." *Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.* **Available at** *http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/CASTL* **(click K–12 teachers).**

Author: Marlene Carter, an African American teacher at Dorsey High School Math/Science and Technology Magnet in Los Angeles, CA, is a National Board Certified Teacher, a Carnegie Scholar, and associate director of the UCLA Writing Project. She lives in the community where she teaches.

Grade: High school.

Demographics: Urban high school of 2,000 students, 65% African American, 34% Latino. Students come from a mixed neighborhood of stable working- and middle-class families and low-income apartments.

Research focus/question: What curriculum, strategies, and attitudes best help African American males to be successful in Advanced Placement English and college?

Equity focus: Academic achievement of African American males.

Content area: Senior AP English.

Description of the study: Carter was distressed that the African American males who entered her senior AP class were "content to do mediocre work, doing just enough to get by." In a two-year study, she focused the first year on why they underperformed. She reviewed the literature to see if the six most commonly cited factors for low performance influenced her students, and found that they didn't. She then lists the fac-

tors that she felt did hinder them. During the second year of her study, six of the seven African American males in her AP class were high performers, and she studied them as well for factors explaining their achievement. Her study thus paints two portraits of African American males: one of underachievement and one of high achievement.

Type of research: Study of focal students.

Data: Written surveys, classroom observations, student work.

Student achievement/outcomes: Being in an AP class helped even the underperforming males achieve in college.

Other findings: The conflicting influence of sports keeps students in school but may prevent them from high achievement.

References: African American males and academic achievement.

Recommendation: Model for teachers or groups seeking information about factors contributing to achievement and nonachievement of African American male high school students, studied by an African American teacher.

Online availability: Yes, see above.

Chin, Carole. 1996. "Are You the Teacher Who Gives Parents Homework?" In *Cityscapes,* **by H. Banford, M. Berkman, C. Chin, C. Cziko, B. Fecho, D. Jumpp, C. Miller, and M. Resnick, 145–163. Berkeley: National Writing Project.**

Author: Carole Chin, Chinese American teacher in Berkeley, CA.

Grade: 4.

Demographics of school: 50% African American, 40% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic and Asian. Grades 4–6, 600 students.

Research focus/question: Study of parents and children writing on the same subject in order to involve parents in their child's education.

Equity focus: Bringing parents who might feel alienated from the school into the school and their children's education.

Content area: Writing and parent involvement.

Description of the study: To build a school/family community, Chin invited parents to write on the same subjects as their children, such as, What does it feel like to be a parent of a fourth-grader? What do students write when they write about what it feels like to be a fourth-grader? (In this district, students went to a K–3 and a 4–6 school, so it was a new school for the students.) Throughout the year parents wrote on different topics (but not too much to be a burden) in their native language, and Chin had their writing translated. The writing was shared with the students. Parents became part of the classroom community.

Type of research: Whole-class study, one year.

Data: Parent writing, parent/child writing curriculum.

Findings: Parents who normally were reluctant to participate in school came to parent meetings. The writing made them partners in their children's education. They shared their stories with their children and discovered their own writing skills.

Recommendation: Teachers interested in building home/school community through writing.

Online availability: No.

Davis, Greta. 2003. "Following the Students' Lead: Exploring the Value of Incentives." *Networks: Online Journal for Teacher Research* **6 (1): 1–11.**

Grade: 5.

Demographics: 26 students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Research question/focus: "What is considered to be the value of such a [incentive] program? What was my role going to be in this process?" "What did students perceive as the value and purpose of such a program?"

Equity focus: "Bad Boys."

Content area: Classroom culture, incentive programs.

Description of the study: Davis and her students had a vision of a "caring, equitable and inclusive" classroom, but that was not what they were experiencing. Davis planned a teacher research project with her students, who requested an incentive program to solve classroom problems of noise and wasted time. Although uncomfortable with the rewards-based incentive program her students chose, Davis allowed her students to start one, and they costudied it. Students, especially boys and "bad boys," began to question the program and alter it from an individual rewards system to one of group rewards.

Type of research: Whole-class study.

Data: Critical incident, audiotape transcripts, transcripts of class meetings, student journals.

Student achievement/outcomes: Students moved from their first choice of individual incentives to whole-group incentives through their research.

Other findings: Value of co-researching with students.

Recommendations:

– For teachers and groups: Useful model of a teacher abandoning a question that interested her but did not interest her students, with whom she was co-researching.

– Useful resource on finding a research question using a critical classroom incident.

Online availability: Yes, go to *http://education.ucsc.edu.* Click on faculty/Gordon Wells: website/ Networks/previous issues/ volume 6, issue 1.

The website of *Networks: Online Journal for Teacher Research* is *http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/gwells/networks.*

Diaz-Gemmati, Griselle M. 1999. "And Justice for All: Using Writing and Literature to Confront Racism." In *Inside City Schools: Investigating Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms,* **by S. W. Freedman, E. R. Simons, J. S. Kalnin, A. Casareno and the M-Class teams, 57–76. New York: Teachers College Press.**

Author: Teacher since 1986 in Chicago schools, Latina, winner of Chicago's Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching, published writer.

Grade: 8.

Demographics of the class: 15 African American, 10 European American, 6 Latino, 1 Asian American, 1 East Indian (3 students were biracial). (Students are bussed from the inner city to this school in a suburban-like neighborhood.)

Research focus/question: What happens when adolescent students begin to explore the themes of racism and prejudice as they discuss and write about literature? Specifically, can they separate how they feel from what they have heard from their family, friends, and community?

Equity focus: Explicit study of racism, encouraging all ethnic groups in the class to be honest about their racial experience.

Content area: Multicultural literature.

Description of the study: Diaz-Gemmati assumed that her class, which she had taught the previous year, would maturely and intellectually study race and culture since the class was caring and "safe." But the class shattered as the students brought in their outside-of-school attitudes and beliefs. In this chapter she describes what happened in her multicultural class as students read *To Kill a Mocking Bird* and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* through the lens of racism.

Type of research: Whole-class study.

Data: Teacher journal, transcripts of class discussions, student writing.

Student achievement/outcomes: Students honestly explored their racist images of one another, experienced pain, fought, but ended up with some common understanding.

Recommendation: For teachers and leaders of inquiry, a useful model of a Latina teacher taking the risk to introduce race as a literature focus in a class with students from different races and economic classes.

Online availability: Yes, go to *http://www.writingproject.org.* Click on Publications/ Additional NWP publications/ National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy Technical Reports/ OP41.

Eidman-Aadahl, Elyse. 1989. "Cracking Through the Shell: Classroom Inquiry and Educational Policy." *Journal of Teaching Writing.* **Invited Volume: 131–149.**

Author: Eidman-Aadahl is director of national programs and site development at the National Writing Project. She has also had an extensive career as a high school English teacher, teacher educator, and teacher-researcher while serving as a National Writing Project teacher-consultant and, later, director of the Maryland Writing Project. This article was written as part of the Basic Writing Teacher Researcher Network, a research collaborative she founded. Her articles have appeared in the *Journal of Teaching Writing* and the *New Advocate.*

Grade: 11.

Demographics: 36 special assistance students (who had failed the Maryland Functional Writing Test in 9th and 10th grades); mostly white and working-class.

Research questions: Can teacher research become a vehicle for creating just and politically sensitive accounts of how educational policies affect real lives? Who does the test ask the student to be?

Equity focus: Eidman-Aadahl and her students expose the class-bias of the writing prompts and evaluation criteria of the Maryland Functional Writing Test (MWT).

Content area: Writing assessment.

Description of study: In 1986 Eidman-Aadahl, six 12th grade tutors, and thirty-six 11th grade students in a special assistance class to prepare students for their final chance to pass the MWT (a graduation requirement) conducted an inquiry on how educational policy is lived in the classroom.

Type of research: Qualitative study.

Data: Drawn from two spring 1986 special assistance classes, including papers, journal entries, transcripts of audiotaped conferences, interviews, and peer response groups, questionnaires, and interviews.

Findings: While the MWT was designed so that "teaching to the test" involved teaching writing as a process, students who failed the test were tracked into remedial programs and their failure affected the attitudes and expectations of teachers, parents, and the students themselves. Those students who failed the test twice (in 9th and 10th grades) came to see this as individual failure rather than questioning the merits of the test. Patterns emerged showing success and failure on the MWT to be largely correlated with the students' socioeconomic class. English teachers found themselves unable to negotiate a curriculum with their students and generally stifled in their creativity. Ultimately, writers and readers in the classroom are undercut as potential judges of quality, evaluators of writing in their own communities, champions of the local voice.

Student achievement/outcomes: Students did what the author describes as their most powerful writing of the semester in connection with this inquiry. They also wrote an extensive letter to the editor of the county paper and deposited petitions arguing that the test be waived for a year in a central holding tank. Tutors wrote about their experiences in their college application essays and sociology classes.

References: Functional literacy, tracking, class antagonism, educational policy, local vs. central control, cultural imperialism, minimum competency tests.

Online Availability: No.

Fecho, Bob. 1996. "Learning from Laura." In *Cityscapes*, by H. Banford, M. Berkman, C. Chin, C. Cziko, B. Fecho, D. Jumpp, C. Miller, and M. Resnick, 57–71. Berkeley: National Writing Project.

Author: This article was written when Fecho was teaching in Philadelphia, PA. He is currently professor at the University of Georgia and author of *"Is This English?": Race, Language, and Culture in the Classroom* (Teachers College Press, 2003).

Grade: High school.

Demographics: Primarily working-class African American students in a city high school.

Research focus/question: Students were studying the question, How does learning about language connect you to your world? Fecho focuses on what he and his students taught each other about standard English and nonstandard Black English.

Equity focus: White teacher and African American students learning from each other about the power and politics of language and dialects.

Content area: Language study of Black dialect, standard English, and home, street, and academic languages.

Description of the study: Case study of Laura, a student leader skilled in her ability to code-switch between home, street, and academic languages and to understand the power and politics of each. Laura taught Fecho about where students learn street language and how they use it, and challenged the academy's labeling of "Black" English.

Type of research: Case study.

Data: Class transcripts, interviews, student work.

Findings: Fecho writes that his study of students' language "shook my assumptions, challenged my beliefs, and stirred my curiosity." Now as a daily practice, "all students consider the import of language in all texts, particularly the texts they create for themselves."

References: Academic references in critical pedagogy, linguistics, and race.

Recommendations:

– Useful for teachers of middle and high school students of color interested in understanding the language codes of home, school, and the street.

– For teachers and leaders of inquiry, a model of teacher-student inquiry collaboration.

Online availability: No.

Franklin, Jennifer. 1997. "The Mitten Is Not a Character: Dramatization in One Kindergarten Classroom." *Teacher Research* **5 (1): 83–91.**

Grade: Kindergarten.

Demographics: 3 students speak no English, 14 students speak another language at home, "a mix of other races, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds."

Research question/focus: "How does the dramatization of familiar stories and rhymes help kindergartners develop a sense of story structure?"

Content area: Language arts, storytelling.

Description of the study: Franklin discovered that at the end of a kindergarten year, only 2 of her students could retell a story. They could answer questions about characters and other aspects of the story, but they couldn't retell the story. The next year Franklin experimented with dramatization of stories. She started by having the students act out nursery rhymes and then moved to stories. At the end of the year she interviewed them about the effect of the dramatization on their learning.

Type of research: Whole-class study.

Data: Student dialogue, teacher observations, story-telling assessment.

Student achievement/outcomes: 28 out of 40 students were able to retell stories without assistance. In the previous year only 2 students could do so.

Recommendations:

– For elementary teachers and inquiry leaders, a useful short article on integrating arts into the learning of oral literacy skills in kindergarten.

– A good model of a manageable, focused inquiry for beginning teacher-researchers.

Online availability: No. Journal is out of print. To purchase journal reprints, back volumes, and back issues go to *http://www.periodicals.com* and click on search stock/T/Teacher Research.

Gallas, Karen. 1992. "When the Children Take the Chair: A Study of Sharing Time in a Primary Classroom." *Language Arts* **69 (3): 172–182.**

Author: Elementary teacher, author of books and articles written as a teacher-researcher focusing on language, literacy, and culture and issues of equity, race, gender, and power.

Grade: 1.

Demographics: 22 students, 4 language groups, range of socioeconomic backgrounds. One-third not native English speakers; racially mixed, including 3 African American children, 11 Caucasians, 6 Japanese, a black South African, and an Ethiopian.

Research focus/question: "What is the value of sharing time in the primary grades?"

Equity issue: An African American child who did not understand "mainstream classroom discourse and who looked as though she belonged in special education but did not."

Content area: Story time, oral language development, community development.

Description of the study: Gallas found sharing time "deadly boring and repetitive" but "wanted to acknowledge [her] belief that narrative (storying, storytelling, story making) should be located at the center of the learning process in the classroom." Gallas took herself out of sharing time and left it in the hands of the children. She focuses on the impact of one homeless child who arrived with little language ability, who developed her own discourse style, becoming a storyteller and "culture builder" in the class.

Type of research: Whole class and case study.

Data: Field notes and taped sharing sessions from October through May.

Student achievement: Growth in story-telling skills and supportive class culture of case-study student and others.

Other findings: The importance of storytelling in individual and group language development and social development.

References: Academic references on classroom discourse and story making.

Recommendations:

– For teachers, teacher inquiry leaders, this is a polished model of inquiry into the cultural differences between a caring, sensitive teacher and students from different backgrounds.

– For administrators wanting to learn about teacher research, this is a fine model.

– For elementary teachers, this article is useful for expanding their understanding of sharing/storytelling time in the classroom.

Online availability: No. NCTE's *Language Arts* online archives go back only to 1997.

**Gallas, Karen. 1997. "Arts as Epistemology: Enabling Children to Know What They Know." In *Class Acts: Teachers Reflect on Their Own Classroom Practice*, edited by I. Hall, C. H. Campbell, and E. J. Miech, 93–105. Cambridge: *Harvard Educational Review.*

Author: Elementary teacher, author of books and articles written as a teacher-researcher focusing on language, literacy, and culture and issues of equity, race, gender, and power.

Grade: 1.

Demographics: 18 children from a range of socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds; 4 different language groups.

Research focus/question: "How arts can play an essential role in forming and extending all aspects of a curriculum."

Equity focus: Equity of access to learning, not just through traditional academic routes, but through the arts; case study of immigrant student.

Content area: Unit on insects with arts integration.

Description of the study: Gallas describes a unit on insects, showing the points at which she integrated the arts and the moments when students had their own ideas about when to bring in arts. Gallas illustrates her theory that "most children depend on play, movement, song, dramatic play, and artistic activity as their means of making sense of the world."

Type of research: Whole-class study and brief case study of immigrant student.

Data: Student drawings, whole-class work, individual student art and written work, student dialogue.

Student achievement: Gallas is interested in "moving beyond simple knowledge acquisition towards true assimilation of learning." The children show this through a variety of art forms.

References: Children's literature.

Recommendations:

– For teachers and teacher inquiry leaders, this is a polished model of inquiry.

– Useful for any arts or classroom teacher interested in integrating arts into the curriculum at any grade level.

Online availability: No. Originally published in *Harvard Educational Review* (February 1991) 61 (1): 40. *HER* online archives go back only to Winter 1993.

Goldstone, Lara. 2003. "The Mother Tongue: The Role of Parent-Teacher Communication in Helping Students Reach New Standards." In *Taking Action with Teacher Research*, edited by E. Meyers and F. Rust, 63–78. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Author: Experienced teacher who has taught in Oakland, CA, and Manhattan, and currently teaches in a charter school in Los Angeles.

Grade: 6.

Demographics: Small middle school in Manhattan Chinatown. 80% Chinese or Chinese American and 20% other; Puerto Rican, Ecuadorian, African American, and Caucasian.

Bilingual: Study of Cantonese speakers.

Research question/focus: What happens when I communicate explicitly with parents about the New Middle School English Language Arts Standards for Student Achievement? More specifically, what is the impact of potential understanding of the new standards for speaking and listening on their children's performance?

Content area: English language arts.

Equity issue: Second-language learners' performance on the language arts speaking and listening standards.

Subject of the study: English Language Arts Standards for listening and speaking, and Asian American students.

Description of the study: Goldstone found that her Asian American students were performing poorly on the listening and speaking English Language Arts Standards, while they improved on reading and writing standards. She followed three case-study students and talked with parents (often through an interpreter) to find out what the community norms were on speaking and listening. She discovered several reasons the students weren't speaking up, some age-related and some cultural.

Data: Assessment of student achievement (report cards), notes on parent conferences, three case-study students.

Type of research: Whole-class study of 66 students and 3 case-study students.

Student outcomes: With parental understanding and support, the three case-study students improved on the standards.

Other findings: Cultural and home conflicts between state speaking and listening standards. In the home, quiet was valued, and parents did not have argumentative discussions with children—the culture valued children being quiet and listening.

References: Review of literature of speaking and listening.

Recommendations:

– Teachers and leaders of inquiry will find this a useful study about a teacher of a race and culture different from those of her students, about quiet Asian American students, and about the value of parental understanding and support of students' academic goals.

– For administrators and teachers, includes a discussion of policy concerns about under-resourced inner-city schools.

Online availability: No.

Hankins, Karen Hale. 1998. "Cacophony to Symphony: Memoirs in Teacher Research." *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (1): 80–95.

Grade: Kindergarten.

Demographics: Suburban public school, 600 K–5 students, kindergarten classroom of 23 heterogeneously grouped children. 50% African American, 45% European American, and 5% other.

Research focus/question: "If African American children consistently perform less well than their white counterparts in my classroom, could I be the problem?"

Equity focus: White teacher of African American students looked at her personal history to better understand herself and three of her students who were fetal alcohol syndrome or crack/cocaine babies.

Content area: Self-reflection of white teacher of students of color.

Description of the study: Through personal journals and memoirs, especially about her family's treatment of a learning-disabled sister, the author bravely looks to her life in probing her research question. By scrutinizing her own history to better understand and teach her students, she came to "acknowledge my own place in the problem of racism" and changed as a teacher, beginning by questioning the labels that come with children.

Type of research: Yearlong case studies of three African American children who had fetal alcohol syndrome or were crack/cocaine babies.

Data: Journal of family memoirs; observations of her class, her feelings, and challenges in her classroom. She sees three types of entries: "head notes—mental notes"; "hard notes—direct observations"; and "heart-notes—my feelings and reflections" (83).

Student achievement: Three kindergartners identified as learning disabled join the classroom community and have some successes.

Other findings: "Accepting my previously unexamined attitudes" led to "recognizing their parents as co-teachers, as partners in the education of their children" (92–93).

References: Ethnography, racial and learning differences, teaching.

Recommendations:

– Teachers and leaders of inquiry groups will find this useful for teachers considering the impact of their personal history on their teaching and on which students resonate with them and which don't, and why.

– Useful model of a teacher studying race and class differences between a teacher and her students.

Online availability: Yes, go to *http://gseweb.harvard.edu*. Click on News and Publications/Other Publications/ Harvard Educational Review/Index of recent issues/Spring 1998 to find the abstract. Full text available to *HER* subscribers at *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hepg/online.html*. Subscribe for $59/year.

Hansen, Lara. 2001. "The Inherent Desire to Learn: Intrinsically Motivating First Grade Students." *Networks: Online Journal for Teacher Research*, 4 (2): 1–12.

Grade: 1.

Demographics: Suburban school, 1st grade class of Asian, Hispanic, White, Turkish, and Indian. 20 students, 17 bilingual.

Research focus/question: "Can I increase the intrinsic motivation of my first grade students through three suggested teaching approaches? . . . teacher enthusiasm, student choice, or cooperative learning . . . [and which is] the most effective in intrinsically motivating my students?"

Content area: Student motivation.

Description of the study: Hansen implemented three motivational strategies in three different content areas: teacher enthusiasm in writing, student choice in math, and cooperative learning in reading. She

describes each of the three. She had two colleagues who also experimented with the strategies. She observed her students throughout and interviewed parents.

Type of research: Whole class (inquiry didn't last all year but time frame is not indicated).

Student achievement/outcomes: All three strategies worked, but the most striking change was in student behavior in cooperative reading groups.

Other findings: Student acting as teacher was a particularly successful cooperative learning strategy. Cooperative learning was the most successful technique, followed by student choice and then by teacher enthusiasm. Hansen learned how teacher-centered her teaching had been, and how easily she could slip back into that mode after the study.

References: Literature review of student motivation.

Recommendation: Teachers and leaders of inquiry interested in student motivation and in changing practice to be more student-centered.

Online availability: Yes, go to *http://education.ucsc.edu*. Click on faculty/Gordon Wells: website/ Networks/previous issues/Volume 4, Issue 2. The website of *Networks: Online Journal for Teacher Research* is *http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/gwells/networks/*.

Herr, Kathryn. 1999. "Unearthing the Unspeakable: When Teacher Research and Political Agendas Collide." *Language Arts* 77 (1): 10–37.

Author: Kathryn Herr is on the faculty of the College of Education at the University of New Mexico. She has taught middle school and been a counselor.

Grade: Middle school.

Demographics: Until going co-ed in the '80s, "Markham Prep" (a private school) served predominantly white, male, upper-class students; in the '90s the school mission changed to include students from diverse race and class backgrounds. No specific demographic information is provided.

Research question/focus: How can students of color be successful at "Markham Prep" without sacrificing "a sense of racialized self?"

Equity focus: A small number of students of color in a predominantly white prep school.

Content area: The experiences of students of color in a predominantly white prep school.

Description of the study: After two years at "Markham Prep," Herr realized that many of the students of color were struggling and "in jeopardy of being disenrolled." Her study aimed to uncover why these students were having such a difficult time, and how school structures and teaching practices could be changed to ensure their success. Herr began by interviewing successful and struggling students of color, asking them: "Tell me what it is like being a student of color here." In these and later group interviews, Herr heard how students felt pressure to "act white." This inquiry raised questions that the school did not want to consider, and Herr raises the question of what happens when teacher's research becomes politically volatile.

Type of research: Qualitative study of group of students of color.

Data: Student interviews, memos, faculty and parent meeting notes.

Student achievement/outcomes: NA

Other findings: Herr questions the typical definition of teacher research as a method of improving practice. Her research leads to questioning the culture of a school.

References: Academic articles on teacher research and black student identity.

Recommendations:

– This article is useful to teachers and administrators curious about how students of different races and ethnicities are experiencing their school.

– Useful model of checking assumptions, and the potential challenges of such investigations to a school administration and staff.

– For teachers and leaders of inquiry this article also speaks to the messy nature of teacher research ("The site does not stand still as the researchers analyze their data . . . decisions were being made daily as to the future of the very students we were concerned about."), as well as the frequency with which "seemingly innocent research questions develop into political quagmires."

Online availability: Yes, go to *http://www.ncte.org.* Click on publications/journals/Language Arts/Tables of Contents/Volume 77 (1). Nonsubscribers may view the abstract; subscribers may view the entire article.

Hole, Simon, and Grace H. McEntee. 1999. "Reflection Is at the Heart of Practice." *Educational Leadership* (May): 34–37.

Author: Simon Hole is a 4th grade teacher at Narragansett Elementary School in Narragansett, Rhode Island. Grace Hall McEntee is cofounder of Educators Writing for Change.

Grade: K–16+.

Research question/focus: How can reflecting on the ordinary experiences of our teaching days inform and improve our practice?

Content area: Teacher research/inquiry.

Description of the study: Simon Hole describes an ordinary event in his classroom, which he tells as a story called "The Geese and the Blinds." He and McEntee take that event through two protocols—the Guided Reflection Protocol and the Critical Incidents Protocol—and demonstrate how an ordinary but dramatic moment in Hole's teaching, in which he made a "bad decision," illustrates the value of deep reflection on a small critical incident. They then show how a group of teachers can go through a similar protocol.

Type of research: Narrative retelling.

Data: Journals, classroom notes.

Student achievement/outcomes: NA

Other findings: NA

References: Two academic references, one on "critical incident."

Recommendation: Leaders of inquiry groups will find in this an excellent example of using protocols to help teachers see the value of both using protocols and scrutinizing small incidents in their inquiry. (The protocols in this article were widely used by the Teacher Research Collaborative.)

Online availability: No.

Johnson, J. Alleyne. 1997. "Life after Death: Critical Pedagogy in an Urban Classroom." In *Class Acts: Teachers Reflect on Their Own Classroom Practice*, edited by I. Hall, C. H. Campbell, E. J. Miech, 107–126. Cambridge: *Harvard Educational Review.*

Author: J. Alleyne Johnson (now Jennifer Obidah), African American professor at UCLA. Former teacher and teacher-researcher in Richmond and Oakland, CA. Coauthored *Because of the Kids* (Teachers College Press, 2001) with Karen Mannheim Teel, a teacher research account of cross-race collaboration in service of equity. This article was written when she was a graduate student and a junior high teacher.

Grade: 7th–8th grade "special" class.

Demographics: School: 62% African American. Students were a mix of poor, middle-class, and upper-class. School was in upper-class neighborhood. Author's class: 21 black students, 2 Asian, 1 Mexican.

Research question/focus: "The purpose of this article is to assert the need to make connections between the day-to-day realities of students' lives and the day-to-day process of teaching and learning that takes place in urban public schools across the United States" (p. 110).

Equity focus: Educating and empowering students of color who have been identified as under-performing and placed in a special class.

Content area: Critical pedagogy, special-education classes, middle school language arts.

Description of the study: Johnson's goal is to "show how I transformed the notions of teacher authority and legitimated knowledge within my classroom." She accomplishes this by asking students what and how they want to learn, and by making connections between the students' lives and the curriculum, specifically by acknowledging their experiences with the deaths of their family and friends. Johnson reflects on death in America and its role and impact on the lives of her students. She considers their experience in their "special class" for low-performing students as ostracism from the school community, and another type of death. She then shows what they are capable of, by bringing their lives into the classroom and bringing the students into the school community as authors of a successful school newspaper. Johnson, who bases her pedagogy on the teachings of Paulo Freire, demonstrates how as a teacher of critical pedagogy she helped students experience academic success and power in a school where they had been ostracized as "special" students.

Type of research: Qualitative, whole-class study.

Data: Observations of students, student talk, student writing, curriculum.

Student achievement/outcomes: Special-education students of color experienced academic success and achieved status in the school.

References: On critical pedagogy, black history and culture, death and adolescence.

Recommendation: Teachers and leaders of inquiry in urban schools where students get labeled as marginal will find this article interesting. It offers a model of how to bring teenagers' experiences with death in their community (and other topics) into the curriculum, to help them feel successful and seen in school.

Online availability: Yes. Originally published in *Harvard Educational Review* (Summer 1995) 65 (2): 213. Full text available on *HER* online (*http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hepg/online.html*) to *HER* subscribers. Subscribe for $59/year.

Juarez, Deborah. 1999. "A Question of Fairness: Using Writing and Literature to Expand Ethnic Identity and Understand Marginality." In *Inside City Schools: Investigating Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms*, by S. W. Freedman, E. R. Simons, J. S. Kalnin, A. Casareno, and the M-Class teams, 111–125. New York: Teachers College Press.

Author: Deborah Juarez, a Latina, has been teaching in Oakland, CA, middle and high schools since 1989. She has offered many workshops as a Bay Area Writing Project teacher-consultant, and has led an inquiry group through the process of incubation and the first years of a new, small high school, Mandela High School in Oakland, CA (one of five small interdependent high schools located at the former Fremont High School campus).

Grade: 8th grade.

Demographics: 51% Latino, 31% African American, 12% Asian American, 2% white, 4% other.

Research focus/question: "What happens when race, culture, and class become explicit topics in the classroom?"

Equity focus: Juarez talks of her "journey of social consciousness" and how it provided "a sense of empowerment" (p. 112) when she was in college. She wants her students to have that experience earlier.

Content area: Language arts, multicultural study of racism, immigration, and biculturalism through literature.

Description of the study: Juarez documents a semester's study and describes what she heard from the students. She began with a unit on race and noticed that African Americans were vocal while the immigrant students were silent. She then moved to a unit on immigration, where both groups talked and disagreed. She then moved on to a topic where the class had common experiences: marginalization and what it means to be "American." She encourages sitting in the discomfort of "hard talk" about race.

Type of research: Whole-class study, one semester.

Data: Student writing, transcripts of whole-class discussion, curriculum.

Student achievement/outcomes: Students experienced a multicultural curriculum and addressed issues of difference and commonality.

Recommendation: Teachers and leaders of inquiry interested in how a teacher of color addressed race, class, and culture in a class predominantly of students of color.

Online availability: No.

Jumpp, Deborah. 1996. "Extending the Literate Community: Literacy Over a Life Span." In *Cityscapes*, by H. Banford, M. Berkman, C. Chin, C. Cziko, B. Fecho, D. Jumpp, C. Miller, and M. Resnick, 133–143. Berkeley: National Writing Project.

Author: Veteran African American teacher, principal of Beeber Middle School in Philadelphia, PA, has done extensive writing, teacher and parent training, and presentations at conferences.

Grade: High school, 15- to 17-year-olds.

Demographics: Majority African American, some Latino.

Research focus/question: Jumpp looks at the use of portfolios among at-risk students in two Philadelphia high schools. Her question: How can parents use portfolios?

Equity focus: Concerned about using one writing sample on a standardized test as the assessment of a student's writing, Jumpp looks at portfolios as a more authentic means of assessing writing.

Content area: Writing across the curriculum, parent involvement, writing assessment.

Description of the study: This article reports on one piece of a larger study of portfolios among at-risk students in two Philadelphia high schools. In this article Jumpp reports on 26 of her students and their collaboration with their parents in assessing their portfolios. Jumpp asked parents to answer questions about their child's writing: What do you see in the writing? What did you like about the writing? What do I need to do as a teacher to facilitate your child's growth as a writer? Jumpp's data include the parents' responses (to the questions and to other aspects of their children's learning), the students' responses, and what she learned. Many parents reported it was the first time they had interacted with their children like this.

Type of research: Qualitative study of parent, student, teacher interaction.

Data: Student portfolios, parent responses, teacher observations.

Student achievement/outcomes: Students enjoyed sharing their writing with parents and were amazed that their parents were interested and so encouraging of them as writers.

Other findings: The value of a learning community of students and their parents. Parents became mediators in their children's learning, empowering parents to tell Jumpp what they wanted for their children.

References: Lisa Delpit and a book about portfolios.

Recommendation: Teachers and leaders of inquiry at all grade levels who are interested in authentic assessment and parent participation in language arts.

Online availability: No.

Lew, Ann. 1999. "Writing Correctness and the Second-Language Student." In *Inside City Schools: Investigating Literacy in Multicultural Classrooms* by S.W. Freedman, E.R. Simons, J.S. Kalnin, A. Casareno, and the M-Class teams, 165–178. New York: Teachers College Press.

Author: Lew is a San Francisco teacher since 1972, whose interest in second-language learners dates back to her childhood, when as an immigrant she started school speaking only Japanese. She is involved in local school reform, was twice a summer Fulbright scholar, and has published in the *English Journal* and *Education Week.*

Grade: High school.

Demographics: Multicultural urban high school.

Bilingual: Study of Cantonese-speaking student from Hong Kong.

Research focus/question: "What is the role of writing correctness in the overall development of the writing of students who do not speak standard English? What is the most appropriate role for the teacher of writing in teaching the conventions of writing? How is standard English internalized?"

Equity focus: Immigrant students who will not succeed in the high-tech world without a good command of standard English (academic English).

Content area: English language learners in language arts.

Description of study: In this four-year study of a bilingual immigrant student (Cantonese/English), Lew compares samples of her writing in her freshmen and senior years to show what she did and did not master and reports on the student's theories of English-language acquisition. Lew reflects on the changes she has made as a teacher of English language learners as the result of two inquiries she has done.

Type of research: Four-year case study.

Data: Student writing, student interviews, curriculum, observations of the student.

Student achievement/outcomes: Case-study student made impressive gains in control of written English over four years.

Recommendation: Teachers and leaders of inquiry looking for a four-year case study of the writing development of an Asian American student learning to write academic English.

Online availability: No.

McNamara, Danan. 2003. "Learning Through Sketching." In *Teacher Inquiry: Living the Research in Everyday Practice*, edited by A. Clarke and G. Erickson, 28–37. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Author: Teacher-researcher with San Diego Writing Project, UC San Diego, teacher of multiage class at Cardiff Elementary School, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California.

Grade: Multigrade: 2 and 3.

Bilingual: Study includes a second-language learner and describes how he benefited from sketching.

Research question: What happens to early writing when it is scaffolded by daily sketching of tangible objects and students make detailed observations during the sketching using their senses?

Content area: Integrating sketching and writing, arts and language arts.

Description of the study: McNamara introduced two types of sketching in her class—contour sketching and blind contour—as "a scaffolding technique to support students' writing." Sketching "helps us look closely, focus, make observations and look again only to see something we hadn't seen before." McNamara gives examples of the sketches and writing of several students. The process, she reports, supported discovery of "the joy, excitement and mystery of the world."

Type of research: Qualitative study of teaching practice.

Data: Student sketches, writing, dialogue, teacher observations.

Student achievement/outcomes: Reports positive change in writing.

References: Rachel Carson and academic researchers on literacy learning.

Recommendation: Useful for elementary teachers interested in integrating sketching into language arts.

Online availability: Yes, at *http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/*. Type the book title, *Teacher Inquiry: Living the Research*, into the eBooks search. A section of the book is available to view free. Website allows registered users to purchase, print, and copy chapters or pages from any of their eBooks. Costs per page vary depending on the publication and can be as low as a few cents per page.

Newland, Alan. 1990. "Teacher Inquiry in the Classroom: Broadening Perspectives." *Language Arts* 67 (1): 70–75.

Author: Teacher in Hackney, London; now a deputy principal.

Grade: 10-year-olds in a British school.

Equity issues: The "neutral" role of the teacher; power and language of boys, and the language of boys versus girls.

Research question/focus: What does it mean to be "neutral" as a teacher in a discussion? How can teacher's language, given the position of a teacher in a class, create space for student discussions of issues of race, class, and gender? How do we "nurture minds that perceive alternatives, minds that have a sense of wonder, minds that will challenge and subvert 'facts'" (p. 73)?

Equity focus: Control of teacher versus students; male/female equity as impacted by language from society.

Content area: Language arts and gender.

Description of study: Newland analyzes a transcript of himself and 13 or 14 students from his class. The students began discussing a book that girls identified as a "boys'" book. Thus began a rich conversation about being a girl or a boy. In studying the tape, Newland looks at identity development in his students and how it is shaped by language. He also looks at his role in the discussion. He assumes what he calls a neutral stance to teach a "sense of uncertainty towards 'knowledge . . . '" (p. 73).

Type of research: Study of a transcript of a classroom discussion.

Data: Transcript of classroom discussion, observations of students.

References: Language and identity.

Recommendation: For teachers and leaders of inquiry, this is a useful short article introducing teacher research and issues of students' perception of gender and teacher stance in class discussions.

Online availability: No. NCTE's *Language Arts* online archives go back only to 1997.

Schardt, Michelle. 1997. "An Unexpected Lesson in Language." *Teacher Research* 5 (1): 102–108.

Author: Trained bilingual teacher in a district without bilingual education, teaching ESL and native language Spanish literacy in a pull-out program, K–5.

Grade: 6-year-old student.

Demographics: Portland, Oregon; a mix of recent immigrants from various parts of the world. Lower- and middle-income.

Bilingual: Study of bilingual student.

Research focus/question: Schardt looks at language development using Halliday's seven categories of language (versus the usual tests).

Equity focus: Using the lens of M. A. K. Halliday's categories, more diverse and more important language skills are identified than from testing.

Content area: Second-language learners

Description of the study: Schardt first assessed her student—a 6-year-old with parents from Guatemala who grew up speaking English, Spanish, and Conjovál—from his behavior in class, as having little language. However, when she analyzed his reading using Halliday's seven functions of language, she realized that he had many skills she'd overlooked. This led her to rethink her teaching of second-language learners.

Type of research: Case study.

Data: Transcripts of teacher/student dialogue.

Findings: Author changed her ideas about assessment and teaching second-language learners.

References: M. A. K. Halliday.

Recommendation: Bilingual inquirers interested in how authentic assessment can help them rethink their instruction.

Online availability: No. Journal is out of print. To purchase journal reprints, back volumes, and back issues go to *http://www.periodicals.com* and click on search stock/T/Teacher Research. Article also appears in Miller, B., and R.S. Hubbard, eds. 2002. *Language Development: A Reader for Teachers*, 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Schiller, Laura. 1996. "Coming to America: Community from Diversity." *Language Arts* 73: 46–51.

Author: Sixth grade teacher at Birney Middle School in Southfield, Michigan, and co-director of the Oakland (Michigan) Writing Project.

Grade: 6.

Demographics: 50% African American, rest Chaldean (Christians from Northern Iraq), Caucasian, Jewish, and Asian.

Bilingual: Project brings bilingual parents into the curriculum.

Research focus/question: "How could I stimulate the building of the community of learners Dewey envisioned? How could I create an atmosphere that invites all students to learn? Could I look to who we are as a people for clues that would help me shape our curriculum and tie learning to our lives? Could we learn to value one another and live together in a society that's becoming increasingly multicultural?" (p. 50).

Equity focus: Bringing all racial and ethnic groups into the curriculum.

Content area: Multicultural language arts.

Description of the study: Schiller designed a curriculum, "Coming to America," where all students and their families examine, write about, and share their stories of coming to America. Students read related books, watched videos, and created a book for which they ultimately had a book-signing at the local Border's Books. A parent committee edited, typed, and laid out the book.

Type of research: Yearlong, whole-class study.

Data: Curriculum, student writing, young adult literature.

Student achievement/outcomes: Students learned their own histories and those of their peers, creating common appreciation and understanding, and building a learning community that included their families.

References: Young adult literature.

Recommendation: Teachers and leaders of inquiry looking for a model of creating a multicultural unit with school-community collaboration.

Online availability: No.

Stafford, Liz. 1991. "Writer's Workshop in the Primary Grades—Writing for a Life (and a Lifetime)." In *Visions and Revisions: Research for Writing Teachers***, 3–17. Davis: The CRESS Center, UC Davis. To obtain a copy of this article, email Rose Bacchini at the CRESS Center:** *rabacchini@ucdavis.edu.*

Author: Liz Stafford teaches kindergarten and 1st grade at St. Helena Elementary School in St. Helena, California.

Grade: K–2.

Demographics: St. Helena is predominantly white, "25% Hispanic, and has a sprinkling of other ethnic groups."

Bilingual: Kimmie, the case-study student, is Chinese American with limited English.

Research question/focus: What impact does writers' workshop have on an elementary school English language learner?

Equity focus: Elementary ELL.

Content area: Writing and ELD.

Description of the study: Over the course of three years (kindergarten through 2nd grade), Stafford tracked the skills and behavior of Kimmie, a Chinese American student who did not speak much English and had been repeatedly deserted by family members. Quick to lash out at her teacher and fellow students, Kimmie found a new outlet for her anger and sadness through writers' workshop. Through the ritual of dictating anything she wanted to Stafford and then copying the words her teacher wrote down, Kimmie learned English while at the same time finding a means to express herself. Eventually, the trusting relationship Kimmie developed with Stafford transferred to an increased ability to make and keep friends at school. She successfully proceeded to the second grade, where she developed a positive relationship with her new teacher.

Type of research: Three-year case study.

Data: Classroom notes, writers' workshop assignments, letters from Kimmie, Kimmie's journal entries.

Student achievement/outcomes: Chinese American ELL improved her English and social relationships from kindergarten to second grade.

Other findings: Reaffirms the value of the personal relationship between the teacher and student.

References: One pedagogical reference.

Recommendations:

– For elementary teachers, a useful case study of an immigrant English Language Learner.

– For teachers of all levels, a good model of a case study.

Online availability: No.

Swain, James. 1998. "In Search of an Honest Response." *Language Arts* 75 (2): 118–125.

Grade: 3.

Demographics: Twenty children from four different language groups with a range of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Research focus/question: "[H]ow can children connect through their writing and what constitutes an honest response to this writing?" (p. 118).

Description of the study: Swain's dilemma and challenge was that his students were using the language he was teaching in minilessons on revision, but that language wasn't connecting them to the real intentions of the author or to one another. This led to his questioning what he meant by "honest response and natural connection through writing." Students were "versed in the language of revision, but not in the actual knowledge of how to revise" (p. 119), what Bloom (1987) calls "procedural display." The training Swain had given them in revision "prevented children from responding on their own terms with their own language to the content of stories" (p. 119). Using *The Bat Poet* by Randall Jarrell, in which a mockingbird and a chipmunk offer a bat two different models of response, Swain moved the class toward "honest response and natural connection" to each other's writing (p. 120).

Type of research: Two-year whole-class study including a case-study student.

Data: Observation, student writing, transcripts of small-group and whole-class student discussions.

Student achievement/outcomes: Change in student response so they were "thinking and listening to [a student's] story like writers or world creators, not like readers concerned with information and clarity" (p. 124).

Other findings: Author changed his metaphor of student response from "critical readers concerned with clarity, detail, voice, and correctness," to students who are "thinking and listening to [a student's] story like writers or world creators" (p. 124).

References: Writing and reading theory.

Recommendation: Language arts teachers who want to move their students from the limitation of predictable rote response to authentic engaged response.

Online availability: Yes, at *http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/la.* View abstract free. Full text available only to *Language Arts* subscribers. $25/year for NCTE members, $75/year for nonmembers.

Williams, Katie. 1993. "Lessons from a Young Writer." *Teacher Research* 1 (1): 125–133.

Grade: Kindergarten.

Research focus/question: Looking at a kindergartner's emergent writing: "What does Kirsten know about writing? What is she doing? How do I understand what she is doing? How do I become a student of her work so that I may encourage and support her growth?" (p. 127).

Content area: Language arts, emergent writing.

Description of the study: In order to make some sense of a kindergartner's emergent writing, Williams applied Judith Newman's categories of writing to six examples of her writing and drawings. The categories are intention, organization, experimentation, and orchestration.

Type of research: Case study.

Data: Student drawing, writing, dialogue; teacher observation.

Recommendation: Useful example of short, simple, early teacher research that helped a kindergarten teacher make sense of emergent literacy.

Online availability: No. Journal is out of print. Purchase journal reprints, back volumes, and back issues at *http://www.periodicals.com.*

Ziolkowski, Joan. 1999. "It's Friendship, Developing Friendship: A Teacher Action Research Study on Reading Buddies." *Networks: Online Journal for Teacher Research* **2 (1): 1–19.**

Author: Ziolkowski is vice principal at Tecumseh P.S. in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

Grade: K–6

Research question/focus: What are the benefits of a reading buddies program?

Content area: Reading.

Description of the study: Ziolkowski, who at the time of the study was new to teaching reading to second and third grade students, involved her sixth grade students in a research study on reading buddies. In the school's reading buddies program, a sixth grade student is paired with a second or third grade student, regularly meets with and listens to him/her read out loud, and makes corrections as needed. Participants cited this opportunity to read out loud and get on-the-spot assistance with difficult words or passages as very important for the process of learning to read. In addition to fostering reading skills, the program also provided a forum for the development of friendships between younger and older students—friendships that often extended beyond the classroom. In fact, Ziolkowski concludes that it was the friendship "which actually fuelled the assumed purpose of reading buddies, the development of reading skills." Taking the time to develop a friendship resulted in "sensitivity to the needs of the younger student, continual on-the-spot assistance with reading skills, and persistent use of problem solving to make the buddy program work for all concerned." The reading buddies program eventually evolved to the joint writing and publishing of stories that were then read to others on a special literature-circle day. Ziolkowski speaks eloquently to the power of action research to uncover one's assumptions and reveal new discoveries.

Type of research: Longitudinal qualitative study.

Data: Transcripts of audiotaped conversations, journal notes.

**Student achievement/outcomes:** NA

Other findings: By watching her students teach other students, Ziolkowski learned about the emergent stages of reading skills (of the first-graders her students were tutoring)—information she was later able to use to improve her own practices in teaching reading. She also discovered a difference between how the teachers and the students valued the friendship-development aspect of reading buddies, as opposed to the development of reading skills.

References: On buddy reading, action research, and school reform.

Recommendation: Teachers interested in cross-grade collaboration, especially those interested in middle school and elementary reading buddy programs.

Online availability: Yes, go to *http://education.ucsc.edu.* Click on faculty/Gordon Wells: website/Networks/previous issues/Volume 2, Issue 1. The website of *Networks: Online Journal for Teacher Research* is *http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/gwells/networks/.*
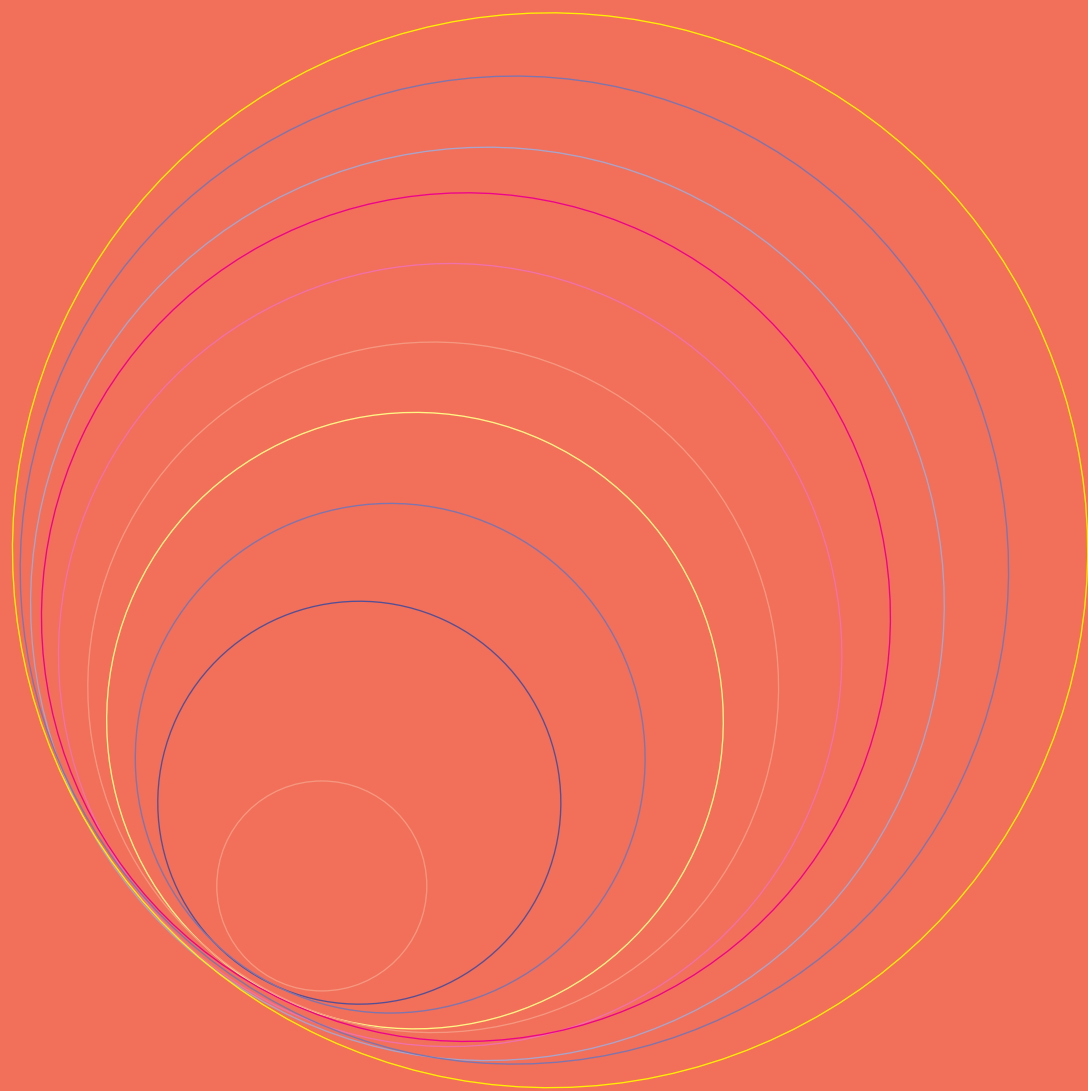
Tools

Introduction to the Tools in This Section

The Teacher Research Collaborative (TRC) Planning Team members compiled this separate "Tools" section in addition to other tools contributed by authors in this volume. The section includes materials we used and adapted to support writing and talking about inquiry for equity. Some of these tools were developed by members of the planning team; others have been refined as they passed from teacher to teacher, school to school, organization to organization through our extended networks. The first five tools were used to facilitate discussions during the 2002 TRC Summer Institute. The remaining tools were used in writing groups during the summer 2003 TRC Writing Retreat as authors began developing their essays.

The Tools

Guidelines for Conversations

1. Sample Meeting Norms and Procedural Norms
2. Protocol Background Descriptions
3. Tuning Protocol
4. Consultancy Protocol
5. BayCES Teacher Inquiry Protocol

Guidelines for Writing Groups

6. Suggestions for Writing Response Groups
7. Notes for Writing Group Facilitators
8. Loop Writing to Support Inquiry
9. Response Group Protocol for First-Draft Writing
10. Response Group Protocol for Mid-draft Writing
11. "Overhearing" Response Group Protocol for Longer Manuscripts

Tool 1: Sample Meeting Norms and Procedural Norms

Sample Meeting Norms

- Speak your truth.
- Assume positive intent; seek first to understand.
- Be intentional about and take risks toward building alliances across race, class, gender, experience, organization, and role.
- Speak from your own experience (race, class, gender, age, and so forth)—and question what is happening from the vantage point of this experience. Take risks and ask for the type of support you need (emotional, physical, intellectual).

Procedural Norms

- Respect starting and ending times.
- Clarify and negotiate the focus of the process observer and the role of the documenter.
- No cell phones unless negotiated with the group.

Tool 2: Protocol Background Descriptions

A protocol consists of agreed-upon guidelines for a conversation that builds the skills and culture necessary for collaborative work. It allows a presenter to get feedback on some aspect of his or her research, allows a group to build trust by actually doing substantive work together, and ensures the participation of all group members. There are many different versions of protocols.

A "typical" protocol looks like this:

A group of twelve to fifteen participants gather in a circle. One of the participants presents his or her research and any accompanying issues or questions. A facilitator gets the discussion going and makes sure that the guidelines and agenda for the protocol are followed. The protocol specifies that time be allotted for different purposes, which may include asking a focusing question, presenting the context of the research, describing the research, asking clarifying questions, asking probing questions, providing feedback on the research, reflecting on the feedback, and more. Protocols can last from 25 minutes to more than an hour. We have included protocols that last between 35 and 40 minutes.

Tuning Protocol

The tuning protocol was originally developed as a means for the five high schools in the Coalition of Essential Schools' Exhibitions Project to receive feedback and fine-tune their developing student assessment systems, including exhibitions, portfolios, and design projects. This protocol engages participants in looking at a presenter's materials (e.g., an assessment, a piece of curriculum, or a piece of writing) and taking the piece of work to the next level through examination and feedback.

Consultancy Protocol

A Consultancy is a structured process for helping an individual or a team think more expansively about a particular concrete dilemma. Outside perspective is critical to this protocol working effectively; therefore, some of the participants in the group must be people who do not share the presenter's specific dilemma at that time. The creators of this protocol strongly urge using it in its full form (as it is printed here) in order to derive its full benefit. However, owing to time constraints we faced in the TRC we adapted this protocol to fit our particular needs, and we still found it a very useful tool.

Additional Resources

Additional protocols for giving and receiving feedback can be found at the Looking at Student Work website: *http://www.lasw.org.*

Tool 3: Tuning Protocol

The Tuning Protocol has been used by groups of teachers, individual schools, networks of schools, and school–university partnerships. Its users include the Chicago Learning Collaborative, the Southern Maine Partnership, the California Center for School Restructuring, BayCES, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform's National School Reform Faculty (NSRF). The protocol was originally developed in 1992 by Joe McDonald and David Allen for the Coalition of Essential Schools' Exhibitions Project as a means for member high schools to receive feedback and fine-tune their developing student assessment systems, which include exhibitions, portfolios, and design projects. Later it was revised by the National School Reform Faculty. This particular version was adapted from the Looking at School Work Spring Colloquium 2001. For more information on this protocol, please refer to the following books:

McDonald, J., N. Mohr, A. Dichter, and E. McDonald. 2003. *The Power of Protocols.* New York and London: Teachers College Press.

Allen, D., and T. Blythe. 2004. *The Facilitator's Book of Questions.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Time 35 – 40 minutes

Steps

Introduction (2 minutes)
1. Facilitator briefly introduces protocol goals, guidelines, and schedule.
2. Participants briefly introduce themselves (if necessary).

Presentation (10 minutes)
Participants are silent.
Educator presents:
1. Context (what the students tend to be like, where they are in school, where they are in the year)
2. Assignment or prompt that generated the work
3. Student learning goals that inform the work
4. Samples of work (photocopies of written work, video clips)
5. Evaluation format (e.g., scoring rubric, test)
6. Focusing question for feedback
Note: You may adapt items 1–5 to address your particular research question and/or specific classroom practice.

Clarifying Questions (2–3 minutes)
Clarifying questions are matters of fact ("How many students will you have in this class?" "What kind of prior experience in this subject can you count on?"). The facilitator judges which questions more properly belong in warm/cool feedback. Presenter answers the questions briefly.

Pause to Reflect on Warm and Cool Feedback (1 minute)
Participants may take a couple of minutes to reflect on what they would like to contribute to the feedback session.

Warm and Cool Feedback (10 minutes)
Participants share feedback while the teacher-presenter is silent. They begin with ways in which the work seems to meet the goals, and continue with possible disconnects and problems. These don't need to be in tight sequence, but participants should always begin with some positive feedback. Some groups prefer to structure the session by beginning with 5–7 minutes of warm feedback ("What are the strengths here?"), followed by 5–7 minutes of cool feedback ("Where are the gaps" "What are the problems here?"). Sometimes groups end with one or two "probing" or reflective questions for the presenting teacher to consider. The facilitator may need to remind the participants of the presenter's focusing question. Presenter is silent and takes notes as appropriate.

Reflection (2 minutes)
Presenter speaks to those comments/questions he or she chooses to while participants are silent. This is *not* a time to defend oneself, but a time to explore further interesting ideas that have come out of the feedback section. At any point the presenter may open the conversation to the entire group (or not).

Debrief (2 minutes)
Facilitator-led open discussion of this tuning experience.

Tuning Protocol Guidelines

Participation in a structured process of professional collaboration like this can be intimidating and anxiety-producing, especially for the teacher presenting student work. Having a shared set of guidelines or norms helps everybody participate in a manner that is respectful as well as conducive to helpful feedback. Below is one set of guidelines and the schedule, to be agreed to before starting the protocol. The facilitator must feel free to remind participants of the guidelines and schedule at any time in the process.

1. *Be respectful of presenters.* By making their work more public, teachers are exposing themselves to kinds of critiques they may not be used to receiving. If inappropriate comments or questions are posed, the facilitator should make sure they are blocked or withdrawn.

2. *Contribute to substantive discourse.* Resist offering only blanket praise or silence. Without thoughtful, probing questions and comments, the presenter will not benefit from the tuning protocol.

3. *Be appreciative of the facilitator's role, particularly in regard to following the norms and keeping time.* A tuning protocol that doesn't allow for all components (presentation, feedback, response, debrief) to be enacted properly will do a disservice to the teacher-presenters and to the participants.

4. *Facilitators need to keep the conversation constructive.* There is a delicate balance between feedback that only strokes and feedback that does damage. It is the facilitator's job to make sure that balance is maintained. At the end of the session, the presenter should be able to revise the work productively on the basis of what was said.

5. *Don't skip the debrief.* It is tempting to move to the next item of business once the feedback section is over. If you do that, the quality of responses will not improve and the presenters will not get increasingly useful kinds of feedback.

Schedule

Introduction (2 minutes)
Presentation (10 minutes)
Clarifying Questions (2–3 minutes)
Examination of Work (5–10 minutes)
Pause to Reflect on Warm and Cool Feedback (1 minute)
Warm and Cool Feedback (10 minutes)
Reflection (2 minutes)
Debrief (2 minutes)

Tool 4: Consultancy Protocol

Consultancy Protocol

Developed by Gene Thompson-Grove, Paula Evans, and Faith Dunne
National School Reform Faculty Project (NSRF)

Purpose: A Consultancy is a structured process for helping an individual or a team think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma.

Time: Approximately 50 minutes

Roles: Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group)
Facilitator (who sometimes participates, depending on the size of the group)

Steps:

1. The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which s/he is struggling, and frames a question for the Consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter's reflection on the dilemma being discussed, are key features of this protocol. If the presenter has brought student work, educator work, or other "artifacts," there is a pause here to silently examine the work/documents. The focus of the group's conversation is on the dilemma. (5–10 minutes)

2. The Consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter—that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)

3. The group asks probing questions of the presenter. These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand his/her thinking about the dilemma presented to the Consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question s/he framed or to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter may respond to the group's questions, but there is no discussion by the Consultancy group of the presenter's responses. At the end of the ten minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to restate his/her question for the group. (10 minutes)

4. The group members talk with each other about the dilemma presented. (15 minutes)

Possible questions to frame the discussion:

What did we hear?
What didn't we hear that we think might be relevant?
What assumptions seem to be operating?
What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
What do we think about the dilemma?
What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?

Members of the group sometimes suggest actions the presenter might consider taking. Most often, however, they work to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. The presenter doesn't speak during this discussion, but instead listens and takes notes.

5. The presenter reflects on what s/he heard and on what s/he is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him/her during any part of the Consultancy. (5 minutes)

6. The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group's observation of the Consultancy process. (5 minutes)

Some Tips

Step 1: The success of the Consultancy often depends on the quality of the presenter's reflection in Step 1 as well as on the quality and authenticity of the question framed for the Consultancy group. However, it is not uncommon for the presenter, at the end of a Consultancy, to say, "Now I know what my real question is." That is fine, too. It is sometimes helpful for the presenter to prepare ahead of time a brief (one- or two-page) written description of the dilemma and the issues related to it for the Consultancy group to read as part of Step 1.

Step 2: Clarifying questions are for the person asking them. They ask the presenter "who, what, where, when, and how." These are not "why" questions. They can be answered quickly and succinctly, often with a phrase or two.

Step 3: Probing questions are for the person answering them. They ask the presenter "why" (among other things), and are open-ended. They take longer to answer, and often require deep thought on the part of the presenter before s/he speaks.

Step 4: When the group talks while the presenter listens, it is helpful for the presenter to pull his/her chair back slightly away from the group. This protocol asks the Consultancy group to talk about the presenter in the third person, almost as if s/he is not there. As awkward as this may feel at first, it often opens up a rich conversation, and it gives the presenter an opportunity to listen and take notes without having to respond to the group in any way. Remember that it is the group's job to *offer an analysis* of the dilemma or question presented. It is not necessary to *solve* the dilemma or to offer a definitive answer.

It is important for the presenter to listen in a nondefensive manner. Listen for new ideas, perspectives, and approaches. Listen to the group's analysis of your question/issues. Listen for assumptions—both your own and the group's—implicit in the conversation. Don't listen for judgment of you by the group. This is not supposed to be about you, but about a question you have raised. Remember that you asked the group to help you with this dilemma.

Step 5: The point of this time period is not for the presenter to give a "blow by blow" response to the group's conversation, nor is it to defend or further explain. Rather, this is a time for the presenter to talk about what were, for him/her, the most significant comments, ideas, and questions s/he heard. The presenter can also share any new thoughts or questions s/he had while listening to the Consultancy group.

Step 6: Debriefing the process is key. Don't short-change this step.

Tool 5: BayCES Teacher Inquiry Protocol

BayCES
BAY AREA COALITION FOR EQUITABLE SCHOOLS

BayCES TEACHER INQUIRY PROTOCOL (30 minutes)

Purpose of protocol: (given where I am in my inquiry…)	**Focus/Question**: (what I want listeners to help me with)

Time	Activity	Purposes/Notes
1	**Facilitator introduces** protocol and goes over format.	• *Important to keep time.*
5	**Presenter shares** his/her inquiry-in-progress. This includes: - Research question/focus - Context: class, kids, curriculum… - Overview of his/her inquiry process - Question, struggle—what he/she wants group to think about when looking at the data	• *Presenter needs to give enough context so that listeners can have an informed discussion—but does not need to give lengthy background.*
4	**Group reads data**/materials (if necessary—otherwise presenter can use this for more presentation or discussion time)	• *A chance for listeners to engage actual materials from the teacher's work.*
5	**Questions** from listeners; presenter responds. Start with clarifying questions (factual) and move to probing questions (for benefit of presenter).	• *A chance for listeners to get clarification and to get deeper into the presenter's thinking and dilemma.*
10	**Discussion** by the group - feedback ("I liked," "It struck me"…) - reflective questions ("I wonder…") - possible directions ("What if…")	• *Facilitator reminds group of what the presenter wants feedback on.* • *Presenter is quiet; group speaks to each other, not to the presenter.*
3	**Presenter reflections** The presenter talks about what s/he heard, learned, is thinking now —whatever feels most useful.	• *The presenter does not need to respond to issues or questions raised.*
2	**Process reflections** (presenter first) Facilitator closes protocol.	• *Important to check on process.*

Tool 6: Suggestions for Writing Response Groups

As a writer, I want helpful feedback that

- allows me to retain a sense of authorship and ownership

- is an honest response **with kindness**

- is thoughtful, reflective

- tells me what you are hearing in my piece, i.e., active listening or **listening loudly**

- uses "I statements": "this works for me," etc.

- tells me what you **like**, what works best, the strengths

- tells me what provokes feeling and thought is specific and targeted feedback (not general) and stays focused on the piece

- includes questions: Why? What changes would you make? Is there continuity, authenticity in this piece?

- prompts me to access my own knowledge

- is a response to structure/organization

- gives ideas for expanding parts of my writing

- gives me ideas for omitting/deleting what distracts

- separates editing from responding, voice and content vs. mechanics

- happens in discussion and conversation rather than margin notes

- gives equal response time to **all** in the group

- has everyone working with his/her own copy of the piece being read

Listen Loudly!

As a responder, I want to:

- get the gist of the whole piece, giving a holistic response, asking myself, what is the writer actually trying to say?

- understand the writer's intention, know what the author is concerned about

- respond to the specific feedback the writer wants

- have room, time to respond, a few minutes without interruption

- name the things that move or interest me as a reader

- ask questions to help expand the writing

- be able to share what I am curious about, unclear or confused about

- give feedback that makes you want to write more

- avoid trying to make others write like me

- avoid leading the discussion away from the writing by focusing on my own experiences

- identify detail flaws, make editorial suggestions

- point out spelling/grammar errors the author may have missed

Listen Loudly!

Tool 7: Notes for Writing Group Facilitators

Time	Purposes and Activities
1:00–2:00 P.M.	**Purpose** of this hour is to • build confidence for the writers • build an interest community around people's topics and issues • establish value around their proposed work • engage folks in one another's ideas • help folks leave ready to write, to work with a facilitator with some solid leads and clear possibilities, or to participate in looping activity **Sharing Ideas: (15 minutes)** **Purpose:** To have a generative discussion so people are raring to go with their writing. **Activity:** Participants write for about 4 minutes about the focus for their writing right now—why this choice—and initial thoughts about how they think it could benefit other teacher-researchers. Each person shares, 10 minutes per person: 5 minutes sharing and 5 minutes clarifying questions and responding to strengthen people's ideas and highlight how their work can be of use to others. **Facilitators are taking notes on individual discussions on their computers; notes will be printed out and shared with individual writers; separate document for each writer.**
3:15–4:30 P.M.	**First Response Groups** **Purpose** of this session is to provide norming for the group, to facilitate the first round of responses, and to provide soft preparation for the next day. **Norming Discussion: (20 minutes)** • revisit aspirations & anxieties by folks sharing something raised during morning discussion • discuss the why of norming • draw common purposes for the writing group from the members by discussing what folks want out of the group

Notes for Facilitators on purposes, examples:
- to move work forward
- to provide a real audience of teacher-researchers/writers
- to continue to make concrete the ideas in *Working Toward Equity* through the writing, experiences, and knowledge of the teacher-researchers gathered here
- to deepen, expand, and refine the content and form of what folks are writing about, e.g., to move from surface knowledge to deeper knowledge as well as find ways to make it accessible to other teacher-researchers

Review Ways to Respond and Begin First Responses
- Review "Suggestions for Writing Response Groups." Discuss and add to the list. (10 minutes)
- Review Tool 9, "Response Group Protocol for Short First-Draft Writing," and hear and respond to two or more pieces. (20 minutes per person = 40 minutes)

Note: There will probably not be time for each group member to read his or her entire piece in this session, so decide on two people to go today. We feel it is important for whoever reads to get the full time and a full response to his or her writing rather than try to get to everybody today.

Debrief process and clarify beginning steps for the morning. (10 minutes)

Note to Facilitators: 5 minutes wiggle room. Yea!

Developed by the Teacher Research Collaborative, Summer Writing Retreat 2003

Tool 8: Loop Writing to Support Inquiry

Loop Writing is a writing activity developed by Peter Elbow that helps the writer find many ways into his/her own thinking, reasoning, or observations. You may find that your writing loops away or veers off even as you move deeper into the heart of your thinking.[1]

Key Notions:

• Do not worry about your final product. Trust where your pen leads you.

• Questions to help jump-start your thinking/writing:
> What about your teaching/research keeps you awake at night or makes you jabber at your friends whether they are teachers or not?
> What comes to your mind all of the time?
> What are you most confused or perplexed about in your teaching/research?
> What dilemmas have you been wrestling with this year?
> What captures your imagination, piques your curiosity?
> What excites you?
> What makes you want to know more?

Looping Processes:

1. You will write to the three prompts. I will let you know when to move on to the next prompt. (20 minutes)

2. Read what you have written to your partner. Do not preface, explain, or apologize—just read. Your partner will do the same with his/her writing. (7 minutes)

3. When done reading, take your partner's writing, reread it, and say back in writing what you think your partner is asking, wondering about, or wrestling with, e.g., Dear Jean, What I think you're saying or What I hear you asking…. (7 minutes)

4. After you have read your partner's written feedback, say back to yourself in writing what you think you are saying or asking. The goal here is to clarify for yourself what you think you are looking at or wrestling with, e.g., I think I'm saying or wondering about…. (7 minutes)

5. Create a road map for yourself. [Given my question(s), here are some possible ways for me to deepen my question and direct my search.] Be as specific as you can. If you are collecting student artifacts, what would those be? If you are going to do interviews, who would you be interviewing? The goal is to list things you can do and steps you can take that are concrete. (7 minutes)

6. Read your partner's road map and write a brief response. It could be comments, questions, observations, or suggestions. Include your e-mail address so your partner can pursue your response with you at a different time should it be helpful. (6 minutes)

For more information about Loop Writing, please see Elbow, P., and P. Belanoff. 2000. *A Community of Writers: A Workshop Course in Writing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. This document has been reprinted with the permission of the McGraw-Hill Companies.

Loop Writing Prompts
Teacher Research Collaborative
Summer 2003

First thoughts, questions, prejudices, preconceptions

Pick a topic and free write on this topic. Write down whatever first comes to your mind about your topic. One way to start: *When I think of this topic, I think of/remember/wonder. . . . . . then I think of. . . . . . And this leads me to ask/wonder/question. . . . . .* Jump into your topic and keep writing even when you think you are not making sense.

Moments, stories, portraits

When prompted, jump into whatever moments, incidents, events, and people you think of that somehow seem linked to your question, or for whatever reason are now appearing in your mind. It is not necessary to connect these moments to the writing you've already done. Focus *on capturing the experiences* rather than *explaining* them. Don't worry about analyzing or explaining the significance of these moments unless it happens naturally as you write.

Dialogue

This could take various forms. It could be real, fictitious, or projected. It could be a dialogue you have had with yourself, with a colleague, with a school administrator, etc. It could represent dialogues you have engaged in willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously. It could be a dialogue you have overheard or imagined. The emphasis here is to bring a new form of energy into your thinking and/or writing. "The goal is not fidelity, but thought stimulation." (Elbow, p. 58)

Variations on Audience

Now focus on your question in a different way. You could ask your question from a different point of view (e.g., a student, an administrator, a parent) or explain your question to a different audience. You could write about your question using a different form or structure (e.g., a play, a monologue, a letter). You might experiment with time or context (write about your question in the past or future). Approach your question from a different angle and see what emerges.

Tool 9: Response Group Protocol for Short First-Draft Writing

Recommended for:

- Early drafts

- Inexperienced writers

- Providing a balance between positive feedback and suggestions for revision

Procedure:

1. The writer reads the paper and does not comment until after the other group members have commented.

2. The responders begin by addressing these two areas:

   - What was the strongest or most positive aspect of the piece? This includes commenting on particularly striking words, images, constructions, etc., as well as global positive aspects.

   - Did you find any part, word, or assumption confusing? Is there something the writer assumed you knew that you didn't know?

3. How would you go about expanding this piece of writing?

4. Are there questions of mechanics, grammar, spelling, or usage that should be corrected?

Taken from *National Writing Project Professional Writing Retreat Handbook*, p. 44. Berkeley: National Writing Project. 2002.

Tool 10: Response Group Protocol for Mid-draft Writing

Recommended for:

- Writer-directed response

- Groups of four writers sharing brief works within an hour's time

Procedure:

1. The group assigns a facilitator and timekeeper for each round.

2. The first writer talks a little about the writing and identifies the kind of feedback that would be most helpful. (3 minutes) Examples:

   - "I would like to hear anything positive that you have to say about this piece."

   - "I know what's good about this piece. Please raise some questions for me to think about."

   - "I'd like to hear both the strengths of the piece and questions that will lead me into a revision."

3. The writer reads the work-in-progress aloud while the responders listen and make notes. (3 minutes)

4. The facilitator leads the discussion around the feedback that the writer requested while the writer listens and makes notes. (9 minutes)

5. The group repeats the process for each manuscript.

Taken from *National Writing Project Professional Writing Retreat Handbook*, p. 45. Berkeley: National Writing Project. 2002.

Tool 11: "Overhearing" Response Group Protocol for Longer Manuscripts

Recommended for:

- Longer pieces

- Manuscripts near the final draft stage

Procedure:

1. Prior to the peer response session, each writer provides a copy of the manuscript for each of the responders with a brief written or oral introduction which includes:

   - What stage of development does he/she perceive the manuscript to be in?

   - What are its strengths? Where does he/she need help?

   - What kind of feedback would he/she like?

2. At the start of the session, group members select a timekeeper and facilitator for each round.

3. The peer editors talk together about the manuscript while the writer "overhears" without joining in. They talk about the strengths as they see them and about what they see as the next steps for the manuscript (within the parameters of the feedback requested by the writer).

4. The writer responds to the "overheard" conversation in a general discussion about the manuscript led by the appointed facilitator.

5. The group repeats the process for each manuscript.

Taken from *National Writing Project Professional Writing Retreat Handbook*, p. 46. Berkeley: National Writing Project. 2002.