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Back to the Future: Looking at Nostalgic Practices to Conceptualize a More Inclusive Literacy Future (Part 1)

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by Rebecca Witte and Darreth R. Rice

Hop back into the Delorean with us for a trip back to 1985 to an age when Swatch Watches, Teddy Ruxpin, and the original Super Mario Brothers were "all the rage." If you are like us, children of the 80s, we reminisce about our favorite childhood toys, games, and shows. In fact, we see remnants of our childhood being recycled in popular culture from scrunchies to books like the *Babysitters Club* and movies like *Barbie*. Besides artifacts and media, we also retain influential memories of our early literacy experiences. Nostalgia brings up feelings of warmth for the past, of sentimental longing, or affection for certain personal history. As former students, classroom teachers, and now teacher educators, we have felt ourselves being pulled into our past selves remembering and questioning the methods and strategies--both with fondness and with frustration-- that were "en vogue" during our elementary years. We think of programs and strategies like The Letter People, SRA (Science Research Associates) reading kits, leveled reading groups (usually named after woodland birds), Young Authors, and other teaching practices that helped define our literacy memories.

Fast forward (like a VCR) to the late 1990s/2000s when we entered our teacher prep programs. Here we learned how to compose integrated units, utilize instructional strategies that moved away from literal text-based questions of our past, and integrate learner knowledge into comprehension. We discovered how to SWBAT (Students Will Be Able To) our lesson plans. In our Language Arts methods courses, we were cau-

East Lansing

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tioned against ability groupings and round robin readings. Instead, we incorporated methods such as KWL (Ogle, 1986) and QAR (Raphael, 1982) to activate schema and build on shared knowledge. That being said, we were less hindered by the extreme pressures of state standards, high-stakes assessment-driven instruction, and merit pay.

While conceptualizing this project, we hoped to revitalize some long-forgotten literacy practices into classroom best practices. We asked ourselves, (1) *how can we provide teachers different ways to engage today's learners to holistically meet the students' needs*, and (2) *in what ways can we provide teachers with a concrete and conceptual tool to evaluate their other literacy practices?*

We present a series of two articles focused on sharing our conceptual tool (an analogy to the popular 80's toy—the View-Master®[1]) and the research used to craft it. The crux of this article is sharing a brief overview of the research and the tool itself. We demonstrate the use of this with a classroom writing practice, dialogue journaling, and how

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[1] View-Master® and its component parts (reels) is a registered trademark of the Mattel, Inc. corporation.

it aligns with the tool. This article wraps up with some tips for teachers to begin to implement dialogue journaling in their own classrooms. In a subsequent issue of the *Michigan Reading Journal*, we will offer you a look into a reading practice, readers' theatre, and how it aligns with the conceptual tool. We will close out the series with concrete steps for teachers to use these theories in their own planning of classroom experiences.

Before moving on, we consider the fact that we can look back with nostalgia on our educational journeys. But, nostalgia is also subjective. We also recognize that as two White, upper-middle-class women who have taught in the elementary setting prior, we can look back at our childhood education and our teacher preparation programs with varying degrees of affection. However, we also recognize that there are many adults and students that cannot view their education with nostalgia. Instead, the memories of schooling are oppressive, irrelevant, and painful. In far too many cases, Black and Brown students have been underserved in K-16 settings. For these students, schooling practices are remembered not with nostalgia, but rather with apathy and resentment, and as a time of erasure of languages, identities, and histories. We acknowledge that we have contributed to harm in the form of curricular erasure and holding a standard to White mainstream norms. Far too often, we have let the pressure of assessment and/or parent pushback drive our curricular choices. We now take up this work as one possibility for a more student-centered, inclusive pedagogy.

Background and Context

Imagine with us that you find yourself sitting on the carpeted floor of your best friend's well-lit bedroom. Carefully, you select the appropriate reel—the circumference of each reel contains tiny film pictures—and slide it into the top of the View-Master®. When you put in the reel and look through the View-Master®, you can see the tiny pictures magnified in three dimensions. As you bring the hard red plastic View-Master® to your eyes and click the lever on the side to advance the pictures, you are instantly transported to a new reality of an under the sea adventure, Indiana Jones escapades, or Disney cartoons. For us, this served as a primitive

YouTube. While we share an affinity for the View-Master® as both a childhood toy and useful conceptual analogy, we also recognize the metaphoric parallel to the work that we, as teachers, do when creating an inclusive lesson plan.

Important for understanding our analogy are the reels (the different theories) and the View-Master® apparatus (teacher-curated practices). We demonstrate the use of this analogy in practice by focusing its use with dialogue journaling and readers' theatre (next article). As part of this analogy, we also want to highlight the dual role of the teacher as both the organizer and a participant of the experience through their choice of reels (theories) and practices.

While we think our analogy is pretty "rad," we understand that is not a perfect match. Our View-Master® analogy has the potential to come across as oversimplified. In addition, reels cannot be used together in the View-Master® like real-life classroom practices need to be. We also admit that while our View-Master® analogy may seem innocent and neutral, teaching and literacy instruction is not apolitical or neutral. Literacy learning and teaching is complex and complicated. The decisions that individual teachers make in selecting reels and practices have consequences. In understanding this, developing a teaching stance that weaves in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) or other sociocultural frameworks, like humanizing or social/emotional learning, enhances the teacher's ability to one, recognize the assets of individual students, and two, reach multiple aspects of the student's identity.

The Reels

In this endeavor, we investigated four different educational theories and two nostalgic practices to determine the feasibility of classroom use in more inclusive ways. We identified the two major categories for the theories: academic and sociocultural. Each is important when considering literacy education in context with today's teaching demands. Within the academic category, both standards and teacher-tested activities need to be considered. For the sociocultural category, we examine components related to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,

social and emotional learning, and humanizing pedagogy. Each reel represents a pertinent theory through which to consider the impact of current classroom practices. First, we provide background and justification for each theory (reel), and then we use the reel to legitimize two nostalgic literacy practices as they shift into a classroom best practice. For this paper, we focus on the nostalgic practice of dialogue journaling. In the next article, we focus on readers' theatre and conclude with showing how the theories (reels) can help determine practices that do or do not work.

Academic Reel as Mechanism for Literacy Growth

In order to determine the viability of a classroom practice, it needs to meet certain academic standards to make it worthy of consideration. For our academic reel, we look to recognized standards, like the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA), and recommendations from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and the National Reading Panel (NRP). While we understand the valid pushback against standards, as they do not reflect the needs of every individual student and are often prescriptive, we also recognize the reality that many teachers are not allowed "wiggle room" to deviate from them. In this way, we offer up an academic reel/theory to legitimize dialogue journaling (this issue) and readers' theatre (upcoming issue) as both academically rigorous best practices in addition to the other possibilities our reels have to offer.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Reel as Honoring Student Knowledges

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), since its inception in 1995, has been an important framework for teaching, especially for Black and Brown students. In CRP, Ladson-Billings (1995) focuses on student success and positive orientations toward Students of Color, rather than on the deficit-based thinking that is so often the narrative. In her original work, she noted three important factors associated with CRP. The first factor addresses the priority of academic success for Black and Brown students. Teachers who embody CRP understand that achievement goes beyond standardized assessments, but rather honors the many ways

that students engage with learning by reading, writing, speaking, and computing, all of which are enriched by asking questions and working collaboratively. Second, CRP recognizes cultural competence as an essential factor in teaching. Ladson-Billings (1995) notes how important it is for students to maintain their cultural integrity within their academic success. This means understanding how students interact within their cultural communities and finding ways to build on those strengths. Finally, CRP promotes cultural critique. Valuing critical consciousness allows students to forefront their knowledges and evaluate inequities. Overall, through her body of work, she found that the most successful teachers of Black students were those that held high expectations for their students, valued community, fostered collaboration, and viewed knowledge as changing, as well as looked for opportunities to both share knowledge and to be critical.

Over the years, CRP has adapted and extended as scholars push the concept further. Paris and Alim (2014) offer a shift to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy to think about the multiplicity of identities of students and also suggest new ways into youth culture, like HipHop. Now considered a "buzzword," CRP can be misrepresented (Ladson-Billings, 2014) in classrooms, like only having diverse books in a classroom library. Because of this, we want to look at CRP practices that assume Ladson-Billings' (2014) intention: "the ability to link principles of learning with deep understanding of (and appreciation for) culture" (p. 77). We view Ladson-Billings' work as a framework to guide our thinking in the CRP reel.

Sometimes discussions involving CRP run the risk of triviality or misuse like "if you do X practice, then you are doing CRP," which is misleading. CRP is an embodiment of teaching, or even a way of being in the classroom. For this article, our intention is not to promote one particular practice as "doing CRP," but to use the theory of CRP over certain practices to see if there is potential for CRP to thrive within it. While a practice may show overwhelming potential in one area of CRP, there are many factors to consider. For instance, the commitment of the individual teacher is

an overwhelming factor. It is how a teacher uses the practice that makes it culturally relevant.

Social/Emotional Reel as Support for Individualized Growth

In addition to considering students' academic and cultural needs in education, teachers also have to appraise their growth as an individual by focusing on their social and emotional development. While there are eight tenets of social and emotional learning according to Mussey (2019), for our reel we will focus on just two: creativity and cultivating connections. As stated in Mussey (2019), creativity must be inclusive and taught. Additionally, teachers need to allow for time and space, so students can develop their creativity. Fostering creativity through intentional instructional best practices can reverse the trend of schools "killing creativity," according to Sir Ken Robinson (2006). The second tenet of social emotional learning that we will focus on in this paper is cultivating connections. According to Mussey (2019), there are seven essential elements of cultivating connections with children. These essentials include humility, gentleness, patience, compassion, empathy, peace, and unity (Mussey, 2019). Ensuring that these activities are part of your practice will not only develop a student's social emotional self, but it will foster a sense of community within your classroom. This sense of community will support an environment ripe for learning.

When applying the social/emotional reel, teachers should consider the tenets that best fit that type of activity. For the sake of our project, we focused on creativity and cultivating connections because of the classroom activities we chose to examine: dialogue journaling and readers' theatre.

Humanizing Reel as Invitation for Collaboration

Students are not blank slates waiting to be supplied with knowledge, nor are they insufficient accounts where teachers need to make deposits. Our final theory epitomized this statement. The humanizing reel is built from the work of Paulo Freire. Freire (1968) speaks about this *banking model* of education in his text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he argues against the idea

that students are empty vessels to be filled. Teachers should instead be "in dialogue" with the learner who "assumes the role of knowing subject" (Freire, 1998, p. 485). Through this conversation between student and teacher, education becomes more *problem-posing* and less like the *banking model* (Freire, 1968). Students then learn to become masters of their own thinking. When students feel like they are in control of their learning and feel like they are recognized as "knowing," they can discern when learning experiences are not empowering them. They are critically conscious of their own educational experiences (Freire, 1968). In using this reel, teachers need to examine a practice by looking at whether the activity empowers students in their own learning journey. Moving forward, we illustrate how we utilized these theories (reels) to support the use of one nostalgic literacy practice: dialogue journaling.

The Focal Practice
(a.k.a. The View-Master®)

Dialogue Journaling: Past and Present

Dialogue journals, in their original form, were described as "a bound composition book in which each student carries on a private written conversation with the teacher for an extended period of time" (Staton, 1988, p. 198). Their objective was to create a student-centered, interactive, non-evaluative space for a student and teacher to communicate. The concept of a dialogue journal continues to evolve. Dialogue journals now include peer-to-peer communication (VanSluys & Laman, 2006), as well as conversations including families and school. In some cases, teachers have utilized them in the context of content areas. Written conversations, dialogue notebooks, or dialogue journals are all names for the same concept: an on-going, student(s)-led conversation with a peer, mentor, or teacher. Since the 1980s, the popularity of dialogue journals has blossomed and waned. In an age where connections with students is essential, and classroom writing is starved, there is a need to reevaluate this practice.

A brief history of dialogue journaling reveals an emergence of research done in the 1980s, notably by Reed (1988). From there we see the amount and use of dialogue journals expand. Researchers, like Peyton (1993,

1997), Peyton & Seyoum (1989), and Staton (1988), began examining the use of dialogue journals. By this time, researchers had already documented the benefits of using dialogue journals with special populations like linguistically diverse students (Peyton, 1997; Reyes, 1991; Staton, 1988;) and students who receive special education services (Staton, 1988; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a rise in research using dialogue journals. Dialogic journals now appear in a variety of spaces and places from graduate-level classes (Roe & Stallman, 1994), to the college classroom (Garmon, 2001), to elementary schools (Hail et al., 2013; Van Sluys & Laman, 2006), to children as young as kindergarten (Hannon, 1999), and in every grade level in between. Dialogue journal participants have consisted of duos and trios used to connect peers (Van Sluys & Laman, 2006), teachers and students, "buddies" across levels, and even home and school (Finnegan, 1997).

For the teacher, not only does journaling involve student-centered writing, but it also provides an avenue for meeting children at their instructional level (Bode, 1989), offers a peek into students' home and cultural lives, and allows the teacher to use each child's unique fund of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and connect it back to the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Stillman et al., 2014). Moreover, dialogue journaling offers opportunities to forge relationships with teachers and peers.

Dialogue Journaling through an Academic Reel
Dialogue journals, when examined through an academic reel, hold promise (see Table 1 for overview). For instance, when investigating the CCSS for ELA in 4th grade, dialogue journals could fit under "Range of Writing" as students "write routinely over shorter time frames for a range of discipline specific tasks, purposes and audiences" (CCSS, 2010). Dialogue journals offer an opportunity to write for a specific audience (teacher or possibly another student) in shorter writing time frames.

Dialogue Journaling: Reimagining the Future

Table 1
Dialogue Journaling Filtered through Multiple Reels

Filter adjective and Level of impact of reel	Academic	Culturally Relevent Pedagogy	Social/ Emotional	Humanizing
Evidence to support impact	- provides daily writing opportunities - creates a community of writers - writing for a variety of purposes	- draws in students' cultural and linguistic lives (Moll et al., 1992) - space to process events and hold critical conversations	- allows for creativity to practice and play - provides connections (teacher to student, peer to peer)	- student-led - potential to engage in critical thinking

Graham et al. (2012) in the WWC practice guide "Teaching Elementary School Students to be Effective Writers" recommend several key practices. One of the recommendations is daily writing time to improve writing skills. The WWC advises that 30 minutes be spent on writing techniques and strategies and another 30 minutes in practice. A dialogue journal provides both daily writing time and practice in writing. Another recommendation (Graham et al., 2012) calls for teaching students to write for a variety of purposes. In the suggestions given, dialogue journaling embraces the purpose of "providing a means of self-reflection, and sharing of experiences, ...and providing entertainment" (Graham et al., 2012, p. 12). Depending on how the teacher decides to utilize it, dialogue journaling offers a host of writing purposes. Lastly, Graham et al. (2012) recommend creating a community of engaged writers. It is here that dialogue journaling holds the most promise. By using self-selected topics and prompts, students have the potential to be more motivated and engaged while also creating richer connections to one another and the teacher. Although dialogue journaling is not listed in the suggested practices for the WWC or CCSS, we still see strong connections, thus holding promise as a classroom best practice.

In order to present a fuller picture of the academic and personal potential benefits of journaling, we focus on Dyson (2021) in her book *Writing the Schoolhouse Blues* as she follows Ta'Von through his early schooling experiences. In second grade, Ta'Von's journal writing flourishes through the use of a daily journal. In it, Ta'Von writes about his developing passion for blues musicians—a passion he shares with this grandma. During that year, his journal fills with information on individual blues musicians, song lyrics, and references to guitars—all topics clearly important to Ta'Von. These "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992) Ta'Von brings to the classroom practice for journal writing. Besides the student-centered content, Dyson (2021) notes the academic skills Ta'Von developed through his journal writing: letter-sound knowledge in spelling, decoding, rereading, and revising. Unfortunately, all these benefits are muted as this "not real" (according to

Ta'Von) journal writing was overlooked by the teacher, and it never informed his overall writing abilities. Only the state-mandated writing and reading assessments were taken into account. The missed opportunity of teacher and peer audience did not allow Ta'Von's funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and passions to be displayed in the classroom, as Ta'Von, one of the only Black students in a predominantly White classroom, tried to negotiate a sense of belonging. Although Dyson (2021) concentrates on themes of belonging, "smartness," and equity, Ta'Von's writing experiences tell us about how journal writing can be a holistic practice of integrative writing skills.

Dialogue Journaling through a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Reel

The practice of dialogue journaling, summarized in Table 1, holds the potential to be aligned with components of CRP. While the research in dialogue journaling does not cite Ladson-Billings (1995) directly, there are several important overlaps. The first component of CRP is foregrounding academic success for marginalized youth. While academic success can be defined quite broadly, dialogue journaling creates a non-evaluative space for students to communicate without the pressure to perform or conform. In this way, dialogue journaling can create positive orientations toward writing and promote academic success. What dialogue journaling does offer is recognizing cultural competency, the second component of CRP. Stillman et al. (2014) show that dialogue journals can be asset-based practices, important for drawing in students' cultural and linguistic lives. For the teacher, this allows opportunities to see each student's unique fund of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and use this knowledge in the curriculum. The third component of CRP is critical consciousness. This is one area where the individual teacher is an influential force in how the dialogue journal is utilized. If the teacher allows the students the space to process events and topics related to what is important to them, then dialogue journals critical consciousness can be furthered. Kaczmarczyk et al. (2019) found that the practice of dialogue journaling can be used to approach critical issues like race that require critical conversations.

Dialogue Journaling through a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Reel

Using an SEL reel, the practice of dialogue journals is potentially high on both creativity and connection (see Table 1). Giving students non-evaluative spaces to play with writing is not only research-based (Troia, 2014), but it is authentic and motivating (Peyton, 1997; Staton, 1988). Depending on the type of journal utilized, students in these spaces are free to ask questions, play with knock-knock jokes, spin stories, or give their expertise on guinea pigs, allowing their creativity to blossom. In turn, this fosters their unique sense of self and further develops their social emotional learning.

Through the practice of ongoing dialogue between teacher and student, dialogue journaling offers opportunities to forge relationships and cultivate connections. Whether peer-to-peer or teacher-to-peer journals, the connections solidified through writing can lead to increased community within the classroom.

This practice is teacher-dependent. As Hall and colleagues (1997) discovered, power dynamics between teacher and student is an important factor to keep in mind. As students share potentially weighty topics such as divorce or abuse, the teacher's response is crucial. Offering a generic response would seem further damaging. For topics where the teacher must report the information (i.e., abuse), consider not responding in the journal and addressing that topic in a more direct way using your school resources (e.g., counselor, administrator, etc.). Understanding the teacher responsibility in terms of SEL and the necessary response is important to consider.

Dialogue Journaling through a Humanizing Reel

Dialogue journaling is ripe for potential when overlaid with the humanizing reel, as illustrated by Table 1. For Freire (1968), dialogue is the center of education. Dialogue journals give answers to the important questions posed by using a Freirien lens. First, the student takes control of their learning. By selecting topics and questions important to them and/or choosing how to answer open-ended prompts, students take the lead. Second, the student is in direct dialogue with

the teacher and possibly peers. Freire (1968) notes that true dialogue is not "depositing" ideas into students or exhibiting control over their ideas. Instead, dialogue is an "act of creation" (Freire, 1968). Implemented authentically, dialogue journaling becomes a conversation with another person, creating connection and community.

Beyond this, Freire (1968) argues that dialogue has the power to engage in and perpetuate critical thinking, which is the basis for authentic education. Building off research done by Kaczmarczyk et al. (2019), dialogue journals have potential in many areas, including approaching critical issues like race, gender, or other topics that require critical conversations.

Moving from Nostalgia to Best Practice: The Case for Dialogue Journals

Image 1
Excerpt from Rebecca White's 2nd grade Dialogue Journal
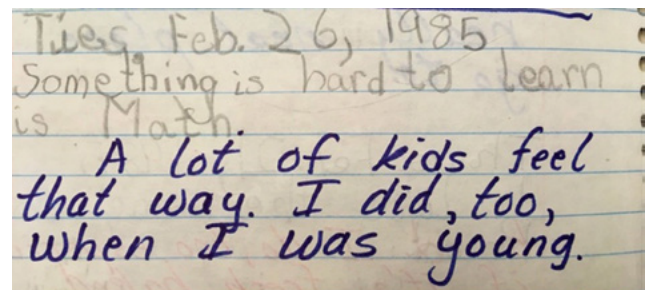
Looking at Image 1 (from 1985!), you can see that the student, Rebecca White, is responding to a question prompting students to write about something that is hard for them. She writes about her struggle with math. In one sentence the teacher responds empathetically citing a personal connection. In this simple exchange, the teacher gained essential information about the student and was able to validate concerns. White, as the student, kept this journal from her second-grade teacher, remembering it and her teacher fondly as it developed a positive rapport and made her feel valued and supported. Not only can dialogue journals be considered nostalgic, like the image above, but dialogue journals can become a best practice incorporated in

classrooms, especially when the student's thoughts and writing are validated by the teacher.

Returning to Dyson (2021), Ta'Von's teacher provided a non-evaluative writing space that was humanizing in the sense that students were about to write about a topic of their choice. In saying this, though, we wonder how this journal writing practice would have been enhanced through dialogic—interactions with a teacher or peer, similar to the interaction in Image 1.

Dyson (2021) notes the importance of a shared writing experience for students. "Writing can be a means for self-expression and communication—but without a dedicated sharing time, and with a tight focus on skills, the intentions driving children's engagement with orchestrating their writing know-how can remain invisible" (p. 139). If Ta'Von's teacher read his entries and responded, like in a dialogue journal, she would have learned about his out-of-school passions and potentially leveraged them in official classroom work—effectively working toward more culturally relevant teaching. She also would have noted the length and depth of his writing abilities that state-mandated tests miss. Further, having an audience for his writing would have justified in Ta'Von's mind that his journal writing was "real." In that case, dialogue journaling could have provided an audience, giving his writing purpose, but also could have provided much needed information about his abilities. Imagine if Ta'Von's teacher could have taken a couple of minutes to read his journal entry and made a comment. What if his love for the blues could have been a point of conversation and connection? Even more, what if his love for the blues could have been incorporated into the literacy curriculum?

Strategies for Implementing Dialogue Journaling in Classrooms

At first dialogue journaling may seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be overly time-consuming. As former classroom teachers, we understand the need to prioritize certain tasks and activities and that classroom time is precious. Because of that, we lay out six helpful strategies to make dialogue journaling manageable in your classroom.

1) Think About Formats - The authors have used both electronic and paper journals. Each method of journaling can serve a purpose and form a connection. Many journals are shared in a paper format (spiral-bound notebooks or paper stapled together), physically passed between teacher and student. Teachers may tend to favor this as it provides handwriting and writing practice. However, electronic journals also are effective. For instance, one of us [White] journaled with teacher candidates in a different state on a shared Google doc. Something similar could be done with elementary classroom technology simultaneously reinforcing typing skills.

2) Decide on a Manageable Timeframe - If dialogue journaling seems overwhelming, pick a specific timeframe. For instance, try it for four weeks at the beginning of the year and then decide if you want to continue. Another idea is to incorporate it as a choice for early finishers or during a literacy choice time (like Daily 5) communicating with only some students. Alternatively, you could write to students every other week, breaking the class in half. Create a plan for how you will respond to the journals.

3) Starting the Process - Begin each journal with the same prompt, such as "What is something new you have tried?" See where your students take it. Don't forget to explain and model expectations (i.e., end the journal with a question). As much as possible, let the student guide the conversation. Prompt them to ask you a question at the end of their entry. They can either reciprocate the question you asked or can ask an entirely new question. If your students forget to ask a question, prompt them in your response to remember to ask a question the next time. It keeps the conversation flowing and also models effective conversation skills.

4) Streamlining the Teacher Response Process -
   • Try to find a time frame that is feasible and works for both you and your students. We have done weekly journals where we have the weekend to respond, but this does not work for everyone.
   • Consider staggering your responses, so you don't feel overwhelmed responding to twenty journals at once. We answer 5-7 journals in

one sitting, and then move on to another task. Then revisit 5-7 more journals following that task. It may take 2-3 days to respond to your whole class doing it this way.

- Sort the journals by how easy they are to respond to, and then respond to the easiest group first. Usually, these easy journals take far less time to complete.
- Use a formula for responding to the journals to make them feasible to complete. This three-sentence response is the most efficient and effective way to respond. First, we answer their question. Then, we follow that up with a comment about their main focus of the journal. Lastly, we ask a question back. Often the question requests clarification on the main focus of the entry.
- Create a list of grade-appropriate topics of student interest you may want to ask your students about (e.g., weekend activities, sports they play, activities they do outside of school, etc.) so that it is easy to introduce the next topic. Similarly, you can ask questions that connect content areas. For instance, following a science lesson on weather, you can incorporate a weather-related question by asking students about what they like to do during a rainy day.

5) Keeping Teacher Responses Simple - Acknowledge that you read students' entries. Journal responses could be as simple as "Agree" or "I would like to know more about this" to a "Thanks for sharing" and then adding a connection. However, keep in mind, you are building a relationship with this student, so in addition to agreeing, you may want to ask for more information or ask a follow-up question. Both of these would validate the student's entry.

6) Have fun! When you read and respond, you don't have to correct grammar or look at a rubric, you can just communicate and cultivate a relationship. Find ways to incorporate what you know from the journals into conversations.

While the audience of this article is primarily elementary teachers, dialogue journaling could be possible

for other levels as well. In saying this, implementation in secondary settings may need to be adapted. We suggest middle school and high school teachers who teach multiple sections of the same class (high school English teachers, for instance), try it with one class first or switch classes every nine weeks. Alternatively, it may work better to focus on homeroom students to cultivate relationships with a smaller group of students.

To Be Continued . . .

In an upcoming issue, we will examine additional practices using these reels (theories). As previously noted, we will offer an additional focal practice (readers' theatre). Finally, as we close out this series, our next article will summarize the research presented here and provide a few strategies for enacting this tool in your classroom lesson planning.

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