

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

1995

The effective use of journal writing in a fourth grade classroom, an inservice for elementary school teachers

Susan Ann Brown

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brown, Susan Ann, "The effective use of journal writing in a fourth grade classroom, an inservice for elementary school teachers" (1995). *Theses Digitization Project*. 1073.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/1073>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF JOURNAL WRITING
IN A FOURTH GRADE CLASSROOM:
AN INSERVICE FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Reading Option

by
Susan Ann Brown
June 1995


THE EFFECTIVE USE OF JOURNAL WRITING
IN A FOURTH GRADE CLASSROOM:
AN INSERVICE FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino


by
Susan Ann Brown

June 1995

Approved by :


Adria Klein, First Reader

4-22-95
Date


Katharine Busch, Second Reader

ABSTRACT

Journal writing is thought to serve as a catalyst to get students to think -- to reflect upon and consider their own experiences against those of others, including authors, teachers, and peers. For this reason teachers have been using journal writing in the classroom to improve student learning. Students are encouraged to take risks with their thoughts and language and become engaged in the content of their written language. However, this prime characteristic of journal prose -- its personal, natural, unconventional style closely resembling the language of speech -- counters the clear, organized, standard language representative of academic achievement, and, therefore, calls into question the merit and worth of journal writing in the classroom.

The goal of this project is to encourage teachers to recognize that writing is a gradual and imprecise process and to help teachers use journal writing to motivate students to write for meaning and fluency, using natural language to express authentic interests in the writer's own voice. Because journal entries reflect thought, not memorization, journals should be regarded by both teachers and students as places to think things through without the interference of conventions and criticism. Since journals are a place for students to think, the focus, both teacher and student, is to remain on content. A journal is the appropriate place for students to play with language and ideas.

Three style of journals are presented in this project -- the personal journal, the dialogue journal for reading response, and the dialectical journal. The personal journal is an authentic writing exercise in self-expression in which students make connections with the world around them. The dialogue and dialectical journals are strategies to engage students through personal response in the books they are reading. In dialogue journals the key elements

in the reading responses are communicating ideas in a written conversation with another person. The need to communicate, coupled with informal social interaction, brings meaning and importance to what is being read. In dialectical journals students employ an even deeper introspection in their responses to literature by reexamining their ideas, first in their journals and then with teachers and peers. By exploring their responses more thoroughly and discussing others' perspectives on the same topic, students begin to think critically and form their own meanings about the text. Examples from my own students' entries are given to illustrate the variety of journal entries.

There is a section on the characteristics of good journal writing to support and reassure teachers who might initially be worried by the unconventional, personal prose of entries along with the disjointed, free-wheeling range of students' thoughts. Some general guidelines are also included to help teachers use journals productively and constructively. A set of handouts which highlight important aspects and different kinds of journaling are also included for teachers to keep at hand when they wish to challenge their students to think and write.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dedicated, with love, to AMY and GREG,
my joy and my strength in life,
and to MOTHER,
my favorite teacher since birth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	
Introduction	1
A Review of Theoretical Foundations	4
Journal Use in a Whole Language Classroom	7
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
Introduction	9
Connections Between Thought and Language	10
The Role of Language	12
Characteristics	16
Types of Journals	18
The Personal Journal	19
The Dialogue Journal for Reading Response	23
The Dialectical Journal	28
Evaluation	31
Summary	33
GOALS AND LIMITATIONS	
Goals	35
Limitations	36
APPENDIX A	39
JOURNAL WRITING: AN INSERVICE FOR TEACHERS	
Introduction	40
Overview	43
The Definition and Purpose of Journals	44

The Case for Journal Writing	46
Classroom Environment	48
The Role of the Teacher	50
The Personal Journal	52
Draw-Write Journal	54
Free Write Journal	55
Evaluating the Personal Journal	60
The Dialogue Journal for Reading Response	61
Student Letters Responding to Literature	63
Teacher Letters Responding to Literature	64
Examples of Learning Experiences through Dialogue Journals.	66
Evaluating the Dialogue Journal for Reading Response	68
The Dialectical Journal	70
Examples of Learning Experiences through Dialectical Journals.	72
Evaluating the Dialectical Journal	75
Characteristics of Good Journal Writing	78
Guidelines for Assigning Journals	83
APPENDIX B	85
HANDOUT MATERIALS	86
Personal Journals	87
Dialogue Journals for Responding to Literature	
Student Responses	88
Dialogue Journals for Responding to Literature	
Teacher Responses	89
Dialectical Journals	90
Ideas for a Double Entry Journal	92

Characteristics of Good Journal Writing	93
Guidelines for Assigning Journals	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	96
REFERENCES	97

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Teachers have used journal writing in the classroom for years for the ultimate purpose of improving student learning. In general, journal writing is thought to serve as a catalyst to get students to think -- to reflect upon and consider their own experiences against those of others, including authors, teachers, and peers. Teachers encourage students to take risks with their thoughts and language by respecting journals as safe places, the entries never to be corrected or criticized for making mistakes and venturing to express half-formed ideas. Freed from the concern of conforming to strict language conventions, students become engaged in the content of their written language with resulting increased clarity of expression. With the focus on communicating meaning clearly, errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling frequently decline. Students learn from making mistakes in their journals and are liberated to think critically and creatively with authentic interest from their own perspectives. Instead of containing facts restated from texts, journals are filled with personal opinions, thoughts, feelings, interpretations, and speculations owned by the student.

The diverse types of journals include diaries, reading response logs, dialectic journals, dialogue journals, think books, and learning logs. Traditionally, journals of one kind or another have been used in language learning classes to help writers experiment with language and to keep track of their progress. Journals or logs have also been used widely to collect and record data for observations, especially for science experiments in the elementary grades. The prose characteristics of journal writing are informal and personal, frequently resembling the patterns of everyday speech. While some

kinds of journal writing may be informational or record observations, personal, dialectic, and dialogue journals are often free-wheeling, disconnected, speculative ruminations, inviting exploration among ideas leading to new insights, self-awareness, and the synthesis of ideas, relationships, and topics. The freedom to range and connect ideas through journal writing is considered a valuable factor in helping students to understand material and encourage critical thinking by students.

With the above considerations in mind, journal writing should be employed in the classroom for the following purposes:

1. To invite students to participate in the writing process which, in itself, produces growth and new understandings.
2. To help students make personal connections to better understand what they are learning in class.
3. To provide a forum for students to interact with and arrive at a better understanding of what they are studying, extending students' knowledge through writing rather than merely representing what is already known.
4. To collect and record observations and procedures.
5. To serve as a vehicle for students to practice, experiment with, and improve their writing, thereby assuming ever-increasing responsibility for their own writing.

Journal writing can indeed be a strong and effective tool in helping students to improve their learning by better understanding classroom material through personal connections generated and articulated in the student's own style and voice in a stimulating, risk-free environment.

However, in spite of the abundant support for journal writing (Atwell,

1990; Fulwiler, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Harste, Short & Burke, 1988; Staton, 1980; Wells, 1992), the very freedom that characterizes the journal invites confusion and criticism about the effectiveness of journals in the classroom writing program. Since schools are expected to strive for academic excellence in all students, written work should be clear, conventional, organized, and factual. The prose of journals -- personal, disjointed, speculative, colloquial, loosely-structured, unconventional -- contradicts the standards and expectations of learning outcomes.

The value and use of journals have been questioned. According to Anderson (1992), some of the pitfalls of journals include overuse, routinization, repetition, writing for the teacher, lack of growth in writing ability, and entries that fail to make connections with material read or discussed.

The styles and varieties of journal writing can also be confusing to students and teachers alike. If specific learning outcomes for using a journal are not identified by the teacher when introducing journal writing, students may not perceive the invitation to engage in journal writing as a means to make connections by expanding their ability to think reflectively. If not structured to produce growth and learning, entries are likely to be superficial and routine.

Another obstacle to effective journal use is the time factor. For the journal to evolve as a quality tool in promoting learning, entries should be frequent and consistent. Frequency of entries allows students a greater opportunity to record interesting, intriguing thoughts and not just those that occur at journal writing time. Consistent practice with journals encourages students to assume responsibility for making meaning in their writing by connecting their beliefs, interests, needs, and purposes to outside information.

The effectiveness of journals, the prose of the entries, the vagaries of

styles and uses of the many manifestations of journals, and the time required to write in journals are all legitimate concerns of teachers contemplating journal use in their classrooms. Before journals can be used constructively and productively to achieve growth and learning in students, the teacher should be familiar with current research about journal writing. The teacher should then decide upon a direction and function of journal use in the classroom by differentiating between the various kinds of journal keeping and matching the functions of each type to her objectives for student learning outcomes.

A Review of Theoretical Foundations

The manner in which journals are used in the classroom reflects in large measure the teacher's personal beliefs about learning to read and write. The Reading Theory Continuum (Harste & Burke, 1980) offers three models of reading consisting of decoding, skills, and whole language. The decoding model, often referred to as the phonics approach, emphasizes the smallest units of language, the graphemes and phonemes. In this parts to whole or bottom-up approach to reading and writing, meaning is built from the letters, using sound/symbol relationships or spelling patterns, to form words which are linked together to make meaning from the print on the page.

Found mainly in the basal reading programs, this phonics approach to reading and writing instruction is based on a precise set of rules and consists of controlled vocabulary, often grouping words by their phonemic similarities. Lists of sight words are memorized to accommodate words, often functional, that do not fit sound-symbol patterns or spelling rules. The main strategy for reading in the decoding program is to sound out unknown words using phonic rules. Since instruction is focused on teaching phonic rules, the teacher dominates the classroom environment, controlling the curriculum which is directed by

basal publications. Students are passive learners, empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. The teacher's role is to model correct language and correct student errors.

In the skills model of reading and writing the emphasis of instruction is on drill-to-skill competency as directed by basal publications, including workbooks and dittos, and implemented by the teacher. Emphasizing word-attack skills, the basal workbooks present words in isolation which students are to master through phonic analysis and repetition of practice. By learning more and more words from controlled vocabulary lists presented in hierarchical manner, students are able to link a longer string of words together, increasing the meaning potential.

The interaction between the reader and the text is that the reader is able to understand the meaning that is contained in the text. Comprehension of basal selections can be checked by answering the publisher's questions at the end of the reading selection "correctly," according to preconceived answers printed in the teacher guide. By achieving successive levels of mastery of the components of reading -- graphophonemic decoding, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension -- students learn to read and write.

Frequently, the instructional time used to teach language skills leaves little time for actual reading. Teachers follow basal lesson plans, and students follow the teacher's directions. There are many assessments to ensure that both teacher and students are following the correct sequence of skills. Learners are passive with the teacher assuming ownership and responsibility for what is to be learned.

The whole language model of reading and writing is based on an entirely different theoretical orientation from the decoding and skills approaches. The

focus of the whole language approach is on meaning as the key to reading and writing. Instead of basal readers and workbooks, quality children's literature forms the basis of reading instruction. The meaning students construct from books is relative, depending upon the child's own background and knowledge. Instruction is focused on activating the student's non-visual background and bringing it to literacy events. Since literacy learning is approached from the learner's perspective, an important emphasis of whole language instruction is on the use of natural oral and written language in the student's responses and interpretations. A central tenet of whole language is that language needs to be natural and whole, not broken into sets of skills and subskills. As a result, the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator, sharing the ownership of and responsibility for learning with students, encouraging students to take risks in exploring meaning, and allowing students to develop their own voices.

In the whole language philosophy the stress is on bringing the reader's background knowledge to the printed words on the page to generate meaning. The reader is constantly predicting, interpreting, and confirming or revising in trying to make sense of the text. The language used is what is needed to make meaning within the context of the situation. Controlled vocabulary lists and sight words are unnecessary for natural language learning. Comprehension evolves from the student's interaction with the text, not from answering questions correctly. Meaningful evaluation demonstrating understanding comes from interpretation, rewriting, and retelling stories. Such recreations of what has been read may be in written form or through use of alternative communications systems, such as art, music, movement, or drama. Evaluations are purposeful, rather than judgmental, and help learners in determining what they already know and what they want to know.

Learning is authentic, engaging students in activities to suit their own interests and needs. Learning to read and write, much like learning to talk, becomes a natural process in which children want to make sense of written language in their environment, especially if it is intrinsically interesting to them, as are songs, rhymes, and stories. There are no rules to teach directly to children in order for them to learn to read. Children internalize the rules by transacting with a language-rich environment. In this natural process, reading and writing are intertwined in a community of learners based on respect, trust, and acceptance of one another's ideas and opinions. Unlike the basal directed approaches, whole language programs encourage the learners to take responsibility, and the curriculum becomes self-motivating. As a result, behavior problems decrease, self-esteem rises, and respect for all increases.

Journal Use in a Whole Language Classroom

My views of language and learning are best represented by the whole language model. The whole language philosophy recognizes that learning to read and write, like learning to talk, is a gradual, imprecise process. Journals are an especially appropriate means for encouraging children to write naturally to express their ideas and feelings, focusing on meaning and fluency. Journal prose resembles the language of speech; it is often natural and unconventional. Children write in their journals for authentic reasons, using their writing to further their own aims and interests. Very importantly, journals are safe places in which students can generate their own meanings in unconventional prose without the constraints of censure and grade assessments from teachers. Journals are ideal places for thinking and exploring, generating ideas which students may later wish to develop, revise, and refine in the authoring cycle.

With these language characteristics in mind, I do not think authentic

journal writing can be accommodated in the decoding and skills models of reading and writing. Their strict adherence to the rules and conventions of the language preclude the journal's nonconformist style focusing on ideas rather than the means of expression. It is my intention to present in this project an inservice for elementary teachers on the use of journals in the classroom. The inservice will provide a theoretical basis justifying the acceptance of unconventional language found in journals and an overview of different ways to use journals effectively to further learning outcomes. I shall also provide information on the characteristics of purposeful journal writing and guidelines to implement journals in the classroom.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Use of the journal in the classroom as a means to promote learning and to generate written language has often been questioned as an effective strategy. The very word "journal" can invite confusion because of its numerous applications and interpretations.

Teachers sometimes look suspiciously at journal writing. For some it is too personal, unstructured or informal to assign in the classroom; for others it is too difficult to measure; and for still others journal writing simply serves no practical pedagogical purpose -- it is a waste of time. (Fulwiler & Young, 1982, p. 15)

Eight years later Parsons (1990) repeated similar complaints registered by teachers about journals when he wrote, "Eventually, the practice became a kind of enforced diary-keeping, disliked by everyone involved." Most teachers, according to Parsons, "were left wondering why so much precious classroom time had to be devoted to such a limited strategy" (p.2).

Fulwiler (1982) explained that journal writing is an interdisciplinary learning tool and is developmental by nature. Stating that journals promote both introspection and speculation, he posits that "the value of coupling personal and academic learning should not be overlooked; self-knowledge provides the motivation for whatever other knowledge an individual seeks." He concludes that all knowledge is related, and the journal is an effective strategy to help clarify the relationship.

Parsons (1990) attributes current negative attitudes toward journal use as a holdover from the unfocused and routine nature of early journal writing which failed to combine "the most useful aspects of learning logs and work diaries with contemporary response theory" (p. 2).

Support for effective journal writing abounds (Atwell, 1990; Fulwiler,

1987; Fulwiler & Young, 1982; Goodman, 1986; Harste, Short & Burke, 1988; Staton, 1980; Wells, 1992). Journals are generally thought to develop cognitive and interpretive thinking strategies; to address informal, personal functions of writing, and to create a low-risk environment to explore feelings, thoughts, and ideas as well as the function of language. As explained by Macrorie (Fulwiler, 1987), journals demonstrate "how students may learn to write and write to learn in ways that constitute thinking in the most productive sense of the word" (Foreword).

Connections Between Thought and Language

Several pertinent connections between thought and language have been made by research experts, and learning connections are thought to be supported and developed through journal writing (Fulwiler, 1987, & Wollman-Bonilla, 1991). They cite the following experts and their reasons for learning through writing:

1. According to Bruner, articulation about new and previous information helps to build connections between this knowledge and increases understanding (Fulwiler, 1987).
2. Vygotsky posited that people think in the system of language symbols when they write (Fulwiler, 1987) and that learning is a social process (Wollman-Bonilla, 1991).
3. Emig's research indicated that learning occurs in a transmodal manner integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Fulwiler, 1987). Because writing is a slower process than talking and lasts longer than speech, it gives students time to reflect on their reading and to organize their developing interpretations (Wollman-Bonilla, 1991).

4. Britton theorized that writing about new information helps people to learn and understand better (Fulwiler, 1987). By articulating their ideas, students learn "to explore and organize what they know, integrate new information, give shape to emergent thoughts, and clarify and reflect upon their ideas" (Wollman-Bonilla, 1991).
5. Moffett postulated that people write and learn better if they care about the topic (Fulwiler, 1987).

These leading language scholars suggest that the informal language which is found in journals is too important to ignore. Their research indicates that people find meaning in the world by exploring the world about them through personal, colloquial, easy, natural language used in every day life, not the academic language of teachers and textbooks. Such language explorations may be oral as well as written. This familiar, informal language can be found daily in natural occurrences -- conversations, notes, private diaries, and personal journals. Fulwiler (1987) believes that the skillful teacher capitalizes on the use of such language wherever it is found, "and the journal is one of the handiest places. Such journals have become recognized useful pedagogical tools in other disciplines -- not just English -- where critical independent thought, speculation, or extrapolation is important" (p.1).

Similarly, Peter Elbow (cited in Fulwiler & Young, 1982) encourages students to engage in "free writing," a technique of writing as fast as a person can to explore and discover through free association. In free writing students write whatever words come out without any prewriting preparation and without stopping. This process of free association illustrates the close relationship between writing and thinking. The journal is a natural place to write freely.

Fulwiler (Fulwiler & Young, 1982) describes the journal as part of a

continuum including diaries and class notebooks. A writer records private and personal ideas and experiences in a diary while a class notebook records teacher instruction and public information. The journal falls between the two. Like the diary, it uses the first person and personal ideas of the writer, and it may focus on academic subjects like a class notebook but from the writer's interest and point of view. The following represents the continuum:

<u>Diary</u> (Subjective Expression)	<u>Journal</u> (I/It)	<u>Class Notebook</u> (Objective Topics)
---	--------------------------	---

Through the language of the journal the writer becomes conscious of what is happening to her, personally and academically, by questioning and expanding on ideas and information, a meaning-making process.

The Role of Language

"Language and thinking are inextricably entwined," state Isaacs and Brodine (1994, p. 7). The role of written language in education, according to Fulwiler and Young (1982), is threefold: to communicate, to learn, and to form values. All three types of writing are found in journals, especially the latter two. While writing to communicate formally is usually done through expository writing, the initiating stage of such communication may have originated as a journal entry where many ideas are generated. In writing to learn, expressive language is used "not to communicate, but to order and represent experience to our own understanding." Such speculative writing is often found in the journal where "language becomes a tool for discovering, for shaping meaning, and for reaching understanding" (Introduction, p. x).

The role of writing to form values is a means of finding the author's voice and giving vent to that voice. The act of writing allows the author to use language to define herself and her beliefs about various ideas and experiences encountered in life and in texts. The journal is an appropriate vehicle for

exploring, questioning, and deriving new ideas from a personal, introspective focus. Because "this value-forming activity is perhaps the most personally and socially significant role writing plays in our education," state Fulwiler and Young (1982), "this role must not be forgotten or lost as we also attempt to produce careful, clear, and correct prose" (Introduction, p. x).

However, it is this very prose of journal writing that often raises a legitimate concern among teachers, especially those new to the profession. Typically colloquial, unconventional, and loosely-structured, the writing found in journals contradicts the scholarly goal of meaningful and vigorous prose which uses language effectively. In the early stages of journal use, this author wrote in her personal classroom journal:

I am ambivalent about the benefits of journal writing. The more I peruse student entries, the more I doubt that the haphazard, unfocused, rambling entries will translate into fluent, robust writing skills. It has occurred to me that this consistent free-writing style might really lead to a perpetuation of unfocused, mechanically incorrect writing habits. (1993)

Donald Murray (1989) addresses the concern of freely-written, exploratory, unconventional prose in a chapter appropriately entitled, "The Importance of Bad Writing -- And How To Encourage It" (p. 101). He explains that writing is a thinking skill, and that authors are "grappling -- on the page -- with the meanings they need to discover" (p. 103). The initial written product often is not traditional writing but may contain "surprising, insightful, thought-provoking and emotion-evolving writing that grows from the nourishing compost of failure" (p.103). Murray emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to experiment with the exciting dangers of language, rather than being condemned to write for correctness, losing meaning to propriety and caution.

In that vein Murray (1989) states, "Outlaw error and you outlaw real writing," (p. 104). He believes that students who do not know the rules of

language will be bored with writing for correctness, intimidated by previous censures, and abandon their efforts to make meaning through language exploration. The result is that "there will be no thinking with language, no exploration, no discovery, for those intellectual activities bring with them an essential messiness in which the rules are ignored or challenged until they prove their worth" (p. 105). As Hemingway once said, "Prose is architecture not interior decorating" (cited in Murray, 1989, p. 112).

Murray (1989) also addresses the tendency of teachers to give young students or remedial students the simplest of assignments, such as writing from story starters, word lists, or assigning writing topics. While this may seem logical and even traditional, this approach to writing is likely just a repetition of what has failed with these students in previous grades. Such mundane, teacher-directed activities fail because they trivialize the act of writing. It is only by bad writing "as all writers must write -- the student begins to hold the world in place, just a small piece of the world and just for a moment, but the student will make connections and discover context and meaning" (p. 110).

Students "learn" to dislike writing at school. When children first enter school, they want to write (Graves, 1983, & Isaacs & Brodine, 1994). They have been making their marks with chalk, crayons, pens, and pencils on paper, walls, and pavement for years, and these marks say, "I am," in their personal versions of writing.

"No, you aren't," say most school approaches to the teaching of writing," states Graves (1983, p. 3). By ignoring a child's effort to show what she knows, educators underestimate the child's urge to express herself and misunderstand the child's attempts to control the writing process. Many teachers take the control away from the child and place road blocks in the way of what the child

intends to do by demanding conformity and correctness. In this way students learn from these teachers that they are poor writers and are reluctant to risk expressing their ideas. Then the teacher says, "They don't want to write. How can we motivate them?" (Graves, 1983, p. 3).

"Journals provide the perfect vehicle for the tentative forays of fledgling writers," state Isaacs and Brodine (1994, p. 4). By encouraging students of all ages to experiment in their journals, to write often and regularly on a wide variety of topics of their own choice, to take risks by experimenting with language use, students can be motivated to write. Lambert (cited in Fulwiler & Young, 1982) entices students to explore ideas and language by suggesting that "a journal is a place to fail. That is, a place to try, experiment, test one's wings" (p. 151). She urges students not to worry about a final, perfect product but to view writing as a process. In their journals students should search for meaning in their own voices.

Personal choice of topic is important in journal writing because choice allows ownership and gives the author a purpose and a motive to write. Students who rely on the teacher for a topic for writing are those who most need to experiment with language. They perceive themselves as "nonknowers" (Graves, 1983, p. 23). Children who feel they know nothing or have no significant experiences in life, often as a result of feedback from parents, teachers, and other children, have difficulty writing. They have experienced and fear censure for their mistakes. Such children must be convinced that others -- students, the teacher, parents -- are seriously interested in what the child has to offer. Through their own choices children exercise control of their writing, establish ownership, and ultimately achieve pride in their writing.

Characteristics

As a result of the research on the value of informal writing by Bruner, Vygotsky, Emig, Britton, Moffett, and Elbow (cited in Fulwiler, 1987, & Wollman-Bonilla, 1991), the use of journals in the classroom has become an acceptable, widespread practice. For teachers unfamiliar with this research, as in this author's early journal experience, the lack of organization, structure, and conventions foster doubts and raise concerns about the merit of journal writing. If journals are to be used as places to think, to speculate, and to make connections, the teacher must also focus on thoughts and ideas, not form and conventions. There are certain characteristics, notes Fulwiler (1987), that separate good journal writing from more formal prose. These are the features that teachers should look for and encourage when students write in their journals.

First, teachers should be aware of the language employed in entries. According to Britton (cited in Fulwiler, 1987, & Wollman-Bonilla, 1991), this language will resemble speech written down. As such, this language will be similar to that used in natural conversations, exhibiting the following features:

1. Colloquial diction: Language is informal employing short, simple words, contractions, and other shortcuts which allow the writer to record her thoughts with minimal effort and maximum speed.
2. First person pronouns: Because journal entries are personal reflections about issues rather than a reference to an outside source, the pronoun "I" indicates the author's position and concern.
3. Informal punctuation: Because journal writing is focused on making meaning, authors tend to use whatever works to keep meaning, such as dashes, lines, and absence of quotation marks.

4. Rhythms of everyday speech: Journals are often like a conversation between the author and one of her viewpoints, and such informal dialogues would not be recorded authentically if written in pretentious prose.
5. Experimentation: Language is explored and played with in unpredictable fashion, using whatever voice, style, form, or perspective the journal writer is manipulating.

Secondly, teachers should look for the use of a variety of cognitive strategies in students' entries. Such a range of cognitive modes is associated with the ability to think critically and, therefore, is considered to make good use of journal writing. The following are examples of cognitive activities found in good journals:

1. Observations: Just as scientists must record an interesting phenomenon in order to test a theory or a literary scholar must read before attempting to interpret, a student is challenged to capture in writing something of interest.
2. Questions: Journals are used to record the probing and questioning of a student's thoughts, personal doubts, and academic speculations. It is more important that questions be raised rather than answered in the student's journal.
3. Speculation: Students ponder the meaning of facts, issues, ideas, events, readings, interpretations, patterns, problems, and solutions. The value of such entries is in the attempt of the writer to think through an issue without fear of censure.
4. Self-awareness: A concept of self begins to emerge in entries in which the writer tries to define her beliefs and develop her values.

5. Digression: New thoughts interrupt current thinking, sometimes making connections between disparate pieces of thought.
6. Synthesis: Thoughts click and fit together, creating new understandings, form new relationships, make connections.
7. Revision: A journal is a record of thoughts and ideas, and the writer can review former entries, change her mind, and update her ideas.
8. Information: While journals should not read like a class notebook, there should be evidence that classroom material is being considered in some way.

Finally, teachers should encourage the formal features that characterize effective journal use, such as the following:

1. Frequent entries: Journals should be used frequently, not just once a day so that all thoughts important to the student can be recorded.
2. Long entries: Chances of developing thoughts or creating a new one increase with more writing.
3. Self-sponsored entries: Personal motivation to record thoughts and ideas, rather than teacher directed, usually leads to more valuable entries.
4. Chronology of entries: Since the key to good journals is the location and particular time of each entry, good journals have systematic and complete chronological documentation.

Types of Journals

The various uses of journals are manifold -- diaries, free write journals, reading response logs, dialogue journals, dialectic journals, think books, learning logs, day books, and more. The word journal is open to a variety of interpretations and applications. Webster's Dictionary (1994) defines a journal

as “a diary or personal daily record of observations and experiences” (p. 166). Macrorie (Fulwiler, 1987) states that journals are “valuable in school in all their manifestations . . . because they counter the tendency of school to freeze the mind” (Foreword). Rather than insisting that students learn what is on the teacher’s mind to demonstrate their learning, the use of a journal cultivates real thinking in terms of having students “working their way through real questions, with real interest and real intent” (Foreword). The key to effective journal use, no matter what its manifestation, is that it is personal and a safe place for testing the student’s own experiences against the ideas of others. It is a forum for generating ideas and questions from personal choice to make connections. As Macrorie (Fulwiler, 1987) says, journals are a tool for “drilling, sewing, and welding” (Foreword). Isaacs and Brodine (1994) also point out that the variety of journal techniques accommodate the diverse learning styles found in every classroom and that “journals allow those who are gifted in different ways to give voice to their strengths” (p. 10).

Three popular uses of journals in literacy learning programs in elementary schools include the personal journal, the dialogue journal for reading responses, and the dialectical journal. While these terms overlap in meaning and use of journals, the following descriptions will outline the characteristics and effective use for each of these types of journal.

The Personal Journal.

The personal journal is an authentic exercise in self-expression. Students are encouraged to write about whatever they want, to express their own personal opinions in their own natural voices, to venture some risks in their thought processes. This freedom of expression of personal ideas and thoughts creates a private and intimate style of writing, similar to a diary. However,

according to Harste et al. (1988), “the very process of writing produces growth and new understandings.” They continue, “Journals allow students to explore writing for personal growth and reflection” (p. 280).

This seems to support Goodman’s (1986) tenets of language learning as listed below:

- * Language must be whole, real, and relevant.
- * It must be personal and social.
- * It must be authentic.
- * The learner must own the process and make decisions about language use.
- * Using language to make sense of the world in the same context as those around us understand the world.
- * Language is a personal-social achievement.

Personal journals present these opportunities to students with the safety net of being risk free; they represent a forum for self-expression without the threat of being graded. According to Harste et al. (1988), “They provide writers with an informal and safe situation in which they can focus on their own thoughts and feelings and on meaning and fluency, rather than on assigned topics or on conventions” (p. 280).

In support of this belief, Mary Jane Dickerson (cited in Fulwiler, 1987) points out Henry David Thoreau as writing, “A journal is a record of experiences and growth”; Jacques Lacan’s assertion that “the function of language is not to inform but to evoke,” and David Majcen’s perception that “Through writing in my journal, I have not only discovered trends and characteristics in my writing, but also characteristics in myself” (p. 129). These insights lend credence to the worth of personal journal writing.

According to Harste et al. (1988) and the experience of this author, it is important in elementary school that the teacher introduce the journal to the class and describe the kind of entry the student will be writing. It helps young students if the teacher can share some examples of entries from former students, from diaries or books containing personal entries, or from the teacher's own journal. Personal journals are daily entries about anything the students choose to write about -- what students do, what they think, how they feel, their personal wishes and moods. Students should understand that journal entries are more meaningful when they are more than just records of activities and events.

Since they are personal writings, journals are inappropriate places for assigning topics. Harste et al. (1988) state, "Assigning topics destroys the purpose for which journals exist" (p. 283). However, in the experience of this author, when dealing with very young and/or remedial students or those who have been trained to write to other-directed topics, it may be helpful initially to have students brainstorm topics they can write about in their journals or for the teacher to suggest possible topics for the day's entry.

By sharing ideas, more dependent students are shown how writing can serve to connect everyday events and the student's own personal wonder or curiosity. For example, by sharing that the teacher watched a television program the previous evening, the teacher might make the connection to TV commercials and wonder aloud why commercials make the teacher angry. According to Graves (1994), by demonstrating such everyday writing "we...show children why writing matters in our daily lives, and how we draw writing ideas from everyday events." He continues, "In doing so, I begin to answer that toughest question for the child: Why would anyone want to write?" (p. 44).

While some personal journal entries may be very private, this can be managed by working out some kind of a system at the time journals are introduced in which the student can indicate that she does not want anyone to read her entry. Most of the time, however, students relish the anticipation of sharing journal entries, and this can be accommodated by teacher response or peer sharing in small groups or selecting a few students to share their entries before the entire class (Harste et al., 1988).

The act of sharing is significant in making connections to new ideas and thoughts. Graves (1983) writes, "The very process of responding to the details of the piece also reminds children of topics they can write about." He also states, "Children pick up a heavy percentage of topic ideas from each other" (p. 28). Sharing also motivates students to improve both their reading and writing skills in order to write meaningful entries which they can then read to interest others. Through reading their own words and language to others, the integrity of the students' written words is preserved and a sense of ownership of the students' writing is encouraged (Bromley, 1993, & Isaacs & Brodine, 1994).

Since the purpose of journal writing is to stimulate thought and ideas of personal significance, teacher response should always be positive or simply an acknowledgement, never a place for correction. As Avery (1992) states, "The first goal for writers of any age must be fluency -- lots of ideas, lots of writing, lots of exploration" (p. 19). By pointing out errors, a teacher is diverting the student's attention away from meaning and purpose in writing to the mechanics of writing. Graves (1994) suggests errors may be due to absorption in what the student is writing; the student may be writing only for herself; the student may use sloppiness to cover up what she considers unworthy ideas, or the student may simply lack conventional skills. In any case when the purpose of writing is to

generate ideas, the focus, both student and teacher, is to remain on content. This is one of the major characteristics of the journal. It is the appropriate place for students to play with language and ideas. The journal is a thinking place.

The personal journal, therefore, is an experimental place in which students are allowed the freedom without censure to explore new ideas and language. While personal choice of topic is endemic to the journal, some students may need assistance initially in generating topics. Graves (1983) says that "Children don't learn to make their own decisions and choices of topics in a vacuum," (p. 31) so it is perfectly acceptable to help these students by suggesting topics, brainstorming, or sharing one another's entries. The student's voice begins to emerge with personal choice of topic, and voice generates the reason for writing. The personal journal is a place where real writing and thinking begins.

The Dialogue Journal for Reading Response.

As defined by Staton (Fulwiler, 1987), dialogue journals are a genuine conversation in written form for an extended period of time. "The distinguishing characteristics of dialogue journals are their interactive, functional nature, and the creation of mutually interesting topics" (p. 49). Purposes of dialogue journals include communication, self-understanding, social relationships within the classroom, and problem solving.

Implicit in the use of dialogue journals is the belief that one responds to conversation, even a written conversation, rather than merely replying. As Staton (Fulwiler, 1987) clarifies, "We reply to questions; we respond to persons." She continues, "A response involves an implicit commitment of self, an engagement with the other" (p. 47). Leslee Reed, a teacher in Los Angeles, put into practice Moffett's (cited in Fulwiler, 1987) theory for writing in dialogue by

having her sixth-grade students keep personal dialogue journals. The results redirected school practice of keeping all writing in monologue form and showed that written dialogue could be as powerful and functional as the spoken.

Staton (1980) acknowledges there is still much to be learned about how writing skills, especially those involving meaningful thoughts, ideas, and experiences, develop, but posits the following about dialogue journals:

Any time a teacher can create a natural written dialogue which is similar to the dialogue between mother and infant by which the child first learns language, we can be sure that a major kind of learning is occurring for the students at a much higher cognitive level. (p. 518)

Communication is a key element in differentiating the dialogue journal from the personal journal. For every entry a student writes, there is a literate, interesting response. According to Staton (Fulwiler, 1987), dialogue journal writing and dialogue journal reading are reciprocal, and "it is the quality of the response, in an informal conversational style, that creates endless opportunities for learning" (p. 53).

Vygotsky (cited in Fulwiler, 1987, & Wollman-Bonilla, 1991) theorized that writing and speaking were different in relationship to thinking. He speculated that writing was more directly connected to internalized thought because speech was other-directed, more social, and less constrained. However, in written dialogue this very closeness of the writing to the thought process is retained. Written conversations are a means to elaborate on the thoughts of two persons as they are engaged on a topic of mutual interest. "These letters consist of each one's responses to a learning experience and to each other's responses" (Wollman-Bonilla, 1991, p. 7). Together the two correspondents negotiate the meaning of an event or an experience.

The basic premise of the dialogue journal, says Staton (Fulwiler, 1987),

is that it is the social interaction and the need to communicate that bring meaning and importance to written discourse. In this sense the dialogue journal is an important strategy in literacy acquisition. Staton continues that literacy is acquired most effectively when attached to one's own experiences and social background. Like speech, written language must be "natural and necessary to get things done, and it must be an important mode of social interaction with valued other persons" (p. 59).

In applying the use of dialogue journals to reading responses, teachers strive for real learning and understanding from students while recognizing that the variety of background experiences and prior knowledge each student brings to the classroom will affect the child's interpretation of what she reads. A search for only "correct" answers to a reading selection contradicts the tenets of the whole language philosophy of personal interaction between the author, the reader, and the text to construct meaning (Goodman, 1986; Harste et al., 1988; Macon, Bewell & Vogt, 1991; Parsons, 1990; Smith, 1985; Weaver, 1988; Wollman-Bonilla, 1991). The dialogue journal is an effective vehicle to encourage students to respond to literature, to make judgments, to relate what they are reading to their own lives, and to be exposed to and internalize the language of literature. By appealing to the whole child in a meaningful and social context, the dialogue journal is an effective strategy to engage students in real learning.

Nancie Atwell (1984) incorporated Staton's idea of written dialogue into her reading program, using journals as a vehicle for a kind of "book talk" in which the books being read by students were to be the topic of their dialogue journals (Wells, 1992).

While teachers have come to value dialogue journals in reading

programs, Wells (1992) points out the lack of studies to ascertain how dialogue journals might contribute to students' reading development. She notes that while researchers have described possible functions of journal correspondence (e.g., answering questions directly, supporting viewpoints with evidence, character analysis), no study has tried to identify these functions as a step in understanding how the writing of dialogue journals might promote reading development.

Graves (1989) discusses hierarchies of several categories of response including interactions with the teacher, book characters, and the author. "Teachers have an important index of child growth when they monitor how children approach them in their letters, understand their characters and the authors of their books, and how they use books to their own ends" (p. 782). While such insights might be useful in analyzing how journals can be used in reading programs, they do not clarify how journal response might contribute to reading development.

In an effort to shed some light on this connection, Wells looked at Marshall's (cited in Wells, 1992) codes of literary response -- descriptive, personal, interpretive, and evaluative -- and found them to be inclusive of the functions of journal correspondence but too broad. Specifically, Wells noted that Marshall's categories did not take into account the context in which letters are written, affecting the ways in which students might write to teachers and each other.

Wells used journal responses, unique to the students in her reading community, to shape five response categories: ongoing business, summaries, metacognitive responses, connections, and evaluation of text and author. This led her to conclude that ". . . to the degree that journal writing offers

opportunities for student reflection, it appears to foster reading development” (p. 299) through further reflection and reinforcement of classroom instruction, expanding on their original thought in response to teacher comments and questions, modeling questioning techniques used in the teacher responses to the student’s dialogue, and encouraging and accepting the uniqueness of each student in the way she uses the journal.

In addition to classifying responses, Wells went a step further and sorted these responses by audience -- letters addressed to the teacher and letters addressed to peers. Peyton (cited in Wells, 1992) stated, “In written communication, the writer must anticipate audience needs and accomplish the communication task without audience help” (p. 301). Wells noted that by expanding their audience, students were expanding the types of writing they were using, thereby developing different writing styles and employing a variety of strategies to communicate effectively with their audience.

In summary, dialogue journal writing is thought to be an effective strategy in helping writers to express significant thoughts, ideas, and experiences they have. It “captures the natural function of language as intentional communication about what matters most to the person,” according to Staton (1980, p. 518), whether the writer generates the subject matter or the dialogue is in response to an outside source (literature). As a strategy to promote reading development, the dialogue journal makes students use metacognitive processes in which they become aware of themselves as readers when they prepare to write in their journals, intangible processes that become concrete. Variety in audience to the journal letters lends a need for students to stretch for new strategies in writing and thinking for effective communication.

The Dialectical Journal.

The dialectical journal approach to reading and writing about literature is commonly known as the double-entry journal in which students respond to what they have read. The term “dialectical” comes from the word dialectic, “meaning the art or practice of logical discussion as a means of critically examining the truth of a theory or opinion” according to Sonnenburg (1989, p. 8). She continues, it “can create a forum for critical analysis of literature, can allow students to search for their own meanings in what they read, and finally can enable students to discover their own points of interest” (p. 8).

Berthoff (Fulwiler, 1987) points out that dialectic and dialogue are closely related. Thinking is a dialogue with oneself while dialectic is “an audit of meaning” (p. 12) in which meaning is reexamined for new or expanded determinations. The dialectic mode of reading response is a way to mediate knowledge through an interdependence of the text, the reader, and the reader’s perspective. Meaning is dynamic and dialectic. Through the dialectical journal students can reexamine their ideas and thoughts, interpret their interpretations. A thinking-feeling relationship is created between the student and the text as students ask questions, make observations, see patterns, form associations, and make predictions about characters and events. As students become personally involved with the text, they begin to form their own meanings about the text. In this way the students’ sense of voice and commitment evolve in their journals.

In the dialectical journal students record words, passages, lines, or quotes from the book, along with the page number, on the left side of the page. Students are asked to copy anything that interests them -- passages they wonder about, find appealing or distressing, have questions about, or relate to

personally. Then, on the right side of the journal page, students respond to the passage in whatever way they choose -- emotionally or intellectually, with a question or a prediction, making a judgment or a connection to their personal lives or to another passage in the book, discovering an insight, or venturing an interpretation. However, in order for students to discover meaning in the text it is necessary that student responses are a dialogue with the book and not merely a personal reflection or emotional reaction.

According to Berthoff (Fulwiler, 1987), the dialectical journal serves several purposes in promoting thinking skills as listed below:

1. Looking and looking again: This is a method of inquiry in which students ask more questions and re-assess what they have already noted.
2. Fostering fluency: By reexamining their earlier thoughts and ideas about the text, students generate new meanings and connections.
3. Tolerating ambiguity: The dialectical journal allows students to keep thoughts and ideas viable, tentative, available for revision, allowing more complete meanings to emerge.
4. Facilitating the interdependence of reading and writing: Dialectical journal writing is a mode of learning because its dialectical/dialogic form corresponds to the character of the inner dialogue of thinking. It helps students become better readers, thereby becoming better writers.

When dialogue journals are first introduced, Lindberg (Fulwiler, 1987) mentions that initially students resent interrupting their reading to make notes in their journals. "Good reading 'goes with the flow,'" (p. 124) his students protested. However, writing entries in the dialectical journal should not be

regarded as disruptive interruptions in reading. Lindberg (Fulwiler, 1987) states that pausing to think about what has been read is an internalized check on the student's own thoughts, and such pauses should occur naturally as the rhythm of the book changes. Such natural times for reflection, and therefore making notations in the dialectical journal, might be when the student recognizes a pattern or the introduction of a new element; when the student is surprised or confused; when details that seem important are encountered; when the story makes the reader speculate about life, and when the student gets her first impression of the book's ending. By pausing at such critical junctures in reading the student is likely to think more critically and less likely to make rapid associations and superficial connections.

Entries and reflections in the journals should then be discussed with the teacher and/or peers. Discussion should focus on the significance of the chosen passages and expand the possibilities of meanings, always in reference to the text, which draw the students more deeply into the text. In this manner students and teacher are discussing literature and searching the text to find meaning.

The dialectical journal, then, is a strategy to engage students in their reading. Through questioning, exploring, and assessing significant passages within the text, students can begin to think critically and discover their own meanings in what they are reading. The dialectical process is one of examining an idea, noting an initial reaction, and then responding to the response. Students learn to formulate questions, to consider responses from differing perspectives, to justify their thoughts. They are learning to think critically and creatively.

Evaluation

In order to evaluate journal writing, the purposes for assigning journals must be specifically defined in the teacher's mind. In personal journals such reasons might include exploring, clarifying, changing, and expanding on topics of personal interest; writing in different styles, experimenting with voice, and generating fluency in writing. For response journals used with classroom texts and material, objectives might include assisting students in finding personal connections to what is being studied; providing a place for students to think about and explore an idea or event to better understand and learn; collecting and recording thoughts, responses, and observations, and encouraging students to practice writing. It is generally agreed among teachers that when students write about something, it helps them to better understand what they already know, what they don't know, and what they want to know. In this way journals are active records of student thoughts during a given time (Fulwiler, 1987).

Because the journal is a place to foster independent thought and generate new ideas through reflection and speculation, students are encouraged to express themselves honestly and personally, to take risks with their thoughts and styles of expression, and to write in their own voices. By encouraging such freedom of expression with the focus on meaning, students write in an informal, unconventional manner that often resembles the opposite of criteria used for formal writing.

Consequently, journals are the students' domain, a testing place for their ideas and opinions where their fluency is not held in check by fear of censure or criticism. As such, journals are not to be marked, corrected, or graded by the teacher (Fulwiler, 1987; Harste et al., 1988). Instead the teacher can respond

personally and positively when she collects and reads personal entries that are not marked "private." In a dialogue journal for reading response she can model conventions in her responses, make constructive responses, or pose questions to encourage further explorations of ideas, but there should be no corrections of language use or grades. Parsons (1990) suggests evaluation of response journals for literature based on selected criteria, such as amount read and types of responses, but, again, there are no criticisms or censure of the content responses.

With dialectical journals Sonnenburg (1989) suggests highlighting interesting or insightful passages and writing brief but specific comments on the journal itself, such as "Jill, I especially enjoyed your comments about the passage on page 27" and "You're on the right track, Joe. Keep it up," to "Come on, Sallie, get into it" and "Let's talk, Bill" (p. 29).

Although corrections, grades, and empty comments such as "good" or "nice work" are inappropriate for journals, students should be held accountable for their entries and for the use of class time devoted to journal writing. Quantifying or counting entries is a common practice by teachers to ensure that students are writing. Some teachers also look for signs of effort and growth in the entries, especially when the journal is used in response to content material. Lindberg (Fulwiler, 1987), who uses the dialectical journal in his literature class, explains, "I am not grading the journal itself. I am grading the student's work in the journal" (p. 122). He also conferences with students about entries to get a feeling for what the student has gotten from her journal entries. Lindberg describes these conferences as "reflections on the reflections" (p. 122). Sonnenburg (1989) asks her students to write a culminating paper at the end of a book using the entries made in the students' dialectical journals. Evaluation

can also be based on evidence of some of the characteristics of good journal writing, such as questions raised, speculations, self-awareness, digression, synthesis, revision, and information (Fulwiler, 1987).

Because the ultimate purpose of assigning journals is to improve student learning, students must be accountable for their entries in some way. It is the teacher's decision as to how to evaluate the journals to determine if the specific purposes in assigning journals are being met.

Summary

Journals in an academic setting are idiosyncratic by nature. They are personal, written in the first person, and subjective. They are a means to encourage students to delve into their own minds and selves in order to produce growth and new understandings. Well-suited to the whole language philosophy of education, students focus on their own thoughts and feelings and on meaning and fluency. The prose of journals is natural and unconventional, often resembling the language of speech. The journal serves as an active record of student thought.

Three styles of journals discussed in this project are the personal journal, the dialogue journal for reading response, and the dialectical journal. The personal journal is an authentic writing exercise in self-expression in which students make connections with the world around them. The dialogue and dialectical journals, as presented in this paper, are strategies to engage students through personal response in the books they are reading. In dialogue journals the key elements in the reading responses are communicating ideas in a written conversation with another person. The need to communicate, coupled with informal social interaction, brings meaning and importance to what is being read. In dialectical journals students employ an even deeper introspection in

their responses to literature by reexamining their ideas, first in their journals and then with teachers and peers. By exploring their responses more thoroughly and discussing others' perspectives on the same topic, students begin to think critically and form their own meanings about the text.

No matter what application is assigned to journals, the entries should not be evaluated in the conventional manner of being corrected and given a grade. Because journal writing is used to encourage independent thought and response in a personal style, a non-judgmental assessment of student work, such as counting the number of entries, is more appropriate. The teacher must be alert and perceptive in evaluating journals to determine if the desired learning outcomes are being produced. Journals are a place for developing cognitive and interpretive thinking strategies through the use of informal, personal language.

GOALS AND LIMITATIONS

Goals

The ultimate goal of this project is to encourage teachers to take risks with journal writing by accepting their students' efforts to express their ideas and opinions with authentic interest in their own voices, without correcting or criticizing the students' language or ideas. Journals are places for teachers and students alike to be engaged in the content of written language, not the conventions and formalities of expression. By allowing students to focus on meaning in their own natural written language, students are motivated to write from their own perspectives and become active participants in their own learning. In this way writing becomes important to students, and they develop an authentic need to communicate meaning clearly. With a focus on communicating clearly, errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling frequently decline. Students learn from making mistakes in their journals and are liberated to think critically and creatively with authentic interest developing their own voices.

Some specific objectives of this primary goal are as follows:

1. To invite students to participate in the writing process which itself produces growth and new understandings.
2. To help students make personal connections to better understand what they are learning in class.
3. To provide a forum for students to interact with and arrive at a better understanding of what they are studying, extending students' knowledge through writing rather than merely representing what is already known.
4. To serve as a vehicle for students to practice, experiment with, and

improve their writing, thereby assuming ever-increasing responsibility for their own writing.

5. To provide teachers with a theoretical basis derived from the whole language orientation of literacy learning for justifying the acceptance of unconventional language found in journals.
6. To clarify for teachers the various kinds of journal keeping and to point out the importance of matching the types and functions of journal keeping to the objectives for student learning outcomes.
7. To help teachers develop a clearer understanding of the value and effectiveness of using journals to promote student learning.
8. To introduce teachers to a variety of teaching strategies including techniques in responding and questioning, modeling correct use of language, promoting critical and creative thinking skills, and developing student metacognitive skills.
9. To acquaint teachers with the characteristics of good journal writing.
10. To outline guidelines to implement journals in the classroom.

Limitations

This inservice is specifically geared toward three kinds of journals that may be used in a fourth-grade classroom. However, there are many other types of journals that can be used such as math or science journals, historical diaries, learning logs, and day books, to name just a few. It is my belief that any kind of journal can be used effectively in the classroom as long as the teacher matches the type of journal to specific learning outcomes. Should the teacher neglect to relate the type of journal used to the learning process, students may not perceive the invitation to engage in journal writing as a means to make connections by expanding their ability to think reflectively. If not structured to

produce growth and learning, entries are likely to be superficial and routine.

Although the use of journals is targeted to the fourth grade in this inservice, its ideas could easily be adapted for use in third, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms. The kind of journal writing described here, especially the dialogue and dialectical journals, requires proficiency in reading and writing as well as the ability to use some higher-level thinking skills and an outer-directed frame of reference to relate ideas and opinions to the text. These journals would, therefore, be inappropriate for the younger grades. However, the personal journal is appropriate at all grade levels.

The amount of time necessary to devote to journal writing represents a significant commitment of classroom time. To be effective, journal writing cannot be addressed on a hit-or-miss basis. Entries should be frequent and consistent. By writing in journals often, students have a greater opportunity to record interesting, meaningful thoughts, not just those that occur at journal writing time. Consistent practice with journals encourages students to assume responsibility for making meaning in their writing by connecting their beliefs, interests, needs, and purposes to outside information. Without investing time in a journal, it will not evolve into a quality learning tool.

Finally, because of the focus on meaning rather than mechanics, I do not think authentic journal writing can be accommodated in decoding or skills-based classrooms. These models of reading and writing stress the rules, conventions, and levels of mastery which direct students to focus on the parts of language rather than its meaning. Meaningful journal writing fits into the whole language classroom where the process of making meaning and authentic language learning are the objectives. The nonconformist prose of journal entries is recognized as natural language used to express authentic interests in

the writer's own voice. Entries reflect thought, not memorization. Journals should be regarded by both teacher and students as places to think things through without the interference of conventions and criticism. The decoding and skills models, with their strict adherence to rules and conventions, would trivialize journal writing into superficial, routine entries for the teacher.

APPENDIX A

JOURNAL WRITING: AN INSERVICE FOR TEACHERS

Introduction

As far back as I can remember, I have always loved to write. To this day I can clearly recall my excitement at being assigned in fourth grade to write a description of someone special to me. It was winter in Indiana, and I immediately thought of my grandmother, whom I thought looked and sounded like Mrs. Santa Claus. I delighted in selecting precisely descriptive and onomatopoeic words to paint a verbal portrait of my grandmother. I continued to pen my way through the editorship of my high school newspaper, a degree in journalism from Ernie Pyle's alma mater, and several professional jobs in which my written words sold product and attracted clients.

As a fourth grade teacher, I am often disappointed, even personally offended when students groan in response to my enthusiastic announcement at the beginning of the school year that we will write, write, and then write some more throughout the coming year. "What's the matter with them?" I wonder to myself in astonishment. "Writing is fun!"

Unfortunately, many students have already learned by fourth grade that writing is not fun. For many, writing is a list of rules that doesn't make sense to them, red slashes and remonstrations from the teacher informing the young writers that they do not write right. Writing is no longer about ideas and meaning; the red marks have taught young students that they must spell, punctuate, and use grammar correctly, or else they fail. Under these criteria who can blame a youngster who finds the conventions of language elusive from developing a negative attitude toward writing?

I wish I could recall exactly what made me love to write in elementary school and how I was taught to write successfully. Having attended a strict

parochial school with a ruler and red knuckles as the prime motivator, I cannot recall a precise teaching strategy that encouraged me to write. In reflection, it must have involved my love of reading, which modeled good writing, and the expectation, both at school and at home, that I would and could write. I know I experimented with language, as in the essay about my grandmother, and was encouraged by my audiences, my parents, teachers, peers. How could I fail to succeed when everyone seemed to think I had something to say and said it well?

I think this encouragement and support during my young school years greatly influenced my philosophy as a teacher. In general I think it is important to always be positive in my attitude and approach with students. Without exception there is at least one good quality in every student and her work. It is my job, as a teacher, to build on that quality.

In using a whole language approach in my classroom, learning is child-centered and has an authentic purpose. Natural language is encouraged and used for both personal and social purposes. Since students use language to make sense of the world around them as others understand it, it is natural for young learners to experiment with language in choosing to relate what is personally meaningful to them (Goodman, 1986).

Because learning to write is a gradual and imprecise process, I find journals a particularly appropriate means for encouraging children to write naturally to express their own ideas and feelings, focusing on meaning and fluency. I accept the natural prose of students in their journals and read their ideas, much as I would listen to them talk. I comment on the ideas, not the manner of expression. If I cannot understand what a student has written, I ask for clarification with the result that the student tries harder to communicate her

ideas. She is engaged in expressing her thoughts in a more conventional style because it is important to her that I understand what she has to say. She learns the conventions of language because it is a means to express her thoughts and opinions in her own voice. Writing in this way fills an authentic need, furthering the student's own aims and interests. If the entry is really significant to the student, she may wish to take the piece through the authoring cycle where ideas can be expanded, revised, and edited for publication.

The journal is a very positive strategy to use with student writing because it emphasizes natural expression, encourages students to explore ideas that they find personally interesting, helps to develop their own style and voice in venting their ideas and opinions, and removes the threat of grades or evaluation which tend to inhibit personal expression. With these purposes in mind to stimulate students to think and write, I invite those browsing through this project to read on so I may share what I have learned and experienced in using journals to turn students onto writing.

Overview

This project on the effective use of journals in a fourth-grade classroom is presented as an inservice for elementary teachers. It is organized to explain how informed and purposeful use of journals can promote both the creation and expression of thought as well as to reassure teachers, especially those unfamiliar with the prose of journals, that natural, unconventional language fosters meaning and fluency. In setting the stage for the introduction of journal writing in the classroom, the key elements of classroom environment and the role of the teacher are discussed. The social aspect of journal writing is also addressed.

Three kinds of journals are presented in detail -- the personal journal, the dialogue journal for literary response, and the dialectical journal. These are the varieties of journals I have used extensively in my own classroom, and I have sprinkled my descriptions of each type of journal writing with examples from my students' entries.

There is a section on the characteristics of good journal writing to support and reassure teachers who might initially be worried by the unconventional, personal prose of entries, along with the free-wheeling, disconnected range of students' thoughts. Finally, some general guidelines are offered to help teachers use journals productively and constructively.

I personally feel that I have not gotten my two cents worth from an inservice if I do not get handouts to take back to school with me. Therefore, a set of handouts which highlight important aspects and different kinds of journaling are included for teachers to keep at the ready when they wish to challenge their students to think and write.

The Definition and Purpose of Journal

In general a journal is a bound volume or notebook in which a student writes freely, sometimes for herself and on other occasions for others to read and respond to (Bromley, 1993). The journal is a record of her thoughts, opinions, and speculations. In the process of committing her thoughts and ideas to paper, the writer often generates new meanings and develops awareness of new ideas, relationships, and concepts previously unknown. A journal can serve as the conduit that causes "the light in the attic" to go on as the student makes new connections through thoughtful ruminations and processes information more precisely. Journals serve as catalysts to get students thinking; they are useful tools for linking thoughts to writing.

The purposes for inviting students to engage in journal writing are manifold. First and foremost, by using journals in the classroom all students are invited on a consistent basis to participate in the writing process which, in itself, produces growth and new understandings. Writing is a thinking skill with writers grappling on the page with the meanings they need to discover. The journal is an excellent medium for exploring one's own thoughts because of the permanence of the print, the explicitness required in writing, and the active nature of writing (Bromley, 1993).

Journals allow students to experiment with language and thinking; knowledge can unfold and grow; students can learn to communicate effectively with themselves and others. The journal also serves as a vehicle for students to practice, experiment with, and improve their writing, assuming ever-increasing responsibility for their own writing. Journal writing also fosters independent writing by allowing personal choice of topic; this ownership gives the author a purpose and a motive to write.

Through journal entries students are better able to make personal connections to understand more thoroughly what they are learning in class. By writing in their journals, students interact with what they are studying and arrive at a better understanding of class material. Instead of just representing what is already know, students extend their knowledge through writing. They also develop their own voices in defining themselves in relationship to various ideas and experiences encountered in texts and in life.

Journal entries made in connection with literature serve as springboards into authentic, student-centered discussions in which information and ideas can be shared, extending understanding and learning. Journal entries can also be revisited, rethought, and perhaps revised and may be chosen by the writer as the basis for an essay or a story by expanding, revising, and editing an entry for publication.

By encouraging students to experiment in their journals, to write often and regularly on a wide variety of topics of their own choice and from their unique perspectives, to take risks by experimenting with language use, students can be motivated to think independently and to write creatively and critically.

The Case for Journal Writing

Despite the merits of and research support for journal writing, the initial use of journals in the classroom can raise alarms and cause consternation for the teacher. Such was my experience as a first year teacher that I wrote the following in my teaching log:

I am ambivalent about the benefits of journal writing. The more I peruse student entries, the more I doubt that the haphazard, unfocused, rambling entries will translate into fluent, robust writing skills. It has occurred to me that this consistent free-writing style might really lead to a perpetuation of unfocused, mechanically incorrect writing habits. (1993)

However, it is this very freedom characterizing journal writing that invites criticism and confusion about the effectiveness of journals in the classroom writing program. Since schools are expected to strive for academic excellence in all students, written work is expected to be clear, conventional, organized, and factual. The prose of journals -- personal, disjointed, speculative, opinionated, colloquial, loosely structured, unconventional -- contradicts all this and can understandably cause a teacher to question the merits and validity of journals.

Other criticisms of journals are that they are overused in the classroom with entries becoming routine and repetitious; students write for the teacher and not themselves; lack of growth of writing ability, and entries that fail to make connections with material read or discussed.

Additionally, the styles and varieties of journal writing can be confusing to both students and teachers. Also, the amount of precious instructional time needed for consistent journal use is considerable.

All of these obstacles to journal writing are noteworthy. However, they can be valid only if the teacher is unsure of her purpose in employing journals and the function that journal writing is to serve. If students are expected to write

for meaning and fluency in their journals, unconventional language, perhaps resembling speech, is the natural form of expression. Students are exploring and experimenting with language as well as ideas when they take to their journals, and it would be inappropriate for a teacher to redirect their thinking toward language rules and conventions at this time. The journal is a place for jotting, not publishing. Rapid, random thoughts need to be recorded quickly before they are replaced by other thoughts and ideas. It is this range of ideas and connections that eventually leads to new knowledge. Conventions slow down this process; conventions are for readers, not writers. With this in mind the teacher should encourage students to focus on meaning in their journals and respond only to the students' thoughts in an uncritical, constructive manner.

The other criticisms of journals -- their effectiveness in promoting learning, the vagaries of styles and uses, and the time required for entries -- can be overcome if the teacher has clarified her purposes and objectives for using journals. By differentiating between the various kinds of journal keeping and matching the functions of each type to her objectives for student learning outcomes, journals can and will be effective tools for promoting student learning.

Classroom Environment

One of the key elements to effective use of journals is to create a supportive, trusting environment in the classroom. Under the whole language philosophy of teaching, the learning taking place is child-centered. Journals are ideal places for students to venture beyond what is known by exploring new ideas and concepts and responding in their own voices to the outside world -- peers, teacher, text, author.

In order to record personally meaningful thoughts and ideas, students need to be confident and feel safe. This can be accomplished by encouraging students to take risks, to step outside their comfort zones to make new connections and write about new topics. Teachers and students respect one another's ideas and efforts by responding with genuine interest in a meaningful manner -- no innocuous happy faces or empty one-word responses. Critical responses are equally inappropriate in journals and the classroom. Teacher and students support one another; they do not put each other down. Every member of the classroom literacy community works to develop their own meanings by making their own choices on what to write about in their journals, determined by their own authentic interests and needs; they do not compete. Responsibility for learning is shared by teacher and students, and students become active participants in their learning; they do not merely follow the directives of the teacher.

A supportive classroom environment will even accept a student's failure. As Lambert (cited in Fulwiler & Young, 1982) said, "A journal is a place to fail" (p.151). She meant, of course, that a journal is a place to try out new ideas, to experiment, and to learn from failure and move on. In this vein a whole language classroom environment stresses the process rather than a final

product. Evaluation, both by teacher and peers, is non-judgmental and serves as a means to guide and redirect teacher and students toward purposeful learning. Evaluation helps learners to determine what they already know and what they want to know.

The Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher in any classroom is pivotal. It is her attitude, approach, and enthusiasm that directs the class toward active, authentic learning. This attitude, approach, and enthusiasm are the practical, daily extensions of the teacher's philosophy of education. A love of fine literature will be evident in a classroom brimming with a rich selection of trade books representing the many genres of literature with students actively engaged in reading and writing. There will be lively book discussions representing a variety of opinions and ideas. There will be displays of presentations reflecting the students' reactions to and internalizations of what they have read. There will be journals and student writing folders conveniently displayed in accessible areas of the classroom. Students and teacher will be moving about purposefully. They are all engaged in the process of learning.

The teacher is a member of this learning community and assumes the role of a facilitator, sharing the ownership of and responsibility for learning with the students, encouraging them to take risks in exploring meaning or to select their own book or to choose their own writing topics. The teacher encourages her students to develop their own voices, reflecting their own thoughts and opinions in relation to texts, authors, teacher, and peers. By cultivating an environment of trust and respect within the classroom, teacher and students work together toward generating new knowledge through reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Learning is authentic, and students engage in activities to suit their own needs and interests. There are no rules to teach directly to the children in order for them to learn to read and write. Rather, it is a natural process in which children want to make sense of the written language surrounding them,

especially if it is interesting. Through transacting with a language-rich environment, children internalize the rules. In this way reading and writing are intertwined in a community of learners, who are supportive of one another and willing to accept each other's ideas and opinions. Students and teacher are directing their own learning; they become motivated. Self-esteem rises; students respect themselves and others; there are few behavior problems.

This, I am proud to say, is my classroom. I have always been an ardent advocate of whole language learning because it works. Learning is an on-going process with everyone in the classroom working together from their own needs and interests. The affective nature of learning is woven through the cognitive domain, and in this way I am able to kindle a love of books and writing in my students by simply being myself. I read with my students, write with my students, and share with my students so it is only natural that my students read, write, and share. Authentic journal writing, with its nonconformist style and wide range of speculations, fits well in my classroom. Students are empowered to think independently and take risks. Without such a supportive environment carefully cultivated over the months by the teacher, learning becomes bland, routine, generalized, and perhaps even trivialized.

The Personal Journal

A personal journal may closely resemble a diary. It is usually written in the first-person, and the topics of entries concern day-to-day events in students' lives, their feelings and emotions, ideas, and reflections. In their journals students may work through dilemmas, discuss adventures and dreams, or give voice to inner thoughts, feelings, and ideas. By engaging in the process of writing to explore their own personal thoughts, students become more fluent, comfortable writers. Because of the personal nature of the journal, students are given the opportunity to develop their own distinctive and individual voices.

Journaling is not just a writing activity. Several skills and strategies are involved in journal writing. Initially, the student must reflect about events and may wish to read previous entries to recall an earlier thought or stimulate a current idea. Then the writer must weigh and consider her thoughts to decide upon a journal topic. A personal choice is made, usually because the topic is important to the writer and she feels the need to express her feelings about the subject. Finally, the student must give written form and expression to her thoughts.

By engaging in journal writing, a student is reflecting and evaluating to make a personal choice about what is meaningful to her. She must make personal decisions about language use to express these ideas. If she is really interested in the topic, the student is likely to try for clearer expression and better vocabulary than that which she already uses comfortably. The student is motivated to write.

When the student has the desire to write, she has something to say. She will write fluently to communicate meaning, probably misspelling words, omitting punctuation, maybe even employing a personal type of shorthand. The

journal provides the student with the opportunity to focus on her thoughts, meaning, and fluency without the distraction of language conventions and the worry of teacher corrections and grades.

In this manner the personal journal is an authentic exercise in self-expression. Students are encouraged to write about whatever they want, to express their own personal opinions in their own natural voices, and to venture some risks in their thought processes and use of language. This freedom of expression of personal ideas and thoughts leads to growth in writing and new understandings. In their journals students are allowed to explore writing for personal growth and reflection (Harste et al., 1988).

In order for students to understand clearly what is expected and encouraged in their journals, the teacher needs to plan a proper introduction of personal journals to her class and describe the kind of entries students will be writing. It helps students if the teacher can share some examples of entries from former students, from diaries or books containing personal entries, or from the teacher's own journal. It must be clearly explained to students that personal journals are daily entries on anything the student chooses to write about -- what students do, what they think, how they feel, their personal wishes and moods. It is important that students understand that journal entries are more meaningful when they are more than just a record of activities or events.

Since they are personal writings, journals are inappropriate places for assigning topics. However, in my experience in dealing with young, remedial, and dependent students, it can be helpful initially to suggest possible topics for the day's entry or to have students brainstorm topics they can write about.

Draw-Write Journal.

In my own classroom I have engaged my students in two types of personal journals with the objectives of encouraging self-expression through writing and empowering students to choose their own topics in an effort to generate a desire and a need to write more. In the beginning of the school year when students have just been promoted to my class from third grade, I introduce a creative draw/write journal strategy from The Creative Journal for Children (Capacchione, 1982). This journal writing strategy focuses on introspection and building self-esteem. From suggested topics in the book, I give students a drawing prompt, such as "Draw the way you feel right now, using only colors, lines, shapes, and doodles to express your mood," or "Draw a self-portrait as if you were looking in a mirror. What do you see?" With soft background music on the tape player, students are engaged in drawing their feelings for about five minutes. Then I ask them to write on the opposite page what their drawings are saying. Students refer to their drawings frequently as they write so drawing on the left page and writing on the right, like a double entry journal, work well.

While this is a directed journal writing activity, I have determined that young students perform better when initially given guidance and a structure for writing. After a brief warm-up period, I found that students really began to let their drawings talk. In my own classroom my students' responses to their drawings have ranged from literal and practical to creative and imaginative, with several personal revelations and concerns being expressed.

For example, when asked to draw their feelings one day, two students wrote that their drawings were sad because one had just had a cousin die recently and the other had a niece who had died at birth that morning. Another student, who sometimes had trouble expressing herself clearly, found a pretzel

in one of her abstract drawings and was inspired to write a clever, imaginative poem about it. Yet another student risked stretching beyond his limited vocabulary to describe his abstract drawing as having “sgale” (squiggly) lines and “waht” (weight). An introverted student who spoke little English drew his self-portrait and described himself as strong and continued to say he had been in a fight and had gotten “blod on mi neaf.”

These examples, along with countless others through time, indicate that students are experiencing growth by improving their ability to express personal ideas, thoughts, and feelings in their journals. Many also seem to be encouraged to take risks in going beyond their comfort zones in language use to describe or explain something that is important to them.

Free Write Journal.

About half way through the school year, after students have learned to relax in their journals to write for meaning and take risks with language in expressing themselves, I switch to a free write journal with a social orientation and student choice of topic. This seems to me a slightly more sophisticated approach to personal journal writing, and, therefore, an appropriate change from the draw-and-write strategy.

Since relevancy and need to communicate with others provide motivation to write, I introduce the element of partner sharing both before and after writing in journals. This format resembles the writing process with partner sharing as a pre-write activity to generate ideas and offer choice of topics to writers. After writing entries, students again share, reading their own entries to their partners so the focus is on hearing the meaning, not on the actual writing. Partners are encouraged to write short responses if they choose or to simply sign their names. I also read and respond to the journal entries on a rotating

basis. Examples taken from my students' journals illustrate the following growth and insights.

Students delight in the social interaction and personal choice of topic. Gloria (1994), an ESL student who recently moved from Mexico, wrote, "If I had to write all the time about what our teacher says I would get boring, because we don't get to write what we feel." This led Gloria to conclude, "When I don't have an idea then I have to write about her (teacher) topic and I like that."

Some students demonstrate a well-developed sense of the world around them in their entries. Phuong (1994), a Vietnamese student, thrilled to the resumption of diplomatic relations with Vietnam, writing, "I just think that president Clinton has made a spectacular decision." She also wrote about the woman who died in the Riverside hospital and gave off toxic fumes as "scary" and then revealed her concern with, "I hope it's not spreading!"

When Phuong chose to write about honey bees being as big as elephants, a silly topic I suggested, she determined that "President Clinton and the Mayors wouldn't let anybody stand outside for at least 30 m." She further reasoned that "If the Bee stings me someplace, probably I'll go in the hospital and get some medical care." Then she demonstrated critical thinking with this fanciful topic as she wrote, "If a regular bee looked like an elephant then, I wonder how large the queen bee looks?"

Phuong also showed a willingness to take risks in her journal when she penned, "The car that I would drive . . . should be a Teal Blue Mercedes-Benz. It should be real comfortable and dazzling." She concluded this entry with, "If I get tired of the car, I would trade it in and get a red Ferrari, and ride it all the way home in the blustering wind!"

Many students enjoy using an affective approach in their personal

journals, selecting topics that have touched them personally. One such student was Jarred (1994) who consistently wrote from a personal perspective, including an analysis of journal writing, saying he “loved writeing 2 get thoughts off your mind” and complained that “you (teacher) don’t give us a lot of time to write.” Jarred wrote about “one sad moment in my life” and related how his cat had been put to sleep at the pound. Still in a personal vein but adding an element of social consciousness, Jarred wrote about how he hated people smoking, reasoning that it doesn’t smell good, and “when they smoke our lungs don’t look good.” A man with a cause, Jarred continued, “What realy makes me mad is when people throught ciggets on ground and it starts a fire.” Predicting a beneficial result from a smoking moratorium, Jarred ended, “I wish people would stop it and if they did it would be a better city or world.”

Jarred turned out one remarkable entry after another. Once he contemplated the passage of time, explaining that the night before the word year “popped” into his mind. In a practical vein he stated, “I was thinking about that all night unless I was sleeping. I thought were do the years go in life.” Another time Jarred wrote, “I’m feeling kind of down today because I lost one of my grandpa bages when he worked at Rohr.” He hoped the badge would turn up, but “if I don’t (find it) I’ll will still rember him in my heart.”

Such a range of thoughts and connections as Jarred had indicates the personal growth and new understandings he was experiencing with his own emotions and in relation to the world around him. His writing closely reflected his thinking which was often quite profound for a 10-year-old. Jarred clearly used his journal for ordering his thoughts and to get in touch with his feelings, perhaps using his writing at times as a kind of emotional release.

One last example of the variety of ideas, the expansion of thought, and

the experimental use of language in personal journals is Mary. A free thinking, free writing student, Mary (1994) offered a smorgasbord of interests in her entries, usually nestled in a great sense of humor. Her topics ranged from "bomb bags" ("All it is is magic water. BIG WOW!") to dreams ("I hate dreams. You never know what you will dream about"). In one entry Mary related her feelings ("My weekend was capitel T Teable!") to those of the main character Karana in Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1960), which we were reading in class. Mary's dog was stolen, and she wrote, "Now I want to burn everything down like Karana did because everything I do reminds me of Oreo."

Another time Mary questioned the relationship of words to their meanings. Words "are so stuped. Like Spageti why don't we call it noodles? And Hospital why don't we just call it medical place? And what about Rail Road? Why don't we call them Big Metal tooth picks?" At the end she sought an answer. "I wish I kenw why can you tell me Mrs. Brown? Write here if you can." Mary drew a box for my response. Her two sharing partners wrote that they had no idea.

Overall, the free write journal seems to be a positive experience for most all students. They view sharing ideas with partners very favorably and have demonstrated the usefulness of this technique in their entries. For example, a group of students talked about monsters and ghosts over a period of several weeks and wrote a delightful series of creative entries about the creatures of the other world. Another time a few girls who enjoyed ice skating lamented the fact that Riverside had no ice rink and wrote about possible courses of social action (writing a letter to the mayor; having fundraisers; suggesting a good location to city officials). Some boys talked sports and wrote sports.

The impressive fact is that all students write in their journals, and almost

all of them seem to enjoy writing. Generally, my students seem to write more in free write journals than when drawing first and then writing, which I attribute to having more time for writing, not being limited to writing about one drawing, and developing greater confidence and skills in writing after several months of the draw/write warm-up. In the free write journal more risks are taken, and longer, more detailed entries are written to meet the need to communicate adequately. The range of subject matter is always interesting, indicating a growing maturity in fourth-graders and an outward-directed sense of interest. Personal choice also seems to bring a certain degree of focus and clarity, especially to students of lesser-developed writing ability as in the case of Jarred W. In reflecting on his feelings about journal writing, Jarred W. (1994) wrote, "I do lick riting becus it is fun in a srtin waw and I like tocking to my poner becuase thay have good thas to rite abowte." He explained his negative feelings in a positive vein, "I do not like free journal writing becuase i do not like to rit bub I wut to now now to rite." This positive statement of wanting to learn something he perceives as not knowing how to do is indicative of the attitude toward free write journals, and one of the reasons I consider them valuable tools in personal growth and learning.

I also have noticed the growth in social behavior that occurs during the year. At first students work in isolation, drawing and writing from their own perspectives. Then when we switch to free write personal journals, students react to the invitation to share with partners much the same as they react to recess time. However, over time students learn the appropriate behavior for "free talk," enjoying themselves in a relaxed atmosphere yet talking with a purpose. They learn that they need to find an interesting topic to write about and that idle, silly chatter will leave them unprepared for writing. Students

always enjoy sharing what they have written, frequently offering brief but positive comments to one another. On the few occasions when I forget the final sharing, I am always politely but firmly reminded that all want and expect to share after writing. This social interaction deepens our classroom feeling of community as students support one another through sharing and responding.

Evaluating the Personal Journal.

Evaluating personal journals presents a dilemma. On the one hand, students are taking risks with thoughts and language in an ongoing process of personal and cognitive growth, and the threat of grades or criticism would only serve to inhibit these objectives. On the other hand, if journals are attended to on a consistent basis, a great deal of instructional time has been devoted to journal writing and must be factored into an accurate assessment of student progress. There are several possibilities for teachers to consider in deciding on an evaluation strategy.

One of the most common means to evaluate personal journals is quantitative -- that is, simply to count the number of entries written by each student over a given period of time. In this way students are held accountable for their entries and for the use of class time devoted to journal writing. A point can be given for each entry, and then cumulative points are assigned a grade.

Another method is to assign a plus-check-minus system for entries after clearly explaining to students the criterion to be used in determining what constitutes an outstanding (plus), a satisfactory (check), or an unsatisfactory (minus) entry. The criterion in this system could be length, quality of thought, or any other criterion the teacher wants to evaluate.

Other approaches include observing students and recording whether or not they are working during journal writing time; asking students to summarize

their entries every few weeks and then evaluating the summaries, or having students prepare a table of contents for their entries periodically with evaluation based on the kinds of entries written.

A final suggestion for evaluation is to have students choose one journal entry a week to add to their writing portfolios. In this way students choose the entry, and entries can be compared throughout the year to monitor growth in written language and knowledge. For teachers who are uncomfortable in evaluating personal journals in any direct way, a solution for accountability may be to ask students to use journal entries as a basis for further work that will be evaluated.

I have used all these methods for evaluation at one time or another and find them all effective means for monitoring student effort and growth. Generally, the younger the student, the more objective and less qualitative are my evaluations since my personal objectives for using personal journals are to encourage the thought process and develop the student's ability to articulate these thoughts fluently through genuine interest. Each teacher's process of evaluation must reflect the degree to which her goals for implementing personal journals have been met.

The Dialogue Journal for Reading Response

A dialogue journal is a written conversation between two persons over an extended period of time. When used in connection with literature, these written dialogues, or letters, consist of each other's responses to what they have read and to each other's responses. The distinguishing characteristics of the dialogue journal are its interactive, functional nature, and the freedom to create mutually interesting topics. The dialogue journal provides a framework for classroom instruction by integrating language learning and language use

around literature. It combines independent reading and writing, literature discussions to develop knowledge about literary techniques, and authentic opportunities to address student needs in reading and writing.

One of the primary goals of dialogue journals is to develop a variety of strategies to enhance reading ability. By recognizing that students bring a variety of background experiences and prior knowledge to their texts, a teacher realizes that students will relate to and interpret what they read through their own distinctly individual and uniquely personal perspectives. Reading is, therefore, the interactive and reciprocal process of making and sharing meaning between the text and the reader (Parsons, 1990). Rather than measuring a student's understanding of a book by having her answer teacher-made questions, the dialogue journal is a way for students to unlock the meaning in literature in a personally significant and satisfying manner. Through writing and responding in her journal, the student can construct meaning and build new knowledge by exploring and analyzing her own feelings and experiences in relation to the text. The dialogue journal is an effective vehicle to encourage students to respond to literature, to make judgments, to relate what they are learning to their own lives, and to be exposed to and internalize the language of literature. By appealing to the whole child in a meaningful, social context, the dialogue journal is an effective strategy to engage students in real learning.

Research (Atwell, 1984; Graves, 1989; Wells, 1992) indicates that dialogue journals contribute to students' reading development by offering opportunities for student reflection and reinforcement of classroom instruction, expanding on their own original thoughts in response to teacher comments and questions, modeling questioning techniques used in the teacher responses to

the student's dialogue, and encouraging and accepting the uniqueness of each student in the way she uses the journal. The dialogue journal also makes students use metacognitive processes in which they become aware of themselves as readers when they prepare to write, causing intangible processes to become concrete.

In addition to fostering student responses about literature to the teacher, the further element of having students write to one another will expand the student's writing ability. Peyton (cited in Wells, 1992) states that a writer must anticipate the needs of her audience and achieve communication without help from that audience, so in writing to peers the student must vary her writing style to ensure understanding. The student must develop different writing styles and employ a variety of strategies to communicate effectively with teacher and also with peers.

Student Letters Responding to Literature.

To introduce the journals to the class, the teacher should explain the purpose of the dialogues and what is expected in student communications concerning the literature. To describe the kind of entries students will be writing, the teacher can share examples from former students or entries from the teacher's journal. It is important that students understand that they will be writing letters to the teacher or to peers on a regular basis with regular responses from their correspondent. Students should understand that they are to react on a personal level with the book and author and that the focus of the letters is what the student has to say, not the grammar or spelling. To invite students to engage in this activity, the teacher might have students decorate and personalize journal covers to reflect the literature to be read and shared.

Initially, students may need guidance in writing letters about what they

have read. Below are a few suggested questions (Bromley, 1993) to stimulate responses:

- * How did what you read make you feel?
- * What did it remind you of?
- * What did you like (dislike)? Why?
- * What do you think might happen next? Why?
- * Do you like this book? Why or why not?
- * What did you learn?
- * Do you personally relate to any of the characters in the book? In what way?
- * Do you agree or disagree with what the main character did?
- * What insights into your own life does this book suggest?
- * What have you learned about yourself as a reader?
- * What would you like to do to become a better reader?

Teacher Letters Responding to Literature.

One of the reasons journals work well is because they facilitate dialogue between the students and teacher about literature. The teacher's reply to the student response is as important as the actual response. By writing back, the teacher transforms the student response from a required exercise to authentic communication with a real audience. Teacher response also creates student enthusiasm for reading and reflecting on the text. Students love hearing back from someone who is interested in what they wrote, and this generates further enthusiasm for sharing their thoughts and eagerly waiting for a reply. Teacher response in dialogue journals is crucial because it is through the reply that instruction is given. Personal responses allow individualized feedback to each student, addressing each student's needs and providing the support to facilitate

each student's learning. It is through responses that the teacher models appropriate reading strategies for each student as well as conventional writing techniques.

It is important that teacher responses encourage students to share their thoughts, feelings, and questions about what they are reading without worrying about being criticized or embarrassed. If the teacher's response puts a student on the defensive by challenging her views, the student will not be able to learn from the teacher's response. Instead, the teacher must cultivate trust by validating student ideas. Even if the teacher does not agree with the student's view, a brief affirmation of what the student writes, such as "It does seem like ...," is appropriate before introducing a different, alternative perspective. Through an evident appreciation of their responses, students relax and become comfortable exploring their own responses. The teacher's replies, on a friendly, non-critical basis, help students develop their reading abilities and deepen their understanding of what they are reading.

To achieve this objective, teacher responses should be carefully formulated in the following ways (Wollman-Bonilla, 1991):

- * Share your own ideas and responses
- * Provide information
- * Develop students' awareness of reading strategies
- * Develop students' awareness of literary techniques
- * Model elaboration
- * Challenge students to think in new ways

By dialoguing with students in their journals, the teacher learns a great deal about how each student is interacting with the book and the author and is given the opportunity to nudge students along to make interpretations and

insights that might not otherwise be possible.

Examples of Learning Experiences through Dialogue Journals.

In my own classroom experience with dialogue journals, I asked my fourth graders to write me letters about what they were reading in Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1960). Janell (1993) made a personal connection between the hunters who were stealing from the Indians to some boys in her neighborhood who had tried to steal her bike. Jon (1993) wrote that Nanko's scar reminded him of the scar his grandfather has on his face, and both the book character and his grandfather had gotten their scars in battle. Another student wrote that she would not want Ramo for a brother because "he is a big hassle."

I wrote personal responses to each student, modeling corrections of their errors and asking questions so students would expand their ideas. I also offered strategies to students who wrote about difficulties they were having with their reading. Robert (1993) wrote, "I am having probloms with Ramo, Ghalas-at, Catan Orlov and Aleut. So far the (book) is grat." Melissa (1993), also a low reader, lamented, "Some of there words are big and hard but I have to get uest to ther words . . . I like read that book. So far it is good."

As time went on student responses made effective use of clarifying questions, such as "What is sai-sai?" and "Why didn't the whale bones rot?" I answered these questions in my responses. Metacognitive responses were also evident when students wrote, "I thought that the first part of the book was really boring. I think that was because I didn't really pay attention when my partner was reading," and "I think the white men will take (the Indians) to California because they can't be Aleuts because they are white men and Aleuts are brownish."

Some students showed depth of thought and feeling in their responses. Jacob (1993) wrote, "I think (the Aleuts) will treat (the Indians) badly because they will take them to a Science Lab or a Museum and make (Karana) just stand there so the people can look at her and take pictures of her and the flash will hurt her eyes and she is not used to white people and they might scare her."

Marchelle (1993) wrote, "The part that really grabbed me was when it said, 'The women could hunt better than the men.' That made me laugh. It proves that we can do some things better than those men. I bet the men felt bad about that."

I also asked students to write to their peers about what they were reading. In writing to others of the same age, students used different strategies and techniques to convey their thoughts, obviously enjoying the exchanges. Jeff (1993) explained why he thought the book was exciting and showed his empathy for Karana when he wrote, "It was exciting when Karana shoots the dog with a bow and arrow and becomes friends so she isn't lonely anymore." Kamille (1993) wrote to her friend, "If you were living on the island with the animals Karana had, which one would you pick? I would pick Rontu. I don't blame Karana for not shooting the dog. I wouldn't have, would you?"

Many of the students addressed topics in their journals that I had asked former students to respond to in a question-and-answer response booklet I had written for Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1960) several years ago. From their own personal search for understanding and making important connections, my students demonstrated that they understood this book and related to it. Because of this class' great enthusiasm and enjoyment of this book, I am inclined to think that personal interpretations and discoveries in reading are more satisfying and fulfilling than being led through a book by

teacher-directed questions and other activities. My students definitely proved the dialogue journal to be an effective strategy to promote both cognitive and affective reading development through reflective writing.

Evaluating the Dialogue Journal for Reading Response.

Dialogue journals help the teacher to recognize what students know and do effectively as readers. Student progress can be monitored through the journal, and responses can aid the teacher in planning instruction to meet students' needs. Evaluating the journals also provides information to document the growth of students as well as the effectiveness of the journal.

The dialogue journal allows the teacher to use daily reading and writing as the basis for assessment, providing authentic, functional work for evaluation rather than one test given when a book is finished. Student learning outcomes are more meaningful because the journals provide a nonthreatening context in which to explore and share their ideas, and students are not limited by focusing on what the teacher expects them to answer. Responses reveal whether students understand what they are reading and provide the teacher with insights into each student's reading processes and their knowledge of literature. Perhaps most importantly, journals can tell the teacher how interested and involved each student is in her reading. Without real engagement, students are unlikely to read beyond school assignments.

The biggest obstacle to using dialogue journals for responding to literature is the amount of time it takes the teacher to respond. However, teacher response is a crucial element and must occur in an ongoing manner. A single response is of little use in assessing a student's learning. It is the pattern of responses that emerge over time that will reflect the range and depth of student abilities, knowledge, and engagement. There are techniques to

manage the workload of journal responses, such as having students write to the teacher once a week and to peers at other times as well as rotating the days on which each group of students write to the teacher.

Another factor to remember in evaluating journals is that the purpose is for students to share their ideas and ask questions without concern for correctness. Teacher responses are used to model conventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but student deviations from these standards are not to interfere with the teacher's assessment of the dialogue journal.

Finally, further insight into students' progress can be gained by asking students to assess their own work. Students can focus on what they think is important in reading, such as strategies they use or elements they consider necessary to a good book, to evaluate their own reading. This helps the teacher to understand what students think is important and may make the teacher aware of something she had not yet realized.

Dialogue journals offer an authentic means of evaluation and are valuable diagnostic tools for the teacher to uncover and address specific problems and build on strengths to help students grow as lifelong readers.

The Dialectical Journal

In the dialectical, or double-entry, journal the student makes two columns and writes two separate entries relating to the same idea or topic. On the left the first entry is a report of information, a quotation, or a phrase taken directly from the text with the page number noted. In the right column directly opposite this entry the student comments on this information in a personal manner, such as personal observation, feelings about or a rehashing of the topic, or an interpretation of the factual information. In this way the student relates the book to her own life, using the journal as a tool for thinking.

The term “dialectical” means “the art or practice of logical discussion as a means of critically examining the truth of a theory or opinion” (Sonnenburg, 1989, p. 8). In other words the dialectical journal is a place for students to form a thinking-feeling relationship with the book as they ask questions, make observations, see patterns, form associations, and make predictions about characters and events. As students become personally involved with the text, they begin to form their own meanings about the text. In this way the students’ sense of voice and commitment evolve in their journals. Students also begin to think critically and creatively as they reflect on their own thoughts first by writing something, looking at it, thinking about it, and then writing an associated thought.

The dialectical journal serves several purposes to promote higher-level thinking skills. It encourages students to make connections between their own knowledge and information that is new to them. This link between the old and the new is necessary for understanding and learning to take place. The dialectical journal also provides students with the opportunity to rethink or reassess an idea or new information. Thinking occurs when students look at

something again, ask a question, and consider alternatives. This is the thinking process evoked in the dialectical journal. By looking and looking again at what they have written, students begin to interpret and analyze.

Yet another purpose of the dialectical journal is to establish a link among reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. The link between reading and writing occurs as students take notes or copy passages from their texts. If journal entries are used as springboards to class discussions about the book, the link among reading, writing, listening, and speaking is made. The critical link to thinking is reinforced as students revisit their notes to comment on, question, extend, interpret or analyze what they have written. Finally, the dialectical journal allows students to revisit and revise their initial responses, to reexamine their thoughts and ideas, making it possible for more complete meanings to emerge. It is the student's own process of making meaning.

When introducing the dialectical journal to students, it may seem more "user friendly" to students to refer to it as a double entry journal or double entry draft, called "ded" for short. Students can make journals especially suitable for double entries by folding a booklet of standard size writing paper in half vertically with a special cover (sample in Appendix B). An option is simply to ask students to draw a line down the middle of their journal notebook and write "Quote" or "Book" on the left side and "Response" or "Me" on the right side.

On the left side students should be instructed to write the page number from the book and the actual words from the book when those words seem important to the student, no matter what the reason. Then on the right students are asked to write about why they chose those words or sentences, to respond to the passage in whatever way they choose -- emotionally or intellectually, with a question or a prediction, by making a judgment or a connection to their

personal lives or to another passage in the book, by offering an insight, or by venturing an interpretation. It is important to emphasize to students that their responses should be a dialogue with, or a response to, the book and not merely a personal reflection or emotional reaction. Teacher and students should keep in mind that the purpose of the journal is to draw each student into her reading through a written dialogue with herself about passages which engage her personally and can lead to discovery. If the student does not relate her responses to the book, she leaves the text behind, defeating this purpose.

Entries from former students or the teacher's own journal will serve as clarifying examples of the types of entries students are expected to make. Another suggestion is to do the first few entries as a class. After reading the first few pages from an actual book to be read, students can select phrases or passages they find interesting and tell why. The teacher models writing student selections in the double entry format on the board or on an overhead projector.

An effective and enjoyable way to have students reflect further on their recorded thoughts is to ask students to share their entries for interesting, student-generated topics of discussion. In this manner students are engaged in an authentic discussion about what they have read from their personal interests and perspectives, exchanging varying interpretations, expanding possibilities of meanings, and drawing students deeper into the text for support. When students disagree about the meaning of passages, critical literary thinking emerges. Students are focused back to the text to support their viewpoints; they are discussing literature and searching the text to find meaning.

Examples of Learning Experiences through Dialectical Journals.

In my own classroom students kept dialectical journals as they read Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1960). Initial responses were generally

questions about their entries from the book, such as “I don’t really understand what brackish means, I wanted to know if you could tell me what it means” and “I wanted to know if a devilfish looks like a regular fish or not?” (Stephen, 1995).

After writing several more entries and generating class discussions from their journal entries, students began to think in their journals and search for personal meaning. Stephanie (1995) wondered if the surviving Indians “burned the thought of the Alutes in their heads or if they burned the ones that got killed on the island,” trying to decide if she should interpret this passage figuratively or literally, finally concluding, “I think that they burned them in their heads and the ones that got killed on the island.”

Timmy realized a passage did not make sense when he applied one definition of the word “great” (wonderful) and the author use another meaning (large). Wrote Timmy (1995), “I was surprised that she called the wild dogs great beasts why not, stuped beasts or dum beasts. I just don’t understand. The dogs kiled her brother, why great beasts!!” Michael was also alerted that the knowledge he brought to the text did not make sense when the book said the Indians had gotten oil from the “cows,” referring to female sea elephants. Michael (1995) writes, “I wonder how cows would have oil and what the Indians would use the oil for.”

Birpal (1995) picked up on the author’s use of foreshadowing when she penned, “I hope Karana doesn’t get hurt when she goes to the cave of the wild dogs. I also hope the the leader of the pack dies.” She also showed evidence of rethinking when she wrote about Karana singeing her hair with a faggot, “I reread it and I sort of understode. I thought that it ment to like sort of like cuting or trimming your hair.” David H. (1995) proved that he understood the book’s use of symbolism when he wrote about a ship with red sails approaching the

island, "Now this is totally rad. The aleuts are going to come back."

Students brought their personal experiences to the text again and again. Michael (1995) wrote, "I wonder how the Indians felt when Kimki left. I think they feel like me when my dad leaves for the weekend." David M. (1995) understood the book's inference that Ulape painted a blue line on her face, the Indian custom for maidens as notice that she was a candidate for marriage when the missionary ship came, but he missed the implication of Ulape's motive to attract the attention of the Indian messenger when he wrote, "I think it is weird that Ulape put those marks on her face because white men propably do not now what that means."

Even the author's writing style and some of the Indian names caught the attention of some. After copying "The gold eyes with their black rims were fixed on me" (O'Dell, 1960, p. 123), Eric (1995) wrote, "I like how the auther put so much description in this sentence." Another student wrote about the author's descriptive language but in a different vein. In response to a passage about coils of sinew hopping and singing as the speared fish tried to race away, David M. (1995) asked, "How could a coil sing and walk?" Birpal (1995) commented about the Indian name Matasaip, "I like this name because it's not the same like American names. It's like the indian names have magic in their names. Their names are so unusual."

Students also used their entries for topics of class discussion. Sheri wanted to know why Karana shot two dogs but not the leader who killed her brother. Asked Sheri (1995), "I don't understand why doesn't Karana kill the leader first. Maybe she wanted to kill the other ones first so she could have a challenge." This started a lively discussion about the complex motivation and conflict the main character was experiencing with students referring back to the

text to support their interpretations of the event. Another student wondered why nothing catastrophic happened to Karana after she shot an arrow, as Indian beliefs warned. Beau (1995) wanted to know, "Was she lucky? Was it the string? Or is she an expert?" Students not only talked about why no harm befell Karana but also entered into an interesting multicultural discussion about varying beliefs and customs of the different races in the world, a very complex topic for fourth graders who are just developing an awareness of the world around them.

My students really warmed up to writing in their dialectical journals, to the point that some would actually groan if I said there would be no journals that day. Writing twice about information or ideas, once to record and once to process and personalize what they first wrote from the book, gives students the opportunity to ponder, reflect, and even form opinions. I have found dialectical journals to be a valuable means for students to integrate their reading, writing, and thinking about literature.

Evaluating the Dialectical Journal.

Any kind of a response journal offers a teacher a means to evaluate students' learning and progress over a period of time. Assessment of students' abilities is based on their daily reading and writing as recorded in their dialectical journals. Journals can be used as a reflection of daily functional, authentic literary activities, offering insights and understanding about students' literary development. The pattern of responses in dialectical journals will reveal the extent of the student's engagement in her reading, her comprehension, and offer insight into her reading process. All of this concrete evidence of the student's reading and meaning-making strategies over time serves as the basis for valuable informal assessment. Such informal assessment can be used to

assist each student in her learning by addressing student needs on an individual basis.

The informal assessment offered through the dialectical journal can be used by the teacher to document student growth and learning in a number of ways. One way is to assign a journal grade for the effort and variety of journal responses. Because there are no right or wrong responses in journals and students are encouraged to express their thoughts and share their ideas without being concerned about the conventions of language, student responses will often reflect their best work. This effort along with evidence of a variety of responses, such as asking clarifying questions, making personal connections to what has been read, predicting or venturing an opinion, and revising, can be assigned a grade.

In reading students' dialectical journals for the purpose of assessment, the teacher must keep in mind that she has invited her young learners to share their ideas and ask questions without concern for correctness. The students' unconventional language use should never interfere with the teacher's assessment of their progress in reading.

Another means of evaluating the use of dialectical journals is to quantify responses. Points or the plus-check-minus system can be used to evaluate objectively the number and length of student entries. Another objective consideration could be the student's ability to copy correctly the direct quote from the book onto the left side of the double entry journal. Anecdotal notes can be made as the teacher monitors students to observe and record whether students are working during journal writing time. Conferencing with students is another method teachers can use to determine what students have gotten from their journal entries with students' spoken comments serving as a reflection on

what they have written in their journals.

If a teacher prefers not to grade the journal directly, students can be asked to use their journal entries as a basis for further work that will be evaluated. Students can write a culminating paper at the end of a book using the entries made in their dialectical journals. Another possibility is to have students review their journal responses to suggest natural extension activities, such as writing to the author, undertaking a research project, or embarking on an author study to compare her books or to gather information about the author.

Through reading and writing about what they have read, students will develop a better understanding of the qualities of literature, and this knowledge will influence their own writing. By responding to student entries in their dialectical journals, the teacher can help students make personal connections and expand their knowledge about literary techniques. This influences the students' writing as ideas are generated in their journals for future writing topics in which students borrow the literary techniques used in good literature. Careful evaluation of the degree to which students are meeting the teacher's criteria for using the journal to promote literacy will help to direct students on their way to achieving real growth in reading and writing proficiency.

Characteristics of Good Journal Writing

For teachers who may be trying journal writing in the classroom for the first time or those who have been disappointed with their attempts to use journals, it may be reassuring to have some idea of the use of language and the types of cognitive strategies that characterize effective journal writing. Bearing in mind that journals are places for students to think, to speculate, and to make connections, the teacher must focus on the student's message, not deviations from standard language conventions. Listed below are some characteristics of good journal writing, as different from more formal prose, with examples from my students' entries:

1. Language often resembles speech written down.

- * Language is likely to be informal and colloquial, using short cuts, such as contractions and dashes, and short words.

Example: Jarred (1994) wrote that he "loved writeing 2 get thoughts off your mind" when evaluating his own journal entries.

Another student wrote that she would have to wait "30 m" before going outside.

- * The pronoun "I" occurs often to indicate personal reflections rather than a factual recounting.

Example: "I just think that president Clinton has made a spectacular decision," wrote Phuong (1994) about the resumption of diplomatic relations with Vietnam.

- * Punctuation is informal, using dashes and lines and often omitting quotation marks.

Example: "K had a chance to shoot the dogs why didn't she shoot them. Thees are the dogs that killed Ramo," wrote Timmy

(1995). Chris (1995) mused, "It says how he died but not the reason. There are two possibilities,

1 heart attack

2 Old age"

- * Journal writing is likely to reflect the rhythms of everyday speech, often a conversation between the writer and one of her viewpoints. Example: Contemplating the relationship of words to their meanings, Mary (1994) mused, "Words are so stupid. Like Spaghetti why don't we call it noodles? And Hospital why don't we just call it medical place? And what about Rail Road? Why don't we call them Big Metal toothpicks? I wish I knew why can you tell me Mrs. Brown?"

- * Students experiment with and explore language, manipulating their voice, style, form, or perspective.

Example: Phuong (1994) plays with words when she wrote, "The car that I would drive . . . should be a Teal Blue Mercedes-Benz. It should be real comfortable and dazzling. If I get tired of the car, I would trade it in and get a red Ferrari, and ride it all the way home in the blustering wind!"

2. A variety of cognitive strategies appears in good journal writing, especially in response to literature. The examples I use here are from my students in response to Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1960).

- * Opinions about the plot and characters or information in the book. Example: Marchelle (1993) wrote, "The part that really grabbed me was when it said, 'The women could hunt better than the men.' That made me laugh. It proves that we can do some things better

than those men. I bet the men felt bad about that.”

- * Expressions of personal feelings.

Example: Jeff (1993) expressed his feelings when he wrote, “It was exciting when Karana shoots the dog with a bow and arrow and becomes friends so she isn’t lonely anymore.”

- * Comments on the language or literary techniques used.

Example: Eric (1995) responded to the author’s description of a wild dog by writing, “I like how the author put so much description in this sentence.” Timmy (1995) pondered the relationship of an object to its name when he wrote, “Why are trees, trees and why are people, people. Maybe if they thought the fish came from hell, they would call it devilfish or killerfish.”

- * Comparison of the text with the reader’s life.

Example: Jon (1993) made a personal connection when he wrote that Nanko’s scar reminded him of the scar his grandfather has on his face, and both the book character and his grandfather “got their scars in battle.”

- * Predictions

Example: A very sensitive prediction, likely influenced by Indian in the Cupboard (Banks, 1980) which we had read in class earlier, Jacob (1993) wrote, “I think (the Aleuts) will treat (the Indians) badly because they will take them to a Science Lab or a Museum and make (Karana) just stand there so the people can look at her and take pictures of her and the flash will hurt her eyes and she is not used to white people and they might scare her.”

- * Articulation of expectations.

Example: Birpal (1995) wrote, "I hope Karana doesn't get hurt when she goes to the cave of the wild dogs. I also hope the leader of the pack dies."

- * Reflections on the reading process.

Example: Marchelle (1993) wrote, "I thought that the first part of the book was really boring. I think that was because I didn't really pay attention when my partner was reading." Birpal (1995) reflected after a confusing passage about Karana singeing her hair with a faggot, "I reread it and I sort of understode. I thought that it ment to like sort of like cuting or trimming your hair."

- * Questions about vocabulary, language use, literary techniques.

Example: Many students struggle with the Indian names and words with the most common questions being, "What is sai-sai?" One low reader lamented, "Some of there words are big and hard but I have to get uest to ther words . . . I like read that book." David M. (1995) wanted to know, "How could a coil sing and walk?" Sheri (1995) asked, "I don't understand why doesn't Karana kill the leader first," and Stephanie (1995) wanted to know why the author said "for six suns" instead of just saying "for six days."

Teachers should keep in mind that students' learning styles and perspectives will influence the way in which they respond to the text. The teacher should always be alert to evidence of knowledge and learning, even if it is not obvious. The teacher should also try to extend students' thinking and introduce them to new perspectives.

3. Finally, teachers should encourage the "formal features" of journal writing, such as the following:

- * Frequent entries: Journals should be used frequently on a consistent basis so that fluency can develop and patterns of cognitive strategies can emerge.
- * Long entries: Chances of developing thoughts or creating a new one increase with more writing.
- * Self-sponsored entries: Personal motivation to record thoughts and ideas, rather than teacher directed, usually leads to more valuable entries as the feeling of ownership is kindled.
- * Chronology of entries: The key to good record keeping (even of thoughts and ideas) is the location and particular time of each entry. Therefore, all entries should be dated and entered chronologically and references to literary passages should be documented.

Guidelines for Assigning Journals

Purposes for assigning journals and the kind of journal to be kept will vary depending on specific learning outcome objectives, but the following guidelines may be helpful for teachers new to the journal process. These guidelines were established by the Commission on Composition of the National Council of Teachers of English (1986).

1. Journals do not fit in the category of either “diaries” or “notebooks.” Instead they borrow a combination of features from each. Like a diary, journals are written in the first person (“I”) about personally meaningful topics. Like a class notebook, journals are about class subject material.
2. Journals can be made in class, personally decorated, or notebooks can be purchased to keep journal entries together. Private entries that students do not want read, even by the teacher, can be folded in half toward the binding of the notebook or marked “VP” (Very Private) at the top.
3. Ask students to write for ten to twenty minutes in class, starting with a shorter time period and gradually extending the time as students become more experienced and more comfortable writing in their journals. Model journal writing for students by writing with them and then share your writing with the class. A teacher adds value to journal writing by devoting her time and effort to the activity she has asked her students to do.
4. Always do something active and deliberate with what the students have written -- partner or small group sharing; volunteer sharing with the entire class; teacher or parent response. (Students who do not want to share should be given the right to pass since journals are personal.) Sharing the writing, even informally, gives credibility to the non-graded assignment as well as generating ideas for new writing topics among students and creating

a sense of ownership of students' writing.

5. Account for entries in student journals, but do not grade them. Because of the amount of class time spent on writing in journals, the entries should count in a quantitative way such as points or a plus-check-minus notation for each entry assigned. However, because of the risks students are encouraged to take in expressing their ideas and thoughts in journals, there should be no grading of actual entries nor any corrections of the language used to express these thoughts.
6. Do not attempt to write back to every entry. This will overwhelm even the most dedicated teachers. Collect journals on a rotating basis, skimming all entries, highlighting points of interest, and responding to entries of special interest. Avoid empty one-word responses and happy faces since journal communication should be genuine and personally responsive.
7. At the end of the term students may be asked to select one entry, as is or to expand, revise, and edit into a story or essay, for their portfolios. Other summative activities might include making a table of contents for journals, writing a self-evaluation of entries, or writing a summary of journal entries.

These guidelines are merely suggestions for making journals work effectively, but, as in all classrooms, the teacher knows what will work best for her students and is encouraged to adapt or change these guidelines to fit her purposes and grade level. Journals are only a means of achieving a goal; but, used wisely and flexibly, learning outcomes of journal writing should speed students of all ages along a course of literacy proficiency. Journals are a means of empowering today's students who are tomorrow's future.

APPENDIX B

HANDOUT MATERIALS

Personal Journals

1. The Draw/Write Journal

- * The Creative Journal for Children by LuciaCapacchione. Boston: Shambhala, 1982.

This book contains 72 exercises in drawing and writing to foster children's creativity, self-esteem, and learning skills. Great prompts for getting started.

2. The Free Write Journal

- * Teacher shares with class her plans for writing that day -- a family event or personal experience.
- * Partner sharing (3 - 5 minutes) to brainstorm topics for journal entries.
- * Alternate writing topic offered by teacher and written on chalkboard.
- * Journal writing (10 - 20 minutes). Teacher writes too. No interruptions! (This indicates that journal writing is important to you.)
- * Journal sharing (3 - 5 minutes) to do something active and deliberate with each student's entry. Students find partners to read their entries to with partners responding with some comment or signing their names. If the author does not want another student to read or write in her journal, this privilege is reserved for the teacher.
- * Collect journals from one-fifth of the class. Skim entries and pick one to respond to in a positive, encouraging manner. This will eliminate teacher burnout from trying to respond to every entry. Do not grade or correct student entries. Instead, model appropriate language use in your responses. Use a check system or make anecdotal comments in your grade book to indicate student progress in writing.

Dialogue Journals for Responding to Literature

Student Responses

1. Have students make a journal, decorating the cover to reflect upon the book they will be writing about.
2. Student Response
 - * Ask students to write a letter to you once a week about the book they are reading.
 - * Initially, the following suggestions may be used to stimulate student responses (Journaling: Engagements in reading, writing, and thinking by Karen Bromley. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1993):
 1. How did what you read make you feel?
 2. What did it remind you of?
 3. What did you like (dislike)? Why?
 4. What do you think might happen next? Why?
 5. Do you like this book? Why or why not?
 6. What did you learn?
 7. Do you relate to any of the characters in the book? In what way?
 8. Do you agree or disagree with what the main character did?
 9. What insights into your own life does this book suggest?
 10. What have you learned about yourself as a reader?
 11. What would you like to do to become a better reader?

Dialogue Journals for Responding to Literature

Teacher Responses

1. Teacher reply to student response is as important as the actual response.
2. Instruction is given to students individually through teacher response.
3. Teacher must cultivate trust by validating student ideas. If teacher does agree with what student writes, a brief affirmation followed by an alternative perspective redirects student thought without criticism.
4. Teacher responses should be carefully formulated in the following ways
(Response journals: Inviting students to think and write about literature by

Julie Wollman-Bonilla. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1991):

- * Share your own ideas and responses
 - * Provide information
 - * Develop students' awareness of reading strategies
 - * Develop students' awareness of literary techniques
 - * Model elaboration
 - * Challenge students to think in new ways
5. Do not grade or correct student letters. The teacher can monitor what students know and do effectively as readers through their responses. The teacher models conventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation in her responses to students. Students can also be asked to assess their own work, helping the teacher understand what students think is important.

Dialectical Journals

1. Students can make journals especially suitable for double entries by folding a booklet of standard size writing paper in half vertically with a cover (next handout) with suggested response starters. An option is to have students draw a line down the middle of their journal notebook and write "Quote" or "Book" on the left side and "Response" or "Me" on the right.
2. On the left side ask students to write the page number from the book and the exact words from the book when those words seem important to the student, no matter what the reason. On the right have students write about why they chose those words or sentences. Responses may be as follows:
 - * Emotional or intellectual
 - * A question or a prediction
 - * Making a judgment or a personal connection to the student's own life or to another passage in the book
 - * Offering an insight
 - * Venturing an interpretation

Remind students that responses must be a response to the book, not merely a personal reflection or an emotional reaction.
3. It may help students to do the first few entries as a class with students selecting phrases or passages they find interesting and telling why as the teacher models writing in double entry format on the board or on an overhead projector.
4. An option is to ask students to share their entries as a springboard to interesting, student-generated topics of discussion serving to engage students in book talk and searching the text to find meaning.
5. Collect journals on a regular basis and skim through entries. Highlight those

of particular interest and/or respond meaningfully. Comprehension, student engagement in reading, and processes used while reading can be monitored through journal responses. Do not grade or correct responses. Assessment can be based on progress of the student's reading and meaning-making strategies over a period of time and the variety of responses used. Assessment can also be made by quantifying responses, conferencing with students about their responses, or using their journals for a further work which will be evaluated.

Ideas for a Double Entry Journal

Copy a passage on the left side of your journal and write your reactions on the right side. Here are some possible reaction lead-ins to use:

1. I wonder what this means . . .
2. I really like/dislike this ideas because . . .
3. This character reminds me of somebody I know because . . .
4. This character reminds me of myself because . . .
5. I think this setting is important because . . .
6. This scene reminds me of a similar scene in (title) because . . .
7. This part is realistic/unrealistic because . . .
8. This section makes me think about _____ because . . .
9. I think the relationship between _____ and _____ is interesting because . . .
10. This situation reminds me of a similar situation in my own life.
It happened when . . .
11. The character I most admire is _____ because . . .
12. If I were (name of character) at this point, I would . . .
13. I think this passage or paragraph is important to the story because . . .
14. Here's what I think will happen next . . .
15. I'm confused about . . .
16. I remember when I did something like this . . .
17. A question I would like to ask these characters right now is . . .

(This may be typed and reduced to fit inside the back cover of the journal.)

Characteristics of Good Journal Writing

The following offer insights about the use of language and the types of cognitive strategies that characterize effective journal writing:

1. Language often resembles speech written down.
 - * Language is likely to be informal and colloquial, using short cuts, such as contractions and dashes, and short words.
 - * The pronoun “I” occurs often to indicate personal reflections rather than a factual recounting.
 - * Punctuation is informal, using dashes and lines.
 - * Journal writing is likely to reflect the rhythms of everyday speech, often a conversation between the writer and one of her viewpoints.
 - * Students experiment with and explore language, manipulating their voice, style, form, or perspective.
2. A variety of cognitive strategies appears in good journal writing, especially in response to literature.
 - * Opinions about the plot and characters or information in the book
 - * Expressions of personal feelings
 - * Comments on the language or literary techniques used
 - * Comparison of the text with the reader’s life
 - * Predictions
 - * Articulation of expectations
 - * Reflections on the reading process
 - * Questions about vocabulary, language use, literary techniques
3. Teachers should encourage the “formal features” of journal writing.
 - * Frequent entries
 - * Self-sponsored entries
 - * Long entries
 - * Chronology of entries

Guidelines for Assigning Journals

These guidelines for assigning journals were approved by the Commission on Composition of the National Council of Teachers of English (Fulwiler, 1987).

1. Journals do not fit in the category of either "diaries" or "notebooks" but are a combination of each. Like a diary, journals are written in the first person ("I") about personally meaningful topics. Like a class notebook, journals are about class subject material.
2. Journals can be made in class, personally decorated, or notebooks can be purchased to keep journal entries together. Private entries that students do not want read, even by the teacher, can be folded in half toward the binding of the notebook or marked "VP" (Very Private) at the top.
3. Ask students to write for ten to twenty minutes in class, starting with a shorter time period and gradually extending the time as students become more experienced and more comfortable writing in their journals. Model journal writing for students by writing with them and then share your writing with the class. A teacher adds value to journal writing by devoting her time and effort to the activity she has asked her students to do.
4. Always do something active and deliberate with what the students have written -- partner or small group sharing; volunteer sharing with the entire class; teacher or parent response. (Students who do not want to share should be given the right to pass since journals are personal.) Sharing the writing, even informally, gives credibility to the non-graded assignment as well as generating ideas for new writing topics among students and creating a sense of ownership of

students' writing.

5. Account for entries in student journals, but do not grade them.

Because of the amount of class time spent on writing in journals, the entries should count in a quantitative way such as points or a plus-check-minus notation for each entry assigned. However, because of the risks students are encouraged to take in expressing their ideas and thoughts in journals, there should be no grading of actual entries nor any corrections of the language used to express these thoughts.

6. Do not attempt to write back to every entry. This will overwhelm even the most dedicated teachers. Collect journals on a rotating basis, skimming all entries, highlighting points of interest, and responding to entries of special interest. Avoid empty one-worded responses and happy faces since journal communication should be genuine and personally responsive.
7. At the end of the term students may be asked to select one entry, as is or to expand, revise, and edit into a story or essay, for their portfolios. Other summative activities might include making a table of contents for journals, writing a self-evaluation of entries, or writing a summary of journal entries for the term.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atwell, N. (1984). Writing and reading literature from the inside out. Language Arts, 61, 240-252.
- Banks, L. (1980). The Indian in the cupboard. New York: Doubleday & Company.
- Bromley, K. (1993). Journaling: Engagements in reading, writing, and thinking. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Capacchione, L. (1982). The creative journal for children. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
- Fulwiler, T. (Ed.). (1987). The journal book. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Graves, D. (1989). Research currents: When children respond to fiction. Language Arts, 69 (1), 36-42.
- Harste, J., Short, K. & Burke, C. (1988). Creating classrooms for authors: The reading-writing connection. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- O'Dell, S. (1960). Island of the blue dolphins. New York: Dell Publishing.
- Parsons, L. (1990). Response journals. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Sonnenburg, E. (1989). The dialectical journal and the art of literary analysis. California English, September-October, 8-10, 29.
- Wells, C. (1992). At the junction of reading and writing: How dialogue journals contribute to students' reading development. Journal of Reading, 36, 294-302.
- Wollman-Bonilla, J. (1991). Response journals: Inviting students to think and write about literature. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. (1992). Journal writing: The promise and the reality. Journal of Reading, 36, 304-309.
- Atwell, N. (Ed.). (1990). Workshop 2: Beyond the basal. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Atwell, N. (1984). Writing and reading literature from the inside out. Language Arts, 61, 240-252.
- Avery, C. (1992). Create a climate that nurtures young writers. Instructor, July-August, 18-19.
- Bromley, K. (1993). Journaling: Engagements in reading, writing, and thinking. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Elbow, P. (1973). Writing without teachers. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fulwiler, T. (Ed.). (1987). The journal book. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Fulwiler, T. & Young, A. (Eds.). (1982). Language connections: Writing and reading across the curriculum. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Goodman, K. (1986). What's whole in whole language? Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Graves, D. (1994). Be a better writing teacher. Instructor, November-December, 43-45, 71.
- Graves, D. (1983). Writing: Teachers and children at work. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Graves, D. (1989). Research currents: When children respond to fiction. Language Arts, 66, 776-783.
- Hancock, M. (1992). Literature response journals: Insights beyond the printed page. Language Arts, 69 (1), 36-42.
- Hanson, M. (1978). Sources. Lakeside, CA: Interact.

- Harste, J. & Burke, C. (1980). Understanding the hypothesis: It's the teacher that makes a difference. (Television series). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Reading Program. Reading Comprehension: Instruction Video Tape Research Guide.
- Harste, J., Short, K., & Burke, C. (1988). Creating classrooms for authors: The reading-writing connection. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Isaacs, J. & Brodine, J. (1994). Journals in the classroom. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Peguis Publishers Limited.
- Macon, J., Bewell, D. & Vogt, M. (1991). Responses to literature. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Macrorie, K. (1976). Writing to be read (2nd ed.). Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden.
- Murray, D. (1989). Expecting the unexpected. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, a division of Heinemann Educational Books.
- Parsons, L. (1994). Expanding response journals in all subject areas. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Parsons, L. (1990). Response journals. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Smith, F. (1985). Reading without nonsense (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sonnenburg, E. (1989). The dialectical journal and the art of literary analysis. California English, September-October, 8-10, 29.
- Staton, J. (1980). Writing and counseling: Using a dialogue journal. Language Arts, 57, 514-518.
- Susan. (1993). [Journal]. Unpublished raw data.
- Weaver, C. (1988). Reading process and practice. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Webster's Dictionary. (1994). New York: Nickel Press.
- Wells, C. (1992). At the junction of reading and writing: How dialogue journals contribute to students' reading development. Journal of Reading, 36, 294-302.

Wollman-Bonilla, J. (1991). Response journals: Inviting students to think and write about literature. New York: Scholastic, Inc.