

## Literacy Leads

Karen Haag

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### #5 From Workbook to Working Book: Using Daybooks In the Classroom --- Daybook Must-Haves

I provide my students their first composition notebook with stitched-in pages. They need the hard-covered daybook so that it can travel back and forth from home to school and stay in useable shape. Having a notebook with pages that are difficult to rip out forces students to gradually let go of the perfectionism they have learned to expect of themselves. They learn to accept pages that don't work. With my help, they view mistakes as potential successes. Drafts that turn out to be lists, for example, can be viewed as a dozen possible story ideas.

I introduce a few must-haves in the notebook so that I can match lost notebooks to students and find pages I need to read. Over the years, I started requiring an **author identification page** (See sidebar). Since my notebook is so important to me, I took to writing something like, "Please call me if you find this notebook. I need it back!" on the *first* page. I also included my name and phone number. A couple times that saved me. Once I left it at a high school and once at a meeting across town, but because my phone number was in my book I got it back. The children have turned the page into a title page of sorts. Students identify who they are and how to get a hold of them. Others draw a beautiful picture on that first page. Still others write an about-the-author summary there. It's another way to make the notebook uniquely theirs.

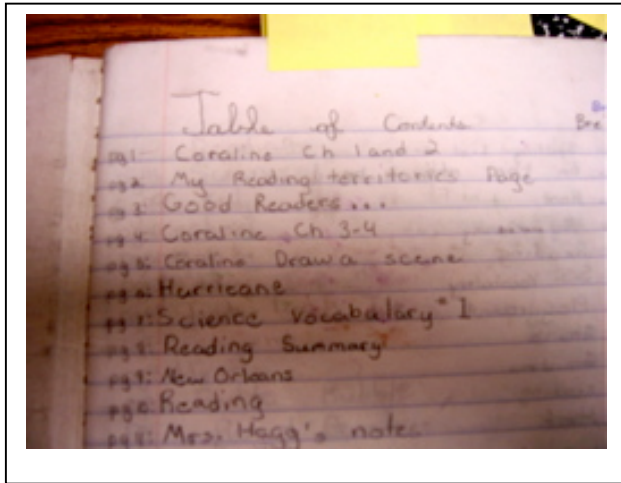
I ask the students to leave several pages at the beginning for a **Table of Contents** and then to number the upper corners of every page. Numbered pages reinforce the point that each page is important and should stay in the notebook. Students can't number all

#### Timeline for Introducing Daybooks

- Share my daybook.
- Show writers' daybooks.
- Ask children from previous classes to explain their daybooks.
- Give each student a daybook.
- Create an author page, table of contents, and vocabulary section.
- Demonstrate how to collect vocabulary words.
- Number pages.
- Spend 2 weeks finding topic ideas. Create a topic page.
- Demonstrate how to take notes in the daybook.
- Encourage children to fill the pages with writing, writing tips and collected writing in various genres.
- Give children time to write, number pages and keep Table of Contents up to date.



**Author Identification Page:** The children use the first page to identify themselves as authors. This child drew a dragon, his specialty.



the pages in one day. Neither can I. We spend a few minutes numbering and then I explain that they will finish as they have time. Keeping up with page numbering and the Table of Contents becomes part of their assigned work. I ask the children to explain this new concept to their parents. Many moms have ripped pages out of daybooks for grocery lists or thrown out daybooks altogether!

Then, I teach my students to work from the front and the back of the notebook to access pages quickly. On the last page the students collect **topic ideas** because it's a page that they can find right away – a “one-second page,” we call it.

From the topic page, they count back 15 pages and make a **vocabulary section** next. It is there that they collect *interesting words*, **NEW words**, **important words**, and **FUN WORDS**. They select words, write the page where they found the word, copy the sentence in which they found it, write their guess of what the word means, and then look it up or ask someone. They check it if they're right or rewrite the definition in their own words. Then, every week they share the words they found in a 20-minute **Vocabulary Show-n-Tell** time. A pleasant surprise is how much children love collecting words. An hour can pass easily in our vocabulary sessions as we share words like “onomatopoeia” and interesting words like “plant” as in, “She planted the idea in my head.”

In my classroom, we count back another 5 more pages and make a “**golden lines**” section. In the UNC Charlotte Writing Project, I learned about golden lines from Bob Tierney. He and a 4<sup>th</sup>-grade-teacher friend viewed golden lines as those phrases or sentences in stories that we just have to have. Letting the pen write the words, carefully crafted, as they roll off our pen, even if we are copying them, makes us feel like writers. Another benefit --- when hunting for golden lines, students read as authors. As they discover distinctive words and phrases, they stop and savor the language. For instance, I was reading a 4<sup>th</sup>-grader's paper and he began, “I'm not telling this story the way it happened. I'm telling it the way I remember it.” I copied that lead into my golden line section as my way of enjoying it, remembering it, and trying to imitate it in my own writing. I teach children to do the same.

**Next week:** Since writers need topics, I model numerous ways to collect ideas for stories.