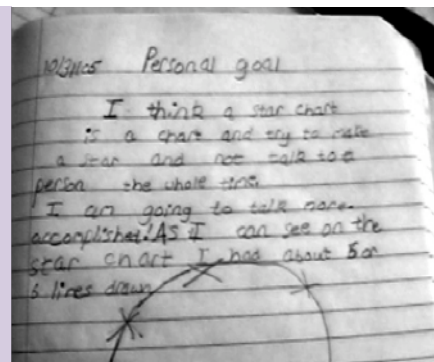


Literacy Leads

Karen Haag

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How do we balance a writer's notebook with a daybook?



Erika (not her real name) began her daybook with very little writing. She could not get the hang of writing about what she learned, setting goals, or applying today's knowledge to the future. I invented a new strategy as a result. I sat with her and talked while the others wrote. I asked her to tell me what she learned. She couldn't at first. I asked her questions to help her extend her thinking. As she began to say what she thought, I wrote for her and when she'd get stuck I'd just ask her why do you do that, how do you know that, give me an example where that happened today. When finished, I told her, I'm just going to write on your page, 'Reflected with Mrs. Haag 8/26/02.' Over time, she became more confident in what this reflecting thing was. By the end of the year she was writing pages. Once I saw the incredible results with Erika, I rotated around the room and worked with everyone in this way – one child per day.

Making a Writer's Notebook a Daybook

The easiest place to start making daybooks is to add reflection pieces to writing notebooks. Set up your writer's notebook the way you've done in the past. I'm not sure how your kids keep track of their pages. If you think it's appropriate you can continue to (or start to) use a Table of Contents.

Just start by saying, *Turn to the next fresh page and write the date and a title for the page. Today we're going to learn about 'writing small moments in writing.'* When you're finished with this assignment or before you begin, write, *'What is a small moment?' in your Table of Contents next to the page number you're using.*

Now, take just a minute and write down what you think a small moment is. I started you off on the whiteboard: *'A small moment in writing is...'* (See suggestions for primary and reluctant intermediate writers throughout. Keep reading!)

Use that as the basis of your initial discussion. Teach what a small moment is. At the end of the lesson say, *Add to or change your writing. What do you think a small moment in writing is now that we've been working with the idea for 30 minutes? Add to, revise, or change your definition.*

You can ask to assess those pages by having the students open to the page they wrote on and pile the writer's notebooks on the table as they go to a special area class. Read through them with your notebook and a pencil in hand. Write down names of kids and their ideas that you'd like to highlight or address. Note confusions. Start there the next day.

Yesterday, we began learning what a small moment in writing is. I read your daybooks and you had some great ideas ...(share). We also had some confusing points I'd like to clear up...(share). We're going to continue to work on understanding small moments today.

On today's fresh page in your daybook, or if you still have space on yesterday's page, make a list of some funny things that have happened to you. Before you do that, though, listen to my small-moment, funny story...

Tell a story and reflect on what made it a small-moment story. Compare the story to the definition the writers have in their notebooks. List the criteria the kids are beginning to see. (If age appropriate, the students can copy the list or you can have a handout ready to glue in their daybooks.)

Now talk to a partner or two about funny things that have happened to them. Share

your funny, small moments, too.

Now make a list of stories you want to write – just the ideas that come to you in 3 minutes – and you think will make good small-moment stories.”

For the last 3 minutes of class, I'd like you to write what you learned about writing today. You might write, 'It was so much easier to come up with an idea for a story by talking to my friend xxxx.' Or, you might write, 'I think I'm beginning to get this idea of a small moment. Here's what more I know today...' Can anyone start us off?

Now that you've heard a couple of classmates share, return to your notebook and write what you learned about writing.

Now, your students have daybooks because they are writing what they think before, during, and/or after your lessons. They're revising their thinking when confronted with new information. They're concentrating on taking the process of thinking apart – and putting it into steps that make sense in their brains, their learning style. They might even draw a visual to help them remember. (A watermelon and a seed, maybe? Their own creation?) By writing what they learned, they are more likely to remember it because they

These steps emerge at the beginning. If you're teaching upper-grade students, most kids can write these ideas in their notebooks. Some primary students can and some older students can't. In that case, record their ideas on the board or in your notebook so they don't get scattered or lost. Type pages they can glue in their notebooks.

1. Give your students something to think about to focus them on your lesson – a question, a word, a quote, even a freewrite to get the stuff out of their heads that will free them to concentrate on academics.
2. Ask them to share their initial thoughts with a partner or small group.
3. Teach your lesson. Address the questions or noticings that surfaced in steps 1 and 2.
4. Address what you see during the lesson (Lucy Calkins' midpoint teaching.)
5. For closure, reflect as a class: ask children to compare what they wrote to what you taught. What can they add? Where were they confused? Where are they still confused? Make lists. Clarify definitions. Draw a visual of the concept. Set goals for next time. (Choose one!)
6. Ask students to write in their notebooks: what did you learn *about (writing)*? How can you apply this new learning to your life? Record in your teacher notebook, too. Or, sit with a reluctant writer and just talk while the other students are writing. Ask questions to extend her thinking and help her pull out what she learned about being a writer. Excuse her from writing a reflection that day or scribe for her. (I write, 'excused,' the date and my name in her notebook so I have a record.)
7. Start again the next day by complimenting the reflections and addressing the questions.☺

wrote it down and because they have a place to go back to and reread.

By building on what they learned yesterday, they see that what they learned yesterday is related to today's learning and will be related to tomorrow's.

Using the notebook will help you shift your role from you as teacher to you as coach available to help students reach their goals. Help your students see that learning is their responsibility by the questions you ask and the way you structure the lesson to ensure each student is thinking personally.

And most importantly... give students the freedom to write whatever will help them be a better reader, writer or thinker when they have time, you plan for them to have time, they have free time, or when they take their notebooks home. Work choices into their day.

At some point you'll say, *I think I'll try these same steps with reading... or math... or science.* And now you're beginning to integrate your daybook. (i.e.: Turn to the next fresh page and label it, 'How do you know you're becoming a better reader... or mathematician... or scientist?' Oh, yes. Be sure to record this page in your Table of Contents.)