

Part III



Writing Group Three: *Designing Writing Programs*



Picture This: Using Wordless Books to Teach Primary-Grade Writers

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“Can we truly teach primary students to write?”

I was sitting with my colleague Ann, in an elementary classroom, at a table sized for the average six-year-old. A stack of writing portfolios loomed between us as she anxiously posed this question to me. We were discussing how her first graders were able to label their pictorial representations of stories with one or two words, or to write patterned sentences in the vein of “I like my mom,” “I like my dad,” “I like my dog.” Although this is certainly considered writing in primary classrooms, it is a far leap from the type of writing that relays a story. Ann felt her students were strong in reading and sounding out words, but their progress in applying these skills in their writing was at a standstill. She wondered how we could help them move beyond pictures, labeling, and patterned sentences and into what we were considering true writing: a series of sentences that would reveal a progression of events. Perhaps the simple form of communication that the students were producing was as far as the average first grader was conceptionally ready to venture, and we should be happy that they were making attempts at writing. But Ann was discouraged because she believed that they were capable of writing more words that would tell a story. Could we teach them to write in the way that writers do? We decided we would try to find out. We started brainstorming ways we could combine the picture labels with the sentences and foster sequential story telling that would lead them to put all these skills together, becoming real writers.

We were already providing many varied opportunities for writing practice. Beyond Writing Workshop, the students had engaged in dictating their words, whole-group interactive writing, journal writing, and open-ended writing centers. In his book *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger reminds us that as a child develops, “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.” Therefore, we can easily deduce that, developmentally, pictures would come to a child before words. This is exactly what we were experiencing with these students. Most of their independent writing consisted of drawing elaborate pictures and orally explaining a detailed occurrence of one event. Moreover, as is the norm with children of this age, the actual words

they had been writing to accompany these pictures consisted of two or three words, such as "My dog," that served as a label for the pictures. We agreed that we needed to teach them to tell a complete story and in the process expand their ability to produce written words. Thus, our journey began in the fall and continued throughout the course of the year.

I was in a unique position, as I was not bound to the same group of students the entire day. As a special assignment teacher, I had the privilege of working with six different classes of primary students ranging from kindergarten to second grade in the areas of reading and writing and was privy to seeing the developmental progression of ages five to eight unfold. From watching the students of each level, I had gained a sense of where the students could go academically. I was teaching children of middle to low socioeconomic status in a school of approximately nine hundred students located just outside the city of Atlanta. We harbored children of diverse ethnic backgrounds from all ability levels. I additionally had the benefit of collaborating with some talented teachers, such as Ann, learning new ideas and gaining the freedom to try some of my own within their classrooms. The word got around quickly that I enjoyed teaching writing and had some innovative ideas. Beginning with Ann's question, a narrative-making program for teaching writing evolved.

As Ann and I talked, our goals began to emerge. We decided that we wanted the students to be active participants in writing processes as identified by Donald Graves in *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*. The Georgia Core Curriculum in all primary grades states that students take part in the writing process, and we believed this was a good start. More importantly, we wanted the students to gain a sense of the individual process they follow to construct their writing, as well as to study specific authoring techniques. We also wanted the students to build a strong story-telling base by understanding that each narrative has a beginning, middle, and end and to apply this understanding when writing their own narratives. Ann invited me to work with the first graders in her classroom, thus giving me a chance to try some new techniques that could be shared with other teachers as well. I decided to approach writing instruction by building on the skills the students already possessed, using literature as a model, and then moving them into expanding their writing of text from this point.

I noticed in working with these first grade students that they drew beautiful pictures with a great amount of detail to represent the story to be told. After drawing, most students orally performed the story in elaborate detail among their peers or to the teacher. Ann and I realized that they had a sense of oral narrative that was ahead of what they could produce in print.

In *Images in Language, Media, and Mind* Roy Fox points out that a growing trend recognizes the importance of images in developing literacy. He cites the research of Janet Emig, who found that students naturally rely on nonlinguistic modes of thinking while composing. According to her research, writing and thinking should not be taught as isolated sub- skills, but together as part of an interchangeable process. With this goal of the meshing images and print, I wanted to preserve children's wonderful enthusiasm and skill, but shape it to meet our writing goals. It seemed imperative to tap into that skill of oral narrative mastery as a starting point. Often when reproducing thoughts in print, the students became lost in representing the sounds and words, at the expense of the story. I had an idea: why not free up the students by temporarily taking out the text factor so that they could pictorially write and gain a sense of narration and authorship? Let them tell their stories in pictures while experimenting with the use of structure. We could use this foundation to build up to representing ideas with print. I wanted to motivate these early writers to take that first step towards authorship and to feel successful so that they would continue to write. Building on their skills as artists and oral storytellers would facilitate my goal.

The genre of literature that would be used as a model for our young writers would clearly be wordless picture books. These are books that tell the story through pictures, without print text. In *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*, Katie Wood Ray discusses the idea of students reading like writers. Instead of reading solely for the story itself, Ray maintains that we must teach writing students to read also for the purpose of studying the techniques used in the writings of others. Observing authors' techniques gives the students models and tools that they can apply to enhance their writing. Since I was building on their skills as artists and storytellers, wordless books would drive instruction. I would lead the students into reading a wordless book as if they were authors. Our writing would be an opportunity to apply these learned techniques after they gained a sense of the story and the process.

Deciding on a study of wordless books and author techniques was the beginning of meeting our writing goals for these first graders. Our idea was that after we built a strong foundation of story structure and writing processes using wordless books, then we would study additional genres of literature and represent our stories with text as students grew in writing and phonemic awareness. We would work to make this progression through much guidance and modeling. The hope was eventually to change the balance from pictures, to pictures and text. We created our own curriculum, learning as we went. I used wordless books as a starting place to build a sense of story structure,

writing process, and techniques. Creating this sense of design was part of an ongoing process to teach effective writing.

Getting Started With the Practice

I began with the children's need to collect and monitor their work. For organizational purposes, I secured two folders for each student. The first was for keeping work in progress together. The second was for collecting all finished writings once each piece had been celebrated in the classroom for a respectful period of time. This folder would serve as a portfolio of works completed so that the students could reflect on previous work for technique, and so that they could track their own personal growth as writers throughout the year. It would also serve to assess and determine whether the students were progressing towards our goals.

Launching into my first intense study of wordless books as a writer meant that I had to become a collector of books from this particular genre. Wordless books are categorized under the larger umbrella of picture books, which means that when searching for books under this category they may or may not contain text. This general categorization makes it difficult to specifically filter out the books that represent the story through pictures alone although there are an abundance of these texts available. I looked through libraries and bookstores, browsing through books and reading descriptions in book catalogues. I searched under the leading booksellers online and additionally found a number of wordless books in our school's kindergarten curriculum materials.

Once I built up a sufficient collection, the teacher cleared a special space to display these books in her classroom. It is my belief that learners tend to become engaged with what they are already familiar with. I think all students have experiences that they bring to a new learning opportunity. These experiences are what they use as a foundation for new learning. Thus, I wanted the first graders to browse through these books independently to build experiences with the books and form some ideas about them prior to my instruction.

Engaging the Students

I chose *Pancakes for Breakfast* by Tommie DePaola for our first experience because the pictures are drawn frame by frame in a linear pattern where the action is obvious. The students already knew this author's work. The group sat before me on the floor as I held the book up for all the students to see while I was reading the title and author. I briefly explained that this was a book

meant for us to read the pictures to understand the story. Some students were excited that they had seen the book. My intention for this initial sharing was for the students to first experience the book for the story itself while being exposed to this type of picture writing. I “storied” the book for the students, orally recounting the action depicted in each frame as the plot unfolded. The students added comments periodically, but the reading was mainly my explaining the picture sequence to the students. As we reached the end of the book, I suggested that since they were such wonderful artists, it would be interesting for us to each create a wordless story like Tommie DePaola did, thus starting them to think about using the author as a model for writing style. We agreed from previous workshop experiences that we needed to do some prewriting, gathering information and generating ideas. I gave students a piece of paper folded into sections. I instructed them to write or draw in each frame a favorite topic such as family and friends, foods, a special trip. Each student began a personal process of creating a wordless story.

From Reading to Writing

In the next session, I once again brought out the wordless book *Pancakes for Breakfast* and was met with some excitement, a few groans, and the comment that we “did that one yesterday.” This was my sure lead! I explained that when we previously read the book, we were reading to understand and enjoy the story. Since we wanted to write wordless stories of our own, we were going to look at this book once more to study how Tommie DePaola created his story. Again, I read the author and title on both the cover and title page, setting up a ritual for beginning a book. As I started reading the story, I realized that a difference this time was that I wasn’t reading the book alone. The students were raising their hands and in turn telling the story that they had merely observed the day before. I went to great lengths to point out how the pictures told the story and encouraged the students as they read to pull out the important details that helped us understand the sequence of the events. We discussed the fact that, although the setting was the same in a sequence of pictures, some part of the frame was changed to show the action progressing. We found examples of techniques such as facial expressions, think bubbles, and objects in the pictures that the author used to convey to us what was occurring in the story. Then we storied a second wordless book, *Changes* by Pat Hutchins, in the same way: we were reading from the perspective of a writer studying not only the story, but as authors looking from the perspective of writing. As the students were engaging in this new perspective in reading, I brought up the idea that all stories have a beginning, middle, and ending. We identified

these parts in each of the wordless stories we had already encountered. I took a piece of paper folded into three parts and modeled this idea with my own picture representations by showing three stages of the building of a snowman. I then solicited the class to name additional techniques I could use that may make my wordless story more understandable to the reader. I received some suggestions, and modeled how to add these to my story. I suggested that the students look back at the idea sheets from our previous session to help them think of a subject for their own three-part story. Each student received a paper folded into three parts just like my model and began writing their own three-part picture story.

As we moved through the next few writing sessions, our practice became to story a new wordless book prior to our actual writing block and to discuss the sequence of events as well as the techniques the author of the featured book used to convey the story. For example, we read *The Birthday Present* by Mavis Smith. It had some words that were part of the street signs in the story. I pointed out how they were important to the pictures, but they didn't tell the story. I suggested that while a wordless book tells the story in pictures, a writer could certainly use words if they were important to the picture and help the reader understand the action. I noticed this technique surfacing in some drafts soon after. One student applied this idea very well. In the story of her mother's birthday party, she drew a banner in her picture that read "HAPPY BIRTHDAY MOM!"—clearly important to the story but not telling the story itself. In the same vein, another student added a "PIZZA DELIVERY" sign to the top of a car to explain his story of ordering pizza. Finally, one student became very animated about his pictures remaining in black and white after we studied a book featuring this technique. The students were beginning to experiment with book techniques to build narrative structure.

Conferencing With Students

As the three-part drafts of wordless stories began to take shape, the need for writing conferences surfaced. Most teachers of writing have a personal style for organizing student conferencing. Since the classroom teacher and I were both circulating around the room, we found the simplest way for us, at the beginning, was to hold informal conferences as the students needed help, while making sure we reached each student before the draft was completed.

We asked students to explain their three-part pictures and tell how the story progressed from beginning, to middle, to end. Narrative structure was our primary goal in the early conferences. If the story was confusing or lacked

sequence, I asked the students to explain how they wanted the story to progress and then asked questions that would lead them to discover a natural sequence. I helped the students recall author techniques to help the sequence flow. In some cases the first, second, and third picture had no common thread. I had a conference with one student who had a picture of two people in a swimming pool for the first frame, then a terrific thunderstorm in the next frame. It seemed to me as she narrated the events that two different stories were in progress. I suggested that she choose one theme and follow it throughout the story. As we discussed her ideas, she decided that she would draw her friend arriving on a sunny day to swim, then move the picture of the children swimming to the second frame. Finally, the third frame depicted the storm, but she decided to add a drawing of an empty swimming pool to show that the children had to abandon their plans as a result of the storm, a technique of repeating pictures that she had recalled from a previous wordless book.

In some cases we needed to give the student specific suggestions. Another student was skilled at drawing motorcycles, and naturally as a result had the same motorcycle in each of his three frames. In this case I asked the student to explain his story, and together we decided that he didn't have one. We discussed possible ideas for a motorcycle story, and I suggested that something could happen to the original motorcycle in his beginning that would make it look different in the end. The next day as I was walking by his table, I was excited to see that his story showed a motorcycle with a nail in the tire.

Through these early teacher/writer conferences, Ann and I found that it worked well to ask the students to tell the story orally so that we could better understand their thought processes before giving suggestions. It was crucial to help students to remember to focus on one idea or theme and to follow through with a beginning, middle and end. The conference focused on suggestions for helping the reader understand the story and its action. It was important to make suggestions and not demands, as Lucy Calkins advocates in *The Art of Teaching Writing*. She maintains that teachers of growing writers should follow this simple sequence: first be fully present as a listener to the writer, learning everything we can so that we can obtain the information to best help the writer. The next step is to ask questions about the piece that will help the writer make the story clear, and then finally to make suggestions. We wanted to honor the efforts of the author by only giving suggestions.

As the students continued their drafts, we checked their progress to make sure that they were on target as the stories developed. The students sat at tables of four to five, which gave them a chance to discuss their work with each other too. As the students storied their drafts for us and developed a sequential three-part wordless story, Ann and I presented them with three separate

sheets to transfer the draft into the beginnings of a final copy. Conferences became increasingly more formal, focusing on editing and fine-tuning as well as making sure all the parts of the book were in place.

The Process of Creating the Product

Once each student had a solid three-part picture narrative draft, it was time to transfer the idea into a more formal copy. Here began a rewriting stage. I gave each student three pieces of paper to redraw their three-part wordless story, with each part (beginning, middle, and end) on its own sheet. On this drawing, they were charged to consider additional detail that could be added to their original pictures to help the reader understand how the story progressed. We continued to work on three-part wordless narratives, and the students had conferences with both teachers and with their peers. Again, we gave help in the form of suggestions, and the students became the final authority of their work.

I continued to feature a published wordless book at the beginning of each session, reading first for pleasure, and then reading as writers to study the techniques of the author and relate these ideas to our own work. The sharing of the wordless narratives switched from being teacher-centered to student-centered, as I began to step away from narrating the book with the students providing the comments, to letting the students become the ones to story the book. I became the facilitator interjecting as necessary to help our understanding and discussion to flow, but the narration and talk were the students' own. I found it most productive in these wordless book sessions to choose one student at a time to story a succession of two pages, switching narrators as we turned the pages so that most students would have a turn. My reason was twofold: First, it gave the students a sense of audience and practice narrating to an audience so that they would become aware that there were actual readers of the story. It additionally served classroom management purposes to keep all students engaged in the story and the discussion.

On one occasion, we were scheduled to study Raymond Briggs's *The Snowman*, a beautifully drawn classic wordless book with multiple story frames and much detail. Ann and I made the decision to use this book with small independent groups so that the students could get a closer look at the pictures. After securing multiple copies from the school, public library, and personal collections, we gave a copy to each group of four students. We gave with it specific directions to story the book within their group, taking turns on pages as we would in a whole group discussion, and finishing with a brief report to the whole group. This was the real test. I wanted to see how well

the students could follow the narrative of a wordless book and identify author techniques without a teacher facilitator. As I circulated the room during the small-group study, I noticed that most groups were engaged in the book, although I had to give a few gentle reminders on how to story a wordless book. In the end, the students generally seemed to have a good sense of the story and the techniques used to create it. I attributed the ability of the students to read the pictures and gain the understanding of the story to our daily practice with wordless stories.

The students were becoming increasingly proficient as readers and writers. These first graders were beginning to transfer their understanding of the stories' and authors' techniques, as well as writing process, to their own work. The students' final three-part wordless narratives were taking form, and it was time to begin featuring work in progress as examples during group discussion. It became the practice that after studying a published wordless book we would ask permission to show the work of a classmate, letting the student share the piece or choose to have me narrate it. We pointed out the techniques we noticed in the piece and the things that made the story work. The class started out unsure of how to comment on peer writing, and I had to model this at first. We were quick to point out when a student gave a comment or question that was on target. We then gave suggestions for what the student might do next and related those ideas to other students' work. This showcase of work in progress gave the students new ideas and examples of how their work should progress. Soon, students were asking to have their stories in progress featured before the class for comments, and we had to start a sign-up sheet.

During this time, we continued perfecting our three-part narratives as well as adding the necessary parts that would eventually transform our stories into a wordless book. Each day as we storied a wordless book, we looked at a different attribute that is common to all picture books and added it to our own wordless stories. We began with the cover and title page. In a whole-group session, I pointed out the title of our latest wordless book; we discussed if and why that title was a good one for the book and how it matched the theme of the story. I pointed out the author and illustrator that were named on the front of the book and on the inside title page as well. The students were then charged to create a cover and title page complete with author and illustrator named on the front for their own books. We continued this practice with the book dedication and the ending author page. For each mini-lesson we studied book parts and found them in some of the wordless books we had previously featured, then transferred them to our own wordless books. By the end of our study and writing of wordless books, each student was responsible for having a three-part wordless narrative, a cover and title page, a dedication,

and an author page. Eventually all students had written, held conferences, edited, and finally produced the finished writing of a wordless book. They then put the books together and added the last part, the copyright.

Reading for the Public

By this time the goals we had for these first graders were beginning to be realized. Each student had been an active participant in a conventional writing process as well as gaining a sense of his or her own personal writing process and what it means individually to be a writer. The students were beginning to read as writers and now had under their belts the techniques of many accomplished wordless book authors and more importantly the skills necessary to identify and model techniques. These kindergarten writers had a sense of narrative structure. It was time for them to share their stories and celebrate the efforts it takes to become a writer and an author.

It was a special day. We called it our Author Celebration, and with it came an air of honor and accomplishment throughout the classroom. There was a special author's chair for the final reading of each featured author's book. Students could sit in the author's chair and story their wordless book before the class. Each student chose to share, with only one asking me to lead the sharing while he sat next to me and assisted. The classroom teacher and I modeled for the students how to be an audience during the author readings. This is the point where we realized that our educational beliefs, classroom practices, and reflection on what we hoped to accomplish all started coming together. Each author in turn storied his or her book for the class and afterwards took questions and comments about the finished book. Most of the books were clear and understandable, and numerous author techniques for wordless books were apparent. Each student had a three-part wordless story with a clear beginning, middle, and ending. The students had gained a solid sense of narrative structure. The best reward of all was that all students had a tremendous sense of pride. They now saw themselves as writers.

The End of the Beginning

At the end of an entire school year of practicing this approach, I found myself again sitting at the same classroom table with the same colleague, a stack of first-grade writing portfolios sitting between us. We were looking at the first wordless books the students had written and comparing them to the ones they had since undertaken on their own, as well as some pieces integrating images along with printed text. It was apparent that the wordless

book study had facilitated their growth as writers. We reflected on the question that had plagued us many months ago and launched us into our search for a new approach: “Can you truly teach primary students to write?” We had found an answer: yes, you can!

There was one goal yet to be fully realized. The original dilemma we faced was how to teach these students to write with words as well as pictures, and we would spend the rest of the year working to this goal as our ideas for teaching beginning writing continued to evolve. Eventually Ann and I began using other genres of literature in the same way we had featured wordless books. Our purpose remained to move the students into writing text.

Creating wordless books was by no means intended to be an end within itself. It was a beginning, a place where the students had the opportunity to study authors and learn the structure, language, and craft associated with telling a story, as well as a place where they began to follow these conventions into becoming writers of text. Most importantly, it gave them a chance to practice writing in a non-threatening way. By the end of the year, most had moved into writing complete stories with a considerable amount of text.

As I revisit this experience now, I take pride in how well these first grade students succeeded. I have since tried this same approach with a multi-age primary class, and the students were successful. I’ve also tried my technique with two kindergarten classes, where some students were successful and others encountered major pitfalls. This setback taught me that students have to be ready to understand narrative and story structure. Previous instruction about narratives would have to build to this use of wordless books to teach writing.

It wasn’t until I wrote about this experience and discussed it in open dialogue with teachers who work with older students that I began to fully understand the full extent of what I had been teaching. Sharing my ideas with colleagues helped clarify what I had been trying to accomplish. Instinct about what the students needed had led me to the right practices, but reflection and sharing my ideas helped me to thoroughly understand and grow. Now I realize through talking with other teachers that the thought processes and skills we were using were very complex. This realization explains to me why some groups struggled. They needed more of the basic knowledge about story to undertake the narrative process. In addition, I found from working with second and third graders later, and from talking to middle and high school teachers, that older grade levels could benefit from using wordless books to revisit narrative and story structure. Through sharing and reflection, I deepened my understanding of writing, just as my students had done.

Reflection

When I joined our book's inquiry community, I was eager to study reflection-in-action as practiced in writing groups. At an earlier four-week summer institute, I had written a rough draft of my essay on wordless books and writing instruction in the primary grades. After much discussion and writing with my initial group, I felt that I had my ideas about this teaching practice securely in place. However, I soon found that I still had more to learn, and the process of working in my new writing group definitely improved my essay and other writing I have done since then.

Leslie and Andy, my new readers, supported revision of my essay in several important ways—some focused on basic organization and presentation, some aimed at deepening the thinking behind my story. Reading Andy's essay—which had section headings already in place—led me to try that strategy for guiding my reader. In creating those headings, I had to think harder about my essay's organizational plan, and discussions in our group clarified my essay structure. Meanwhile, talking about Leslie's piece helped me flesh out the philosophy behind my pedagogy. My draft presented a step-by-step narrative of what I was doing in the classroom—a parallel to the straightforward narrative I was teaching my students to compose with pictures—but discussing Leslie's essay encouraged me to write about the rationale behind the teaching practices I was urging others to adopt.

*While these talks with my new group took my essay to a new level, they also built my confidence as a teacher and writer. I began to feel that I had it in me to think and write as a professional. By thinking **through** writing, I learned how to tap into the level of reflection that allowed me to put my philosophy into practice—both in teaching and in writing.*

Now I know that the more we educators reflect and discuss practices, the more we realize there is much to discover about teaching. This idea seems so simple that I don't know why it took me years to realize. Interestingly, it was only when I had to describe my classroom in language for my writing group that I began to see how what I was teaching was actually far more complex than I had realized. Being able to talk about my teaching with educators from other levels was especially rewarding. For example, my instincts had told me that my primary students needed a springboard to actual print, but it wasn't until I began verbalizing my thoughts to other teachers from high school and college settings, that the more complex concepts embedded in my teaching emerged for me. I wasn't merely leading students to begin using print. I was also teaching visual discrimination, narrative structure, and author techniques. My approach was helping primary students to synthesize and evaluate information: I was teaching the highest order of thinking skills. I found that my original ideas had more depth than I ever imagined and that they had applications for teaching students of all grade levels. (A response report from Linda

Stewart, a member of another one of our project's writing groups, was particularly helpful in pointing out these connections. See "Reading Across Writing Groups.")

Thinking about what I am doing for my students on so many levels beyond the isolated practice of using wordless books has helped me to be a better teacher. Now when I start a new unit, I make it a point to journal periodically throughout the unit so that I can reflect on and then see before me what is happening with the students in response to my teaching. As a unit progresses, I can look to my teaching journal for patterns in student learning to help me understand the learning taking place. I now meet regularly with the teachers on my team and we exchange ideas and trouble-shoot to find the best possible way to help our students. I feel empowered taking this approach because I am able to use shared reflection to find the best practices for our classrooms.

Overall, building on the learning in my writing group, I have become a more confident and effective teacher. In the classroom, instead of a hit-or-miss approach where I accidentally fall into the right practice but have little idea of why, I now work consciously to envision and articulate concepts as I teach. I fully explore what I want to accomplish and how I want to accomplish it. I don't believe that I could have achieved this level of self-reflection in my teaching today without the experience of writing and reflecting with my writing group. I know that my teaching now has greater passion and that I have both the conviction and the knowledge to back up my teaching claims.

My writing group and our whole community of practice had a profound effect on my abilities as a writer. Working with these colleagues gave me the confidence to apply for a graduate professional writing program, where I am one of the few elementary educators enrolled. Significantly, in that program, I've found that most of the other students have less experience with collaborative writing than I do. In and outside class, I have been able to offer suggestions about how to workshop effectively and to model some strategies learned from the writing groups in this project. Recently, I joined a well-established group of professional writers outside of my graduate program setting, and this new group easily accepted me as a peer.

Working on this essay as a member of an active community of practice has been invaluable. It exposed me to new ideas and writing techniques. It gave me confidence in myself as a teacher and a writer. The writing, the thinking, and the discussions helped me clarify my philosophy of teaching and learning. I now view my teaching from the perspective of a writer as well as a teacher: the two go hand in hand. My learning grew gradually from writing about a specific teaching practice that worked well for me, to revisiting the experience reflectively and refining my thinking in ways that will forever shape the way I teach. I now collaborate with my students through journaling and reflecting. I now understand that as long as I practice such social approaches to reflection, my story will never conclude—and the learning will never end.

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