

Michelle Perria
Part A

Vivian Paley's style of inquiry is journaling and reflection. Paley states that in the journal, "you are to write about the things that you do not understand, that don't work, and try to imagine why. It is only with yourself...that you can learn, to be completely honest. Once you begin to bring out the first errors and misjudgments the dam will burst with revelations" (Paley #13). I think this is very beneficial practice for new teachers like me (I'm only in year three) and for seasoned teachers. A journal is the best way to see what works and what doesn't. For the seasoned teacher it is a great way to keep things from getting boring and stale. If you are constantly evaluating your methods of approach and you are monitoring the student reactions and learning you cannot possibly become a stale teacher.

Paley tape records her daily lessons, she transcribes the conversations, and interprets what she hears and doesn't hear. This is a practice of dedication, but it is also a practice in learning. By reviewing every day what was said she can monitor what children are learning. She can also see the holes in the lesson and in their thinking allowing her to go back and re-teach what was missed or converse with the students about what happened the day before. I admire the dedication necessary to reflect about every detail of the day. Paley encourages all teachers to keep the journal. Not only is she dedicated enough to do the transcriptions, but she does it all the same day. And that is the ingredient I need to add to my daily journals.

By reading the transcripts of conversations she was able to see when the students started to change their thinking and when they were learning. With the journal and reflection Paley is able to see the value of continuing with the lessons.

In reality, I would like to implement this inquiry into my classroom with a 2009 twist. I see a video camera instead of a tape recorder. With video I should be able to see the students as well as hear them. I will be able to observe my interaction with the students and by reviewing the daily activity I can see if learning is happening and if it is not I will be able to tell if it is me or them.

This approach to inquiry could easily be used in high schools to observe class disruptions and teacher reactions. When you can break it down it will be a lot easier to change a behavior. When I have watched videos of myself I have noticed that sometimes I trigger the disruptions, or that I always look to the same students over and over to answer.

I would love to see administrators keep a journal or review a teacher's journal with the teacher. This would be another way to get more feedback about best practices. In our building the non-tenured teachers must submit artifacts as evidence of best teaching practices. This actually reminds me of this method, only it is missing the reflection piece. Administrator could review the video or journal with the teacher and then the teacher could write a reflection about student engagement and learning. The reason this would be beneficial is because we are in an "at risk" school and until recently most teachers in the

building have just settled; settled for just getting through the day, just getting students to turn something in, and settled for doing something easy to avoid the resistance of the students.

I think a journal or a video reflection would help many of the settlers see where the students are when they are in the room. If 50% or more of the tape is just the teacher voice, how can there be actual learning. In our building the teachers who have already met credit requirements feel that they are done. How is this possible when the students are different every year?

As far as accessibility goes, it should be a fairly simple process; however, time is an issue. The theory is great, but how? High school teachers have about 150 students and one plan period, oh, and don't forget the life outside of school and the extra duties.

Journal inquiry will add to scholarship. Teachers can take their reflections and write to other teachers (just like Paley). Other teachers can help each other through writing.

I see cross over between Paley's inquiry and that of Bateson's cultural observation. Bateson observes cultures to better understand how people interact and learn. Paley does the same thing, Paley watches children interact and is able to see children make meaning by playing. Bateson watch children learn the emotional response by interacting with adults who set the learning stage.

The one thing I am going to take away with me is the journal and reflection piece. The funny thing is that I was most resistant to this piece because I could not figure out how a kindergarten teacher was going to help me, a high school English teacher.