

## Unit 2 Paper

While many teachers are confined to using the structured process-product research method, Vivian Paley has conducted and implemented her own in class research using teacher inquiry. Paley's focus of narrative inquiry, a form of teacher inquiry, is conducted through a number of related actions.

Conversations are an extremely important part of Paley's narrative inquiry. These include conversations from stories and conversations during dictations. Throughout the book, "The Girl with the Brown Crayon," students are always commenting, questioning, and explaining character relationships, lessons, and the author's reasons for writing the way he did. "That's a lie! A mommy and a daddy have to remember their own child! And you can't neither change colors from hugging! Me and Cory hug and we don't change colors a bit!" Renny blurted out. (Paley 40). This is just one of instances in Paley's book where students' input sparks a conversation to be discussed as a class. Some conversations lasted longer than others, and some were more complex, however students were never denied the opportunity to discuss what they associated to the text they were working with at the time. "To dismiss a statement as being "off the subject" forfeits a valuable teaching moment," (Walley's Stories 216). Student's interests and conversations drove the class to focus on reading Leo Lionni stories for the entire year. In each book by Leo Lionni, Paley's class spend a significant amount of time reading, dramatizing, painting larger posters, discussing the book, and comparing the book and characters to previous Leo Lionni books.

The importance of conversations in Paley's teacher inquiry is best shown by the fact that she recorded conversations all day, every day. Recording the conversations became a way for Paley to reflect on her teaching and her student's knowledge in order to determine follow up discussions. "The teacher learns to watch for inexactness in her questions, to repeat a child's inaudible comments, to ask for clarification and additions." (Walley's Stories 218). Paley only used one tape on her recorder which forced her to transcribe the material the same day or following morning. She used what she transcribed to begin new discussions related from the previous day. Paley's process of engaging the students in conversations, recording the conversations, reflecting on the conversations and implementing her research into her teaching the following day exemplifies the meaning of teacher inquiry.

The center of Paley's narrative inquiry is a storytelling curriculum consisting of dictation and dramatization. The dictation is done through the students telling Paley a story which she writes. Through dictation the student has an opportunity to have an open-ended conversation with the teacher, also allowing the teacher to ask the student questions. This is shown by one of Paley's students in "The Girl with the Brown Crayon" the student named said, "Once there was a little princess. And a mother and father. They was the king and queen." During this story Paley was able to take note of Renny's language development and narrative form. Paley

was then able to refer back to the recorded conversation and reflect further. On occasion, dictations were even done as a whole class. During a lesson on the Leo Lionni book, Cornelius, Paley dictates a letter that the class composes for Leo Lionni. Through conversation of the book, Reeny, herself came up with the idea to write to Mr. Lionni concerning the characters of his book. After the children's stories are dictated they are acted out and the author of the story decides who gets to play the characters for their story. As the teacher reads the story the students dramatize the events taking place.

Before children enter school all of their learning is done through play. They learn language, manners, meanings, emotions, people and places through playing. An example from "Story and Play" shows that students can use both dramatization and play to try to make sense of a new word. During free time, some three and four year olds were using a word they heard their parents use, which was, "waterbed." The boys acted out water turning into a bed, preventing a leak, not being able to swim in the water coming out of the bed, and a monster. On a following day the boys were talking about a squirrel drowning in waterbed but it started leaking so the squirrel was fine. Paley used these and other students' conversations during play as part of her teacher inquiry. She was able to revisit the conversations by the use of the recorder and pay close attention to language, interests, concerns, and relationships.

Vivian Paley is a major proponent of teacher inquiry or action research. Her teaching methods can be based around dictation, dramatization or play, and conversations. The related characteristics combined together form narrative inquiry, Paley's method of conducting teacher inquiry.