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ABSTRACT

Volume 2 of the dialogue journal newsletter contains contributions from the editors and teachers concerning the use of dialogue journals as a means of sustained written interaction between students and teachers at all educational levels and in second language and other types of instruction. The information presented includes techniques, ideas, opinions, results, examples, information sources, and other resources for dialogue journal use in education. Issue 4 of this volume focuses on the use of the technique in special education for educationally mentally retarded and learning disabled students. (MSE)

DIALOGUE

Volume 2, 1984-1985

Volume II, No. 1

Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dialogue

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNALS

January, 1984

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

Joy Kreeft, with contributions from Jana Staton and Shelley Gutstein

As we talk with teachers who are adapting dialogue journals to their own situations, we encounter interesting varieties and adaptations of dialogue. Some of what is reported seems to be genuine dialogue, and some does not. This feedback has helped us to reflect on what we and others mean by 'dialogue,' and what the necessary conditions for dialogue journal writing are. This article is an initial attempt to outline some of the necessary characteristics of a dialogue, whether it takes place in a journal or some other form. We will focus on student-teacher interaction in a classroom or other academic context and point out how the characteristics that we have focused on are tied to features, ground rules, or strategies over which teachers, as the initiators of this interaction, have some control.

We may not cover all of the important conditions for dialogue journal writing. If you have others that you think should be included, please write us. You may also know of other interesting and effective uses of dialogue in the classroom. We would love to hear about them.

1. There is an intrinsic purpose or goal for communicating, and participants communicate about real issues that are important to them. They seek genuine information whether it is about each other or about course content, they solve real academic and personal problems, etc. This differs from much classroom interaction in which no real information is exchanged, but the teacher asks questions to check whether the students possess certain information, or, in the case of the language classroom, 'converses' with students in order to aid in student expression of concepts and grammatical structures (e.g., 'Where is the clock?' 'It's on the wall.')

2. Both parties are engaged equally in the interaction--providing and seeking information, introducing and elaborating on topics, etc. This means that one person does not dominate or control the direction of the interaction with questions or directives, but also is willing to respond to the questions of the other person. This also means that the normal unequal status of teacher and student is minimized. The teacher is as involved in the content of the interaction as the student, instead of simply collecting the journals and giving a grade or making evaluative comments such as 'good point.'

3. There is freedom for both participants to choose topics as the topics become important, without fear of censure or reproach. Topics may be suggested by one of the participants, but are not predetermined. This differs from many classroom writing assignments, in which the teacher determines both the topics and kind of writing to be done (expository paragraph, etc.).

4. The communication is frequent and continuous, between the same two parties, over an extended period of time. What constitutes an adequate amount of time is unclear, but it appears that the interaction should occur at least once a week and for at least a couple of months. In order for rapport to develop, it is essential that the same participants continue in the interaction. Notes on message boards are one form of communication with others, but usually do not result in continuous dialogue. We have seen dialogue journal interactions in which one topic is carried on for six or eight months, interspersed with brief mentions of other topics. During this

IN THIS ISSUE

time, a lot of information is shared and opinions are expressed.

5. The focus is on meaning and understanding rather than on form. Both participants are primarily interested in the message itself, and there is a continued effort to make the message clear and comprehensible. When the message is not clear, clarification is sought, but this does not take the form of overt correction.

6. The communication is private and not subject to public scrutiny (unless both participants decide, at some later date, that they would like their writing to be made public). Students especially must know that their writing is safe from authority figures and peers. In face-to-face encounters, students often feel shy, and young students or students learning a second language may be afraid to make mistakes in front of the teacher or peers. In the journal they may initially feel unsure, but as they build confidence through the positive feedback that they receive, they soon feel free to express themselves and make mistakes, knowing that only the teacher sees them and that the mistakes are all right.

7. There is time for rereading (or reviewing) and reflection before response. This characteristic and the privacy of the interaction differentiate this kind of dialogue from oral conversation in an important way. The rapid pace of face-to-face interaction places demands on both participants to respond immediately, with little reflection time and can thus cause discomfort for the young student or language learner who may not understand what has been said or know how to reply. In the journal students have time to review what was said and reflect on it before replying, and can ask for clarification if it is needed.

8. The exchange takes place in some tangible form or context, which is available to both parties and can be reviewed at any time. This can be a bound notebook or a video or audio cassette (see below). Thus, students can look back to what was said earlier, either to check their own previous entries or the teacher's. In this way, the teacher's entry is available as a model for vocabulary, grammatical structures, ways of thinking and self-expression, etc.

We have proposed some characteristics and conditions that seem necessary for a genuine dialogue, at least under the constraints of classroom settings. There is an exchange of real information and genuine purposes; both participants are equally engaged in the choice and discussion of the topics; the communication is frequent, continuous and private; there is a focus on meaning rather than form; and there is time for rereading and reflection. All of our interactions with students in dialogue journals may not possess all of these characteristics, but they give us a goal to aim for, and when they are present, the interaction can be very satisfying for both participants.

Two Examples of different forms of dialogue communication

To emphasize that the dialogue journal concept can be adapted to other forms or modes, here are two examples.

Videologues in American Sign Language Classes

Paul Menkis, currently directing the intensive ASL program at Gallaudet College, began experimenting with the concept of a video-dialogue journal instead of a written journal:

"Because to date ASL does not have a written form, the idea of a video-dialogue journal began to take form. This approach met the need to consistently communicate in the target language instead of switching back and forth between two languages. In my classes, where students begin with no knowledge of ASL and in which no voice communication in English is used, I initially use the written dialogue journal as a means of establishing communication and rapport with the students. After about three or four weeks, I gradually introduce the concept of the videologue journal. This three- or four-week time span is necessary to give beginning students time and confidence to acquire and use some basic ASL skills to begin using the language to express their ideas."

"The videologue strategy involves assigning a blank videotape to individual students. Students then videotape themselves in ASL in a specially designed private self-viewing room equipped with cameras and recording equipment (in the Gallaudet College Learning Center). They

videotape their questions, comments, etc., for two to four minutes. Then the videotapes are given to me for my viewing and response. While I'm viewing the tape, I make notes on their comments and questions and on their progress in using ASL. Then I respond in ASL on their individual tapes and return them to the students at the next class meeting for their own viewing and continued responses."

For more information, write or call H.P. Menkis, Dept. of Sign Communication, Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 651-5633, voice or TTY.

Oral letters

Andrew Soria has used Oral Letters with university level EFL students. Oral letters consist of cassette tapes (which the students provide) on which the students record a spoken message to their teacher. Students use their own cassette recorders or machines in the language laboratory. After they have recorded their message, they rewind the tape to the beginning of that message, clearly marking which side of the tape it is on. The teacher listens to the message and records a response immediately following it on the tape, again rewinding to the beginning of the message. Students are encouraged to speak freely about any topic they like, without a script. The tapes are private; no one other than the participants listens to them.

Andrew reports that one of the more interesting 'letters' was that of a Chinese student he taught several years ago. The student explained about Chinese flute music and included on the tape examples of his own playing of a variety of different Chinese flutes.!

Andrew Soria can be contacted at 17765 N. Shore Estate Rd., Spring Lake, Mich. 49456. (616) 842-9011.

THE AGONY OF THE SELF-EMPLOYED

REFLECTIONS ON DIALOGUE

...What I feel like telling you today is that the world needs real dialogue, that falsehood is just as much the opposite of dialogue as is silence, and that the only possible dialogue is the kind between people who remain what they are and speak their minds...we must pay attention to what unites us rather than to what separates us.

...We are faced with evil. And, as for me, I feel rather as Augustine did before becoming a Christian when he said: 'I tried to find the source of evil and I got nowhere.' But it is also true that I, and a few others, know what must be done, if not to reduce evil, at least not to add to it. Perhaps we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured. But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you don't help us, who else in the world can help us to do this?

Between the forces of terror and the forces of dialogue, a great unequal battle has begun. I have nothing but reasonable illusions as to the outcome of that battle. But I believe it must be fought, and I know that certain men at least have resolved to do so...The program for the future is either a permanent dialogue or the solemn and significant putting to death of any who have experienced dialogue...after an interval of two thousand years we may see the sacrifice of Socrates repeated several times. Albert Camus, in an essay in 'The Unbeliever and Christians,' 1948.

CURRENT RESEARCH

More Dissertations in Progress

Bonita Blazer. Development of writing in kindergarten: Speaking and writing relationships. Univ. of Penn.

Jack Farley. A descriptive analysis of the journal writing abilities of a group of educable mentally retarded young adults. Univ. of Cincinnati.

Mary Rivkin is using dialogue journals to document changes in attitudes of early education majors toward the educational value of children's play. Univ. of Md.

(Cont. on p. 7)

WHO ARE WE?
Joe Koltisko

We thought you might want to know who else reads Dialogue. Right now (January, 1984) our mailing list has 300 individuals and grows by 10-20 people a month. About 28% are teachers or counselors in the U.S., while 55% are educational researchers, many of whom also teach in graduate departments of education. 7% work abroad, 5% are teacher-trainers or school administrators, and 5% work with the deaf.

As a way of finding out more about what people do with dialogue journals, we summarized the responses to our 'Survey Questionnaire' in the last issue, and telephoned a sample of people to find out how journals are being adapted to different settings and to meet different needs.

Different Needs

Elizabeth Turner, in South Australia, finds that dialogue journals encourage her 15-year-old deaf students to question things happening around them. For Carol Harmatz's adult ESL students in Washington, D.C., the journals provide a confidence builder and emotional outlet for their difficulties in adapting to a new culture. Carol Urquhart of Willis College, Ottawa, mentions that dialogue journals sensitize her to the linguistic and psychological needs of her immigrant students.

Those we spoke with have adapted dialogue journals to suit their particular needs. Diane DeFord and Pat Rigg of Ohio State University use 'reaction folders' with their student teachers, many of whom use a similar method when they become teachers themselves. The reaction folder is more focused and perhaps less frequent than the dialogue journal, but it retains the notion of dialogue. Daniel McLaughlin, at the Rock Point Community School in Chinle, Arizona, says that dialogue writing enables him to understand and assist students with severe emotional problems, who would never have 'opened up' in conversation.

Presentations at Conferences

The use of dialogue journals is beginning to come up at educational conferences. Carolyn Kessler of the University of San Antonio says that Christine Meloni's presentation on dialogue journals at the Fall Conference of TEXTESOL was so successful that many teachers have implemented them. One teacher is even using it with her husband! They are on different schedules, and this is one way to keep in touch. Sarah Hudelson of Florida International University discussed dialogue journals in the course of a series of ten workshops for fifty teachers of bilingual children, as well as using them with her own university classes. This past summer, the South Bay Writing Project in California included presentations for teacher consultants on dialogue journals by Patricia Nichols of San Jose State's English department. (A letter from Patricit in early 1982, one of the first we received, helped spur us to start this newsletter.)

As part of the California Writing Project at UCLA, Leslee Reed, Selma Horowitz and Rose White have been talking to teachers in many Southern California school districts for the past three years about implementing dialogue journals in first and second language classrooms.

We are also finding that more non-English teachers are using dialogue journals. Lucille McCarthy, of Baltimore, writes that they were used with great success in a week-long intensive program last summer designed to teach ten- to fourteen-year-olds about life in Victorian Philadelphia. The children were able to pin down what they had seen and learned, and put themselves in the historical context.

Research Uses

Our survey also uncovered a number of dissertations planned or in progress in which dialogue journals serve as an effective means of recording on a daily basis student reactions and perceptions about events and concerns, as well as several in which the dialogue journal interactions themselves are being studied (see pg. 7). Most of the researchers are also using dialogue writing in some form in their teaching or training, and many teachers have begun to do research, using their dialogue journals as data.

Our telephone survey and your responses have shown that dialogue journal users and uses continue to diversify to meet the individual needs and situations of students and teachers. If we've left out yours, please send us a note. We want this to be a continuing dialogue.

LESLEE'S PAGE

Dialogue Journals--An Important Classroom Management Tool.

--Leslee Reed

As the day begins and my class comes into the classroom, the very first thing most students do is pick up their journal and read my reply to their previous entry. Sometimes they are especially eager to respond and begin writing before they have removed their jackets. Other times they read, put away their jackets and get out their supplies for the morning, and while waiting for class to begin, they re-read and begin writing. This gives me time to check attendance and get the business of the day underway. For those who have been inspired to reply and for those who have had something interesting happen overnight, it is time to write, and they do!

As the day proceeds, the journals remain visible, available for the few moments when an assignment is completed and there is a bit of time for writing. If an assignment is unintelligible, too difficult or too easy, out come the journals and the writing goes on. Because the students write throughout the day, I have ongoing daily feedback and the journals serve as an important aid to my management of the flow of the classroom.

I invite my students to help me to become a better teacher, so they are encouraged to evaluate and even criticize lessons. As they do so, I ask them to become more specific in letting me know why a lesson was dull or boring. Frequently they make suggestions about how we should do something or how I may be more helpful to a specific student. Occasionally they suggest a lesson topic--perhaps there is something they're interested in, they have seen or heard about on TV, or we have discussed in class and they wish to know more about.

Some student actions are disruptive and need my immediate attention. After being reprimanded in class, the student may use the journal to deny that he/she was as guilty as the accusation implied or to explain why or how that particular action came about. If the student is very angry, the journal may become a place to vent anger and a student may even write, "I hate you..." Frequently by the end of the day, that same student is busily erasing that entry and writing a new one.

Using the written exchange provides me a way of complimenting a student for an especially well done bit of work, a particular behavior toward another student or the fulfillment of a responsibility in the classroom. A new piece of clothing warrants a comment, which, written in the privacy of the journal is savored by the recipient, and the student without new clothing does not suddenly feel that his own clothing is somehow not so good.

The privacy of the journal provides time and a place for those happenings which are painful to discuss, the death of a family member, the impending divorce of someone very close, the fears that the family may not be able to stay in their home or the agony of having a parent who is not succeeding in this country and is contemplating returning to the native country. Sibling problems or interclass difficulties shared with someone who is non-judgemental are easier to bear simply because someone has "heard." Knowing that someone else knows your problems creates a bond with that person.

At times there are things that a student wants desperately to tell about. One day in class we discussed ghosts and whether or not we believed in them. This inspired one student to write a 4-page narrative about ghosts. To have the time and the attention of the teacher long enough to relate that entire story is a near impossibility, but the journal gives time and space for those issues or topics which need retelling. Writing also relieves the class from having to sit and listen for a long time to just one person, when they, too, have something of equal importance to tell. For the student who always has something of such importance that it cannot possibly wait, the journal provides the opportunity to fully relate the information.

Classroom management is also aided by students' entries that tell of their need for specific materials and supplies. This not only helps me to know what individuals need to work with, but it helps make the students aware of the necessity for specificity and detail. If the request is not specific as to quantity, size, color and amount, I cannot be very helpful, and materials are delayed until the specifications are clarified.

Yes, as an adjunct to daily classroom management the journal fills the bill!

HOW TO GET STARTED

Shelley Gutstein

Often teachers are concerned about how to present Dialogue Journals to their students--how to get the students to "do it right." Our experience has been that the journals are one of the greatest self-teaching devices that exists, and that explaining the journals to classes is less of a problem than most people think.

What we mean by this is that with adequate introduction to the concepts of dialogue journal writing on the first day, most procedural problems can be worked out using the journals themselves. What should this introduction consist of? While every teacher will present journals to the class in his/her own way, there are some general concepts that should be conveyed from the outset. First, the students should be told that their dialogue journal is a place where they and the teacher will communicate, "talk," about anything they want to talk about; second, they should know that the journal will not be evaluated or graded in any way. Last, the journal is private and no one else will read it. We haven't found it helpful to say that the will journals improve the students' grammar, writing or reading.

Some teachers give out brief handouts to clarify the concepts and any other requirements, especially with beginning second language students. A handout I often use with beginning ESL students (adults) looks like this:

> *A dialogue journal is a very special kind of writing. It helps you learn to think and write in English. Every day you wi · write for 10 minutes. I will take your journals at the end of class, write back to you, and give you your journal at the beginning of class.*
>
> *Here are some things to remember:*
>
> 1. *Please use a black pen and write on one side of the paper only.*
> 2. *Please include the date each time you write.*
> 3. *Write as much as you like, but please write at least 5 lines a day.*
> 4. *Your journal is confidential. This means I will not show or tell anyone what you write.*

It is important to keep the handout clear, short and concise. We don't want to overwhelm the student or make the journals seem homework- or test-like. Adults seem to need and benefit from a handout more than younger students.

Once the students have their notebooks and are ready to write, they usually produce appropriate journal entries. Teachers may write a sample entry on the blackboard to help the students begin. We find, though, that most students will write original first entries.

With students who 'don't get the idea,' we have found that, in most cases, we can work out the misunderstanding within the journal itself. Consider the journal of Antonio, a 19-year-old Venezuelan student. He thought the Dialogue Journal was a letter exchange, and began the first day by addressing me using a fictional name:

> *My dear Eve:*
> *How are you? I'm very well here. Washington it's biy and old and On, yes the buildings are lovely so mucn.....*
> *A. Canaan M.*

In my response, I just repeated what I had said in class:

> *Antonio, this book is to be a conversation between you and me. So you can write directly to me, ask re questions, tell me anything you wish. OK?*

The second day, Antonio tried again, with a second name for me, but a much more appropriate comment:

> *Lovely Cecilia:*
> *In my first day of class my grammar its so bad but I'm tryiny.....*
> *Antonio J. C. M.*

I responded that he did not need to use a formal letter style:

> *This is a conversation between you and me! If you are not sure what co do, please ask me.*

In his third entry, Antonio had gotten the feeling for a direct communication:

> *Hi! Today the Metro one more time! It's the second time. . . Excuse me because it's 9:15. About the nomework, I like it but I don't know more tnings. The tenses, it's so difficult for me. We are a lot of people for you...*

We see from Antonio's journal that the journal itself is a very powerful vehicle for "teaching" students how to write a dialogue journal. We have learned that presenting the journals to students is much less complicated than it seems at the beginning.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

From Australia, Elizabeth Turner writes about the difference that dialogue journals have made in teaching deaf students of deaf parents who are unfamiliar with spoken or written English.

At first W. wasn't keen on journals and kept his entries to a bare minimum (three or four lines) but now has really let fly with the pen and dashes off lengthy entries every night. For W. there is equal value in reading my reply. When I return the journals, W. turns his back on the things of the present to run his eyes over my words, then looks up with a nod or a smile. He says so little in class (it's an oral school) that for a while I became quite worried about him. I'm so relieved to know that W. will write about his feelings, which enables me to keep in touch with the ups and downs in his life...As I look over my response to W.'s entry, I see that some of my sentences are quite complicated grammatically.

If you have time, I would be interested to know who else in Australia is using dialogue journals.

Elizabeth Turner
Unit 1, 212 Torrens Rd.
Renown Park, South Australia, SW

Jeanina Umana uses dialogue journals in her English classes in Costa Rica. At first her students used Spanish almost exclusively, but little by little they began to use English words, then sentences, until they finally wrote whole paragraphs in English. She always answers in English, no matter what language they write in.

Since our course is structured according to syntactic criteria, when the students write, they force themselves to be ahead of what we are doing in class. For example, very early I found things like, "I want that you tell me about..." According to the grammatical sequencing for the course, that sort of embedding comes toward the very end. But, since they were trying to use it, I taught it earlier and they learned it with no pain because they saw the need for it.

Verb tenses was the area in which I saw the most improvement throughout the semester. To handle time relationships is very difficult to teach in EFL, but if you really have a need to say something and get it across, then you learn to do it better than by working out someone else's exercises. The journals have convinced me that we need a completely different approach to language teaching, and I have volunteered to teach a pilot course that focuses totally on communicative competence.

Dissertations Completed

Marcia Markman. Teacher-student dialogue writing in a college composition course: Effects upon writing performance and attitudes. Univ. of Maryland. 12-83.

Vera Milz. A psycholinguistic description of the development of writing in selected first grade students. Way Element. School, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

Conference Presentations

Jessie Roderick and Jana Staton. Dialogue journal writing: Insights for Pre-service and in-service education. Spring Conference of the NCTE, Columbus, Ohio, April 12-14, 1984.

Jana Staton. Learning to play the game: What we can learn from the writing of profoundly deaf students. AERA, New Orleans, April, 1984.

Please send in information about dissertations and forthcoming papers, etc. Next issue will be published May, 1984.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

We now have 300 names on our mailing list, and we encourage you to xerox and share the newsletter with others. Since we began charging a modest fee (now $3.00 for 3 issues a year) about 100 of you wonderful people have sent in some contribution. ANY DONATION will keep you on the subscriber's list, as it lets us know you are interested the Dialogue. Sometime in the future we may have to drop names of people who have never paid, but we'll put that day off as long as possible. (which means until our out-of-pocket losses per issue start to climb beyond $25.00. There, now, don't you feel guilty?)

HAVING TROUBLE FINDING LIGHTWEIGHT BOUND COMPOSITION BOOKS?

Write us if you would like information about printing firms which carry or will make up bulk orders (1000 OR MORE COPIES) of bound composition books, with lightweight, plain covers, which can have 'Dialogue Journal' and your institution name printed on them. Prices about 50¢, page count variable, and covers are lightweight. Write Joy Kreeft or Jana Staton (at CAL address) for an information sheet with addresses and phone numbers.

NEXT ISSUE

Focus on a Teacher. Our next issue (and those following) will feature one teacher using dialogue journals, including details on the setting and particular use made of dialogue journals, the perceived benefits, and some results. If you know of someone who is using dialogue journals in an interesting way or in a unique situtation and who should be featured in the newsletter, please contact us.

How to encourage reluctant students to communicate. In response to several urgent requests from readers, Leslee Reed will discuss this problem, and would like any contributions you can send us about what has worked for you.

Interpersonal uses of dialogue journals outside the classroom. Yes, there are other situations in which we find dialogue journals being used. We want to describe three important ones, and will appreciate any examples of these, or others:

- between parents and children
- between wives and husbands, and those contemplating a permanent relationship (examples will, of course, be carefully edited!)
- between co-workers, such as principals and teachers (we know of two schools where this happens), or colleagues in research.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal menas of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of the National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyse the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

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Dialogue

July, 1984

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

INTERPERSONAL USES OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Jana Staton

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, neither having to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them right out just as they are, chaff and grain alike; certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping and then with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away.

George Eliot

Dialogue journal writing began as a way to overcome the barriers to communication between students and teachers. But many of us, after six months or a year of sharing our students' lives and thoughts in this way, have asked, "Why can't I have the same relationship with people in my own life? If only I could talk this way to _____." For those of you who haven't tried a dialogue journal with another person in your life--a child, parent, principal, husband or wife (or the practical equivalent)--we want to share some of what we and others have learned from using dialogue journals to create sustained, interactive conversations in our own families and at work. We have collected observations from people now using journals and samples of their writing. (Because of the nature of these journals, we have, of course, kept the identity of our contributors private.)

One point brought up by those we interviewed is that dialogue journals allow both persons to be much more honest than in face-to-face encounters. One person observed, "I can afford to be somewhat critical in the dialogue journal... I don't think at this point in our relationship I'd risk that kind of honest criticism if I were talking." Most of our informants point out that topics can be discussed in the journal which are too uncomfortable to bring up initially in face-to-face conversations. Sometimes these topics are talked about later, and sometimes they are resolved in the journal itself.

Another observation was that there was so much to be learned through the interaction. A principal who began keeping dialogue journals with her teachers was amazed at how much she learned about them, when she had thought she already knew everyone and their concerns rather well. A mother who kept a dialogue journal with her teenage son found that the journal opened up a number of new relationships all at once, as her son began addresing his entries to her in her different roles: "To the one who pays the bills," for example. These various labels helped her understand the complexity of their relationship and his perceptions of her. The dialogue journal allowed them both to discuss feelings and topics for which there was neither time nor courage to discuss when she came home late from a demanding job and the major concern of both was an immediate task (like fixing dinner).

A part of an entry in one dialogue journal provides a perceptive insight into how the written dialogue can affect the quality of a relationship:

"More and more, I feel that writing in the journal permits me to listen to you better when we're together. By having gotten things off my mind in the journal, they're no longer there, occupying brain space and commanding attention and excluding what you're saying at the time and want me to hear...Listening requires effort and concentration and the journal leaves my mind free to concentrate."

(Continued on p. 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

(Interpersonal Uses, cont. from page 1)

Successful Situations for Using Dialogue Journals

In our survey, we have found that the following kinds of pairings have worked well: Parents and teenage children (especially mothers and sons); students going away to college and one parent (we know of a daugther and father); an adult and an older parent who live some distance apart; adult couples, married or considering it; colleagues conducting research (our secret weapon in the NIE study); principals and teachers. All of these partnerships share some important conditions which seem to facilitate the dialogue: (1) Both persons are aware of some barriers to the kind of mutual communication and understanding they need, and there is a mutual willingness to try a new channel for communication; (2) Some issues, goals, or a common task exist as a shared framework to provide topics; (3) There is a lack of time for mutually convenient, one-on-one conversations about important topics, even though the two people see each other every day; (4) Very often, these successful pairs turn out to be male-female combinations.

In contrast to these successful situations, one combination which has not worked well is a couple in which only one partner feels the need to open a second channel of communication. Unlike the classroom in which the teacher can require this dialogue, an interpersonal journal must be truly voluntary, and an initial degree of mutual willingness to try it is crucial. The second pairing which has not worked well thus far is that of a parent and an elementary school-age child (6-10 years old). Several friends have tried to get their young children to keep dialogue journals with them as a way to encourage them to "write more" or to enjoy writing and reading. In the three instances we know of personally, none of the children got very excited about it and the dialogues petered out quickly. Given the ease with which children as young as five years begin a dialogue journal with their teachers, this difficulty is somewhat puzzling. The reason may be that at this age children are not as aware of the need to communicate explicitly with their parents, and can't understand the reason for writing down things they can just as easily say to a parent they feel close to. However, parents separated from their children might find that a dialogue journal would work well, because the physical separation creates an awareness of the functional value of the journal for the child. One interesting fact from parents who have been able to maintain a journal with a child is that these dialogues seem to be effective only on a time-limited basis, and may not last even as long as a year. It may be that with children, there are years of their lives in which a private conversation on paper with one parent is needed and useful, while the next year, the need for the dialogue diminishes.

Considerations for Getting Started

Just as in the classroom, there are some logistical considerations which seem to help the dialogue get started. A visually attractive form seems to make a difference--all of us are sensitive to size and color, and to materials that symbolize our own values. One couple reports that their dialogue journals have to be written in royal blue spiral notebooks. A journal that looks special communicates the value of the relationship itself. Finding a convenient place to leave the journal when an entry is completed allows the journal to be passed back and forth easily and without complicated schedules (in-baskets and mail boxes at work do fine; at home you may need to find a private place to leave it). Perhaps most important, we have found that formal or fixed schedules probably need to be avoided with interpersonal journals. The dialogue seems to work best when the journal can flow back and forth as topics surface which need discussion. Some mutual obligation, like not letting more than a week pass without at least one exchange, needs to be established, but within that framework, a flexible schedule actually encourages sustained conversation. Guilt feelings are not conducive to dialogue.

We thought an instance from a first exchange might demonstrate the way that the dialogue journal got started for a couple of people, growing out of a mutual frustration, as these first entries show (both persons were familiar with the use of dialogue journals in classroom settings):

A: *I am writing this to you because right now I feel very uncomfortable about talking to you. Lately (the past two weeks) we haven't seemed to be able to "match"--I feel I am missing your signals*

[redacted]

PUBLICATIONS ON DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Dissertations

Jaffer, Deborah. Young Writers in Search of an Audience. Univ. of Penn. May, 1984.

Kreeft, Joy. Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Context of [illegible]. Georgetown Univ. October, 1984.

Mortensen, Marsha. Teacher-Student Dialogue Writing in A College Composition Course: [illegible]. Univ. of Va. December, 1983.

Staton, Jana. The Interactional Acquisition of Functional Competence in Early Adolescence: A Study of Dialogue Journals. UCLA June, 1984.

Articles

Albertini, John and Heath-Long, Bonnie. Forthcoming article on dialogue journal use with college-age deaf writers. NTID, in Journal of Curriculum Inquiry.

Atwell, Nancie. "Writing and Reading Literature from the Inside Out." Language Arts, 61, 3, March, 1984.

Davis, Fran. "Why You Call Me Emigrant?: Dialogue Journal Writing with Migrant Youth." Childhood Education, Nov./Dec. 1983.

Gutstein, Shelley P. "Using Language Functions to Measure Fluency." ERIC number to be announced, June, 1984.

Kreeft, Joy. "Dialogue Writing: Bridge from Talk to Essay Writing." Language Arts, 61, 2, February, 1984.

Kreeft, Joy. "Why Not Really Communicate?--Using Dialogue Journals." WATESOL Working Papers, 3, Winter 1983-84.

Staton, Jana. "Writing and Counseling: Using a Dialogue Journal." Language Arts, 57, 5, May, 1980.

Reports

Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event. J. Staton, R. Shuy, J. Kreeft and L. Reed. Final Report, National Institute of Education Grant No. G-80-0122, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C. January, 1982. (ERIC No.: Vol. I: ED 214 126; Vol. II: ED 214 127.

Books and Book Chapters

Staton, Jana. "Thinking Together: The Role of Language Interaction in Children's Reasoning." In C. Thaiss and C. Suhor. (Eds.) Speaking and Writing, K-12. NCTE, Fall, 1984.

Staton, Shuy, Kreeft, and Reed. Interactive Writing in Dialogue Journals: Linguistic, Social and Cognitive Views. In the Writing Series, (M. Farr, Ed.) Ablex, 1985.

ARTICLES ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING

As new articles about dialogue journal writing are published, they will be summarized in the newsletter. Below is a summary of three of the articles in this issue's list of publications.

Frances A. Davis. 1983. "Why you call me Emigrant?": Dialogue journal writing with migrant youth. Childhood Education, Nov.-Dec.

This article provides a rationale and some methods for using dialogue journals with minority language groups in the U.S., along with several examples of student and counselor writing. Dialogue journals were used by New Jersey Project MAP-S as part of a migrant education project funded by the U.S. Office of Education. The project was designed to help migrant junior and senior high school youth obtain career and occupational information and an understanding of their career goals. As was hoped, the students quickly moved in their dialogue journals from personal writing to focus on their career plans and to seek necessary career-related information from their counselors. As a result, the journals served as a means for fulfilling many of the project goals. The writing practice lead to greater fluency in writing; important occupational information was exchanged; and close personal ties developed between the students and counselors, so that counselors could use the journals to develop the students' self-concepts.

(Continued on page 5)

(Articles, cont. from page 4)

Joy Kreeft. 1984. Dialogue writing--Bridge from talk to essay writing. Language Arts. Vol. 61. No. 2.

This article addresses the question of how dialogue journals can help to develop students' writing skills. Many examples of teacher and student writing highlight teacher stategies and student growth. The article shows how dialogue writing bridges the gap between oral, face-to-face conversation, which is interactive, and writing, which is usually accomplished by the writer alone, without interactive help from an interlocutor. Thus, dialogue writing provides a means for students to move naturally from a skill they already know when they enter school, interactive communication, to a new skill, essayist-type writing. Research on the differing characteristics of spoken and written communication is reviewed, the characteristics of dialogue journal writing that promote effective writing are discussed, and one student's developing competence in writing over ten month's time is studied in detail.

Nancie Atwell. 1984. Writing and reading literature from the inside out. Language Arts. Vol. 61, No. 3.

How do students become "insiders" to the world of reading and writing? Atwell wanted her eighth grade students to become comfortable citizens--critics, enthusiasts, and participants--in the literate world, and one day started written "reading conferences," in the form of letters that she and her 70(!) students wrote to each other about the books they read. In the letters they shared information about good books and authors, praised and criticized authors' styles, and reflected on their own reading and writing experience. She describes their letters as "a dining room table with 70 chairs around it"--a place where she and her students, as partners in the enterprise, entered the world of reading and writing and established themselves as expert readers and writers. The article describes in detail the progress of two of her students, with provocative samples from the letters. This article is especially important for secondary school teachers who want to focus on content in the journals, or who would like to do dialogue writing but have too many students for a daily journal exchange with each student.

(Strategies, continued from page 3)

because I really don't like that kind of music, but I'm glad some people do!" or, "You and I agree! That was an exciting and interesting idea the speaker presented."

2. Focus on the activities of your students; ask questions that show you have noticed them, and that you are interested. "Do you think we should work on the map or the outline first?" "You seem to be going along very well. Which book (or materials) will you need next?" or, "How much of the math was too easy for you? You seemed to go right through the work today." or conversely "You seemed to hesitate on your math assignment. Could I help you? Were you having trouble with the steps or was it the word problems?" Negative comments may be required. "You and Jay were having a problem today. How did it start?" or, "Too bad you were so sleepy today. Were you not feeling well or were you just tired?"

3. Everyone has emotions. If you note some change in a student, you might comment on it. "How happy you seemed today. There must have been something special happening. What was it?" Or you could mention your own feelings, "Did you notice how angry I was? Do you know why? What do you think I could do to prevent that from happening again?"

4. Encourage them to share interesting books and activities with you. "You are reading a book I have never read. Do you think I would enjoy reading it when you are finished with it?" or "I've just finished reading The Borrowers. It is so funny that you might enjoy it if you like funny, impossible books. Do you?"

5. When you have noticed a problem between class members you can enlist help. "It was too bad that John was so angry today. It spoiled the game for him and for the class. Could you help him when you see him becoming so upset? You could ask him to take a walk with you, or even suggest that he come talk to you about the problem. Does that seem possible? Do you have any ideas that would help me to help him?" How important we feel when someone in authority thinks enough of us to ask for our help!

6. Try to learn from your students by asking about something you have no idea

(Continued on p. 6)

(Strategies, continued from page 5)

about. "Does the Culture Club play punk rock or just rock music? Have you many of their records? Which is your favorite? Do they use synthesizers?" "How is a low-rider different from my car?" "Why do you think the Angels will win?" "Is our team better than theirs? How do you know?" "How did you celebrate your birthday? At our house the birthday person gets to decide what we will have for their birthday dinner. Do you have any customs like that?"

Most of all, I want to emphasize the importance of having and showing a genuine interest in the student's hobbies, attitudes and responses. This helps you to learn about your students, and helps them to realize that you are human. Encourage them to teach you, to tell you things you did not know, to share ideas and happenings. And remember that every student will not write a glowing gem of an entry every day. When an entry has been particularly interesting, don't hesitate to show your enthusiasm.

Just as a good conversation is enlightening, good journal entries should enlighten. Being an interested, eager listener makes you a good conversationalist. The same skills make your journal entries interesting and encourage responses that grow!

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Herbert Hilsen of Cali, Colombia comments on his experience with dialogue journal writing:

"The technique develops an amazing fluency rather quickly. The communication is genuine. Students and teacher come to know each other better. And students do not freeze up when they have to write, nor depend on artificial models.

"Things I remember from people's dialogue journals are very useful to me now when I meet them. I have a strong visual orientation, and having read these ideas I find they stick better than just from ordinary conversation.

"Ideas from students' dialogue journals are extremely useful for oral activities. Thanks to remembering what I read in dialogue journals, I am never at a loss for oral interview or exam material later."

Nancie Atwell uses dialogue journals with students studying literature in an elementary school in Maine. She writes about her impressions of her students' experience using peer journals:

"You may be interested to know that my writing/reading students are now carrying on dialogues with each other--as well as continuing to write to me. This talk is also wonderful, and very different from their dialogues with me. Although the subject is still literature, the tone is more informal and the content is pure gossip-about-books. It's as if lit. is mundane and everyday--something kids just naturally chant about. And these letters are very, very funny.

"Among all the good things resulting from kid-to-kid literary dialogue is the practical issue of replicability. Teachers I talk to just about die at the notion of sustaining correspondence with 75-125 secondary level kids. Opening up the possibility of peer and teacher correspondence has cut my four-hours-per-evening letter writing sessions in half."

Nancy Rhodes has been using dialogue journals for the past year in Montgomery County Maryland's adult education program. The students in her classes come from a wide range of countries and are well-educated in their native languages:

"My main purpose for using journals is to get the students more accustomed to putting their thoughts down on paper. This turns out to be a major task for many of them. Although the majority of the students have a good command of the spoken language, most of them have little, if any, practice in any type of writing in English, whether it be business letters, notes to friends, or academic essays.

"At the beginning of each semester I often hear a lot of complaints about keeping a journal, and I am aware that for many of them it is difficult to write something in a foreign language for the first time in their life. For this reason, I was interested to know, at the end of the semester, what were the students' views of what they had learned from their journal writing. Their written responses were quite revealing. Perhaps we can learn more about what the students actually gain from journal writing from their own comments than from what we teachers think they will learn.

(Continued on page 7)

(Notes, continued from page 6)

"A Japanese student commented on how journal writing helped her to start thinking in English, which she hopes will help improve her speaking ability."

> *Writing dialogue journal is very useful for me. Because I've very much progressed hearing ability in this class, but not enough to speak. Usually I think in Japanese at first and translate into English. It's not good. I'll have to think in English. When I write dialogue journal in a short time, I'm used to try thinking in English and I believe it'll certainly improve my English conversation ability.*

"A Colombian woman commented that her practice in journal writing has helped her in her job."

> *Now in my volunteer job I have to do the nutritional assessment and I am very happy because the nurses and the dietitian can understand me my English writing and I know the dialogue journals have helped me a lot.*

Carol Severino, who teaches university-level writing classes at the University of Illinois, Chicago, conducted a pilot study last fall in which one class used dialogue journals and the other class used an interesting textbook. The dialogue journal class did better on the final essay exam, and their writing anxiety, measured by Daly's scale, increased less than the textbook class. There were also fewer absences from class and tutoring sessions, better class discussions, and generally a more integrated feeling in the dialogue journal class. Carol hopes to do a larger-scale study for her dissertation. She would appreciate suggestions from anyone doing studies of how dialogue journals improve writing performance and attitudes toward writing!

Carol has a wonderful handout that she gives to her writing classes to introduce dialogue journals use. If you would like a copy, send us with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we'll send you one.

Finally, The Washington Post mentions dialogue journals in an article discussing the multi-ethnic population of Arlington, Virginia and its impact on the Arlington County Public Schools. The article discusses the problems foreign born children encounter in adjusting to American schools and how the schools cope with and help the children. These children, who often have come from war zones or other turbulent areas, experience culture shock, language problems, and may withdraw entirely. In the dialogue journals, the students can let out their feelings "in full bursts":

> "Feel so sad today," said one note by a second-grade Vietnamese girl. . . . "Cry, cry, cry. Feel so stupid. Please God let me go back to my country."

• QUOTABLE QUOTES

On the Teacher as an Interactive Model:

> *I would like to suggest that what the teacher must be, to be an effective competence model, is a day-to-day working model with whom to interact. It is not so much that the teacher provides a model to imitate. Rather, it is that the teacher can become a part of the student's internal dialogue--somebody whose respect he wants, someone whose standards he wishes to make his own. It is like becoming a speaker of a language he shares with somebody. The language of that interaction becomes a part of oneself, and the standards and style that one adopts for that interaction become part of one's own standards.*
>
> Jerome Bruner, "The Will to Learn" Toward a Theory of Instruction. (1966, p. 124)

A Student's View of the Importance of Dialogue Journals:

> *. . .I think writing these journals are very important and they play an essential role about connections between teacher and student. It's really nice to consider our teachers as our friends, it must be in this way, if not there is always a distance between them. If we know each other better, we will surely understand each other better too.*
>
> Farnaz, Age 18
> High Intermediate ESL
> Iran

A Poem

When I came here,
I found the white color in the outside.
I felt cold.
I didn't like the temperature.
Everyday I want to return to my country, so
I can't very happy.

Recently, the winter was gone,
I found the grass that was green,
And the flower was bloom.
Looking the outside like a picture,
It's very beautiful.
I changed my mind.
I wanted stay here,
And planned my summer semester.

Jean-Hsiou Lai, Taiwan
MCPS Adult Education ESOL
(This and other dialogue journal entries are printed with permission)

PLEASE HELP!!

To hold our costs down, we are paying directly for the costs of xeroxing and mailing the newsletter, which now run about $75 an issue. To keep accounts straight, PLEASE make your checks out to Jana Staton, rather than to "Dialogue" or the Center for Applied Linguistics. This avoids a separate bank account and its charges.

SPECIAL FEATURES IN OUR NEXT TWO ISSUES

Dialogue Journals at the University

A number of faculty at the University of Maryland have found creative uses for dialogue journals--in teacher education classes, graduate courses, dissertation seminars, and research projects. So that we can learn more about these adaptations, we have asked Jessie Roderick to be our guest editor and organize other contributions on the subject for our next issue.

Dialogue Journals in Special Education

A very special interest to us and some of our readers has been the development of functional and meaningful literacy and self-expression among students who are not always considered "able" to read and write. A number of projects are in process, and at least one dissertation being written, on the uses of dialogue journals with students in special education and vocational rehabilitation classes, and with adults who are called developmentally retarded. These will be pulled together into one issue.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of the National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyse the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

DIALOGUE appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $3.00 to cover duplication and mailing. Make checks payable to Jana Staton.

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Dialogue

November, 1984

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

This issue presents a different facet of dialogue journal use--as a means of focused, reflective inquiry in higher education. Our guest editor, Dr. Jessie Roderick of the University of Maryland, assembled these accounts as a means of illuminating the role of a continuing personal dialogue in adult learning, with our students but also with each other. We hope that readers at the university level as well as those in other institutions will find these accounts instructive in pointing to the use of the dialogue journals for reflection and discernment in seeking truth.

Dialogue Journals in Higher Education

In his book The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action, Donald Schon proposes that problems and solutions are found in practice through the process of reflecting in practice. Although Schon does not discuss dialogue journal writing as a means of reflecting in practice, it seems to me that many of us at the college level do reflect in as well as on practice when we dialogue with students or our colleagues. In a larger sense, dialogue journal writing appears to facilitate one's being a professional--an active inquirer into one's practice and a continuous learner and decisionmaker who functions in a social context. Is this a fair claim for the process of dialogue journal writing? Does it agree with your experience? We invite you to share in our enthusiasm and learnings as you read the accounts that follow.

The accounts include:

- the use of dialogue journals in helping student nurses assume responsibility for reflecting on and evaluating their decision regarding patient care.
- far-ranging discussions of two cultures in individual dialogues with visiting scholars from the People's Republic of China.
- dialogue journals used for feedback and sharing of perceptions and puzzlement, between colleagues.
- benefits and constraints of a structured dialogue journal discussing and reflecting on "play"--itself always a non-reflective experience!
- a reflective tool for understanding writing itself--especially with college students who are becoming conscious of their own skills and fears.

-- Jessie Roderick

Subscriptions

Our rate for 1 year (three issues) is $3.00, and thanks to those of you who have just subscribed, we're now running about even on costs. If you haven't sent us $3.00 during 1984, why not do so now. We'll forgive the past, and send you 3 issues in 1985! If you sent $3.00 this past year, consider yourself subscribed until Fall, 1985.

Be sure to make checks payable to Jana Staton, not to CAL or DIALOGUE.

In This Issue

Approaching Clinical Teaching and Evaluation Through the Written Word

- Rose Jackson

Several faculty at Indiana University School of Nursing are using dialogue journals in an attempt to explore their potential for both formative and summative evaluation in a clinical setting. In the early stages of journal writing, our students are encouraged to share perceptions of the hospital experience. In turn, faculty respond in a supportive and non-threatening manner. They also assist in making individualized patient care assignments, based on needs identified in the journals.

Encouraging students to ask questions they might not want to ask in front of peers, were not able to ask because of time constraints, or which seemed difficult and inappropriate in a patient's room are important components of the dialogue. As formal evaluation periods approach, faculty invite students to focus specifically on their achievement of objectives and on sharing perceptions of self in the role of a health professional. Faculty members also guide students toward comprehensive self-appraisal through the use of probing questions and analogous examples of their own experiences as students. In this way, students are steered toward assuming greater responsibility for judging the quality of their own client care. The process appears to support students' acquisition of a professional's sense of responsibility for independent monitoring of one's own practice.

- Rose Jackson, a professor in the Indiana University school of Nursing, prepares masters and doctoral level nursing students as teachers of nursing.

Dialoguing Across Cultures

- Jessie Roderick and Marsha Markman

For nearly two years, each of us participated in an individual written dialogue with a visiting scholar from the People's Republic of China. Both of our partners were among a group of Chinese computer science technologists and college professors enrolled in a computer science program at the University of Maryland. Since both Li and Tong expressed a desire to improve their written and spoken English during their stay in the United States, we arranged weekly, paired sessions in our respective offices for discussion and the exchange of dialogue journals.

Tong and Jessie

Dear Jessie,

Althouyh I have been nere for more than one year, I am not pleased witn my Enylish. when my friend told me that you would be interested in speakiny witn me I was very happy. Please correct any mistake that I made. I think I will get a lot of proyress since your help. . .

Dear Tony,

. . .I must tell you that your English is very good. You write well with smooth flow and interesting vocabulary. . . In response to your request that I correct your writiny, I've made some suyyestions in your entry. For the most part, I've suyyested alternatives for words you used. I will be happy to discuss these suyyestions with you.

In this excerpt from his initial journal entry, Tong expressed a willingness to interact with me in order to get help in English. This husband and father of a six-year-old daughter, whose "hometown" is Shanghai, soon began writing me of "many interesting things" he found after he came to the United States. We talked of transportation, shopping, computers, tourism, education, seasons, personal travel experiences, museums, and other areas of mutual interest--comparing and contrasting the way of life in our two cultures. We also discussed word meanings, derivatives, and formal and informal writing and speaking. My desire to help Tong improve his English communication and my interest in learning more about persons from other cultures while learning more about myself in the process, motivated me to participate in this dialogue. In rereading our journal I sense more of a conversational tone than a teaching one, This suggests that for me, the learning about Tong and myself might

(Continued on p. 3)

have been a more powerful motivator than the desire to help him improve his English.

Li and Marsha

Dear Marsha,

Since I came here, a lot of things I heard was made a deep impression on my mind. American young people have more independence than Chinese young people have. . .

Dear Li,

. . .The independence you see in American youngsters does have some unhappy consequences. Yes, there is a problem with drugs. . .the violence is there, too, but I don't see this as being the norm at all. . .

An associate professor of computer science at a Chinese university, Li came to our tutoring sessions principally to improve his reading skills and at the same time, to enhance his knowledge and understanding of American life. Li designed his own curriculum, focused on a discussion of words, phrases, and concepts in articles he was reading initially in the University's student newspaper and later in articles from magazines, the daily newspapers, professional journals, short stories, essays, poetry, and comic strips.

Our weekly dialogue journal writing was introduced in order that Li might practice and develop his writing skills and his ability to think and communicate in English on paper. Language use and mechanics in his entries were not corrected, although he frequently recognized and corrected his own faulty grammar and spelling as a result of my own written responses.

Li wrote copiously--with humor and insight--borrowing from the richly poetic Chinese language. He commented on his visits to the theatre and museums, discussed a scholarly paper he presented (in English), and wrote about his work at the University and his family in China. His entries were replete with description, analysis, and social and philosophical commentary, providing me with a plethora of information and insight not only into Li and his culture, but into my own pedagogical beliefs and expectations.

* * * *

The interchanges we shared with each of our partners illustrate the fundamental commonalities between seemingly disparate peoples. They exemplify, too, the knowledge and understanding that can develop through dialogue and the insights into teaching and learning that such dialogue can produce.

Specifically, we learned that we shared with our Chinese dialogue partners many concerns, hopes, and appreciations. The desire for change that improves the quality of life for all was a persistent theme in our exchanges. We learned that our partners actively sought out ways to learn but did so in a gentle, caring manner. Their gratitude for our talking with them was evident in their choice of words--words that expressed thanks and an interest in us as persons. And we learned about ourselves as teachers, friends, and communicators. We raised many questions, generally answered their questions in order, and found ourselves comfortable in this one-on-one situation with a student-initiated curriculum.

- Jessie Roderick, a professor at the University of Maryland in Curriculum and Instruction, is concerned with the authentic person coming through in the teaching process.

College Professors Dialogue About Themselves

- Louise M. Berman

At the time I was trying to pull together my thoughts about the process of dialogue journal writing in which Jessie Roderick and I had engaged, as a way of exploring our roles as teachers, I read some articles in the Washington Post on the use of computers for monitoring the activities of employees in the workplace. As I thought about the similarities and dissimilarities between our experiences and the experiences of those described in the newspaper articles, I realized that computers monitoring the workplace and dialoguing about the workplace do share a common purpose. Both processes are informed by the hope that we may observe more concretely, we may understand more fully, and we may find better or at least different ways to do what we do. Both pro-

(Continued, p. 4)

cesses make objective one part of our experience, for further scrutiny--the computer details outward behavior, the dialogue journal highlights inner ideas, questions, and wonderments. Both processes allow for something to be done about what is scrutinized.

However, the differences are just as striking. The computer gives the information to a supervisor to do something to the worker. Dialogue journals are bases for sharing ideas among equals. Computer monitoring serves as a basis for judgments to be made about another person. Dialogue journaling serves as an avenue for supporting and for assisting each other in extending ideas.

Unlike computer monitoring which provides little basis for helping individuals become what they wish to be, dialogue journals provide the basis for exploring areas where thinking may be faltering and muddy. For example, we engaged in some dialogue about mystery, a few lines of which are shared.

Louise: *Perhaps we should allow some mystery for students and teachers. . .*

Jessie: *I like the idea of mystery but I'm not sure every teacher can handle it well. . .*

Louise: *. . .I am concerned that students are allowed to maintain some selfhood, some individuality, some mystery that may or may not be shared.*

This dialogue on mystery led us into some entries on alternatives to questioning. Our dialogue was not always sustained on a topic, but revisited on occasion or sometimes completely dropped if there did not seem to be reason to sustain it. Our interests and thoughts at the time of the entries determined the written conversations rather than predetermined specifications.

From our experience, we can offer some ideas and cautions for those considering dialoguing with colleagues about professional activities:

First, since we had engaged in a number of professional activities together, we had a sense of trust--very important if the journal entries are to be more than a surface dealing with issues. Second, as Jessie expressed, we gave ourselves opportunities to be rather than to be doing. Third, we could write in our journals on our own time and did not have to get out appointment books or plan "bag lunches" to carry out the activity. Fourth, our thinking was extended as we were lifted from the dailiness of our own activities. Fifth, we had access to a trusted colleague who helped us highlight that which we might like or not like about ourselves as professional beings.

The university professor frequently has little opportunity to engage in the kind of professional development which starts from the puzzlements of the individual professor. Dialoguing in a written conversation provides such an opportunity. It can break the aloneness in a profession which demand walking where others have not trod.

- Louise M. Berman is a professor of curriculum theory and development in the Department of Education Policy, Planning, and Administration, University of Maryland, College Park. She uses dialogue journals in her classes as a means of helping students reflect on their experiences in order to understand themselves more fully as professional persons.

Dialogue on Play

- Mary Rivkin

Play is a phenomenon observed and experienced by everyone. Yet it eludes precise definition and absolute identification. It is not always possible to tell if someone else is playing--even kindergarteners tell us that pleasure is no certain indication. It appears that only the players know if they are playing. But while scholars explore the mysteries and manifestations of the play phenomenon, people continue to play, most unreflectively.

I sought to increase reflectivity on play among teachers preparing to teach the supremely playful--young children. As part of one of their education courses, we experienced several potential play activities followed by their writing an experiential description of each activity, my responding to it, then they again to me. Class discussions also occurred.

I found that, while the activities generally proved sources of play, reflecting on play was not play for most

(Continued, p. 5)

students. Although many expressed enjoyment of the reflective process for its personal involvement, struggle over thought, self-exploration, and relationship with the teacher, others thought the play experience was dampened by the knowledge that reflection would be required subsequently. Some commented on the irony of studying play during a semester that was very demanding academically.

As well as learning about the students through dialogue, I learned about myself. My teacher's dream of "true conversation" with each student as Gadamer describes it, was sometimes realized and sometimes elusive. Some of my writing occurred simply to get to know a student, to discover her views. Other times we seemed to reach agreement, our views became valid and intelligible for each other. Sometimes I felt that I was making them write and myself too, because this was a class assignment. Along with the students, I found the compulsivity of our educational system militates against true I-Thou dialogue.

In rereading the dialogues, I also experienced what Gadamer calls "the otherness, and the indissoluble individuality of the other," (H.G. Gadamer, Truth and Method, 1970) both of the students and of myself. Each conversation was unique, each one seemed to me to be a stretching --for ideas, for words--an extending of horizons for both the student and myself. Surely changes occurred on both sides. Yet always gleaming through the words, the same persons, recognizable, characteristic. It gave me a new interpretation of Whitman's "I celebrate myself and sing myself."

- Mary Rivkin likes to teach, mother, read, and garden. She broods about the schools, and human happiness, perversity and potential. The experience reported here is part of her dissertation work at the University of Maryland-College Park.

NEXT ISSUE: Focus On Special Education

DIALOGUE's spring issue will discuss the uses of dialogue journals with mentally retarded students and others who typically don't become proficient in written communication. Teachers, including Leslee Reed, are finding dialogue journals to have many exciting benefits for such students.

Personalizing Composition Instruction Through Dialogue Journals

- Marsha C. Markman

For nearly three years, the dialogue journal has played an integral role in my college composition teaching.

In addition to the usual composition course fare--classroom writing activities, grading papers, individual conferencing--each of the students in my classes participates with me in a weekly written dialogue focusing on course assignments and activities, writing attitudes and concerns, and specific writing problems and strategies for their solution.

The dialogue journals are a way to personalize instruction in the composition curriculum. Central to such a "tutoring" approach is attention to writing apprehension, and to other personal and instructional issues which can affect writing performance but do not find their way to the classroom or the teacher's office. Our reflections in these personal dialogues are intended to help develop positive attitudes about writing and confidence in their ability to perform well.

Our dialogues (written outside the class) become vehicles for meeting course objectives and satisfying individual student needs, as the following example illustrates:

Dr. M.,

I hate writing titles for my papers. I have no trouble writing the body of my papers, but I always delay writing the title until the last possible instant, and I'm never satisfied with it. Any suggestions?

Gary,

. . .A couple of suggestions for the title of paper:

1) Ask yourself what the point of your paper is. What is the central idea you want to convey? The answer to that question will help lead to the "catchy" title you are looking for.

2) Read through your paper keeping your search for a title in mind. Something you have written or a quote you have made may "jump off the paper" as an appropriate title.

(Continued, p. 6)

The written dialogues do more than instruct and encourage. They enable students to practice writing to a real audience--a central element in writing, and one which eludes students and plauges composition teachers. Too, it permits students to individually work through--in writing--the planning, writing, and revising processes of composing. Each student can discuss specific writing attitudes, problems, and strategies, request help, and share successes and failures with an interested tutor, without the threat of correction and grading that accompanies most of their written course work. Indeed, my selective discussions in their dialogue journals about composing strengths and weaknesses have proved more likely to receive students' attention and promote response than my copious comments on a student's essay.

Along with personalized instruction, encouragement, and writing practice, the dialogue journal meets the goal of current composition research which encourages teachers to become active writers in the classroom as well as models of correct writing. The permanent and personal qualities of these interactions, furthermore, permit teachers to more closely monitor their students' needs and, hence, their composition curriculum. In this way, they can better satisfy the social and individual nature of classroom writing instruction.

- Marsha Markman has taught professional/technical writing at the University of Maryland. She is currently teaching composition at George Washington University and Holocaust literature and film at the University of Maryland.

Research Ideas: Using School Records

- Jana Staton

Most of us reading this newsletter are already convinced that dialogue journals are the best thing about our teaching and learning. But what do we say to administrators and parents? Analyzing journal texts can take years; a teacher in a local school hasn't the time or the resources to begin such analysis. But the changes recorded in the texts themselves--changes in self-concept, understanding of oneself and of others, or attitudes toward writing, learning English-- these changes are also going to be reflected in student behaviors. Such behaviors as school attendance, willingness to read and write, disciplinary referrals are being recorded in some way by schools already. We are convinced that information is readily available about the effects of dialogue journals on students from school records.

To start off, I have one candidate outcome measure: re-enrollment in subsequent English language classes. At Gallaudet College, I found that preparatory college students (all deaf) in the developmental English Language Program who were in dialogue journal classes for one or more semesters were significantly more likely to re-enroll for a another semester of English than were students who were not involved in this kind of personal written communication with their teacher. My interpretation of this "persistence effect" is that involvement in systematic dialogue journal use increased the students' sense of affiliation with the instructor and changed their attitudes and expectations about studying English. More of them were willing to re-enroll after failing the test for admission to regular English classes. Before you say "that's obvious", remember how administrators react to anything which keep students enrolled.

Mrs. Reed has always pointed out that her students are seldom absent, seldom late for school, and that she has few disciplinary referrals. You may think of other measures we haven't. We think these kinds of outcomes are well worth our looking at as a way of documenting the tangible benefits of interpersonal dialogues. We'd like to hear from anyone who's collecting such data.

Notes From the Field

Sara Sill writes about using dialogue journals with her fourth grade students, mostly from Spanish-speaking homes, at Alexandria Avenue School in Los Angeles:

"In the journal I can discover the individual characteristics of each child and quickly break down the student-teacher barrier. We become interested in each

(Continued, p. 7)

other and this carries over into all of our classroom activities, so that even if one of us is angry, we know that we still care about each other.

"I find that when parents come in for parent-teacher conferences, I know their child very well and we have a lot to talk about, because I have developed a special relationship with each child. The parents are delighted to know that a teacher cares enough to respond individually to their child."

Hilary Stern, Director of the Adult Education Program at the Spanish Education Development Center in Washington, D.C., describes her first experience using dialogue journals with an adult class:

"It's been two weeks now of writing to twenty-three students a day, and I am an enthusiastic convert!

"My primary objective (in using the dialogue journals)-- helping my students feel comfortable writing in English--has now become secondary. I have developed a personal relationship with each and every one of my students (a feat in itself, but even more remarkable considering classes have only been in session for two weeks and will continue for only two more weeks). Besides the personal satisfaction of developing new relationships, other unexpected benefits have arisen. Discipline, the most salient problem in public schools, is no longer a concern...I have these kids in the palm of my hand. I have been able to help some students resolve academic and personal problems which, in the flurry of the classroom, I would have never had time to find out about, let alone discuss. And I have been able to set aside two hours every day to indulge in one of my favorite activities: writing."

From Jeff Creswell, a fifth grade teacher, Humboldt School, in Portland Oregon, comes this commentary:

"Every child knew that he/she had a private, alone time with me every day because of the journals. Every morning they scrambled to their journals to see what I had written. This intimacy played an important role in classroom management. Many problems were worked out through dialogue in the journals.

"Listening is essential to good journaling. I tried to really listen to what the children were saying in their writing and to respond accordingly. If I misunderstood, they let me know it! If they misunderstood what I had written I let them know it!

"Children's sensitivity to print increased. By the end of the year they were far more aware of punctuation, spelling,... Writing was clearly viewed as a powerful tool of communication. The mechanics of writing became important because they helped to get the meaning across."

From Donna McBride, a fourth grade teacher at Humboldt and Jeff's partner in trying out the dialogue journals last year:

"The journals were by far the best thing that happened during the school year. I feel the journals allowed the students to express themselves and carry on personal conversations with me. I got to know them as individuals and they learned a lot about me. A lot of discipline problems were handled through the dialogue. Journals were one area where a student could succeed no matter what his or her level."

Thanks for sending these comments along to Dr. Colin Dunkeld, Portland State University, who is growing his own Dialogue Journal Project out there in Oregon. A report of the project in one school is now available through ERIC:

Dunkeld, Colin and Anderson, Sandra. The Robert Gray Journal Project: An Account of a Year-Long Journal-writing Activity in Grades Five Through Eight. ED 240 592.

Ordering DIALOGUE JOURNALS

Here is the best source we've found for ordering a special supply of dialogue journals. For a minimum order of 1000 copies, Roaring Spring Blank Book Company will provide saddlestitched, lined composition books, about 7 x 8½ inches. The

(Continued, p. 8)

cover is plain, lightweight tagboard, with lines printed for student and teacher names and the words (---school name----) DIALOGUE JOURNAL on the front. The price is right--about 50¢ apiece. Teachers at Gallaudet College have been using these for two years, years, and particularly like the light-weight covers which don't say "Composition". The cover is great for student decorative instincts.

Roaring Spring Blank Book Company
740 Sparry Street
Roaring Spring, PA 16673

PH: (814) 224-5141
Ask for Hunter Swope, Mark Garach, or Dan Hoover, and mention that you are interested in the same kind of journal as Gallaudet College uses.

Maybe if enough of us write or call, they might decide to make this a stock item (without the school name) so that smaller orders could be placed.

Leslee's Page

In August, I spent two weeks starting out a new class for the teacher I had last year as a student teacher, because she couldn't begin teaching until the middle of August. Because she will have so much else to do this first year, I did not start the dialogue journals with her class, and it really made a big difference. I repeated the same lessons, standards, everything, but the genuine enthusiasm on the part of the students just was not there! Even my student teacher (who had seen my class begin the year before) noticed the difference. Dialogue journals do cause students to become much more personally involved with the class and with the teacher, which just does a great deal for the interest level.

-- Leslee Reed

Note: Mrs. Reed's experience points out the importance of beginning the year with dialogue journals. They may seem to be an overload when you're just getting started, but they help create the kind of classroom which makes teaching a joy.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

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Dialogue

amplify and provide feedback on what they are thinking and want to say to the world.

For the teacher, the rewards are even more immediately forthcoming, and the excitement of teachers about what they learn from their dialogues is apparent throughout this issue. If we take seriously Vygotsky's injunction that what the child can do today with assistance she or he can do tomorrow unaided, then the dialogue journal interactions are a glimpse each day of the student's unfolding potential. Teachers see in the dialogue mental and linguistic capabilities which the student cannot yet demonstrate or use unassisted. The dialogue journals provide one way of assessing the potential of the student for development, and at the same time a means of directly helping the student to internalize the strategies needed for more independent functioning in reading and writing and in classroom activities.

We have as yet no clear understanding of the true effects of extended participation in these written dialogues for stimulating further mental, linguistic, and emotional growth for students with special needs. These articles do suggest, however, that students with limitations in oral modes of communication need full access to written language used for communicative purposes, just as do all students. The apparently greater difficulty that many special needs students have with written language (in contrast to speech) may occur because written language has not been introduced to them as a functional means of communication, but only as a product to be evaluated.

Workshop Handouts

Our estimate is that about 90% of the 300 people who get this newsletter (and probably a lot of others we don't know) are giving workshops about dialogue journals. Would some of you be willing to share a copy of your handouts with others? We're thinking of two kinds of one-page handouts which might exist: handouts you have used in teacher workshops focused on using dialogue journals with particular populations, and handouts you have given to your students to explain dialogue journals. We have two or three already (for elementary school teachers; college freshmen; and ESL teaching, adult level). If we get a good sample, we'll make the set available at cost. If you send something in, make sure you give yourself full credit: Name, address, even phone number should be right on the handout.

Topics in the Dialogue Journals of Mildly Retarded Students

• Jack W. Farley, Jr.

Researchers who have studied the written language performance of mildly retarded students through composition production and written story recall have observed poorly developed abilities in the areas of syntax and spelling (Cartwright, 1968). Previous research has indicated that mildly retarded writers perform significantly lower in the mechanics of writing than nonretarded writers with the same mental ages, and that writing abilities of the mildly retarded are comparatively less well developed than their speaking, listening, or reading abilities (Sedlak & Cartwright, 1972; Durrell & Sullivan, 1958).

Having studied the written language performance of mildly retarded writers who have maintained dialogue journals with me, I have also found limitations in written syntax, spelling, and punctuation. However, regardless of the limitations that can be observed in writing produced by the mildly retarded, analysis of their communication in dialogue journals suggests an alternative view of their written language performance.

I have found that the topics which mildly retarded writers discuss in their dialogue journals do not necessarily reflect their mental ages, but rather their chronological ages. A group of six mildly retarded students (average mental age, 10.0 years; average chronological age, 18.1 years) with whom I maintained dialogue journals actively discussed their experiences of driving, employment, graduation planning, marriage planning, and imminent parenthood. For example, here is an entry by one of my male students.

> *Some persons are nice and other person like to do things like to sing, play the radio, go to the movie. Some person don't like to work in ther house and some are very good for working on a job or some . . . peoples like to have things like money, new car, house, and some people like to read and some don't*

like to read a books. I sometime like to read a book but I like to put think to gethir and I like working with my hand and I like to play on a football team.

These students consistently produced functionally relevant (though far from mechanically accurate) interactive communication. They reported opinions and personal facts, made predictions, responded to questions, and evaluated. From reviewing the students' communication, it became apparent that average intellect is not a prerequisite for driving, working, graduating, marrying, parenting, or maintaining dialogue journals.

****

References

Cartwright, G. 1968. Written language abilities of educable mentally retarded and normal children. American Journal of Mental Deficiency. 72. 499-505.

Durrell, D. & Sullivan, H. 1958. Language achievements of mentally retarded children. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 206 147).

Sedlak, R. & Cartwright, G. 1972. Written language abilities of EMR and nonretarded children with the same mental ages. American Journal of Mental Deficiency. 77. 95-99.

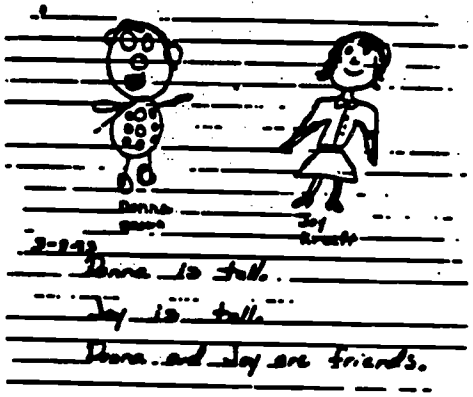
"I CAN Write!" Written Interactions of Mentally Handicapped Students

• Joy Kreeft Peyton and Roberta R. Steinberg

We began dialogue journal writing in our Sunday School class for mentally handicapped adults as a way to enhance and further develop the personal relationship we already had with each student. The students range from severely to mildly mentally handicapped. Our class is small, and we frequently have as many teachers as students—an ideal setting for dialogue journal writing. We describe here our experience with two of the students.

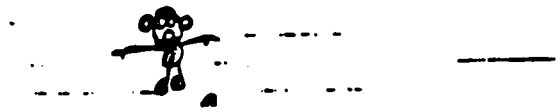
Donna[1]

Donna is 37 years old, and considered severely mentally handicapped. She is a fluent and interesting conversationalist, but besides writing her name, when we began the class she had done no reading or writing since she was 10-12 years old and had a tutor. She is considered a "non-writer." When I asked her if she would like to keep a dialogue journal with me, she said that she couldn't write. So I told her that we could tell each other things with pictures, and if we wanted to add words, we could. She said yes, she wanted to do that. Here is her first entry and my response. She could read our names, and I read the rest of my entry to her.

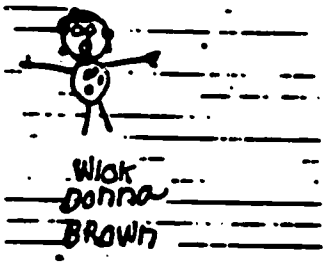


A week later her entry looked the same. When I said, "Oh, you drew yourself again," she replied, "I'm telling you that my hand

is healed" (she had burned her hand earlier." And indeed, some fingers had been added in this week's picture. It was clear that she understood we were sending messages to each other.



Donna's third entry contains the word "walk." When we looked at it together,



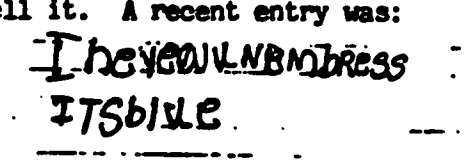
she said, "I'm telling you that I walk by my house." Donna had, without my bidding, broken into print. I imagine that the act of putting words and pictures on paper had called up for her words she had learned to write with her tutor, years ago. The next three entries were the same, a picture and the words "Wlok Donna Brown," and I wondered if we had gone as far as we could. But as we discussed my responses, I discovered that she could read most of my words without help. Again, she was digging back into her past experience with reading and writing. One day she wrote the following, and told me that she takes the bus to work (the word she knew how to write was "school").

Wlok Stop Bos have Houselike SChool

One day she wrote:

and explained that she was telling me about the black dog that she sees every day. The picture had changed to a house. As we continued to write back and forth, week after week, new words would appear among the old ones that she used over and over.

Donna and I have been writing weekly in a dialogue journal for two years now. The changes I have shown here have taken place over long periods of time. Now I often ask her what she wants to say and help her spell it. A recent entry was:



"I have a new dress.
It's blue."

As we continue our journal, it is clear to me that we have developed a valuable way of sharing messages with each other. Since we're in a class with other students, our journal writing time is sometimes the only time we have to talk individually with each other. We also have a very important reading and writing event. I think it's the only time that Donna reads and writes all week.

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1 Because Donna's name is an important part of her entries, it is impossible to use a pseudonym. Both Donna and her parents have given permission for her real name to be used.

****

Mary

Since the focus of our Sunday School class is to learn the scriptures and to develop an understanding of God, the dialogue journal gives us a chance to relate on a more personal level, developing an understanding of each other--our interests, fears, and innermost workings! Mary heartily enjoys writing in her journal. Aside from occasional help with spelling, she has shared with me a variety of topics, including school, her boyfriend, books she has read, movies she has seen, her family, and her upcoming Baptism. I am continually

surprised that Mary doesn't feel inhibited in the slightest about writing and expressing her thoughts. She is eager to write and to share things about herself. The more journal writing we do, the longer she needs to write; not because it is a difficult task for her, but because she has so much she wants to write about. And judging the quality of Mary's entries from the point of view of grammar and syntax, it appears that the journal is gradually improving her ability to express herself in writing.

Can Dialogue Journals be of Value with Learning Disabled High School Students?

Roberta R. Steinberg

When I started using dialogue journals, it was with a class of learning disabled students at the elementary level. The experience was successful and gratifying for all of us. It took us a while to get started and establish a routine, but once we got going we wrote twice weekly. The range of topics we wrote about included personal experiences they wanted to share and concerns they had about being learning disabled. They had many, many questions--about what I did outside of school, what hobbies we might have in common, how they were doing in school, and what they might do in the future.

This fall, when I began teaching learning disabled high school students, I was faced with a completely new challenge. Would L. D. high school students freely use dialogue journal writing as a creative tool for self-expression as my elementary children had? When I first introduced the idea to the class, it was met with a great deal of hesitation. I explained that we would be keeping an ongoing journal together, and that I would be writing thoughts and sharing ideas with them each time they wrote an entry to me. In other words, we would have a written conversation. They weren't sure what to expect! At first I let them write freely twice a week, and gave them no specific topic to write about. Two of my six students felt comfortable writing without prompting, and had no problems. However, I found that four of the students had difficulty writing anything. Sure, they had a lot to say, but they didn't know where to begin. They needed much more structure than the "free writing" was providing them. With this in mind, I began suggesting topics, or giving them key words they could write about, or questions about themselves, the world, society, etc., to which they could respond--for example, "How do you feel about nuclear war?" "What do you want to do after you finish school?" "What are some of the goals you have set for yourself?" All they needed was the start, a beginning or an idea which they could then expand on.

The results thus far have been very interesting. One student, who has an identity problem and frequently expresses his dislike for English class, is a case in point. Needing to be the class clown and express his dislike for our class has frequently gotten this student into trouble. Yet we have been able to establish a beautiful relationship outside of "academics" in our dialogue journal. The journal has provided an outlet for this child to express his feelings--feelings he has about being learning disabled and questions he needs answered like, "Will I always be this way?" Being adopted, this child feels as if he is different from the others and is unsure about who he is and where he came from. Peer pressure and dating, values clarification, interpersonal relationships, and family problems have all been areas that we have shared in our journal writing.

This relationship is what has been so fascinating to me--to have a child who is so unmotivated and at times disruptive in class, yet so caring, sensitive and sharing in his journal. The beauty of dialogue journals is that they enable the teacher to establish an intimate relationship with the student through writing; a relationship that is ordinarily impossible because of the need to teach the entire class. Unfortunately, during class time we teachers aren't always able to really get to know our students on a more personal level, and dialogue journal writing allows us to do that. In the case of the student mentioned above, it allowed me to answer questions and provide support where it was dearly needed. To give you an example of the kinds of things we might write about, here is an exchange between me and another student in the class (printed here with her permission).

Student: *Tonight Im going to the football game with my sister. I think the months are going by fast. The job I applied for is Bradlees but I don't know if Im going to get it. My mother gave me another application. The job is to clean the building in Vienna. I did the job before because I use to help my mother and my grandmother clean the building so I hope I get the job because I think it's time for me to have money of my own so I don't have to ask my mother for any.*

Teacher: *The time is going by quickly. When I was a senior in high school, I got a job at a department store over the Christmas holidays. I felt good earning money to be able to buy things without having to ask my parents for money. I worked hard. There was a show on T.V. last night called "Family Ties." The young girl in the show got a part time job while she continued to go to school. She told her mom that working at the store made her feel good about herself. It was a good program.*

I think it's nice and very responsible of you to want to do that. Just be careful that your grades don't slip, and that you do a job that you like.

I feel that several factors contribute to the current success of my dialogue journal program: (1) the small class size. This enables us to work more closely together and possibly to do more with our journal writing than a larger class could. (2) a structured time to write. Learning disabled students greatly benefit from consistency and structure. The routine that allows them to know in advance that Mon., Wed., and Fri. are journal writing days makes it easier for them to organize and prepare themselves and enhances their writing. (3) knowledge of my students' strengths and limitations. This should be the first item to consider when setting up a dialogue journal program. Those students who can write independently without needing "dialogue starters" should be encouraged to write freely. But with many of my learning disabled students, to avoid frustration and wasted writing time, I needed to give them an idea, raise a question, etc. Giving them something to write about and at the same time personalizing it gives them enthusiasm and confidence to write. (4) choice of a journal. I have some students who write rather large, and I needed to decide whether to use a large, notebook-size pad for journals or a small spiral pad. I chose a small spiral pad because it was pocket size and seemed more personal. The children liked the idea of a smaller pad, because it enabled them to put it in their pocket or read it without its being so easily seen by others. Interestingly enough, students who wrote large began to write noticeably smaller and more legibly, and they didn't feel inhibited by the amount of writing space either.

Getting Started With Learning Disabled Deaf Students

- Linda Mondschein

My class consists of 5 boys between the ages of 6 and 9, with hearing losses ranging from mild to profound. Four of the five boys have severe learning problems and an accompanying lack of confidence in their academic abilities, so they are now in a "special class" at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School on the Gallaudet campus.

Dialogue journals complement my natural language approach to reading and writing and have become an integral part of our daily morning routine. I have found them to be a valuable tool for monitoring progress and encouraging the children to take more risks when communicating in writing. By having the right to choose the topics for discussion, the children have gained a sense of ownership over their own work and value it highly.

Two of my children (David and Wayne) are not functional readers and still primarily use pictures to communicate in their journals. In September, Wayne would draw large blobs with pen or crayon but add no print to his entries. Now, after

six months, and after I have asked my students to use only pencil, Wayne is drawing pictures of his friends and his environment and is writing the name "Michael Jackson," names of his classmates, and words he sees on signs around the room. Up to this time David and Wayne haven't responded to my remarks in their journals, but I continue to provide exposure to meaningful writing by writing one or two sentences under their pictures, which I read together with them (by signing) each morning.

The growth in communication and in confidence for my other three students has been very distinct and exciting. One student, Lenny, who is a bright 6-year-old, has moved from listing an inventory of the letters he knew down the margin of the page and filling in the remainder with large pictures, to writing about his family, friends, special holidays, and feelings. Lenny also incorporates into his entries the comments which I have written on his homework papers, such as "WOW" and "Good work." In March, Lenny expressed his opinion of himself and his sister:

Carolyn yes ✱ Good
Lenny yes ✱ Good

Lenny takes a long time to write and really ponders over what he wants to discuss in our journal each day. I have seen his ability to comprehend what I write and to communicate effectively in writing greatly improve, even though he is not yet responding in writing to what I write.

Andrew used mostly invented spelling when we began the dialogue—so inventive that he was unable to reread his entries or my responses without assistance. Recently, while looking back through his journal, Andrew asked me what some of his early conversations said. Since his were not intelligible, we had to reread my responses to understand his remarks. Then we looked at some of his most recent entries:

I love you Linde
Your car is nice

I frad of witch
I frad of rocks

Anthony's delight was obvious as he realized he could read and understand them easily.

Erin illustrates another language and communication breakthrough which the dialogue journals facilitated. At 9 years, this student has a very low frustration/tolerance level and becomes upset easily. Erin did not want to be involved with the journals in any way. He would become upset and cry when the time came to write to me or to read my responses. Our struggle produced basically the same kind of entry each day. Erin would draw a picture and add a one-word label, such as this:

boat

He would never respond to my comments about his entry or write about the same topic twice. He would frequently draw intricate satellites and rockets, but he refused to discuss them in writing.

In November, Erin began drawing pictures in sequenced steps to illustrate the crafts projects he chose to construct, then returned to drawing arbitrary pictures and adding one-word labels. I continued to write, question, and encourage him to write to me, but a dialogue between us did not ensue.

Finally, after Christmas I became frustrated with this one-way communication and stopped responding! The next morning Erin approached me with a bewildered expression on his face, and pointed to the blank page where my response should have been. I told him (in sign language) that since he was not writing and sharing with me, I did not want to write to him. He went back to his desk immediately, and that day his entry read:

color see March bike Happe to you.

What a success! Erin was referring to his birthday (in March) and to a red bike he hoped to receive. I wrote:

You want a red bike for your birthday. Your birthday is on March 3. We will sing "Happy Birthday" to you.

The next day Erin wrote:

the Happy Birthday to you, March 3, cupcakes give Lenny, Andrew, and David and Wayne, Linda.

Of course you can imagine how eagerly I responded to this very informative comment! Two days later I read:

> *The dance is on Thursday. I'm in late for my OK*

Are dialogue journals worth it? You bet!

However, my students do not always make steady progress. It is now the middle of March, and today Erin's dialogue has regressed back to a picture and one-word label. Today I will write the date and respond with only a sad face. I hope we will soon begin conversing again.

The older children in my class, Andrew and Erin, want more privacy now when they write. For the younger children, privacy is not an issue yet. Wayne and Lenny have begun teasing each other in their journals. One draws a picture of the other and writes "sad" or "crying" underneath. Then they giggle about their joke, and I know that they are really reading. Their interactions point out a final benefit of the dialogue journals which I really didn't expect. All of the children have increased their interactions and sharing with each other, both in their journals and throughout the day in face-to-face communication. What a positive learning experience we're all having!

NEXT ISSUE: Dialogue as Reading

One of the neglected aspects of dialogue journal communication is that it is also a reading event. Our fall, 1985 issue will focus on how the dialogue journals work as a reading event for students, and how they might also be used as an informal reading inventory to assess students' reading ability. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ALL OF YOU ARE WELCOME! If you have been thinking about the reading side of dialogue journals, your comments, observations, research articles are needed. Send to Jana Staton at CAL.

Dialogue Journals for Mainstreaming Educationally Handicapped Students

• Leslee Reed

It happens to every teacher at some time. "We know you are sensitive to the needs of individuals and you've done such wonderful things with some of our youngsters who have had problems." (Now you brace yourself, here it comes!) "Annie is being sent to our school. She's a dear little girl, and I'm sure you can help her a lot." (But, you think I already have a class full of students who each, in some way, need special help.) As usual, you smile and reply, "I'll try."

Annie arrives, sweet, eager and handicapped by spinal bifida. She has been in a special school for children with physical and educational handicaps. It is felt that now she is ready for mainstreaming. Through repeated surgeries and special shoes she is able to run, play and carry on normal activities with only a limp. Annie smiles, she loves people, and immediately is absorbed into the activities of the class, classified as a fifth grader. But adjusting to a new class and a totally different learning environment is not easy. Getting along with 28 to 30 other students is a far cry from the 6 or 8 who were in her previous class. Annie knows the alphabet. That is, she can sing it, but she doesn't recognize the letters when she sees them. Her reading skills are minimal, and she is easily discouraged. I need to start at a basic level with her without letting the other students in the class think she is "dumb."

When I received Annie's school records, her folder was filled with pages of immature scrawls, pictures, and worksheets consisting of lines connecting words and pictures. There was no evidence of ability to read and write. Her I.Q. score was vague. 23 had been written, along with a comment that the testing had been unsatisfactory. The greatest help her records gave was that she had a sunny disposition. The specialists felt she would probably not be able to work at the 5th grade level, now or probably ever. They were willing to try

whatever I asked them to do. There was discussion of placing her in a lower grade. Academically that might have helped, but socially it would have been destructive to her, in my judgment.

Every teacher who has had to make such an "adjustment" knows the extra hours of work and worry that it entails. It is obvious to the other children that the new student is different. Attention span is shorter, and the need for help, support and supervision is almost constant. To help in the adjustment the teacher must create a warm climate of acceptance so that others in the class do not resent the time spent with this one student who is used to having so much help. In these situations, the Dialogue Journal has served me very well.

Everyone in my class has a Dialogue Journal, so immediately the new student is helped to begin her own. (Every student writes at least three sentences in his journal every day and places it in a special place for my reply each night. What we write is private, and the writing is never graded.) Frequently the new student needs help to begin writing, and another student, an aide, or I find a few minutes to establish the practice, set up the pattern and encourage the student to write without worry about spelling, grammar or of being graded. As the new student realizes that everyone else is doing it, she feels more at ease. Here is one activity where she is the same as everyone else. There is no need to worry about competing, being criticized, or being told it is right or wrong. Very soon this becomes for each student and for me an important tool in communication. Here they may tattle, complain, ask questions, and know that they are being "heard" every time they write in their journal. My responses assure them that their feelings and problems are known and shared. Students learn that they are important. With continued use they learn that I can be trusted and am responsive to whatever is on their minds.

Annie loved the idea of having a journal. Pencil in hand she was poised to write—but what? On a slip of paper I printed, "My name is Annie Brown. I am in Room 11. I am in grade 5." I read it to her and had her read it back to me. We talked about her name, her room, and her grade. We found the words that said her name, her grade and her room. She read the 3 sentences again, delighted that she was reading, and smiling happily the whole time. Now she could write in her journal.

On the next day when she got her journal back we read the words, and her face again lit up in smiles. All eagerness she sat down, and pencil in hand wrote exactly what she had written the first day. So I introduced her to the date which is always on the front of the chalkboard, and showed her how we start each entry with the date, then we write something <u>different</u> each day--something that we want to tell each other, or questions we want to ask. On a slip of paper I wrote, "My name is Annie. I live at 354 3rd Street. My telephone number is ___. She didn't know her telephone number, they had just had a telephone put in. So we amended her writing to say, "Today I will learn my telephone number."

Annie's education had begun. She is now reading and writing those things which in my judgment are vital to survival. With the help of another student or an aide she dictates her ideas and then reads them back. Writing back to her I keep the sentences and ideas simple, yet appropriate to her needs and to her writing. She tries to read what is written to her, and may either ask someone for help or come to me personally and ask what was written. Though she is unable to keep up with the other fifth graders, she has her journal and uses it to express her feelings when the lesson is so beyond her that she feels helpless. It does not label her as being slow or behind. We all write in our journals whenever we feel we have something which must be said, so the class accepts her behavior without question. The daily exchange becomes fun as we discuss ideas and problems she has. As she becomes more adept at comprehending, she can be encouraged to think about how the problem developed and be given a choice of ways of solving it. Underlying all of these emotional and social adjustments is an ongoing basic reading and writing activity.

After the first year, Annie's gains surprised everyone. With her permission, I shared her journal with the specialists who worked with her. It showed clearly that she was gaining and comprehending. They were delighted, and felt that for the first time she was really making progress academically. No, she was not at grade level, but she was certainly gaining, and though additional surgery kept her out of school for six weeks, she was gradually becoming independent and approaching the level expected of her age. Here is an entry from her journal near the end of the year:

> *I miss you too. Why didn't you come yesterday? Today is warm. I can't believe that a 1st grader can read in the 9th level. She is so small. I bet she is going to be smart when she grow up. I love plants. Thank you for the plants.*

Through the entire year the journal was a basic tool. At times she wrote pages to me telling me about an event or describing why something was good or bad. Sometimes she wrote only about the weather, simply fulfilling the basic 3-sentence requirement. At the year-end evaluation we agreed not to retain her in the fifth grade, and my request to keep her in my classroom for her sixth grade year was granted. Her adjustment to a regular school and an academic gain of two to three years indicated that mainstreaming had really been effective. As far as I could tell, the Dialogue Journal had been the tool that effected the major change.

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Gambrell, Linda B. Dialogue journals: Reading-writing interaction. The Reading Teacher. February, 1985. 512-515.

Shuy, Roger W. Language as a foundation for education: The school context. Theory into Practice. Summer, 1984. 167-174.

Staton, Jana. Engaging deaf students in thinking, reading, and writing: Dialogue journal use at Gallaudet. Volta Review, Special issue on writing. September, 1985.

BACK ISSUES - A little History of Dialogue Journals

We've had a lot of requests to make the back issues of this newsletter available, so we will. There have been eight issues since 1982, with the following focuses:

- I.1 - General news (April, 1982)
- I.2 - Benefits to the teacher (Fall, 1982)
- I.3 - Benefits from the students' view (April, 1983)
- I.4 - Research issue (August, 1983)
- II.1 - What is dialogue? Different models (January, 1984)
- II.2 - Interpersonal uses (July, 1984)
- II.3 - Dialogue journals in higher education (December, 1984)
- II.4 - Dialogue journals with students with special needs (May, 1985)

Separate issues are not available, but the entire set (about 60 pages) has been reproduced, along with:

- a list of publications related to dialogue journals
- abstracts of all dialogue journal dissertations we know about (see list below)
- a brief chronological history of the dialogue journal research

This is all for $5.00 (our cost to duplicate and mail out). Send orders to Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, and make checks payable to HANDBOOK PRESS.

These are the dissertation abstracts available so far:

Young Writers in Search of an Audience. Deborah Jaffer Braig. University of Pennsylvania. May, 1984.

A Descriptive Analysis of the Journal Writing Abilities of a Group of Educable Mentally Retarded Young Adults. Jack W. Farley, Jr. University of Cincinnati. 1985

Dialogue Journals and the Acquisition of Grammatical Morphology in English as a Second Language. Joy E. Kreeft. Georgetown University. December, 1984.

Back issues, cont. from p. 10

Teacher-Student Dialogue Writing in a College Composition Course: Effects Upon Writing Performance and Attitudes. Marsha Markman. University of Maryland. December, 1983.

Acquiring Practical Reasoning Through Teacher-Student Interaction in Dialogue Journals. Jana Staton. UCLA Graduate School of Education. June, 1984.

Notes From the Field

Several of you have written us wonderful responses to our previous issues. Here are some comments we've received.

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I just finished team teaching a course at the University of Maryland on the Holocaust in Literature and Film. I introduced the dialogue journal, and it was a marvelous addition to the course. My colleague and I plan to write an article about this experience.

Marsha Markman
University of Maryland

****

I'm busily working with colleagues in our undergraduate programs who are using the dialogue journal with their students in clinical settings ("Dialogue," 11/84). At this point I'm busily trying to analyze the journals and preparing a paper for presentation at a nursing conference in April. The kinds of interactions I'm seeing between faculty and students are wide ranging--not so much focused on evaluation, but rather on "self in the process of becoming."

Rose Jackson
University of Maryland

****

Although I had used journals before, I had never participated in a long-term dialogue journal with students. I began using the journals in three of my high school literature classes. I dialogued once a week with almost 90 students for about 10 weeks. I am not sure how I did it in addition to all my other work, but I did it and enjoyed it. My greatest insight from that experience was to discover that I had found an invaluable way to personalize instruction.

Last spring I dialogued with seniors in an Advanced Placement Composition and Literature class. I am doing it again this year. I hope to examine these journals for my doctoral work at the University of Maryland to see if they reveal if and how students (in this case mostly Seventh-day Adventists) relate novels and short stories to their religious and ethical beliefs. However, for the first time I sense some resistance from two or three of the students; so, you can appreciate how relieved I was to read Mary Rivkin's comment that sometimes she felt that both she and some of her students only wrote because it was an assignment. Nevertheless, I enjoy the personal contact with students and I doubt that I will ever teach as year without participating in some form of written dialogue with them.

Valerie Landis

Beltsville, MD

****

I think you should publish warnings about the addictive nature of dialogue journals! It seems as though they are a tremendous means of giving students a say in the direction of their education.

Sara Sill
Calabasas, California

Our pockets are bare again!
Renewal subscriptions will be most welcome--only $3.00. If it has been more than a year since you sent in a check, we'd love to hear from you. And please write us a note about who you are, how you heard about dialogue journals, and what you are doing with them for NOTES FROM THE FIELD.

Conference and Travel Notes

Jana Staton and Margaret Walworth presented the use of dialogue journals as an aid to reading in content areas at the TESOL meeting in New York, in April. These papers are now available. Write Margaret Walworth, Dept. of English, Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C. 20002.

Here are some of our plans for the coming year.

Joy Kreeft Peyton, Roger Shuy, and Jana Staton typically present at the Ethnography in Education forum at the Univ. of Penn., the last weekend in March. This year they presented papers based on a recently completed research report, "Analysis of student-teacher written interaction in the learning of English as a second language"

Joy Kreeft Peyton plans to present a paper on one aspect of our dialogue journal research with ESL students at the TESOL Summer Meeting, July 12-13, Washington, D.C.

Leslee Reed still conducts workshops in the Southern California area through UCLA's Writing Project, and may be available for workshops elsewhere during her free months.

Jana Staton will be one of the speakers at a FIPSE workshop at the University of Georgia (Athens) in mid-July. Call Don Rubin, Language Arts, School of Education, Univ. of Georgia for more information.

Joy Kreeft Peyton is going to spend May and June of this year in the Philippines and Thailand on a training project for CAL. She hopes as part of this trip to explore how dialogue journals can be used effectively in refugee education programs. This is an area we would like to spotlight in a future issue.

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

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