

Teacher writing for professional learning: A narrative

NIKKI AHARONIAN

*Faculty of Education, Monash University
Ofakim School, Kibbutz Merchavia, Israel*

ABSTRACT: Nikki Aharonian, an experienced primary school teacher and leader of professional learning in Israel, discovered the powerful influence of writing in learning when she embarked on postgraduate studies. Writing and written conversations were central to her learning experience and teacher-writing in professional learning and identity development became the focus of her study. After reflecting on her experiences and exploring the literature calling for teachers to write in the past two decades, she was eager to introduce teachers in her own professional environment to this non-traditional form of learning. This narrative relates her experiences as she introduced narrative writing and collaborative reflection to a group of Israeli literacy teachers in a professional learning framework.

KEYWORDS: Collaboration, narrative, professional learning, reflection, teacher-stories, teacher-writing, writing.

DIFFERING APPROACHES TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS

Traditional frameworks for the professional learning of English by literacy teachers tend to advocate a “one size fits all” approach (for example, NITL, 2005). Invariably, these frameworks fail to consider individual teachers’ needs and the varied social, cultural and curriculum contexts in which educators work (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008; Lieberman & Wood, 2001). In recent years, however, individual teachers and communities of literacy educators have shown how a more complex approach to professional learning can consider these needs and teachers’ varying professional contexts (for example, AATE/ALEA, 2002; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2007). This article demonstrates the role of personal and professional writing as a means of achieving relevant and effective professional learning for teachers, particularly for teachers of writing. This kind of professional learning, which cannot be quantified and may not have immediate benefits for students, tends to be ignored by regulatory bodies (for example, The Victorian Institute of Teaching – VIT, Victoria, Australia) in their assessment of educators.

“Professional development, though well intentioned, is often perceived by teachers as fragmented, disconnected, and irrelevant to the real problems of classroom practice” (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008, p. 226). Traditional top-down forms of professional development do not recognize the particular needs of classes, the teacher’s own knowledge and that there are varied ways of achieving successful learning in schools (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). These learning frameworks, usually imposed by an external body and presented as a way to “fix a deficiency” (Holly, 1989, as cited in Parr,

2003; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004), often promise simple solutions to complex educational dilemmas (Parr, 2003, Parr & Bellis, 2005).

In recent years, professional learning is increasingly a mandate passed down by politicians and policy makers (Parr, 2003). This top-down paradigm of teacher learning involves transmission of knowledge and skills. There is a clear expectation for teachers to produce particular student outcomes. Doecke and Parr (2005) remind us that professional learning can be closely connected to student learning without producing externally prescribed results. Lieberman and Miller (2001) warn that while these decision-makers are talking about professional development and the quality of teachers, they are actively working to “deprofessionalize teaching, to fast-track teacher preparation and licensure procedures, to disband tenure, and to devalue teacher experience, discretion, and knowledge in everyday classroom decisions” (p. viii). Additional warnings against top-down prescribed professional development programs have been sounded (Hargreaves, Earle, Moore & Manning, 2001, as cited by Parr, 2003).

THE CALL FOR TEACHERS TO WRITE

Nineteen years after my induction into teaching I embarked on postgraduate study. Throughout my various coursework units and the preparation of my Masters thesis I experienced a dramatic change in the way I view myself with regard to writing and professional knowledge. Not only did my learning and powerful writing experiences positively influence my teaching practice; they also stimulated growth in my professional identity.

While studying, I was surprised to discover vast bodies of literature dealing with the role of writing in the personal and professional lives of educators (for example, Atwell, 1998; Lieberman & Wood, 2001; National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006). I began asking myself why those texts never came to my attention previously. In addition, I began exploring why, despite my active involvement in many educational projects, I felt no drive to write professionally – neither private, reflective texts nor public pieces for publication.

The benefits of personal and professional writing for teachers have been explored widely in the past twenty years (see Dahl, 1992). There have been several waves of interest in the field and a variety of advantages have been discussed. Although many studies have been conducted on writing pedagogy and on professional learning for educators, very few have specifically investigated teachers of writing and the contribution of writing in their own professional growth.

Throughout the 1990s teachers were encouraged to write themselves in order to improve their writing pedagogy and thereby strengthen student writing (for example, Beeghly Bencich, 1996; Frager, 1994). It was proposed that by experiencing personally the difficulties inherent in the composition process, teachers could understand their students better. Teachers have also been encouraged to write for publication (for example, Crowe, 1994; Smiles & Short, 2006). The call for teachers to write has usually referred to individual teachers writing for their own purposes. Narrative composition, writing for enrichment and the role of writing in the formation of professional identity have all been explored. Many educators have written of

their enlightening experiences while writing privately: “It seems that I’m not really sure what I’ve learned in my classroom until I write about it” (Five, 1992, p. 50); “I write because I need to understand myself and others...” (Monroe, 1992, p. 69). Doecke and Parr (2005) join others in the promotion of “writing as a vehicle for grappling with issues” (p. 9) relevant to the practice of educators. Campbell, McNamara and Gilroy (2004) discuss the possibilities for exploring teacher identity using writing, talk and reflection. They invite teachers to examine their professional identity by engaging in story-writing or keeping a reflective diary. In recent years, the role of narrative in teacher learning has been widely discussed (Doyle & Carter, 2003; Kamler, 2003; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, as cited in Parr & Bellis, 2005), and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) call for researchers and others involved in education to listen to the stories teachers tell of their experience in the classroom and beyond.

In contrast with those who called teachers to write individually in the 1990s (see Frager, 1994), there is now a growing body of literature describing the advantages of collaborative writing in professional development (see Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Scott Bulfin (2005) emphasizes the importance of communicative writing with others. This writing can take place between colleagues in schools, between friends, and between more and less experienced educators. This written collaboration can take place online. Bulfin explains how collaboration intensifies the reflexive processes and why the products are deeper than each individual writer would have achieved alone. The value of creative and intellectual dialogue for all teachers is shown by Bulfin and Mathews (2003), when they write about their experience as graduate teachers. They recount that: “we have undertaken a collaborative and dialogic approach to our own professional learning. We have...actively listened, talked, read, written and theorized our experiences, we have come to know and see them differently and more powerfully” (p. 49). The authors conclude “...we stretched the boundaries of our understanding, challenging each other to look further than we could see alone” (p. 52).

GETTING TEACHERS WRITING – A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

I am an Australian teacher, deputy principal and leader of professional learning in Israel. I support teachers inside their schools and run regional in-service professional learning courses. In the nine years that I have been working with teachers, I have witnessed the concern of many primary-school educators with respect to the teaching of writing. Many express a desire to improve their classroom practice and to support their students on the difficult road to success in writing.

Although national examinations show that achievement levels of Israeli students in Years Four and Eight are far lower for written composition than they are for reading (National Authority for Educational Measurement and Evaluation, 2007) – an international phenomenon – most of the professional development frameworks (PD) available for literacy teachers in this country concentrate on reading pedagogy. After years of deliberation about teaching writing in upper primary classrooms, and dissatisfaction with my own writing, I set out to explore these fields in postgraduate study.

There is no tradition of composing teacher narratives and collaborating on them in northern Israel. There are presently no formal options for professional learning through written

reflection and peer discussion. The more I read relevant studies and wrote my own narratives, the more I understood the potential of writing in teacher communities. I was eager to try introducing educators in my present professional environment to the empowering effects of professional writing in supportive learning groups. While writing my Masters thesis on the role of teacher-writing in developing professional learning and identity, I ran a professional development program for Israeli teachers of Grades Two to Six. The name of the twenty-eight-hour seminar was “Improving Literacy in a Heterogeneous Class”. The teachers voluntarily signed up.

I began the course by asking the fourteen teachers participating to fill in a questionnaire about themselves, their teaching experience and their expectations of the course. I included a list of possible topics and asked them to mark those most relevant to them. I was not surprised to find that the most pressing topic for all of the participants was the teaching of writing and supporting struggling writers. Many were clearly expecting “quick fix” solutions to the problems they faced in the classroom.

I opened the third meeting by bravely asking the teachers to write for ten minutes in silence; the topic being an experience they have had teaching writing. I told them that we would be discussing their texts after the writing period was over. One teacher immediately left the room, a coffee break I assumed. Another took out her cell phone and began clicking furiously. Others doodled in their notebooks, began listing points or began to fill lines with Hebrew script. I sat and watched them, uncomfortable with the squirming that was going on in several seats. Each minute that went past was like five; time didn’t seem to pass. I forced myself to wait ten minutes, resisting my urge to cut the time down. Silence was kept in the room for most of the time, although occasionally there were embarrassed giggles or a whisper. When time was up, some of the teachers were still busily writing their narratives and were sorry to stop. Others looked relieved and were waiting to get on with the workshop.

In the discussion that followed I was interested to hear what the participants had experienced in those ten minutes. Several teachers commented that they are unused to writing on demand and that they felt uncomfortable. Some confessed that they are not used to writing at all. Several remarked that the time limit and the expectation of sharing their writing pressured them. At least two of the teachers didn’t write at all during the ten-minute period. Only two or three confided that they enjoyed the writing experience.

We looked in detail at what had happened and began to understand how the writing process is different for different people. We discussed the implications of these differences in our classrooms. One of the teachers, who didn’t write anything, an experienced Grade Six teacher, explained to the group that she isn’t a writer. “People are either born writers or they aren’t. I’m not,”¹ she said. The group discussed this statement. Is it true? If it is, what does it mean for the teaching of writing? I added that this is one of the major misconceptions held by struggling writers in our classes.

¹ Palmquist and Young (1992, as cited in Hayes, 2000) claim that increased “writing anxiety” (p. 17) and lower self-evaluation result when college students believe that writing is a born trait. Similarly, Dweck (1986, as cited in Hayes, 2000) reports that if students who believe writing is an innate talent experience failure, they may develop a negative attitude to writing and avoid composition.

I asked the teachers if anyone was willing to share their text with us. Two of the first volunteers started to tell their story without looking at the page. I stopped them and reassured them that it was clear to everyone that what they had completed was the roughest of drafts, but that we wanted to hear what was on the paper. Some of the pieces were well structured, interesting stories. We were amazed by the writers' style and clarity. At the end of the session I explained that our next meeting would take place on the virtual campus. Each teacher was required to do three things: first, to revise her story about her teaching writing (or to write another story) and to post it on the assigned private discussion board. The second task was to reflect on the teaching story and on the experience of writing it. I supplied possible directions for this. The third task was to read stories from other group members and comment.

It took weeks and lots of encouragement for the first teacher to post a story. She wrote about a poetry anthology she had successfully produced at her school. The poems were all connected to Israel's sixtieth anniversary. This teacher told how she had created a poetry unit suitable for each different age-group, chosen appropriate poems to teach, and encouraged the children to write. Every child in the school had writing published in the festive booklet. She told her story modestly but proudly and expressed her personal excitement and satisfaction with the project. A few days after this story appeared, comments began to appear, most of them congratulating the teacher on her success in the project but also on being the first to contribute a story. Questions also appeared. Gradually a few other stories appeared on the site and the discussion was lively.

Unfortunately, only six of the fourteen participants took part in the discussion. At the next meeting, I devoted time to the oral reading of those stories posted on the campus and gave those teacher-writers time to share their experiences. I was sure that my enthusiasm, together with proving to the participants that it is possible to complete the task, would motivate the others to write and share their stories. A few weeks later an additional story appeared, but that was all. I was disappointed, but not surprised, because I knew the teachers were both overworked and self-conscious.

Although I know that time constraints are a central factor in any work I do with teachers, here I believe that the type of task assigned was significant in the low rate of participation. I am continually aware that these teachers have not been asked to write anything of this nature for a very long time, some of them since they were at school. Many of the teachers expressed anxiety connected to the possibility of their texts being assessed. In addition, it was clear that in a twenty-eight-hour seminar, many of the teachers did not know each other and may have felt vulnerable as a result.

Despite the fact that a large percentage of participants refrained from writing, I was excited by the experience I gained. I tasted this kind of dialogic written conversation with teachers and found it far more meaningful than choosing a topic, planning a lecture or a workshop, imparting my knowledge or experience and going home. When I read the stories written, I was greatly aware that every teacher had something to say and possessed professional knowledge which could be a wonderful starting point for collaborative learning.

Sara², an early career teacher, was very quiet and reserved in the first two sessions. When we discussed writing during the third meeting, I presented examples of published authors talking about the writing process. We saw how laborious composition can be. Suddenly, Sara shyly told the group that she kept a personal diary and that because she lived alone she came home and poured her day into writing. She confessed that writing was an important part of her routine.

The narrative Sara wrote and posted was written in very simple language but told a very powerful story of her battle to get her second grade pupils to write. She told us how she used to spend each Sunday morning³ hearing stories from her class about what they had done on the weekend. She was frustrated that it was always the same children who related experiences and that many remained silent. She explained that it was difficult for many to choose just one experience to share.

One day, Sara gave her pupils special notebooks to write what they wanted to share of their weekend and that afterwards those that wanted to could tell their story. She was shocked by the result. Firstly, everybody wrote, including those who usually didn't share their stories as well as her struggling writers. Secondly, many more children were willing to tell their stories. The teacher, excited by this lesson, decided to continue. In the weeks that followed, she asked her pupils to write every Sunday morning, and was happy that the children wrote willingly and that the texts produced became more and more complex. Many pupils asked to share their work.

Whilst reflecting on her narrative for our group, Sara started asking her class to write on other occasions, after recess for example. Another innovation for her was that she started writing while her class was busy with their heads down. She used the time for reflective writing on teaching issues. In the weeks that followed, writing became an accepted mode of communication in Sara's class. When children were involved in an argument or had a problem, she asked them to first organize their thoughts by writing them in their notebook and that afterwards she would be happy to listen to them. It worked! When Sara got to school after her day off, she would find a pile of notes waiting for her on her desk. Subject teachers who taught the class were surprised when they began to receive written communications from the young children.

Sara received positive feedback on her work from the members of our group, and from me, and also heard ideas for continuing and expanding her practice. I found it very satisfying that through this activity she realized that she had something significant to share with a group of experienced teachers. Many of the veteran teachers certainly had something to learn from this shy and nervous, early-career teacher. I realized that Sara was similar to her shyer pupils, those that only dared to share a story when they had it firmly on paper.

Although this was the first time that I took part in this kind of dialogue, I was in charge and responsible for creating the conditions for a meaningful professional conversation to evolve. Soon after I assigned the task, I was worried that none of the teachers would contribute. Several times a day I entered the virtual campus and was confronted by the blank message

² All names appearing in the article are pseudonyms.

³ In Israel the school week begins on Sunday.

board. Under pressure, I wrote yet another encouraging invitation to write. Relieved when Carla posted the first story, I was quick to congratulate her and ask for responses. Soon I had a new worry. I was sorry that Carla, having exposed herself, wasn't receiving any reaction and that others were not joining her. A week later term holidays arrived. The teachers had time for the task and more narratives appeared.

Dear Sara,
Thank you for sharing the exciting events from your classroom. When you wrote: "I always thought that children don't like writing so I never dared to ask them to do anything like this. I was surprised", you were exposing the significant professional learning you are experiencing in your classroom. Those moments of surprise, wonder, disappointment and frustration are those that lead us to valuable learning, but it happens only if we allow ourselves to stop, observe, question and reflect on our practice. If we don't ask ourselves what caused our success or some change to occur, we remain stationary...

You have definitely proved to us all that early career teachers have a lot to teach veteran teachers.
Nikki

Figure 1: Response on the online forum (1)

As Hebrew is not my mother tongue, it was not easy for me to respond in writing to the teachers. I knew exactly what I wanted to say to each participant, had printed their narratives and covered the margins with notes. I was certain that they were checking the board daily waiting for my response. Although discussion between the teachers was thought-provoking and relevant, I was again under pressure, this time to write significant comments. As soon as I sat down to respond to each and every teacher-writer, I regretted waiting and realized it was quite unnecessary to fear the task.

As I responded, using the notes I had previously scribbled in the margins, I expanded my understandings and was aware of the significant professional learning I was undergoing in the process. Peeping into the classrooms of the participants through their reflective writing, and encouraging them to learn from themselves and from their peers, I was experiencing what I had planned for them. I was aware that my feedback was stimulating the teachers' professional learning rather than judging them as educators and assessing the quality of their work.

M, I wish all teachers would be willing to admit that their pupils don't understand a concept because it wasn't presented in a way that suits their present understanding.
I wish all teachers could look back and try to understand the source of their pupils' difficulty and look for creative ways to support them.
I wish all teachers could listen to their pupils and involve them in the dilemmas of teaching a difficult concept.
I wish all teachers could be flexible in their teaching and change direction mid-process if necessary.

M, I enjoyed your narrative and although I don't agree with all of the things you wrote, from reading your thoughts and reflecting on them, I have learnt a lot from you...
Nikki

Figure 2: Response on the online forum (2)

When I lecture to a group of teachers or run a seminar in a staff room, I can respond to the classroom experiences the teachers share less personally than I can through reading their written stories and writing a response. Responding isn't an easy task, because I want to highlight the positive points evident in the narrative, ask questions which will promote fruitful reflection and learning, and encourage an ongoing dialogue. I am sure that my responses are higher in quality while sitting at home quietly by the computer, than they are in the dynamic environment of a professional learning activity.

LOOKING AHEAD

Despite the fact that this small-scale experience was only partly successful, I am optimistic that significant learning frameworks can be established for Israeli teachers in this way. Many of the participating teachers have already said they are waiting to continue this learning next year. I was sorry to say goodbye.

In order to succeed in this kind of professional learning, I believe teachers need to know, ahead of time, that this will be the framework of the seminar and that they must commit themselves to experiencing writing and discussing teacher narratives. Participants should be aware of what the benefits might be personally and professionally. A mix of experienced and early career teachers is likely to be preferable – building on the enthusiasm and burning need for collaboration amongst newer teachers and the experience and knowledge of veteran educators.

As a result of my own learning and my positive experience with this group of teachers, I am eager to develop professional learning environments directed at the particular needs of areas, schools and teachers. These frameworks, whether formal or informal, initiated from the top down or from the bottom up, must address the needs of teachers and recognize the value of teacher knowledge. Examples of this kind of collaborative professional learning through writing are reported by Bulfin (2005), Florio-Ruane (2001, as cited by Parr & Bellis, 2005), Lieberman and Wood (2001), Mitchell (2005) and others.

Freedman, Flower, Hull and Hayes (1995, as cited in National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006) argue "...if schools are to become professional workplaces, writing will have to become integral to teachers' work and to their identities as professionals" (p. 8). It is clear to me that provision must be made for reflection, writing and dialogue in thinking about teachers' work loads. It is difficult enough trying to convince overworked teachers to take on extra commitments without them having to "carve out" (Parr, 2007) time for this in an impossibly busy schedule. Writing for professional learning takes time and it takes energy. Many studies into teacher learning are showing that meaningful and relevant professional learning must be seen as an integral part of a teacher's work (for example, Bulfin, 2005; National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006; Parr, 2007). I cannot help but feel that if suitable provision is made for this activity within the school framework it may be seen by many more teachers as more consequential and worth the time and energy. Time allocated for collaborative inquiry and writing by teachers would increase participation and would show that the importance of the activity is recognized.

Since finishing writing my thesis, I continue to ask relevant questions. I wonder how, for example, more teachers and teacher educators can become aware of the empowering effects of writing in supportive learning groups, and if the contribution of teacher communities grounded on the basis of writing and sharing for learning might be significant? Why is this kind of professional learning ignored by bodies responsible for the assessment of teacher learning (for example, VIT)? Why isn't professional writing recognized as a legitimate means of learning for educators?

In the contemporary Western world, despite the fact that external pressures on educators are rising and that teachers are still required to participate in professional development events aimed at producing particular student outcomes (for example, VIT, 2007), it is still my hope that teachers and teacher educators like myself will be exposed to the exciting professional learning alternatives available through writing. I fully embrace the words of Routman (1995): "I wish that all teachers could see themselves as intelligent persons who have everyday experiences worth writing and sharing with others. It's coming...I'm optimistic" (p. 525). The author was optimistic thirteen years ago; I am optimistic today.

This year, my colleagues and I will be offering seminars which focus on the teaching of writing. They will all be structured around teacher collaboration and the writing and sharing of narratives. I believe that if we ground our work in a respect for the knowledge teachers bring with them and their honest desire to raise the writing achievement levels of their pupils, they should sign up, and be open, flexible and active participants. It is my hope that some of the participants will join me on my ongoing learning journey and like me, will adopt writing as an integral part of their professional lives.

REFERENCES

- Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) & Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) (2002). *Standards for the Teaching of English Language and Literacy in Australia* (STELLA). Retrieved June, 2008 from <http://www.stella.org.au>.
- Beeghly Bencich, C. (1996). Review: Writing and teaching. *The English Journal*, 85(3), 91-93.
- Bulfin, S. (2005). Conversation + collaboration + writing = professional learning. In B. Doecke, & G. Parr (Eds.), *Writing = learning* (pp. 40-58). South Australia: Wakefield Press.
- Bulfin, S., & Mathews, K. (2003). Reframing beginning teachers as knowledge producers: Learning to teach and transgress. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 2(3), 47-58. Retrieved June, 2008 from <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/files/2003v2n3art4.pdf>
- Campbell, A., McNamara, O., & Gilroy, P. (2004). *Practitioner research and professional development in education*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Connelly, F., & Clandinin, D. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19, 2-14.

- Crowe, C. (1994). Why write for publication? In K. Dahl (Ed.), *Teacher as writer: Entering the professional conversation* (pp. 74-80). Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Dahl, K. (Ed.). (1992). *Teacher as writer: Entering the professional conversation*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). Teacher-centered professional development. Alexandria: VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved June, 2008 from <http://www.ascd.org>.
- Doecke, B., & Parr, G. (2005). Writing: A common project. In B. Doecke, & G. Parr (Eds.), *Writing = Learning* (pp. 1-16). South Australia: Wakefield Press.
- Five, C. (1992). Teacher research – catalyst for writing. In K. Dahl (Ed.), *Teacher as writer: Entering the professional conversation* (pp. 44-51). Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Fragar, A. (1994). Teaching, writing and identity. *Language Arts*, 71(4), 274-278.
- Hayes, J. (2000). A new framework for understanding cognition and affect in writing. In R. Indrisano, & J. R. Squire (Eds.), *Perspectives on writing: Research, theory, and practice* (pp. 6-44). Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.
- Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (2001) Introduction. In A. Lieberman, & L. Miller (Eds), *Teachers caught in the action: Professional development that matters* (pp. vii-x). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lieberman, A., & Pointer Mace, D. (2008). Teacher learning: The key to educational reform. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(3), 226-234.
- Lieberman, A., & Wood, D. (2001). When teachers write: Of networks and learning. In A. Lieberman & L. Miller (Eds.), *Teachers caught in the act: Professional development that matters* (pp. 174-187). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Mitchell, J. (2005). Talking our way to understanding writing. In B. Doecke, & G. Parr (Eds.), *Writing = learning* (pp. 59-71). South Australia: Wakefield Press.
- Monroe, R. (1992). Getting it down and sending it out. In K. L. Dahl (Ed.), *Teacher as writer: Entering the professional conversation* (pp. 69-73). Urbana, ILL: NCTE.
- National Authority for Educational Measurement and Evaluation (RAMA). (2007, May). *National Meitzav examinations. The state of the nation's primary schools, 2006*. Retrieved June 5, 2008, from <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Rama/MivchaneiHameitzavKlali/DochotMeitzav1/>.
- National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (NITL) (2005). *Teaching reading: Report and recommendations. National inquiry into the teaching of literacy*. Canberra: DEST.
- National Writing Project, & Nagin, C. (2006). *Because writing matters: Improving student writing in our schools* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Parr, G. (2003). Teacher professional learning and transgression? Inquiry on the boundary. *English in Australia*, 138, 63-79.
- Parr, G. (2007). Writing and practitioner inquiry: Thinking relationally. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 6(3), 22-47. Retrieved June, 2008 from <http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/files/etpc/2007v6n3art2.pdf>
- Parr, G., & Bellis, N. (2005). Autobiographical inquiry in pre-service and early career teacher learning: The dialogic possibilities. In B. Doecke, & G. Parr (Eds.), *Writing = Learning* (pp. 19-39). South Australia: Wakefield Press.
- Routman, R. (1995). Donald Graves: Outstanding educator in the Language Arts. *Language Arts*, 72(7), 518-525. Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com>

- Smiles, T., & Short, K. (2006). Transforming teacher voice through writing for publication. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 33(3), 133-144.
- Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2007). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 80-91.
- Victorian Institute of Teaching. (2008, September). *Your guide to teacher registration – How to meet professional development requirements*. Retrieved October 5, 2008, from http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/1602_Your-Guide-to-Teacher-Registration---Professional-Development-Requirements.pdf

Manuscript received: August 2, 2008

Revision received: October 12, 2008

Accepted: December 8, 2008