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ED 800 Unit 2

Vivian Paley is a prominent thinker and an impactful contributor to teacher-inquiry. It was not until she left the teaching profession that Paley began to relay the findings of her research. Through many books and essays she has been able to convey her various techniques of inquiry and their importance. The most effective method of teacher-inquiry Paley has used is journal reflection. It was through journal reflections that Paley started to have a profound understanding of her students and herself.

Through the process of journal reflections, Paley's observations and recordings brought about discovery and a change in curriculum. Paley wrote everything she saw and heard in her classroom. She would even tape record conversations so nothing would be missed. After writing down all her observations in a journal, Paley reflected about the events. These journal reflections led her, not to the answers of her questions, but to more questions and opened new doors. It was through the book *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* that she summarized her findings. The results of her reflections drew into a full year of Leo Lionni's works, a literary curriculum she had not intended to teach. After a reading of *Frederick*, Paley found it interesting how her students interpreted the story, but Paley did not commit to focus exclusively on Leo Lionni's books until she was mystified by reactions to the story of *Tico and the Golden Wings*. She was driven by the new perspectives her students brought forth on the recurring character conflict of these books and discovered that she would have lost out on a wealth of enlightenment if she had relied strictly upon her own viewpoint, likely avoiding the book(s) altogether. After logging conversations, analyses, and changes in behavior, Paley was able to learn more about the Leo Lionni stories and derive deeper understanding about teaching and the learning of her students. Though on the eve of retirement, this inquiry method brought Paley to realize she had much more to learn.

Another validation of her journal inquiry method from *The Girl with the Brown Crayon* was "Bruce's story", where Paley's new understanding allowed her to modify her approach toward a student, establishing a more supportive learning environment. Paley's reflections of her journal entries made her reanalyze notions she had about her students and herself. When Paley read *Inch by Inch* for the first time, she felt a connection with the struggles of the inchworm, but after her student Bruce spoke up, she realized she was not the inchworm but the nightingale, a demanding and pushy bird. *Inch by Inch* was "Bruce's story". Bruce explained the inchworm did not want or like to measure the songs, as he did not like to picture-write. Paley tried to convey to Bruce that it would be fun to write a story to go along with his drawing, but in fact, it was not in Bruce's character to do so and the activity, in his mind, spoiled the picture. Paley had never noticed how much anxiety and tension had been building within certain students while writing. Upon reflection of "Bruce's story" Paley acknowledged that "... children are often negatively affected when I discount my own observations and go along with the expectations of others." This realization changed her approach; she then allowed Bruce's writing to surface naturally. Through journal reflection Paley realized the cause and effects in her classroom and modified her teaching accordingly.

It was not until after Paley retired from teaching that she became a published writer and addressed why journal inquiry works. In *Must Teachers also be Writers?* Paley reflected on writing as a tool of thought by which questions can arise and change can occur. She reminds us that writing leads to reflection and in modern day society we do not create time to write like we did in the past. If we do not write, how can we properly reflect about the events of a day? Teachers must comprehend their curriculum, their students, and themselves to fully help students reach their highest potential in learning and understanding. Journal reflection is one way to help teachers perform this task. A teacher should be writing about things he or she did not understand, what did or did not work, and imagine why. Only then can the teacher change the classroom environment and their self. In her essay *Talking to Myself in a Daily Journal: Reflections of a Kindergarten Teacher*, Paley stated that given the opportunity she would require teachers to write a journal and reflect rather than collaborate as a team. She believes there is significant knowledge to be gained by critiquing yourself. It is through Paley's method of journal reflection that one can have a deeper understanding of oneself, the student, the content, and the environment in which we teach.