

# IGNITE YOUR TEACHING BY BEING A TEACHER-WRITER

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### **Why should you be a teacher-writer?**

The benefits of "teacher as writer" are far-reaching. When teachers share and model with their own writing, they stand with their students as members of the writing community and as fellow writers instead of as "the writing teacher." The writing community needs a teacher who is willing to take risks in the composing process and face the same peaks and valleys that his or her students do. When teachers take the responsibility for providing the high-quality support our students need to move forward as writers, we commit ourselves to leading a writerly life (Dorfman and Cappelli, 2017, 12).

### **Three Writing Sessions**

These sessions are provide us with the space, time, and an opportunity to engage in composition.

We will have two kinds of shares:

- Content
  - Partner A reads their writing aloud to a partner.
  - Partner B responds to what s/he heard in the writing.
  - Switch roles.
- Process
  - Partners talk about what happened when they were writing, what it felt like, where they struggled (or stared off into space).
  - Partners do not share their actual writing.

**PIECE #1: Inspired by *My Quick Writes* (from *Inside Writing*) by Donald H. Graves & Penny Kittle**

- Directions:
  - Once you've chosen a prompt, copy it on the top of your notebook page or document (screen).
  - Write rapidly for ten minutes. NO STOPPING.
  - Change nothing. Do not go back and edit or revise.
  - Close your notebook/document when time is up.
  - Be prepared to engage in a content share.

Choose one of the following prompts:

- What is there not enough of in your life right now, this very minute?
  - Write about it.
- What stories do your hands tell?
  - Trace around your hand & fill it in with memories connected to your hands.
- Choose an important time in your life and list the music you remember connected to those memories. Write about that kind of music generally, or choose one particular song.
- List three books that are important to you. Choose one and write about how it has affected your life.
- Retell a family story you have heard told many times. Write your version of the story.
- Think of someone who doesn't respect you or value what you offer.
  - Write a letter that informs this person of your abilities as well as what the person needs to do to understand your abilities.

**PIECE #2: Inspired by *Renew* (Stenhouse, 2017) by Shawna Coppola**

Here's how this writing time will go:

- I'll read something that will provoke a feeling, thought, or memory.
  - No prompts will be given.
- Brainstorm and discuss possibilities for writing.
- Write.
- Process Share: Talk with a partner about what happened when you were writing, what it felt like, where you struggled (or stared off into space).
  - Also think about what we can learn from our experience as writers that can increase the effectiveness of our instruction.

(Coppola, 2017, 96-97)

“Love is” can be found by pointing your browser to <https://goo.gl/kjkhF3>. You may also click on this QR code:



### PIECE #3: Slice of Life Writing inspired by the Slice of Life Story Challenge on Two Writing Teachers

- A storytelling technique that offers insight into an ordinary person's life.
- Examples:
  - A story about a small segment of someone's day.
    - Example: The engine turned over & my heart skipped a beat -- <https://goo.gl/qauxDz>.



- A poem that tells about a small moment in time.
  - Example: Midnight Watch -- <https://goo.gl/c65Gj6>.



- A collection of words and photos that describes a scenario.
  - Example: What a Character! -- <https://goo.gl/kn7Ane>.



- At the end of our writing time, you and your partner will decide if you want to do a process share or a content share.
- For more information about the Slice of Life Story Challenge, point your browser to <https://twowritingteachers.org/challenges/>. For information on joining the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Slice of Life Story Challenge, please visit <https://twowritingteachers.org/2018/01/22/11thsolsc/>.

### **Group Discussion: Implications for Working with Students**

Talk with a partner about these things for a couple of minutes before we open it up to the group.

- Which type of writing was the easiest and why?
- Which type of writing was the most challenging and why?
- What did you do when you got stuck?
- How did you feel while writing?

### **10 Ways to Develop a Daily Writing Life**

1. Write first thing in the morning if you can.
2. If you choose to do it another time of day, prioritize it.
3. Think “same time, same place.”
4. Some people find it useful to “attach” their writing to another daily activity to strengthen the habit.
5. Be flexible, no matter what.
6. Avoid judging your writing.
7. Always reflect on the benefits of writing at the end of the session.
8. Keep an “excuse book” close at hand.
9. Find a buddy or a community to do it with.
10. Be realistic in your expectations.

(Shubitz, 2013)

### **Resources:**

Coppola, Shawna. 2017. *Renew! Become a Better – and More Authentic – Writing Teacher*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Dorfman, Lynne R., and Rose Cappelli. 2017. *Mentor Texts: Teaching Writing Through Children's Literature, K – 6, Second Edition*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Graves, Donald H., and Penny Kittle. 2005. *Inside Writing: How to Teach the Details of Craft*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Shubitz, Stacey. 2013. "Creating a Consistent and Meaningful Writing Life," September 15. <https://twowritingteachers.org/2013/09/15/writing-life/>.

Sokolowski, Kathleen Neagle. 2017. "Love is," November 6. <https://courageDoesNotRoar.blogspot.com/2017/11/love-is-sol17.html>.