

An interesting research topic in education looks at inquiry-based learning, yet it is also important for teachers to look into their own inquiry and grow as a teacher. Vivian Paley is a great example of this. Paley is known as a teacher researcher where she conducted, recorded, and analyzed many different topics throughout her career, mostly on the importance of play and stories. Paley would analyze the way students interacted and how the classroom culture was shaped by student-inquiry. As readers of Paley's work, we are able to see the importance of relationships with her students as seen in *The Girls with the Brown Crayon* and her dedication as a teacher researcher through inquiry characteristics such as: writing and reflecting.

*The Girls with the Brown Crayon* by Vivian Paley shows how students use their stories and play to shape their lives and experiences. The book walks us through a year of kindergarten students' inquiry about Leo Lionni's books. Led by Reeny, the students relate themselves to different characters, discuss the different features of the books, and want to learn more and more about Leo Lionni and his writings. This leads Paley to use this as a basis for her curriculum for the entire school year. This shows us a great example of inquiry-based learning for the students, but it also shows us what Paley had in order to create this great final year of teaching - relationships. Paley's overall relationships with students in this book are what every teacher should strive for in education. In particular, Paley's relationship with Reeny is remarkable in the sense that this young girl had so much say in how the class culture would be shaped. Paley listened to Reeny's needs and questions about Leo Lionni which turned into great life lessons that could relate to other subjects. Paley and Reeny's passion for Leo Lionni was adopted by the rest of the students and teachers in the classroom which turned into an exciting atmosphere for all students. Being able to see what your students are interested in and letting it shape your curriculum is one of the most important aspects of teaching and it all starts with having good relationships with your students.

Vivian Paley gives her readers more than just stories from within the classroom, she gives teachers a way into her inquiries about her classroom. In "Must Teachers Also Be Writers", Paley discusses how she was able to "make sense of her classroom" by stepping back and watching and listening to her students. She later says, "Only as we write down our thoughts and observations *may* we question and argue with ourselves about the things we do and say. Note: question and argue with ourselves." Paley shows us that part of her inquiry and thought as a teacher was brought on by the essence or daily writing and importance it plays in being able to see the classroom from a different perspective. One way Paley wrote daily was by using a tape recorder in class. To ensure that she would transcribe and write about the day, Paley only had one tape for the recorder. This way her writing was fresh in her mind, she could make connections to things that were said and could address situations the very next day if necessary. It is crucial for teachers to write down their findings and observations with students to then be able to become a reflective teacher.

With the importance Vivian Paley puts on writing daily as a teacher we can see that this writing leads to reflection and further research. Paley had the absolute control over her work yet

let her students' experiences with play and stories direct the curriculum. With this she was able to show other teachers the importance of writing and reflecting in relation to inquiry in the classroom. When Paley reflected on her daily lessons it was a formative assessment. She was able to decide what to do the next day and was able to see students' misconceptions. In order for teachers to be reflective it is critical for them to write and reflect.

Through the writings of educator, author, and researcher, Vivian Paley, we can see the importance of student-teacher relationships in driving the curriculum and the need for daily writing and reflection. Paley was an advocate on the importance of daily writing and reflecting becoming part of the norm for teachers. To end here is a quote from Paley to inquire about the need to become a teacher who not only writes, reflects, and researches in the classroom but shares the information with others.

“There are few novelists among us, and only a small number will have their works published in any form. But we all have the desire to learn more about ourselves and the children who call us Teacher. Let us resurrect the daily journal to help us study the most complex society ever assembled in a single place: the school classroom.”