

Occasional Papers

These are a way to think more deeply about your experiences delivering professional development in high needs schools. Occasional Papers are written on the occasion of some occurrence that made you think. In these papers, you will describe the occasion, reflect on the possible significance of the occasion, and raise questions for us to consider. The point of an OP is to reflect on what happens in your professional development work related to the teaching of writing. An OP is read aloud. Always. It must be written out completely and cannot be told rather than read.

1. Watch for something worth thinking about.
 - a. Something you do that makes you think
 - b. Something you notice about a student
 - c. Something you notice in student work
 - d. Something a student says
 - e. A reaction you have which puzzles you.
 - f. Something other people do which bothers or pleases you.
 - g. An idea that you have that seems as if it might lead to something more.
 - h. A comment that means more to you than its simple meaning.
 - i. An insight that is worth expanding and recording
2. Take time to describe the event as accurately as you can. Put it down with all of its inconsistencies and lack of resolution.
3. Consider it, reflect on it. Take it seriously. Be interested in what it might tell you. What is going on? Is there anything to reveal by reflection that might not be immediately obvious? Do not expect closure. Struggle for truth. Go beyond what everyone always thinks about this. Open up the topic rather than finishing it off. Do not fake anything.
4. Raise questions about your experience and its implications which could be discussed in the group.

We will discuss the OP. The discussion is one of the most important parts. It must be serious and intellectual. It must explore the topic from new angles. If we finish a discussion about an OP thinking about the topic in a slightly different way, then things have worked out well. If we leave thinking in exactly the same way as we did when we started, then the activity has failed. The OP should make us think about everything more deeply. The purpose is not to solve or resolve an issue, but to open up issues for our consideration. It should raise questions and attune us to the presence of more questions.

Through these papers you will not learn the answer, but a process through which you will see multiple answers and raise many more questions- they will make us all more aware of the complexity of possibilities that make up our own, teachers' and our students' writing and learning lives. Caution: You should not use students or teachers' real names or identifying details in these papers. What we discuss both in OP and in our personal writing should remain confidential in the group.