

Gillon2

This is an incredible essay! In it you outline the unique and essential features of Paley's form of inquiry. Indeed, Paley's style of inquiry is characterized by her commitment to write – both as a scribe and through journaling. You say, “Paley's use of writing as a means of inquiry is two-fold because it involves scribing her students' stories as well as journaling her own thoughts.” Paley believes that reflecting through writing allows her to think through and form thoughts without being interrupted by others. But she does more writing than just what she does as a “scribe” and with her journal, right? We see evidence that she intends to contribute to the broader context in “Talking to myself in a Daily Journal” when she states: “I am as concerned and curious about good and bad as the children are. I want to know how these perceptions affect learning and teaching.” Thus, although Paley describes her own transformation from a teacher content within the routines of her classroom to one consumed with growing as a teacher, so too her reluctance to see herself as an author gave way to a willingness to “leave behind traces of her work” for those who might come after her. These thoughts help us to recognize that even a career as a teacher can in fact reflect a certain mobility within the profession. A teacher can grow in unimagined ways through the processes of teacher inquiry. In this way, whether we reside in the kindergarten classroom or not, we can see Paley as an exemplary model of what might be accomplished within the contexts of our own teaching. Still, Paley's techniques are not quite consistent with conventional academic inquiry-- the kind practiced at MSU and elsewhere. But, as the term “teacher inquiry” indicates, she searches for “knowledge of teaching and learning, organization and leadership in schools, local and national policies and their consequences, and more.” In other words, Paley expects that her research will benefit her classroom and others, right? Of course, she carries out this research practically through the daily recordings, transcribing, journaling, and writing. As you suggest, her approach to inquiry affords the possibility that she will make important discoveries that would otherwise pass unnoticed. You say, “Paley believes the process of writing down the student stories offers her a deeper understanding of the ways in which her students interpret the world.” Looking at this another way, is there an inherent conflict with Paley's form of inquiry – especially the very individualistic nature of her form? Consider what Paley said related to this: “if a policymaker were to spend a little time around teachers, he or she would not hear them discussing the latest research findings and the ways in which they could be implemented. What policymakers would likely hear would be stories about their students as part of a long-standing oral craft tradition.” Is there an element of narrowness to this “tradition”? Paley was expressing the “narrative” nature that is easily observable in teaching and learning. But is something lost when the focus of research and teacher conversations is inward focused? Herein lies the tension with autobiographical inquiry, right? In the end, you provide a fine essay that effectively describes Paley's form of inquiry.

Excellent work!

Grade: 4.0