

Beyond Journaling: A New Approach to Personal Writing in the Classroom (15 hours of in-service credit will be offered.)

What part can personal writing play in the classroom? How can students take their experiences into writing for and about a wider world? With the popularity of journaling across the curriculum, many are the students who call out for help, sometimes flooding their teachers with material so vulnerable and plentiful it is hard to know what to do with it, sometimes dropping hints of stories long relegated to silence. This two-Saturdays workshop/retreat offers an intensive hands-on immersion in a time-tested approach to writing memoir in community, based on the understanding of what creates empathy in a reading stranger. Participants will learn concrete methods to evoke narrative windows powerful enough to keep students at all levels engaged, carefully shaped enough to allow a classroom of reader/listeners to “walk in each new writer’s shoes.”

Mornings will be used to playact and sustain a series of “Page One Moments,” so that they become containers or springboards for the larger story each group member wishes to tell. Writing over lunch will provide participants with a firsthand experience of how the oral group work is translated into the production of written works. Afternoon sessions will be devoted to bringing the approach into the classroom, with topics including: How to help students become one another’s imaginary readers; Protecting each student’s way of storytelling; Creating safe boundaries through working within the needs of the writing, while respecting the privacy of the writer; The difference between writing for a stranger or a friend; What happens when a secret needing intervention is revealed; Working across a wide range of literacy skills to celebrate the shape of each story; Human Rights, Healing and Diversity Studies implications in the dare to illuminate each page enough so that another will care. Teachers will use as a text Herstory Writers Workshop’s new manual, *Paper Stranger: Shaping Stories in Community*.