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Teachers as Writers

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Teachers as Writers

This new section sets aside a place for teachers to publish original poetry, short stories, or snapshot memoirs related to teaching (approx. 500 words or less). Reading other teacher's writing can be most inspiring.

These first pieces contain vivid childhood memoirs by two teacher education students at UM-Flint. They poignantly apply their life stories to their future roles as teachers of writers.

A Child's Innocence

BY CARRIE BURNARD

LAKE ORION, MICHIGAN

It is unusually quiet in the house for summertime. It is a rare day because everyone is either working, visiting a friend's house, or playing outside. Usually my nine brothers and sisters are at home. That means a lot of commotion when compounded with the stream of neighborhood kids that visit every day. On this day, I am sitting at the kitchen table with my pad of paper and a pen. It's good that it's quiet, because I am writing a poem for my grandma. I really want my grandma to like this poem because I want her to be proud of me. I also want some attention from her. I like to read poems, so I think I should be able to write them, too. I start by thinking about what my grandma likes. I know she loves animals, flowers, and kites. I throw ideas around in my head for a while, and then I decide to write a poem about a kite. After many re-writes, the poem is complete. I make a kite out of paper and copy the poem onto it.

I think it is a masterpiece and go downstairs to give it to my grandma. I start to wonder if it is too short, or if it makes sense, or if I should have written about animals instead. I take a deep breath and knock on her door. She calls me inside. I shyly walk up to her. I tell her I wrote a poem for her, and she gets a big smile on her face. She takes the poem from me and gets ready to read. She makes a production out of it by standing up and clearing her throat. My grandma loves drama. She begins to read, "A kite, a kite, I see a bright white kite that is flying in the sky. And when I went I said goodbye I will let you fly." She seems to instinctively know how to read it with the right flow and voice! She

hugs me and says it is a wonderful kite poem. She then hangs it on the wall, which to me is the biggest validation of all. She says she wants to hang it there so she can see it every day.

I don't know if I can adequately describe the feeling I had inside that day. I just remember a grin from ear to ear. I was eight when I wrote that poem. I don't know how long my grandma kept my poem on her wall, but it eventually ended up in her scrapbook. Two years ago, when my grandma died, my family and I went through all of her things. When I found that scrapbook and read that poem again, those warm feelings came back to me. I instantly got another grin on my face that went from ear to ear. When I read it a second time, I felt, "Wait! How did I think this poem was so good?" I just don't remember what I was thinking those many years ago.

Now, I read into the poem and give it new meaning. When I read it, I think of the white kite as being a child's innocence and the poem is the child's process of moving into adulthood. She is leaving the kite there for some other child.

While I was very nervous about sharing my poem with my grandma, she made me feel special for doing so. I could truly trust my grandma to respect my hard work. This is very important when teaching children to write. They are innocent, just like the white kite. They need a supportive, caring, and trusting environment where they can write and share their work. They deserve that warm feeling inside and a grin from ear to ear!

Midnights with the Invisible Kid

BY WENDY HARWOOD
OWOSSO, MICHIGAN

My eyes pop open; darkness surrounds my little bed. Blackness peers through my half-open curtain. It is not yet time to wake from my slumber, but for some reason, I am wide-awake. I quietly peel my covers from my stiff body and slide down the ladder. My tiny bare toes hit the cold floor. I close my eyes as if to prevent the inevitable creek from the wooden floor beneath me. I look to see my sister, still curled into a ball with a bundle of blankets at her feet. I quietly make my way to the French doors that tower over my 7-year-old frame. I pull with everything I have to open those monstrous gates. The warm shag carpet between my toes is a welcome feeling. I rush to the kitchen.

I stand leaning against the archway. I do not want him to know that I am here yet. I watch him. He sits in a dilapidated old chair, the same chair from when he was a boy. He scribbles with the black Parker that he always keeps in his shirt pocket. His Super Dad powers tell him that I am standing behind him. He rises from the chair and, in one step, stands in front of the chocolate brown refrigerator. The cold air rushes over my feet. He produces a glass bottle of Pepsi. I step onto the yellow linoleum and run to my seat. My Super Kid powers will make me invisible until I want him to see me. He sits, now with two glasses in his hand. It is time to shut off my cloaking devise. He laughs as he acts shocked to see me sitting there.

A draft blows in from under the back door. I pull my knees into my Garfield nightgown. I drink the contraband and hope that my mom does not wake up.

"Do you want to hear it?"

What was he thinking? Would I have risked waking the whole family to sit in the drafty old kitchen, freezing to death while watching him scribble unknown words in a legal pad? Probably. But tonight I wanted to hear about the magical places my father had written about. I wanted to feel the warm wind blow through my hair as I flew away on some mystical creature that escaped his imagination.

A simple nod was all it took. I sat in awe of the way the words rolled from his lips. I wanted to write like that. I wanted my stories to make people wake from a sound sleep to come and listen.

I knew then that the power of writing far surpassed human power. Writing was a place where you could be immortal. My father taught me that. Through his model, I learned the secrets of writing. When my father was sick, he would have me sit at the end of his bed. With just enough light to see, I would read him his favorite books and poems. I would read the stories that I wrote for him, and my Super Kid powers would tell me that it made him feel better.

Children need to know that writing is important and powerful. When they see that you are excited about it and love it, they will follow. Teaching is not just about techniques and devices, but also about the feeling and the force that writing puts into you. When children learn that they have a voice and the tools to use that voice, they can learn to express themselves in ways that they may have never known.

KALEIDOSCOPE 2006

The Michigan Reading Association is sponsoring a great opportunity to have a student from your school building become published!

It's as easy as...

1. Select a piece of writing from your building
2. Fill out the Student Information Sheet
3. Proofread selection and edit with student writer
4. Mail the writing and information by the deadline

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES:

- One entry per school building, any grade K-12.
- Manuscript must be original. Prose or poetry may be entered.
- Students may submit a black line drawing with entry on a separate sheet of 8 1/2" x 11" paper (due to space limitations, drawing may not be published).
- Manuscript must be typed, double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper.
- Manuscript must be in "polished" form (no invented spellings).

▪ **WORD LIMIT:**

- K - 6th grade 250 words
- 7th - 12th grade 500 words
- Student Information Sheet must be completed and attached to entry.
- Mail entry to :

Kaleidoscope Entry
Michigan Reading Association
668 Three Mile Road, Suite C
Grand Rapids, MI 49544

For more information contact the Michigan Reading Association office,
800.MRA.READ.

Student Information Sheet

This form must be completed and attached to entry!

Title of Entry

Student's Name

Grade

Student Address

City

State

ZIP Code

School Name

School Address

City

State

ZIP Code

()

School Phone (include area code)

Teacher's Name (please print)

Principal's Signature

A submitted entry gives Michigan Reading Association permission to publish manuscript in KALEIDOSCOPE 2006.

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: DECEMBER 16, 2005