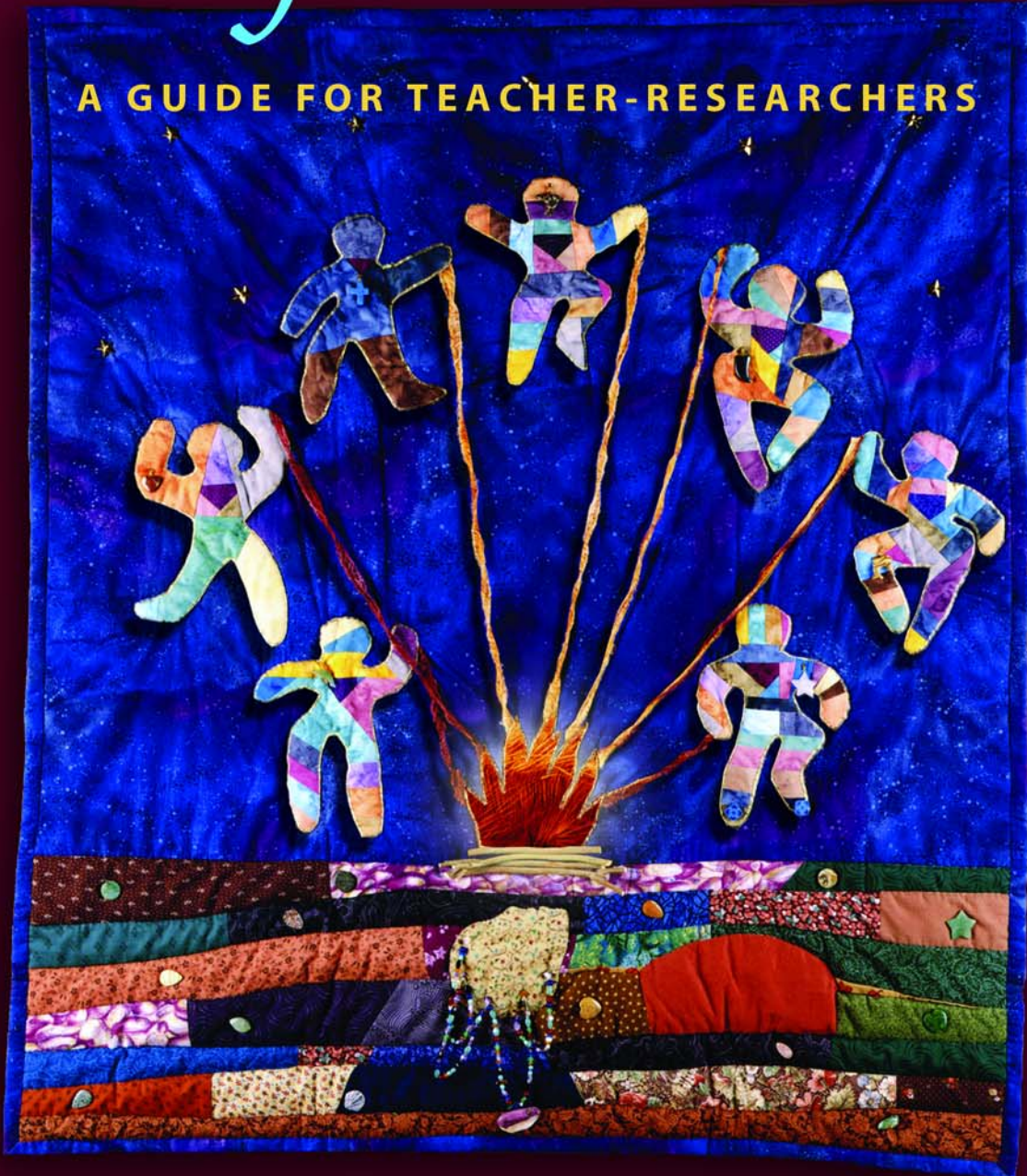


INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

second edition

Living the Questions

A GUIDE FOR TEACHER-RESEARCHERS



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Using a Research Workshop Approach in College Courses or School Inservice Programs

Teacher-researchers need a community in which to learn the tools of the trade, experimenting and talking through their processes as they work. College research methods courses and school inservice programs are where most teacher-researchers create this community; *Living the Questions* was designed for use in these settings.

The mix of research strategies and tips, essays by teacher-researchers, and research workshops allows you to tailor your instruction to the needs of the educators you will be working with. We suggest a research workshop approach to instruction, as it will give the educators a framework for their continued work beyond the course. This guide will help you develop a research workshop approach in helping others become teacher-researchers and develop their own teacher-research communities.

Course or Inservice Elements

We've found it's best to develop a set structure when you're using a workshop approach in a research methods course. Regular routines foster more self-directed learning and responsibility for participants. Here is a sample structure for a course:

2 1/2 Hour Format

- Discussion of Reading Response Papers—45 minutes (see the following section)
- Brief Presentation by Instructor and/or Students—30 minutes
- Short Break
- Research Workshops—60 minutes (using workshops within each chapter of *Living the Questions*)

In order to use a workshop format, you need to prepare assignments in advance. Once you and your students become accustomed to a hands-on research approach, however, you will be delighted by how much responsibility shifts to students each week and how quickly students come to enjoy the variety of experiences. This guide to a research workshop course approach includes a full explanation of standard weekly assignments. Ten additional one-page assignments that you can tailor to your own teaching plans can be found at the end of this guide.

Reading Response Papers

One of the most useful weekly reading response activities is a one-page required response. Students use these reading responses in small groups (or with the whole group, if you are leading a small seminar). The response activity is simple. Participants distribute copies of their responses in small groups and skim all papers silently for the first ten minutes, highlighting different points they want to discuss with the whole group. Then, for twenty minutes, the small groups discuss each paper while a group recorder notes key points. The recorders report back to the whole class during a ten-minute whole-group discussion that closes the activity.

The Reading Responses Guide Sheet for students is adapted from the work of Linda Rief in *Seeking Diversity* (1992). See Assignment 1 in this guide for a Reading Responses Guide Sheet.

Presentations on Themes

We find presentations in a workshop are most successful if instructors follow a mini-lesson approach, presenting information in a way that is short, sharp, and focused. This is also a good time to bring in other teacher-researchers who have completed the course and gone on to produce successful work. Here are some potential presentations:

1. Mini-lessons on specific aspects of the research process, such as:
 - *Practice note taking*. You might have participants test out writing “in the midst” or “after the fact” notes using video segments (three to five minutes from any classroom).
 - *Experiment with interviews*. Show excerpts of interviews you or other teacher-researchers have conducted. Encourage students to critique what seemed to work well and what could be improved. For a follow-up lesson you could ask students to brainstorm interview questions that would enhance their own research.
 - *Write memos*. This is a mini-lesson that can be done more than once in a term and helps students see the power of beginning to analyze their data during the process of collecting it. Ask students to take ten minutes to write about one thing they noticed this week that intrigued them: a finding, an observation, or a cluster of events. These memos can be shared with partners or small groups and revisited later in the course.
 - *Find patterns*. Using the classroom itself as a database can provide excellent opportunities for mini-lessons on data analysis. Patterns and categories can be charted in the themes of the weekly response papers, taped transcripts of small-group discussions, or other examples of student work generated within the research class itself.
2. Your own teacher research—your own data, what you discovered, what you’d do differently.
3. Individual teacher-researchers, or panelists—this works well if it’s repeated in the course to make different points. Some panelists early in the course might talk about research design; others later in the course might talk about the experience of presenting their work to a larger audience.
4. Presentations by students on different aspects of their research process.

Research Workshops

Living the Questions includes numerous research workshops that can be used within a college course or an inservice program. Here is a sample schedule of workshops and readings for a twelve-week course:

Week 1

- Read the “Things I Learned” poems from the Research Workshop on pages 10–12 in *Living the Questions*.
- Have each student write one line about what they learned about teaching this week and then write or read the lines as a collective class poem.
- Assign “Hanging Around” (Assignment 2 in this guide); send students in teams to do the first “Hanging Around” observation in the last hour of class.
- Workshop assignment for Week 2: Each student brainstorms five questions about teaching and brings the questions to the next class.
- Reading assignment for Week 2: Chapters 1 and 2 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 2

- Discuss notes from the first “Hanging Around” observation.
- Do the “How to Refine a Research Question” exercise (Assignment 3).
- Reading assignment for Week 3: Chapter 3 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 3

- Have students present their group “Hanging Around” final projects to the whole class.
- Have students brainstorm mini-inquiry projects for the week (see pages 74–76, “Testing the Water with Mini-Inquiry Projects,” in *Living the Questions*).
- Reading assignment for Week 4: pages 91–115 of Chapter 4 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 4

- Have students circulate one- to two-page mini-inquiry project findings; discuss in small groups and with the whole class.
- Brainstorm individual questions for sociogram interviews; the raw data collected during the week will be used in the following week’s workshop.
- Reading assignment for Week 5: pages 115–133 of Chapter 4 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 5

- Do “How to Do a Sociogram Workshop” (Assignment 4).
- Reading assignment for Week 6: Chapter 5 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 6

- Work in small groups to talk about possible formats/designs for individual case studies after handing out the “Case Study” sheet (Assignment 5).
- Reading assignment for Week 7: Chapter 6 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 7

- Share and discuss drafts of case studies; assign “Case Study Role Plays” (Assignment 6) for next week.
- Reading assignment for Week 8: Chapter 7 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 8

- Case studies due—for the first fifteen minutes of workshop, ask participants to “be” their case studies.
- Assign the first draft of research briefs that will be due Week 10; encourage participants to reread research briefs in Chapter 3 of *Living the Questions* as well as the many examples in the Teacher-Research Designs appendix (pages 241–268).
- Assign the “You’re Invited Dinner Party” (Assignment 7) for next week.
- Reading assignment for Week 9: Teacher-Research Designs appendix.

Week 9

- Share dinner invitations and guest lists in whole group from the “You’re Invited” activity (Assignment 7); discuss the implications for literature review.
- Assign “Preparing to Write a Literature Review” (Assignment 8) for next week.
- Reading assignment for Week 10: Chapter 8 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 10

- Share drafts of research briefs in small groups.
- Have each participant write a letter to send to his or her favorite featured teacher-researcher from *Living the Questions*, to be due Week 11 (Assignment 9).
- Reading assignment for Week 11: Epilogue in *Living the Questions*.

Week 11

- Share revised research briefs and letters to teacher-researchers in small groups; bring stamps and envelopes so students have the option of mailing their letters to teacher-researchers.
- Reading assignment for Week 12: readings related to research brief topics.

Week 12

Final Research Briefs Due

- Have a “Research Briefs” or “Research Findings” cocktail party or tea party. Bring party foods and nonalcoholic drinks, and require that students circulate in class, moving every few minutes to talk with someone else about their research plans. Their cocktail party chat must be focused on their research. Play soft music in the background. This is a great way to close out a college course or inservice program!

We hope these formats and suggestions give you just enough information to get you thinking about how to develop your own unique workshop course tailored to the needs of your students.

References

- Kirby, Dan, and Carol Kuykendall. 1991. *Mind Matters*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Rief, Linda. 1992. *Seeking Diversity*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



ASSIGNMENT 1

Reading Responses Guide Sheet

You will need to write a one-page, single-spaced response to one of the readings each week. These responses will serve as the basis for our discussions of the readings. You may choose to:

- *Analyze the Researcher's Role*
What is the researcher's method? What ethics are involved in the decisions made in the study? What differences do you see between your own beliefs and the beliefs informing the researcher's work?
- *Consider Methodology*
What choices are being made about what types of data are collected and analyzed? What constraints does the researcher experience in data collection and analysis? What would you do differently?
- *React and Connect*
How does this reading connect with what we've read earlier? What do you agree with in the reading? What do you disagree with? What provokes an emotional response?

- *Ponder the Structure and Writing Style*
How does the researcher make the study come to life? What are the “telling” details or incidents included? What do you think is left out of the study? You’ll need to have twenty copies of your written response to distribute to classmates in small groups at the start of class.

Here are some tips to help instructors get the most out of this activity:

1. As instructors, you’ll need to write a weekly one-page response that is distributed to all groups. This gives students a strong model, and it also allows you to have a “voice” in the small groups you don’t have time to visit.
2. Be picky about that weekly one-page, single-spaced written requirement. Students will test the limits, double-spacing their work or skipping a week altogether. The activity falls apart quickly if everyone doesn’t participate equally in the writing responsibility.
3. Avoid grading these one-pagers. The point is to get students to share their ideas freely and take a few risks in their writing. If you grade the papers, even with the dreaded “Check +” or “Check –,” students will try to make their writing fit the template of whatever has received the highest grade in the past.
4. When assigning reading reactions, you could choose to be very specific about which section of a chapter you want students to write about. On the other hand, you might leave the response to a chapter open-ended, allowing participants to write about the sections that have the greatest impact on their thinking.
5. If you have twenty students or less, you can build a classroom text through the reading reactions by having students bring copies for the whole class instead of a small group. In this case, workshop participants can save all of the papers from week to week and have access to a range of classroom responses to the readings. They can also use them as an additional data source within the class, finding patterns in their classmates’ responses to one particular reading or categories across the entire course when they reread the complete set. This alternative also opens the door to more whole-group discussions on all of the papers.



ASSIGNMENT 2

Hanging Around (pages 72–74)

Participant observation is more than a research methodology. It is a way of being, especially suited to a world of change. A society of many traditions and cultures can be a school of life.

—MARY CATHERINE BATESON

For this assignment, you will need:

1. One or two research partners
2. A good people-watching spot at the mall, a restaurant, or a retail store

Begin in the classroom before you go to your chosen site. After you’ve identified where you want to do your research, answer these questions individually (from *Mind Matters* by Kirby and Kuykendall [1991]):

1. Considering what you know about this place, product, or service, what do you expect to find?
2. How do you expect the place to be organized?

3. What types of clients or customers do you expect? Will one age group or gender predominate? Do you expect a certain income or educational level to dominate?

You and your partners should compare notes, highlighting differences in expectations. You will then go to watch people in the location of your choice. Your goal is to describe fully the scene, events, actors, and interactions. On site, start with the basic components of understanding the site by answering more of Kirby and Kuykendall's questions:

1. How many cars are in the parking lot?
2. What are the "arrival behaviors" of the customers? (Do they pause to look in the window, or rush in?; do they speak to other people? What greetings do they use? Do they ask for information? etc.)
3. Note the number of customers arriving alone and the size of groups. Keep a running tally of customers by age group, gender, and ethnicity.
4. If possible, talk to one customer who doesn't seem to be in a hurry. What brings the customer there? How often? What does he or she think of the place? Ask similar questions of an employee about the clientele of the place. Set aside at least fifteen minutes to write down random observations of the site.

Ask yourself these questions as you take notes:

1. Who's in charge? How is power gained or lost as the actors interact?
2. Who controls conversations? What are the topics of conversation?
3. What are the key elements in the scene?
4. What are the relationships of the actors?
5. What language or actions seem specific to the culture and the scene?
6. What ethical concerns arise from the assignment?

You and your partner(s) should take notes separately and then compare them. This activity will be repeated next week, with time in class for discussion of notes. Your final collective analysis (due at the fourth class session) should describe the scene, events, actors, and interactions fully in any form—narrative, poem, fiction, or role play. It should be no longer than three single-spaced, typed pages. You should also include a detailed map of the scene.



ASSIGNMENT 3

How to Refine a Research Question (pages 28–29)

Start with four core principles:

1. Ask only real questions. Don't do research to confirm your good teaching practice.
2. Avoid asking yes-or-no questions.
3. Eliminate jargon.
4. Avoid value-laden words or phrases. For example, your question might begin as:

Do LD/ADHD students engage in meaningful discussions during literature circles?

The final answer to this question, a yes or no, won't get at the key issues of how, why, and when these students are involved in talk. This question also gives the impression that you are setting out to prove a preconception—either you support certain students being in these groups, or you don't.

First, change the research question so that it is open-ended:

What happens when LD/ADHD students engage in meaningful discussions during literature circles?

Next, underline any words that are jargon and rewrite them so that any reader could understand what you mean:

What happens when LD/ADHD students engage in meaningful discussions during literature circles?

The definitions of *LD* (learning disabled) and *ADHD* (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) are debated even among educators and would likely be unknown to a lay reader. *Literature circle* is a specific curricular innovation that is defined differently among teachers.

The revised research question becomes:

What happens when students identified with special needs engage in meaningful discussions during reading instruction?

While *identified with special needs* and *reading instruction* are much broader, they are terms any reader can understand, and they can still be defined more specifically in the actual study.

Finally, underline and change any value-laden words that would require explanation for readers:

What happens when students identified with special needs engage in meaningful discussions during reading instruction?

Part of the goal of this research will be to get at how you and your students define *meaningful*. This word needs to be cut from your research question so that the values you share with your students, and the values that might divide the classroom community, can emerge from the study.

It is a terrific exercise for any researcher to consider the ideals lying beneath value-laden words. When refining your research question, try to brainstorm how you define words like *meaningful*, and ask students to define what makes a literature discussion meaningful. By ferreting out value-laden words in your research question and subquestions, you can begin to uncover your biases and preconceptions before the study begins.

The final refined research question becomes:

What happens when students identified with special needs engage in discussions during reading instruction?



ASSIGNMENT 4

How to Do a Sociogram Workshop (pages 156–158)

Sociograms are a useful source of information for analyzing the social networks in your classroom. What you need first is a question for individual interviews with your students that requires them to answer with the names of their classmates. For example:

- If you could eat lunch with anyone, who would you sit next to?
- How do you know who is a good writer in this class?
- If you could read a book with anyone in the class, who would you read with?

Ideally, the question should have some link to your research topic, even if the link is weak.

With younger students (grades pre–K–2), you or a colleague will need to interview each child separately in a space that's slightly removed from the rest of the class. These interviews should be done very quickly—no more than a minute per student. Resist the urge to ask “Why?” when a student gives a surprising response; those types of open-ended questions are useful for other aspects of your research, but not sociograms. With older students, you can pass out slips of paper and have each student immediately write a response to your question—this takes less than five minutes of class time.

As you're interviewing or after you collect the slips from students, you'll need to do a tally sheet. To do the tally sheet, list the name of the person interviewed and the names of the classmates she or he lists as first, second, and third choices. For example, if you were interviewing Theresa, the tally sheet would look like this:

Theresa

1. Jennifer [her first choice]
2. Kelly [her second choice]
3. Melissa [her third choice]

This would continue for the whole class:

Harry

1. Jim
2. Joe
3. Kelly

and so on.

Once you've completed the tally sheet, make a whole-class chart with names of students on horizontal and vertical margins. Give a child three points if he is the first choice of another student, two points if he is a second choice, and one point if he is a third choice. Add the total points for each child to get a sense of who has more social power in the class and who has less (with a positive question, students with the most points are those who have the most social power in the class, and those with the least points have the least).

Many times it's helpful to ask two questions—one from a positive social perspective and the other from a negative social perspective: “Who would you want to sit with at lunch?” and “Who would you not want to sit with at lunch?” When you have the negative data, you can differentiate between children who aren't noticed by classmates and those who are disliked or avoided. For example, a student who has few points for each question for some reason is not visible to classmates. A student who has low points for the first question and high points for the second is behaving in a way that has a negative effect on his or her social status. If you have the time, you might want to chart your findings for the question, but many teachers save time by only adding up the tally points.

Sociograms never stand alone as a data source. The results need to be triangulated with other data sources in order to provide truly valid findings. But if you're stymied in trying to understand links between the social networks in your classroom and the learning going on, sociograms can provide a terrific quick look at complex social relationships. Some teacher-researchers avoid sociograms because they are concerned about hurt feelings if students share their choices with each other. We have not found this to be an issue with many teachers who have used sociograms, but we respect that concern.



ASSIGNMENT 5

Case Study

For your case study in this class, you will need to do a close examination of one student. The case study should be linked to the topic you want to explore in your research project. This can be a student of any age and any ability. You will need to gather the following materials:

1. Work samples from a variety of contexts (writing samples, science reports, informal or formal assessments, etc.).
2. Answers to interview questions. You will devise your own interview based on your research question. For example, if you were studying the effect of implementing science logs on students' concepts of science, you might ask:
 - What do you like about the science program? Why?
 - Who is a good scientist that you know? What makes him or her a good scientist?
 - Why do we write during science time?
 - What do you do well as a learner (or as a student in this class)?
 - What do you do poorly as a learner (or as a student in this class)?
 - What is science for?
 - What could you do to improve your work in science?

You can develop questions of your own based on the age or needs of your case study or the direction the interview takes.

3. Observations of your case study in class. Sit and observe your case study, and write down what you notice. What is his or her process? Write rapidly, noting even trivial details. Try to do at least three ten-minute observations before you write up your case study. Please bring some of these materials (work samples, interview answers, and at least one of the ten-minute observations) to the next class. You will eventually write up your case study report as a three- to four-page, double-spaced, typed narrative.



ASSIGNMENT 6

Case Study Role Plays

Next week, you will “be” your case study student for fifteen minutes in a class discussion. You should try to adopt the language style, body posture, tics, and persona of your case study during the class discussion. I will lead the discussion, asking the class these questions:

- What do you like about school?
- What do you dislike about school?
- If you could say one uncensored thing to your teacher, what would it be?
- If you could say anything you want to your parents, what would you say?
- What does someone need to know about you in order to be able to teach you?

You'll need to try as best you can to mimic the physical behaviors, speech patterns, and attitudes of your case studies. After these role-play discussions, we'll talk as a whole group about the experience of trying to get into your case study's skin.



ASSIGNMENT 7

“You’re Invited” Dinner Party (pages 178–180)

Finding other researchers who can inform your research often begins with determining the essential issues in your research question. One way to do this is to imagine how others from widely varying disciplines would discuss your research question—this is an unusual way to gain multiple perspectives on your work. The “dinner party” assignment moves us into thinking creatively about how to figure out what other research and ideas should be incorporated into a project. More important, it emphasizes the value of building a research community while you build a base of readings to use in your work. As you bring different perspectives into framing your research question, it helps to think about individuals and wider communities that might inform your research design and plan in new ways. You can start by creating a dinner party guest list of people who could help pursue your research question.

The instructions for the assignment are simple:

1. Invite a minimum of six guests.
2. The guests can be anyone—dead, alive, even fictional.
3. For each guest, state your reason for inclusion and what you think or hope he or she would contribute.
4. Be as creative as you like.

For more information on this assignment (and examples), see “You’re Invited” by Kimberly Campbell, pages 178–180 in *Living the Questions*.



ASSIGNMENT 8

Preparing to Write a Literature Review (pages 180–186)

*In her first home each book had a light around it,
The voices of distant countries
Flooded in through open windows,
Entering her soup and her mirror.*

—NAOMI SHIHAB NYE

One way to approach a literature review is to find “mentor texts”—texts written by researchers whose questions, findings, and style of writing speak to you. For this assignment, you will pick one literature review and analyze it as a mentor text for your own research. For each text, answer teacher-researcher Jessica Singer Early’s questions:

1. How does the argument unfold?
2. How does the author present two or more opposing schools of thought?
3. How does the author use model phrases or templates for sentences that serve as different transitions or functions?
4. How does the author evaluate (and not just list) what he or she is reading?
5. How does analyzing the literature review change the way you’ll approach reviewing the literature for your research?

Next week, bring in the literature review and your one-page analysis to share with others.



ASSIGNMENT 9

Letters to Teacher-Researchers (pages 220–223)

How strange that we, as teachers, are asked to share our knowledge with students, but are rarely asked to share our knowledge with each other. Having the opportunity to read what other teacher researchers have written—and responding in a personal letter—was eye-opening for me. I was recently asked to write and publish some of the work my team and I are involved in, but my greatest concern was, “Who will read this and what do they care?” Yet now I know that someone out there will read it, and hopefully can find some useful thread to adapt to her classroom.

—CINDY QUINTANILLA

As we look for communities to help sustain our work, we can reach beyond our immediate local and regional networks and discover teacher-researchers who share our interests, research passions, and classroom tensions. We can also take it a step further and communicate with those distant colleagues, expanding our communities and supporting each other beyond geographic boundaries.

We have found that there are many benefits to taking the time to sit down and write to the teacher-researchers who have influenced our thinking or motivated us to make significant changes in our classrooms based on their research and classroom stories. The authors who receive the letters clearly benefit, too, of course; as Cindy notes, it is important for teacher-researchers to realize that their work and words have reached an audience, that their ideas have found a mark and made a difference.

Teachers we know have written letters to teacher-researchers for a variety of reasons, often to thank them for their work and respond to their research on a personal level. Other times, the letters are a chance to share ideas and insights with a distant colleague who might be able to act as a sounding board or offer further resources.

Teachers who received letters back from teacher-researchers they've written to have said it helps them realize that the authors are teachers like themselves, not magical beings. The work any teacher-researcher does in the classroom has the potential to expand beyond the borders of his or her school and community.

Letter writing has a certain magic to it, and even if you ultimately decide not to mail your letter, you will benefit from the increased engagement with the research that has had an impact on you. It's really quite easy to correspond with any author in print: simply write in care of the publisher or journal, and they will forward your letter to the author.

Your assignment: Write a letter to any teacher-researcher. It should be a letter you feel comfortable sharing, since you will bring it to the group next week. (For examples of letters to teacher-researchers, see “Letters to Teacher-Researchers,” pages 220–223 in *Living the Questions*.)