

Loop Writing to Build Inquiry
Bay Area Writing Project
San Francisco Education Fund Literacy Network

Loop Writing* is a writing activity that helps the writer find many ways into his/her own thinking, reasoning, or observations. You may find that your writing loops away or veers off even as you move deeper into the heart of your thinking.

Key Notions:

- Do not worry about your final product. Trust where your pen leads you.
- Trust that “no matter how distant some of your writing seems from where you began, there is a connection” and that connection is probably worth pursuing. (Elbow, p. 54).
- Questions to help jump start your thinking/writing:
 - What about your teaching keeps you awake at night or makes you jabber at your friends whether they are teachers or not?
 - What comes to your mind all of the time?
 - Where are you most confused or perplexed about in your teaching?
 - What dilemmas have you been wrestling with so far this year?
 - What captures your imagination, piques your curiosity?
 - What excites you?
 - What makes you want to know more?
 - What makes you want to move on?

Looping Processes:

1. You will write to the three prompts on the half sheet of paper. I will let you know when to move on to the next prompt. (20 minutes)
2. Read what you have written to your partner. Do not preface, explain or apologize, just read. Your partner will do the same with his/her writing. (7 minutes)
3. When done reading, take your partner’s writing, reread it and say back in writing what you think your partner is asking, wondering about or wrestling with, e.g., Dear Jean, What I think you’re saying or What I hear you asking..... (7 minutes)
4. After you have read your partner’s written feedback, say back to yourself in writing what you think you are saying or asking. The goal here is to clarify for yourself what you think you are looking at or wrestling with, e.g., I think I’m saying or wondering about..... (7 minutes)
5. Create a road map for yourself. Given my question(s), here are some possible ways for me to deepen my question and direct my search. Be as specific as you can. If you are collecting student artifacts, what would those be? If you are going to do interviews, who would you be interviewing? The goal is to list things you can do and steps you can take that are concrete. (7 minutes)
6. Read your partner’s road map and write a brief response. It could be comments, questions, observations, suggestions. Include your e-mail address so your partner can pursue your response with you at a different time should it be helpful. (6 minutes)

* Thanks to Sim Chiang of Bay Area Writing Project for sharing this practice with us. The practice of Loop Writing is adapted from *A Community of Writers* by Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, Random House, 1989.