

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 process as they work. College research methods courses and school inservice programs are the places 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 together beyond the course. This guide will help you develop a research workshop approach in helping others become teacher-researchers—and in developing their own teacher-research communities.

Course or Inservice Elements

We've found it's best to develop a set structure when you are 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 your course:

2 1/2 Hour Format:

Discussion of Reading Reaction Papers—45 minutes (see below)

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 a little more advance preparation of assignments. But once you and students become accustomed to a hands-on research approach, you will be delighted at how much responsibility shifts to students weekly and how quickly students come to enjoy the variety of experiences. This guide to a research workshop course approach includes a full explanation of a standard weekly assignment. Ten more one-page assignments that you can tailor to your own teaching plans are at the end of this guide.

Reading Reaction Papers

One of the most useful weekly reading response activities is a required, one-page response. Students use these reading reactions 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, skim all papers silently for the first ten minutes, highlighting with pen different points in each paper they want to discuss with the whole group. Then the groups discuss each paper for twenty minutes. A group recorder notes key points discussed by the group and 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 on page 6 of 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 successful work. Here are some potential presentations:

1. Mini-lessons on specific aspects of the research process, such as:
 - *Practice notetaking*. You might have participants test out writing “in the midst” or “after the fact” notes using videotape 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. A follow-up would be to have students brainstorm interview questions that would enhance their own research.
 - *Writing 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 in the process of collecting it. Ask them 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.
 - *Finding 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, tape 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 inservice. Here is a sample schedule of workshops and readings for a twelve-week course:

Week 1 Read “Things I Learning About Teaching” poem from Research Workshop on pages 9–10 in *Living the Questions*, showing the Stafford, Oregon, and Maine examples first. Have each students write one line about what they learned about teaching this week and then write or read as a collective class poem.

Assign “Hanging Around” (Assignment 2 in this guide); send students in teams to do first “Hanging Around” observation in last hour of class.

Workshop assignment for week 2: Each student brainstorms five questions about teaching; bring questions to next class.

Reading assignment for week 2: Chapters 1 and 2 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 2 Discuss notes from first “Hanging Around” observation:

Do “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 group “Hanging Around” final projects to whole class.

Have students brainstorm “Testing the Water with Mini-Inquiry Projects” for the week (see pages 68–69 in *Living the Questions*).

Reading assignment for week 4: Chapter 4 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 4 Have students circulate one- to two-page mini-inquiry project findings; discuss in small group and in 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: Chapter 5 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 5 Do “How to Do a Sociogram Workshop” (Assignment 4).

Reading assignment for week 6: Chapter 6 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 6 Work in small groups to talk about possible formats/design for individual case studies after handing out “Case Study” sheet (Assignment 5).

Reading assignment for week 7: Chapter 7 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 7 Assign semantic domains exercise using “Semantic Domain Analysis Activity” (Assignment 6).

Reading assignment for week 8: Chapter 8 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 8 Discuss semantic domain findings in small groups; assign “Creating Teaching Time Lines” exercise (Assignment 8).

Reading assignment for week 9: Chapter 9 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 9 Case Studies due—for first fifteen minutes of workshop, ask participants to “be” their case studies. You lead a discussion, or assign one member of each small group to be the discussion leader. For further explanation of the assignment see “Case Study Role Plays” sheet (Assignment 7).

Assign first draft of research briefs due week 11; encourage participants to reread research briefs in Chapter 3 in *Living the Questions*.

Have participants write letter to send to favorite Featured Teacher-Researcher from *Living the Questions*—due week 10 (Assignment 10).

Have each participant “Ask Eric” this week about their research question (see page 168 in *Living the Questions*).

Reading assignment for week 10: Chapter 10 in *Living the Questions*.

Week 10 Discuss teaching/learning time lines in pairs or small groups, noting “seminal themes” or interests that occur across the years for individuals.

Share letters in small groups or read aloud as basis for discussion about what elements of the course will have a lasting impact.

Reading assignment for week 11: Epilogue in *Living the Questions*.

Assign the “You’re Invited” Research Workshop on page 169 in *Living the Questions* in preparation for week 11.

Week 11 Share dinner invitations and guest lists in whole group from the “You’re Invited” activity (Assignment 9); discuss implications for literature review.

Week 12 Have everyone share “Ask Eric” responses to their queries.

Final Research Briefs Due Have a “Research Briefs” or “Research Findings” cocktail party or tea party—bring party foods and non-alcoholic 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—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 started thinking about how to develop your own unique workshop course tailored to the needs of your students. Feel free to respond to us through our e-mail addresses: rhubbard@oregonvos.net and Brenda_Power@voyager.umeres.maine.edu. We look forward to hearing what you think about *Living the Questions*. Happy researching!

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 typed 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 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 for what data is collected and analyzed? What constraints is the researcher experiencing 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/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 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 get the most out of this activity:

1. Instructors 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 small groups that you don't have time to visit.
2. Be picky about that one-page, single-spaced length limit. Students will test that limit, 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 quickly try to make their writing fit the template of whatever has received the highest grade in the past.
4. When assigning reading reactions, you might choose to be very specific about what sections of chapters you want students to write about. For example, you might ask students to respond to the Jeanne Henry essay in Chapter 7 (pp. 196–204) if you are working with doctoral students. On the other hand, if you have a mixed group, you might leave the response to any chapter open-ended, allowing participants to respond to the writing in the chapter that has 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 just a small group of five. In this case, workshop participants save all the papers 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 the class response to one particular reading or categories across the entire course when they reread a partner's complete set. This alternative also opens the door to more whole-group discussions on all the papers.

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Assignment 2 Hanging Around (pp. 65–67)

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 retail store.

Begin in our classroom, before you go to the site. After you've identified where you want to do your research, answer these questions individually (from *Mind Matters*, 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 type of clients/customers would you expect? Would one age group or gender predominate? Would you expect a certain income or educational level to dominate?

You and your partners will then compare notes, highlighting differences in expectations. You will then go to watch people in a 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 . . .)
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 do they 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 culture and scene specific?
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, role play. It should be no more than three single-spaced typed pages long. You should also include a detailed map of the scene.

Assignment 3 How to Refine a Research Question (pp. 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/no questions.
3. Eliminate jargon.
4. Avoid value-laden words or phrases.

For example, the question you want to ask 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 key issues of how/why/when these students are involved in talk. There is also the sense that the researcher is setting out to prove a preconception—either she supports certain students being in these groups, or she doesn'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 teacher 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 the teacher and her students define *meaningful*. This word needs to be cut from your research question so that the values the researcher shares with her students, and the values that might divide the classroom community, can emerge from the study.

But 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 on your own how you define words like *meaningful*, and also 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 get at 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 (pp. 136–137)

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 students answer with the names of their classmates. For example, If you could eat lunch with anyone, who would you sit next to? or How do you know who is a good writer in this class? or 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 through 2), you or a colleague will need to interview each child separately in a space removed slightly 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 open-ended questions are useful for other aspects of your research but not with sociograms. With older students, you can pass out slips of paper and have the whole class immediately write their responses 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 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, giving 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 least (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, the other from a negative social perspective: Who would you want to sit with at lunch? 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. But 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 their social status.

If you have the time, you might want to chart out your findings for the question. (An example of a completed sociogram is on page 156 in Jennifer Allen's piece,

“Exploring Literature Through Student-Led Discussions.”) 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 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 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).
2. Answers to interview questions. You will devise your own 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 them a good scientist?
 - Why do we do writing during science time?
 - What do you do well as a learner (or student in this class)?
 - What do you do poorly as a learner (or 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 How to Do a Semantic Domain Analysis (pp. 134–136)

1. Pick four to six words that are crucial to your research study.
 - Define these words yourself.
 - Ask students to define them.
 - Ask colleagues to define them.
 - Find definitions in professional literature.

Depending upon the subject of your study, one or two groups of informants may be more helpful than others. If you are looking at “folk terms” (words that emerge within the culture you are studying), you’ll want to pay particular attention to the definitions from that group. For example, in Barbara Lockwood’s study of social interactions among her fourth graders (p. 134), she found these folk definitions among students:

Dude	Looks good, is really hip, wears neat clothes
Jerk	Junior educated radical kid
Nerd	Never-ending radical dude

As these terms show, the definitions can be sophisticated with linguistic cues. Teachers these days are learning to ask students whether they are describing something as “fat” or “phat.”

On the other hand, if you are looking at implementing a new curriculum at your school, you might want to take key words out of the curriculum, standards, or assessments provided and ferret out differences between your meanings for the critical terms and those of your colleagues or students.

2. Find differences in the definitions.
 - Who has different definitions?
 - Where do differences come from?

In Jane Doan’s K–2 multiage classroom, she asked students to describe different areas and activities in the classroom and uncovered these folk terms: “being sent to the planning chair” meant a form of punishment; “meanies” referred to a group of older girls who are mean. Jane and Penny Chase, her co-teacher, realized their “alternative” to punishment, “the planning chair,” was still viewed as punitive by the students. And they hadn’t realized the existence, let alone the power, of the “meanies” till they heard the word often among students and asked for a definition of it.

3. Redefine/reframe your study based upon your findings.

Julia Crowl’s study of perceptions of home-school links by seventh-grade students included home visits and activities with parents. Doing a domain analysis showed her just how defined and pervasive class consciousness was among students (many of the low-income students in her study lived in a particular neighborhood and so were defined derogatively as “scrubbers”). This information led her to do less background reading on literacy instruction and more on the effects of class distinctions on peer groups and family relations.

Assignment 7 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 their 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?

Participants need to try as best they can to mimic the physical behaviors, speech patterns, and attitudes of their case studies. After these role play discussions, we’ll talk as a whole group about the experience of trying to get into the case study students’ skin.

Assignment 8 Creating Teaching Time Lines (pp. 247–252)

Knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. The work required to “know thyself” is neither selfish nor narcissistic. Whatever self-knowledge we attain as teachers will serve our students and our scholarship well. Good teaching requires self-knowledge; it is a secret hidden in plain sight.

Parker Palmer, 1998

As we rethink our identities on the classroom, we are in the process of reflecting on our sense of ourselves and our roles with our students, each other, and the larger educational community. Without intentional attention, our evolution can go unexamined—and in the process, we can lose the opportunity for the self-knowledge that can aid our teaching. Besides uncovering the hidden dimension in our changes in identity, it can be extremely helpful to dig back into our teaching roots: what drew us to teaching in the first place? What are the threads in our teaching lives and commitments that ground us and keep us teaching?

We can benefit from examining those patterns in our lives and how they have shaped our identity—and how our identity continues to evolve. This assignment is a starting place to help you begin a dialogue with colleagues about what has shaped, informed, and transformed your teaching life.

1. Create a time line of your professional development.

Create a time line—in either a visual representation or in narrative form—that shows your career path, noting patterns and evolving interests. At the endpoint of your time line, you should include a brief “look to the future.”

Here are some suggestions:

- If you create a narrative, it will help you group your experiences under headings (for example, see Kathryn Mitchell Pierce’s “Time Line of Professional Development,” pages 250-251).
- Graph paper can help you chart a visual career path, with the “ups and downs” that highlight your teaching life. Symbols, icons, and brief descriptions of each symbol will help make your representations of the highs and lows clear to your colleagues.
- Choose media that will help you look at your life from a new perspective; it may help you to create two very different charts and compare what emerged from each experience.

2. Write a brief process paper.

When you have completed your time line, write a brief reflection on your mental process as you completed this assignment. It should be no more than one typed page in length. We will be sharing both the time lines and the process papers with each other.

Assignment 9 “You’re Invited” Dinner Party (pp. 169–172)

Finding other researchers who can inform your research often begins with figuring out what the essential issues are in your research question. One offbeat way to do this is to imagine how others from widely varying disciplines would discuss your research question. This is an unusual way to see multiple perspectives on your work. The “dinner party” assignment moves us into thinking creatively about how to figure out what other researchers and ideas should be incorporated into projects. More important, it links the importance of building a research community at the same time you are building a base of readings to use in your work.

As you bring different perspectives into framing your research questions, it helps to think about individuals and wider communities that might inform your research designs and plans in new ways. You can start by creating a dinner party guest list of folks who would be helpful to you in pursuing your research questions.

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 each would contribute.
4. Be as creative as you like.

For more information on this assignment and for examples, see “You’re Invited” by Kimberly Campbell, pages 169–172 in *Living the Questions*.

Assignment 10 Letters to Teacher-Researchers (pp. 216–220)

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. And we can 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 teachers who write up their research to realize that, yes, their work and words have reached an audience, 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 largely 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.

Several teachers who have received letters back from teacher-researchers have commented on the fact that it helps them realize that the authors they read are teachers like themselves, not magical beings. The research any teacher-researcher does in her classroom has the potential to expand beyond the borders of her classroom 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 “Expanding Our Communities: Letters to Teacher-Researchers,” pages 216–220 in *Living the Questions*.)