

Building a “Noticing Notebook”

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Keeping a notebook is the single best way I know to capture and develop the habit of responding to the wonderment and awe of everyday, seeming ordinary, life.

It encourages you to pay attention to your world, both your internal world and the external world.

A notebook can work as a safe haven for your infant ideas. A chance to incubate noticings and ideas before they become strong and mature enough to face the light of rational judgment and public scrutiny

Possible names for notebooks: *life books, journals, thinking books, thoughts book, my book, sketchbook, daybook, gratitude book, noticing book*

What is a noticing notebook? How do thinkers use it? What does it do for thinking? I draw from my own experiences and entries as well as the thoughts and entries of children and colleagues alike.

A notebook helps to develop the skill of recognizing the small moments of life. Being in the moment, observant, and open to continuous learning. You may also consider thinking of it as an investment account. Small, continuous deposits that are diversified. These contributions grow, strengthen, and compliment one another. These life “accounts” can then be used later for extraordinary happenings.

Think of the heart. It pumps continuously bringing nutrients and oxygen to every part of the body. When your blood returns to the heart it is ordinary. It lacks oxygen, vitality. Once it is pumped through the heart and lungs it is rich, vibrant, and of service to our

mind and body. A noticings notebook helps thinkers notice the ordinary. These ordinary moments are captured through our senses, intake valves for our brain. Our brain then works through a series of steps to reframe these ordinary noticings into rich, vibrant, and meaningful thoughts. Simply “mindfulness.”

Notebooks offer us an opportunity to respond with wonder and awe to the connections we make between our external and internal worlds. Our own space for thinking, a place where we can explore our deepest values, a place to remember, a place to react, a place to step off into new venues, a place to be. In the art world there is a term called “palamento.” When you look closely at a masterful creation from long ago you’ll notice slight cracks in the painting that luminate the under layers of the artist craft and their thinking. A notebook is like that. It is the most important book in one’s life because it is a gift for us.

A notebook can help us through the dry periods of thoughtfulness. It is a safe, non-threatening place where “my thoughts are mine”. A place your spirit can be revitalized because of the development of responding with wonderment and awe. The funny thing is that once you start this “noticing” process your ability to do so increases tremendously.

Think of those children that we “grapple” with in the school setting. Motivation, relevance, connecting the known to the new, remaining open to continuous thinking and metacognition are some of the attitudes and dispositions that may result in a lack of motivation for their learning. A notebook may become a gemstone tray for these children’s lives. A place to be alone with their thinking. A place to capture the itches they have, their reactions to lines from a song, the outrage they have for life’s injustices, details, gossip, wonderous words and lines, dreams, dilemmas, perceptions, memories, and receiving the physical world. A place

to shift and sort through the vast murkiness of their lives leaving gemstones of what matters to be left for their viewing.

My hope is that you will start a notebook of your own, for your own thinking. By trying on the notebook you'll undoubtedly develop your own style, formula, format and recipes for your own thinking. By walking in the shoes of mindfulness each day you'll enter into a form of "action research" of using a "noticing" notebook. This will help you to facilitate your student's entry into an endeavor that will raise their consciousness on how the notebook may help them to enhance the enrich their thinking by developing the habit of Responding with Wonderment and Awe.