

The Pen and Paper



Developed by:

Indiana WRITING PROJECT

A local site of the National Writing Project

Hello friends,

One of our favorite things to introduce to our students is a writer's notebook, a place to collect their thoughts and ideas. Ralph Fletcher, author of [A Writer's Notebook](#), states, "Writers need a place to record reactions. That's what a writer's notebook is for. It gives you a place to write down what makes you angry or sad or amazed . . . to write down what you noticed and don't want to forget.... A writer's notebook gives you a place to live like a writer, not just in school during writing time, but wherever you are, at any time of day." Fletcher goes on to say a writer's notebook is:

- Personal, like a wallet or backpack- a workable, management system.
- Like an incubator: a protective place to keep infant ideas safe and warm, a place for it to grow while it is too young, too new, to survive on its own.
- Where writers get ideas down while they are hot. . . just get them down, nothing fancy. Later if the writer wants it to grow into a story, he/she can revise and polish.
- Where the writer writes down just enough so that, later, rereading the words will reawaken the image in his/her imagination.

A writer's notebook is the playground of our students' imagination and word use. We give our students permission to experiment, challenge themselves, and determine what is golden and worth pursuing to a finished copy through the writer's notebook. However, we found there are traps to avoid in using writer's notebooks. A writer's notebook is NOT:

- A diary.
- Reading journal that you summarize main ideas of a book or letters to the character.
- A place for assigned writing.

It is all too easy to say, "Get out your writer's notebook and write about (you insert the topic)." We learned the hard way that this creates in students an unwillingness to play within the notebook's covers. We believe as [Ralph Fletcher](#) believes, "A student who keeps a notebook can begin to live like a writer-noticing, paying attention, listening, collecting, musing, wondering, playing with language, taking pleasure in his/her own words."

We hope you find our thoughts on writer's notebooks inspiring and useful. Feel free to contact us with comments or questions. The Indiana Writing Project is here to help!

Until next month,

Shirley and Susan

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teachers helping
teachers.*

[NCTE on Writer's
Notebooks](#)

[More Ruth Ayers on
Writer's Notebooks](#)

[Best Practice of
Sharing Student
Work](#)



In honor of Grandparents' Day,
our featured mentor text is *The
Wednesday Surprise* by Eve
Bunting.



Look and see
what is
upcoming on
the calendar
for 2018!

- New and Improved Indiana Leadership Institute: Information and applications coming soon.
- Week Long Open Institute: June 25th to June 29th.