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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to provide a model of a successful in-school publishing center, Panther Paw Press, established at Pierce Elementary School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The publishing experience of one student will begin a discussion of the center's goals, the basis of those goals in recent practice, and how the students worked beyond expectations.

Six Publishing Goals to Validate Authors:
Success and Beyond in an Elementary School Publishing Center
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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to provide a model of a successful in-school publishing center, Panther Paw Press, established at Pierce Elementary School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The publishing experience of one student will begin a discussion of the center's goals, the basis of those goals in recent practice, and how the students worked beyond expectations.

Six Publishing Goals to Validate Authors:

Success and Beyond in an Elementary School Publishing Center

With tears in her eyes, Ben's mother shared with me his latest accomplishments. Since he had been in my third grade classroom four years earlier, Ben's confidence as a learner had continued to grow. The little boy who had agonized over every journal entry, now voluntarily wrote articles for his school newspaper. The third grader who had used incredible amounts of energy to not write during writer's workshop and to not read during silent reading, now used that energy to earn honor role grades at school and to read for pleasure at home. "You are the one who made the difference for Ben. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Ben's transformation to an active learner and a confident user of language had been remarkable. However, even more remarkable was the fact that I could remember the pivotal literacy event that marked the change--the publication of his first book, The Dirt Pile. His story was the first book published by our newly-opened school publishing center, Panther Paw Press. Ben wrote the first draft of The Dirt Pile after I had read Roxaboxen by Alice McLerran (1990) to the class. Hers was the true story of how neighborhood children had used rocks, sticks, and litter from the surrounding desert to create a cherished place to play. When Ben drew a sketch that would stretch Roxaboxen into his life experiences, he drew himself with other kids surrounding a pile of dirt intended to correct a drainage problem. Ben's published book was the true story of how he and neighborhood friends had used that pile of dirt as both the inspiration for and the foundation of a fort.

As with Lucy Calkins and Mem Fox, the turning point in Ben's life as a writer came when he was first published. Becoming an insider in the world of authorship changed the way Ben read and wrote because once children view themselves as authors they notice and learn from the choices made by the authors of the books they read (Calkins, 1994). Ben's writer's notebook quickly filled with stories motivated by the picture books he heard in class. In some of those stories he paralleled his experiences with the subject of the picture book, and in others he attempted style techniques used by the author. Another monumental change was evident during silent reading time. Instead of stalling while selecting books he would pretend to read, Ben was now one of the first to be settled

in and reading. Once his current library book was on his desk top, he would select one book from our classroom display of Panther Paw Press books. With obvious pride and enjoyment, each day, Ben began silent reading period with the same book--The Dirt Pile.

I need to share the credit for Ben's mother's gratitude with two people. The first is Alice McLerran for writing Roxaboxen, a story that touched Ben's life. The second is my colleague Lisa Trefz who worked hundreds of hours with me to revitalize the existing publishing program at our school. We gained administrative approval. We wrote a handbook. We trained staff. We recruited volunteers. We gathered materials and created the physical space. We published 278 more student authors after Ben in that first year. And now, thanks to the recent kind words of Ben's mother, we know that the publication of The Dirt Pile was not the culmination of the writing process, but rather the beginning of it because Ben had been inducted into the "writerly life" (Calkins, 1994, p. 266). Ben was honored to be the first author published by Panther Paw Press. In truth, it was an honor to produce the story that allowed Ben to see himself as an author. "Our children will regard themselves in a dramatically new light if they are published authors" (Calkins, 1994, p. 268). Publishing The Dirt Pile energized Ben with the power of authorship. Four years later, the dramatic new light was still shining on him.

Lucy McCormick Calkins (1994) has written, "Because publication can provide such perspective and tap such energy, I believe it must be one of the first priorities in our classrooms" (p. 268). Lisa and I have long shared a priority for publishing in our individual classrooms. On the first page of the Panther Paw Press handbook we optimistically listed six goals we hoped could make that priority a possibility for our entire school community--students, parents, and teachers.

Goal 1: To help children see themselves as authors.

Both his mother and his teacher had noticed a change, but did Ben see himself as an author? Ben wrote on his publishing evaluation, "Working with Panther Paw Press was fun because we got to do what real authors do." Ben was not alone. Reading other student evaluations it became evident that the publishing experience helped "...our children regard themselves as insiders in the world of authorship" (Calkins, 1994, p. 269).

Working with Panther Paw Press was exciting, knowing I'm an author.

Grade 2 author

I really liked the feeling of being an author.

Grade 3 author

Working with Panther Paw Press was fun. I enjoy reading my book and other people's books a lot. It was a good experience for me because I am thinking of still being an author when I grow up.

Grade 3 author

Calkins (1994) suggests that teachers demonstrate to children that they are regarded as authors by including their status in classroom talk: "Writers like you..." or "Your writing reminds me of Cynthia Rylant's," or when calling them together "Authors, can we meet..." (p. 270). The handbook and all printed materials for the Panther Paw Press use the word author and avoid potentially devaluing labels such as young author or budding author. Once a story is submitted, a custom printed parchment-like author's certificate is displayed on a prominent bulletin board near the office. In the center of that board a poster announces: Congratulations! These authors have work being published by the Panther Paw Press. That certificate remains on the board until the books are finished and act as a reassurance to anxious writers that their stories have not been lost. Once the certificate comes down, authors know they will soon be further honored when the principal makes a formal presentation of the book and the author certificate in the classroom or at an assembly. The first reading of the book in the author's chair provides the opportunity for the author to bask in the positive comments made by classmates. Often the audience will listen most intently to the author information page, commenting that they have learned something new about the author. A second poster proclaiming that Panther Paw Press proudly presents published works by "local authors" decorates each classroom display of books. Continuing validation that they are indeed an author occurs when the published book is read repeatedly by classmates.

Goal 2: To involve parents in the learning process at their child's school.

Historically the Pierce parents have been involved in and supportive of school activities-- planning for holiday parties, installing new playground equipment, funding enrichment activities, supervising relays on game day, and assisting with math and science enrichment. By involving them it was our intent was to "...allow parents to be meaningfully involved in the school's

instructional program...to use their skills, to do more than make cookies for the school bake sale” (Gold, 1989, p. 26-27). Since many of the Pierce parents are engineers, math and science have always had a high priority in our school’s curriculum. We felt that an effective way to promote an understanding of process learning and elevate the status of writing would be to involve parents directly in publishing, an important and exciting phase of the writing process.

After procedures had been established and the handbook had been written, volunteers were recruited to hold publishing conferences with students, to word process the stories on Macintosh computers, and to laminate book covers and assemble the books. Team leaders for each of these three areas were parents with previous experience in publishing children’s writing. Additional volunteers were recruited by inviting all Pierce parents to attend an introductory meeting. Once publishing demands increased, auxiliary volunteers were enlisted to duplicate the pencil-illustrated step of our publishing process. Since 1993 Panther Paw Press has operated each year with approximately twenty enthusiastic volunteers who work under the direction of a teacher associate called the Resource Manager and a dedicated parent leader who was a pioneer in publishing children’s writing for our staff.

Working with the Panther Paw Press was very gratifying--to see the final product is always exciting. I really liked how smoothly it seemed to run.

Parent volunteer

Working with Panther Paw Press was a terrific experience. I really liked having a part in the production of a child’s book writing experience. The books are wonderful! They are future memories and present dreams come true for many. There is no better way to experience reading and writing.

Parent volunteer

Our volunteers became idea people. They made suggestions to increase student involvement and ownership by offering more choices in formatting the books. They could explain the school’s writing program to our community, praise the progress of the students, and advocate for the importance of celebrating and validating writing (Bellomo & Williams, 1995). Tangible proof of parental support for Panther Paw Press was demonstrated when the PTA purchased two additional Macintosh computers for the second year of publishing.

In addition to the core group of volunteers who come to school to assist publishing, we found a way to promote participation by every student's family. Adults from the student's home have written interesting author information paragraphs used as the last page of each book. Teachers send home a guide sheet and several good examples. The first year, volunteers at school had written very similar sounding author paragraphs after the publishing interview. It was one of those school volunteers who suggested that paragraphs completed at home would better reflect the unique attributes of each child. Not only are the paragraphs more interesting, but also each student benefits from the parental involvement and support.

Open communication is necessary to establish and maintain a comfortable working relationship with volunteers. Both parents and staff used memo note pads, an announcement bulletin board, notes sent home and back with students, and telephone calls to communicate problems and offer solutions. Periodic meetings were scheduled to train or troubleshoot. Each spring we have invited volunteers to a party to honor their accomplishments. We gather all the Panther Paw Press books from the classroom libraries to display--a powerful tribute to their endeavor. Volunteers discuss their personal experiences and hear from volunteers who worked in different capacities. This inclusive discussion allows for a more comprehensive review and evaluation of the year. Frustrations and failures, ideas and concerns, successes and special memories, are shared as we listen to the volunteers' plans for publishing the following year.

At the end of each school year we have asked volunteers, students, and staff for a written evaluation of the program and suggestions for improvements. Overwhelmingly, volunteers have expressed delight at working with the children and pride in the books they have sent home as keepsakes for the families. However, the volunteers' evaluations have communicated one ongoing frustration. Our volunteers are eager to start production long before the teachers have drafts ready for submission. In her book Invitations, Regie Routman tells of mediating a similar situation by using sensitive yet honest communication (1991, p. 264). As staff facilitators, Lisa and I explained to the volunteers that most of our teachers do not start the school year with writer's workshop. Instead, time at the beginning of the year is needed to establish routines and get to know the students. The volunteers understand and respect the teachers' request for a delayed starting date, but indicate that a cut-off date for submissions early in April would avoid excessive work in May when they are busy with their own children's end-of-the-year activities. Likewise we explained to

the staff the need to pace submissions. We asked teachers to be sensitive to the repercussions on the volunteers of waiting until the last minute to submit stories. This issue remains unresolved. Again, this year, the school's reading and writing committee will struggle with the revision of a calendar for next year's submissions that will accommodate the needs of the volunteers and promote compliance by the teachers.

Although annoying, the reoccurring deadline scheduling issue has diminished neither participation by teachers nor the willingness of parents to volunteer. For the past two years we have had a surplus of interested parents. Staff evaluations every year have unanimously agreed that Panther Paw Press is a valuable collaborative project that should continue.

I really liked the quick response by volunteers and the feeling of importance they gave the children.

Grade 1 teacher

I really liked that Panther Paw Press pulled together parents, staff, and students in a project that recognized individual student efforts and motivated writing.

Grade 3 teacher

I really liked the parent involvement--it made life great. I tried to publish pieces last year (on my own) and it took an incredible amount of time.

Kindergarten teacher

Teacher's time is at an undeniable premium. In the past four years Pierce parent volunteers have donated time to publish the work of 1,080 authors and have made a total of 2,160 books. Our teachers wanted help to supplement the publishing they do in their rooms. They felt a more true-to-life publishing experience would motivate the students. Now Pierce has joined other schools who have learned the publishing secret--parents. "This procedure is easy and makes a nice publication. Although there are many, many other ways to make books, most involve the teacher. Ours doesn't; it involves the parent!" (Harste & Short, 1988, p. 94).

Goal 3: To provide the teaching staff with an organized volunteer-supported publishing center.

When I transferred from Madison School to Pierce in 1990, I was one of four teachers who chose to use the existing parent-run Pierce Publishing Center. The original publishing center produced spiral bound 8 1/2 by 11 inch books that were floppy and hard to display in a classroom library. The pages would quickly tear along the spiral. Illustrations on the front cover would

smudge and get dirty. Words were typed on just one side of the paper, like worksheets. Although initially excited by the books, students soon lost interest. Lisa Trefz agreed a change was in order and began to work with me to design a more realistic book that would be colorful and hold up well with handling. We felt that "...students would respond to these hardcover books more positively than to paper covers because they more closely resemble professional publications. The hardcovers signal 'you are an author' to students" (Harste & Short, 1988, p 94).

While teaching at Madison School, half the size of Pierce, I had observed parents publishing student writing in hand-sewn books with hard wallpaper-covered covers. I knew we could not afford the money for the rubber cement or the amount of volunteer time needed for those durable but labor-intensive books. Questions mounted: What kind of hardcover book could we design? Who would pay the expenses? Who would be in charge? Where would volunteers work and materials be stored? How would a child's work proceed through the publishing journey? Before taking plans any further, we met with the principal, Terry O'Neil, to determine the viability of rejuvenating publishing at Pierce. Once we knew that our principal was "an advocate and not an obstacle" (Sudol, D. & Sudol, P., (1995) Lisa and I applied for twenty extended contract hours to write a publishing handbook.

Before we could create a publishing center on paper, Lisa and I wanted to see a publishing center in action. Two years earlier I had visited a publishing lab at Lucas Elementary in Iowa City with the Madison staff. Together, Lisa and I toured the publishing lab at Madison School in Cedar Rapids, we interviewed the person in charge, the media specialist, and we brought back samples of procedures and product. Another neighboring school, Wright Elementary, gave us a copy of their handbook. Attending a session at the University of Northern Iowa Beginning Reading Conference provided us with publishing center information from Colo and Pleasant Valley in Iowa. Further networking accessed publishing projects at Scotch Elementary in West Bloomfield, Michigan, and Barretts Elementary in Manchester, Missouri. Bolstered by the wealth of experience and information from seven schools, Lisa and I sat down the day after Thanksgiving to begin writing the our handbook. We had already worked well over the twenty hours of the extended contract. But, the fuzzy picture we had of the new Pierce publishing center was coming more into focus.

We clearly knew the book we wanted to produce needed to look as much like a real book as possible. Two copies of each story would be published. One book would be presented to the

author, and the second book would be placed in the classroom library. The student's school picture would be used on the author information page. The book's size was determined by the materials available, 8 1/2 by 11 inch copy paper that would be folded in half, about the size of a paperback. We planned to duplicate two copies of the student-illustrated title page, laminating one of them to attractive, brightly colored card stock to get the hardest, most durable cover we could afford. We were determined that like a real book, the words needed to be typed on the front and the back of pages. This final feature, front and back type, ended up to be the most difficult to actualize.

The search for a user-friendly computer program that could be formatted for front and back type was time consuming. We found the only options to be complex professional software intended to publish magazines or newspapers. Unfortunately, those programs were well beyond our technological capabilities. In fact, we never did find a program we could master. Instead, we found a professional computer software trainer in our pool of volunteers. She had experience with the publishing program Ready, Set, Go! Our decision was made. The principal purchased a site license with the Ready, Set, Go! software. The volunteer computer specialist set up book formats, wrote a procedures manual, and trained the word processing volunteers. With her continued supervision the word processors learned the procedures and by the second year they worked independently. Today there is a wider selection of publishing programs. Some are designed exclusively to publish children's writing. Although we continue to preview programs, we have not found one that could significantly improve upon our initial choice.

Because the yearly PTA budget was already set, the principal paid the first year's costs out of the building funds. Subsequently, expenditures have been shared between the PTA and the building budget. There is no way around it. "Materials for publishing cost money. Yet there is no more important investment, other than the paper to do drafts, that will contribute to the success of a writing program" (Graves, 1983, p. 59).

Teachers had been assured this new publishing process would mean no additional work for them beyond submitting a draft in final form. To establish a flowchart for the draft's publishing journey we needed to identify who took over after the draft left the classroom. "As with any project involving several steps and a variety of personnel, procedures must be developed, schedules must be established, and overall management set up. In short, somebody has to be in charge" (Gold, 1989, p.18). We found that many publishing centers are coordinated by one dedicated parent

volunteer. Unfortunately, once that lead volunteer's children graduate to middle school the leadership is lost and the programs falter. The publishing centers we found that endured parental attrition had a supervisory staff member in charge to provide continuity as volunteers rotated through. This staff person was a direct link to the teachers and could also deal with issues requiring professional judgment.

In the handbook Lisa and I identified this staff supervisor as the Resource Manager. Paramount qualifications included ability to work with people, a flexible schedule, and technology skills. We approached our media specialist but she felt a commitment to computerizing the school's card catalog was her first priority and declined to be involved. Fortunately, the principal reallocated a few hours for an organized and efficient teacher associate to function as the Resource Manager. She was excited to learn and became fervently dedicated to the cause. Lisa Trefz and I continue to share the responsibilities of staff liaisons. Because the Panther Paw Press has been designated a responsibility of the school-wide reading and writing committee more staff members are becoming involved in its operation.

Finding space for a new project is a challenge in a crowded school. By cleaning out a storage area in the teacher's workroom we created a central location for materials and space for two computers. Two of the shelves in the workroom had vertical slots designed to hold construction paper. We used those slots as the organizing feature to keep track of the drafts. Student stories were placed in a folder that moved ahead to a designated slot each time it completed a step in the publishing procedure. We wrote a detailed description of the steps for publishing in the handbook and also displayed a flow chart of how the folders moved back and forth from the classroom to Panther Paw Press. Although the multiple steps may seem cumbersome, this organization has been foolproof. We have not lost a story even though each folder changes hands approximately ten times.

At first my initial reaction was that "the book" seemed to travel back and forth a great deal. I now feel those steps are all necessary and helpful to producing a great book. I saw just how excited the kids were when their book came back for more of their input or as the finished product.

Substitute teacher

Because we felt a first-class operation would encourage teacher participation and parental acceptance, we used the school district's graphic artist to lay out and produce the handbook we had written. In addition, we worked with the graphics department to design an author certificate, the checklists and forms used to organize the volunteers, and attractive motivational posters. The posters decorate the workroom area, classroom displays of student books, and a bulletin board for author certificates located in the front hall.

February first, two months after we started writing the handbook, we officially opened Panther Paw Press. Lisa and I conducted a general orientation meeting for the staff. All teachers received a copy of the handbook, customized memo pads, and a poster for the room. While all teachers are invited, participation will always be voluntary. Twelve primary teachers have published stories each year, eight more classrooms than had participated in the original publishing center. The fourth and fifth grade teachers have said that as students grow older, they are capable of publishing their own work (Graves, 1983). However, intermediate teachers always have the option to submit stories.

Later, on opening day, the volunteers were also given a handbook at their orientation meeting. The principal hired substitute teachers for the afternoon so Lisa and I could train the parent volunteers during the school day. With their children busy in class, parents could participate without having to make childcare arrangements. Following an explanation of the process approach to writing and a brief overview of the work space and the flow chart for drafts, volunteers were divided into three small groups to get training in their specific area—word processing, bookmaking, or holding publishing conferences. A motivational skit at an assembly announced the grand opening of Panther Paw Press to students.

As the first stories moved through the process, it became glaringly evident that we needed to add an additional step in the flow chart. The drafts needed to be proofread after being typed and before the students did their pencil illustrations. Correcting typographical errors at this point saved considerable time in the long run. Fortunately, our learning resource teacher, Lois Willhoite, offered to check the copy. Later she devised a Pierce standards for punctuation style sheet that has been provided to teachers and typists which significantly reduced errors, especially with commas. Lois has also offered to proofread the stories for the classroom teacher before submission. Not

only does this help the classroom teacher to submit polished copy, it also further reduces the chance for errors in typed text allowing the folders to move through more quickly.

Kindergarten teachers requested a simpler book format for kindergarten students. Two designs for a two sided laminated story page were formatted. One side is a title section as well as the author picture and paragraph. There are two options for the story side. It can be a single illustration with text at the bottom or a four panel page with text typed under each of the four pictures. The first grade teachers decided they preferred the spiral bound book published by the original publishing center. We programed formats for these three additional choices using the Ready, Set, Go! software.

Each year teachers and parents from other schools come to tour Panther Paw Press. We have presented the Panther Paw Press to college classes and at principal meetings. We always provide a copy of the handbook and share samples of students' published stories. When feasible we ask a parent to explain the roles of the volunteers. While we might provide inspiration and some quality samples, we hope that visitors leave understanding they have merely a beginning point for their plans. Hard work and thoughtful reflection will be needed to design a publishing center that matches their unique school situation.

Goal 4: To provide an extended opportunity for publishing as the final stage of the writing process.

This goal should be rewritten to reflect more current thinking about the writing process. It should read: To provide an extended opportunity for publishing as an important and motivating stage of the writing process. In his new book, Taking a Fresh Look at Writing, Donald Graves (1994) clarifies a common misunderstanding about the writing process. He assures us that the well-known steps of the writing process do exist, but not sequenced in a rigid linear fashion. Rather, each child uses the steps differently and teachers should not legislate their precise timing. Rewording this goal might help to correct the impression that the ingredients of a writing recipe completed in the correct sequence are required for each published piece. A philosophy that recognizes the recursive nature of writing will allow our students to create a unique, personal writing path (Flood & Lapp, 1993). The more we can put the child in control, the closer the writing can move to the life of the child.

Our intent in producing two copies of each book was to extend the audience for Pierce authors beyond their classroom teacher. Classmates celebrate as the book is first shared from the

Author's Chair. Parents have told us how the books sent home are welcomed by a proud and supportive audience of family members and friends. "As a student's work moves further and further from the supportive environment of the classroom, a more formal publishing program is needed" (Harste & Short, 1988, p.94). Panther Paw Press provides a formal publishing experience that produces a quality book our authors can confidently share with the community. The thrill authors experience as they present their work to others encourages them to continue writing and moving through the authoring cycle. Dual motivation occurs as other students listen and hear either a skill or a strategy they would like to try in their future writing (Harste & Short, 1988).

An unanticipated benefit of Panther Paw Press is how the students perceive the published books as a specific anchor for future writing and as a record of past accomplishments (Graves, 1983).

The books are really nice to have for a keepsake and to have so when you're like in 8th grade you can look back and see what you made and you're like oh my gosh I really made this?

Grade 3 author

Goal 5: To support the district's instructional goals for communication competencies.

Although publishing is a central motivating feature of the authoring process it should be kept in perspective. It is only one aspect of the entire language arts program but if used to its full advantage publishing perfects a broad range of language arts skills. To produce a polished copy for publication, students willingly accept the challenge to master many language skill basics (basics that many parents consider neglected, especially in a writing workshop classroom.) If teachers set high standards for spelling, punctuation, capitalization, handwriting, and grammar during revision they are taking advantage of a motivating, teachable moment to stress many skills. "Publishing legitimizes the need for revisions and conventions. Once you 'go public' the writing has to be in its best form. There's no question that publishing authentic writing for an audience increases students' willingness to revise" (Routman, 1991, p. 264).

Since Panther Paw Press opened, Pierce has had two supportive principals who've requested the books be published in best form. Our proofreader has established our best form to be at approximately a fifth grade skill level, which most teachers and parents agree is a reasonable

expectation for conventions in an elementary school publishing center. A genuine difference of opinion exists for some concerning the editing standard. A well-meaning parent volunteer said the “kid’s errors are cute” and by correcting them we take away from the character of the writing. One teacher agrees and suggested, “Next year I think the Panther Paw Press should allow the pages to come through as is.” A second teacher feels each grade level should have a standard for punctuation that matches that particular grade level’s abilities. Graves (1983) agrees that teachers should help

...children work with editing that is within their grasp. This is the teaching zone, the zone of proximal learning for the child. Beyond that, the teacher corrects the errors in final text and publishes the piece as amended for the audience. There isn’t a professional writer alive who doesn’t have an editor that saves the author and the company from embarrassment (p. 58).

If it is our intent for Panther Paw Press to simulate a real-world publishing experience, we must allow our young authors the courtesy of an editor.

In our community there have been ramifications when Panther Paw Press books have gone home containing an undetected error. Angry parents have sent them back to be corrected. Books made public containing errors put the authors in a vulnerable position subject to criticism or embarrassment. Lower standards of editing could very well undermine our attempts to increase the author’s self-esteem and motivate writing.

Regie Routman (1994) warns us of a third repercussion that could have a far reaching negative political impact. She feels that once a paper goes “public” the spelling and grammar must be correct. Otherwise we are taking the chance that parents or even other educators accustomed to emphasis on correctness from their schooling will feel that teachers are not doing their job. It is imperative to communicate that we are teaching the basics. “Otherwise conservative and right-wing groups will continue to dominate educational headlines and claim our children are not being taught to read and write” (p. 12).

If students are motivated by publishing to perfect spelling, punctuation, and grammar, we must take full advantage to improve student skills and our credibility with parents. If Panther Paw Press lowers the editing standards for conventions we could be throwing away a great deal more than our red correcting pencils.

Goal 6: To enhance the reading-writing connection by providing students with original works published by peer authors.

My book is fun to read but the other published authors are fun to read too.

Grade 2 student

The books are a constant source of pleasure for the children, who read and re-read them.

Grade 1 teacher

I really liked getting a classroom library of books written in my students' language.

The books are beautiful and very supportive to promoting, improving, and mastering reading.

Grade 2 teacher

This goal further justifies the rationale for maintaining editing standards. One copy of each author's work is placed in a classroom library. These books are published with the intent of the students' writing becoming reading material for all students in the classroom. As such, they should be in the correct form (Hornsby & Perry, 1985). Not only are they reading material, these books soon become the most read material in the room (Harste & Short, 1988; Routman, 1991). Should beginning readers be reading and re-reading text that is incorrect?

Students, parents, and teachers have praised the design of the Panther Paw Press books.

The books are nice they look like a real author like Tomi dePaola.

Grade 2 student

The books are like the kind you see in a book store.

Grade 3 student

The actual book was the biggest award I've ever handed out.

Principal

In addition to the attractive physical aspects of the Panther Paw Press books, students respond positively to the author's story. Each year students are thrilled to read a book published previously by an older brother or sister or friend or neighbor. Stories about the changes for a family when a new baby is born or when a brother is injured in a serious car accident; stories about

a snake at grandma's house or the limousine business run by the author's family, all serve to validate the everyday life experiences of children.

The books are cool because they are often about a kid's life.

Grade 3 student

As our Pierce authors look into their lives and write, they have moved well beyond the struggle to just put something into print. "Writing does not begin with deskwork but with lifework" (Calkins, 1994, p. 3).

Panther Paw Press has accomplished the original six goals set out for it in the handbook. With the books we have published, we have validated the Pierce students as authors. Like John Cheever (1994), Pierce authors seem to have discovered that writing helps them to make sense out of their lives. With this insight, the students have moved beyond the goals Lisa and I wrote. They have unknowingly written and achieved a seventh goal of immense depth and monumental importance.

Goal 7: To encourage students to write as a way to understand their lives.

Thank you, Pierce authors. You have dignified our efforts to take your writing public. More importantly, by using writing to hold your lives in your hands to make something of them (Calkins, 1994) you have reminded Lisa and me that "our teaching matters more than we ever dreamed possible" (Calkins, 1994, p. 517).

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