THE STUDY CIRCLE: A SUPPORT FOR COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY AND WRITING

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Teacher: One of our group's rules is *Be kind*. If someone entered this space and students were following the *be kind* rule, what would that person see and hear?
Javier: They would hear us saying polite words.

This interaction occurred during the first meeting of our Study Circle group. In attendance were four Grade 4 vulnerable readers—that is, students who are particularly sensitive to disruptions in their literacy ecology: too-difficult texts, inauthentic tasks, insensitive peers, caring but stressed teachers, as well as oppressive class-, race-, and gender-based power structures (Jaeger, 2015). These students received one-on-one tutoring designed to meet their individual literacy needs, but, in my mind, this was not enough to fully engage them as literate human beings. Too often difficulties with literacy are associated with lack of interest and engagement (Guthrie and Davis; Melekoglu). I wanted to place these children in a collaborative environment in which their natural curiosity could surface.

Study Circle was just such a place. In this context, students conducted research on a topic of interest, relied on their peers for support, and published books on their findings. It is my purpose here to describe the structures that facilitated this process and to track the participation of one student, Javier, whose teacher considered him low-achieving and disruptive. The study described here is important in that it highlights the strengths of students who were otherwise considered unsuccessful, as well as their positive and productive interactions.

Literature Review

Research on inquiry-based instruction for children of this age group is scant. Mariam Dreher studied sixth-grade students as they wrote social studies reports. She found that they had little trouble generating research questions, but had considerable difficulty finding answers to those questions in reference materials. Over half of the students directly copied sections of text that were one paragraph or more in length. Some students effectively followed the report structure provided by their teacher, but others struggled to do so. Overall, there was a great disparity between the strongest and weakest of the reports. Dreher and her colleagues taught a research protocol to fourth graders. This protocol included lessons in gathering and organizing information, drafting, editing, developing visual aids, presenting, and self-evaluating. These lessons were presented in response to student requests and observations of their research process. Students' inquiry skills improved over time.

Additional information is available in practitioner-oriented books and journals whose authors argue for the need to revise traditional and ubiquitous research practices such as assigning topics and placing undue emphasis on the product of the research experience (Lindfors; Harada and Yoshina). These authors envision an environment of inquiry as one in which students employ discussion and writing as tools for sense-making (Barnes). Specific recommendations include:

- Foreground student choice about topic selection and question generation (Lamb, et al.; Lindfors; Harada and Yoshina; Parker)
- Teach helpful research strategies such as how to select appropriate and accurate information and how to record that information (Lamb, et al.; Stripling; Parker)
- Provide ongoing scaffolding during research activity (Stripling; Harada and Yoshina)
- Encourage student-student as well as teacher-student interaction (Lindfors; Stripling; Harada and Yoshina; Leu et al.)

- Facilitate sharing of information among students and with families (Lamb et al.; Stripling; Parker)

A significant gap in the literature is the lack of recommendations for providing enrichment experiences, like those described in this article, for students who struggle. Within the Common Core State Standards research, for example, little attention is paid to the needs of those readers who demonstrated difficulty in activities that targeted the less rigorous standards. On the flip side, there is little within the intervention literature about offering challenging experiences for students who experience difficulties in school (Jaeger, 2016). For example, Lamb et al., referenced above, seem to presume that research projects are suited only for gifted elementary students.

In response to these gaps in the literature, this article investigates inquiry practices employed with students who struggle in school. In conducting this research, I wanted to better understand the ways in which the inquiry practices described above played out in the Study Circle setting in general and how they influenced the engagement of one focal student.

The Study Circle Project: Research Methods

This qualitative case study was conducted at Education without Boundaries (pseudonym), an elementary school in a large urban district in a western state that served approximately 350 students. Of these children, 52% were Latino, 20% African American, 12% Asian, and 16% other ethnicities/no response given; 92.7% of students received free or reduced-price lunch and 59.8% were English learners. I selected this site because the school had a diverse population, a setting that would maximize the variety of readers I might find. In addition to the one-on-one tutoring I provided for the research participants, I met with the students as a group for one hour each week over the course of a school semester, totaling 15 hours.

Ideally, Study Circles would take place within the classroom context, including students who struggle, as well as the higher-achieving children who are more likely to engage in enrichment activities like this. Because teachers at the school site were unfamiliar with this

practice, it was my intent to implement and explore the possibilities with a smaller group in a pull-out setting. If the practice proved successful in a more tightly-controlled environment, I would feel comfortable recommending it for use in the classroom.

The student participants were diverse. Javier was Latino and native English-speaking. Bella and Sam were English learners whose native languages were Spanish and Cantonese, respectively. Timmy was a native English-speaking African-American. The students selected for the study struggled with literacy, but they also exhibited clear strengths as well as challenges. The stereotypical view of vulnerable readers positions them as students who struggle with all aspects of literacy from decoding to vocabulary to high-level comprehension. I chose to work with this population because I was intrigued by students who did not fit this stereotype—who had strengths to fall back on as we worked together and who could serve as mentors providing assistance to peers in their areas of expertise. I desired to conduct research that positioned them as whole and active vulnerable readers who are "overresearched but underseen" (Tuck, 411).

Within the Study Circle project, each student took up the inquiry process in unique ways. For purposes of this study, however, I focus on Javier. Javier found decoding of even simple words frustrating. He reacted to this frustration by acting out in class and his teacher seemed to view him as just one more distraction. However, Javier had a far different side, as well—a side I was fortunate to witness in both the tutoring and small group aspects of our work together. Javier was a History and Nature channel buff and displayed remarkable mastery of both topics. He knew more about the Revolutionary War than I did (or ever will), easily distinguishing among the characteristics and tactics of a range of the colonies' various insurgent groups. A child who, having struggled to write the word *quart*, remarked, "*This is my arch-enemy—I don't know how to spell*," yet he remained vitally interested in the world around him. Javier was also naturally social, making friends easily and collaborating effectively. Over time, Javier formed connections with the process of our work together. This combination of curiosity, friendliness, and engagement with process, made Javier an ideal candidate for Study Circle.

To represent the work that occurred during Study Circle time, I collected a range of data. I photographed or photo-copied the notes students took, the drafts they wrote, and the books they constructed. I audio-recorded each session to capture in detail the conversations we had and also audio-recorded two interviews with each student, which allowed me insight into their feelings about Study Circle. All recordings were transcribed and then analyzed using data-driven coding (Gibbs); that is, the transcripts were read and re-read, noting patterns in the enacted curriculum and in the comments made by Javier, the focal student. Classroom observations and the resulting field notes helped me understand who these children were in an environment distinctly different from that of Study Circle. Within these classrooms, the students had virtually no control of the tasks in which they engaged. Their teachers failed to offer them choices about what they did or how they did it, and, as a result, their innate curiosity was, more often than not, stifled. Finally, I developed detailed lesson plans and maintained a journal in which I examined the way those plans were enacted.

The Study Circle as a Collaborative Inquiry Space: Research Findings

The Study Circle project involved three major periods of time: preparation for research, note-taking and drafting, and editing and sharing the final products. I describe each of these in turn.

Getting Prepared

In planning for our first session together—and for all sessions to come—I attended to Barbara Stripling's comment: "Environments that support inquiry must be centered on building the community itself as much as they focus on the learner [and the] knowledge" (32). The goal of Study Circle was, in fact, to develop a culture of inquiry. This was not to be about individual students working on individual projects; even if each child selected a different topic, as they ultimately did, it was important that we build and maintain a research community with members who supported each other in

the process. I also wanted the students to understand that this was to be a productive environment, a place where they were expected to apply themselves to the work at hand, but where they could take risks without fear of ridicule (Lamb et al.). So, we began our work together by establishing two key norms: work hard and be kind. We discussed what it would look and sound like if a stranger entered a space where researchers were hard-working and kind. As noted in the initial quote, Javier participated actively in the ensuing discussion. Although this sentiment was not always evident in his interactions outside our space, he was almost uniformly hard-working and considerate during Study Circle.

I wanted the students to understand what it meant to *study* a topic but felt it might be easier if they talked about something more tangible first. So, during our first session, I asked them to describe what it meant to *swim*. Other students struggled to explain their thinking or focused on concrete aspects like moving arms and legs. Javier, however, explained, "*It includes skill … You have to know what you have to wear*." When we shifted gears and talked about what it meant to study, Javier noted that it involved hard work.

It was important to me that topic selection allowed for both freedom and collaboration (Lindfors; Harada and Yoshina). For this reason, I asked the students to brainstorm overarching topics within which they could select their individual sub-topics. The children suggested everything from *sports* to *space*, with Javier adding *how things work* and *the history of their school or state*. They voted for as many topics as they wished, and we considered only those topics which all the students expressed an interest in, thereby assuring that no one would be excluded from the group's enthusiasm.

Ultimately, the students selected *animals*. This was unsurprising. Jo Worthy et al. noted that books about animals were rated seventh in a list of sixth graders' choices, and I suspect that, had they surveyed fourth graders, this topic would have been further up the list. Part of the appeal may have been that, within the parameters of this topic, there were so many choices available to them. Each child listed between 20 and 30 animals, including such exotic species as warthogs and sea urchins. I told the children that they could choose to work with a partner

to research an animal, but, knowing they could help each other as much as they desired, each chose to work on a topic of her/his own choosing, and selected that animal during the second session.

At this point, I asked the following question: "What are we going to have to do and what resources do we need to obtain to study an animal?" Initially, talk turned to a visit to the local zoo—a terrific idea that would prioritize first-hand experience, but it was unaffordable for us; we then discussed the possibility of emailing the zoo for information. Use of books and web sources came up soon thereafter.

Although I had failed to consider this during the process of topic selection, the large number of child-friendly books about animals proved a great boon. For example, the *True Book About …* series included books about nearly every animal chosen. I required that they consult at least two books and one website in their research, and the *True Book* series, and other similar books, served as fertile ground on which to begin. A fully digital project was precluded by the severely limited technology resources available at the school. We made do with a single laptop.

Once books were collected, I modeled the process of selecting questions to guide their research (Lamb et al.) during the Week 3 meeting. To do this, I read aloud a book on the blue iguana, an animal no child had selected. Students were to attend to the various types of information the book provided. Sam noted that the book described where the iguana lives and Timmy mentioned he had learned what the iguana eats. Javier explained how the iguana grows and I expanded upon this to include other facts about its body. Then the students seemed stuck, so I re-read a section about the iguana's babies and Bella noted that this provided another possible question to research. At this point, I introduced the term *miscellaneous* and explained they might also collect interesting information that did not fit under any of the other headings, information that would be of interest to their readers.

To help students avoid simply copying from sources, common practice in student research (Dreher; Harada and Yoshina), I modeled the note-taking process using sentences from the blue iguana book:

This is a sentence I read you a few minutes ago. If you were studying the blue iguana and you wanted to write this information down in your notebook, you would not have to copy the whole sentence because … all we're doing now is collecting information.

In other words, "as few words as possible" was the mantra for this process. I asked the children if the sentence was about food or the animal's body or babies. They replied in the negative and we decided the information belonged on the *where they live* page. We looked again at the sentence and agreed that the words *found*, *one*, *just*, *the*, *is*, *on*, and *iguana* could be eliminated, with only *islands in Caribbean* remaining.

Note-Taking and Drafting
Later in that session, after I had taught these preliminary lessons and students had selected their animals, children received notebooks and they headed separate pages with the sub-topics we had discussed. Then the students generated what they already knew about their animal and recorded these facts on the appropriate page. Most offered at least four or five facts. They then had the opportunity to ask their classmates for any additional information to add to their lists. This information served as the foundation for the knowledge they would gain in the research process (Stripling). In the meantime, I visited many of the local libraries searching for books about the animals they had chosen. Ideally, students would have joined me in the hunt for resources (Parker), but our time together was short and there was much to do. Javier, who had great difficulty finding books he liked in the school library, wanted to know where I got the books for him to use in his research.

By this point in time, I knew the students quite well and had a sense of their individual strengths and challenges. Based on that knowledge, I designated Class Experts. Sam, the most fluent reader in the group, was the expert for pronouncing words; students were to ask him if they were having difficulty with the pronunciation of a word. If they could pronounce the word but did not know what it meant, they were to ask Timmy, the vocabulary expert. Bella was the sentence expert,

because she was great at understanding the meaning of individual sentences, and Javier, with his ability to grasp the overarching meaning of larger segments of text, assumed the role of meaning-making expert. The "expert" construct established each child as an authority to whom other children could turn as needed. It also released me to circulate freely and handle pressing problems ranging from missing books to difficulty understanding steps in the process.

Then the note-taking work began in earnest and continued for the next three to four weeks. Although we had talked about the contents and index pages in the iguana book and how they might use those pages to find information more quickly, most students chose to read the books from the beginning, jotting notes as they went along. This approach came as no surprise; Dreher found that even children who understand how to use text layout tools rarely do so. I suspect this was the preferred choice because one area of focus was on finding miscellaneous information that was, by definition, unrelated to any of the specific sub-topics and would likely be distributed throughout the book.

Javier was skilled at the note-taking process; he ably selected bits of information from the sources he consulted and recorded them on the correct pages in his notebook. From the first day of his independent project, he got to work immediately and continued diligently for the rest of the hour. The students talked a lot as they worked, sharing interesting tidbits with each other. Relishing the opportunity to add more facts to his repertoire of interests, Javier regularly responded enthusiastically to what he learned. By and large, these conversations were brief and spontaneous and did not seem to distract anyone. There were exceptions. After witnessing Timmy's and Bella's lengthier conversation, I noted, somewhat playfully, that I thought she would end up knowing more about Timmy's research topic (lions) than her own (sea urchins). I engaged in these little talks and reacted with surprise to new information as I facilitated note-taking.

Over time, students employed the range of strategies they had been taught. They turned to their designated peer experts, asking, for example, about word pronunciations. Javier grasped the concept of *miscellaneous* and enjoyed finding interesting items to place on that

page in his notebook. After two days of note-taking, we re-grouped to hear each other's most interesting information. Javier could barely contain himself: "*Can I do mine now? Sharks they eat fish and people ... Sharks eat [other] sharks. Sharks eat stingrays. Sharks eat sea urchins and cans ... Like if someone throws in [the water] a tin can [makes a gulping noise].*" He was equally interested in facts provided by others about their animals.

I was unable to find videos on any of the other animals, but I did discover one about sharks and brought it in for Javier—to which he responded, "*Awesome! Free movie!*" Other students were interested in watching as well, and we agreed that students should assess how far they had gotten in their note-taking (Hanada and Yoshina) and then decide whether they could spare the time. Because I believed watching the video and taking notes at the same time would be too arduous for Javier, I proposed that he should be responsible for noticing information in the shark video and tell me what he heard; I would assume the task of recording the information in his notebook. He agreed and stopped regularly to tell me what he had learned.

At this point, Javier mentioned a problem with his notes. He had utilized three different sources—two books and a video—and discovered they were not in agreement as to when the first sharks lived. The first book said they came into being one million years before the dinosaurs, the video said 200 million, and the second book agreed with the video. We brought this concern to the attention of the class, leading to a discussion of conflicting information. I suggested that if two sources agreed, they were probably right, and also suggested they look at the copyright date. Anticipating where I was headed, Javier said, "*Oh, now I get it!*" We agreed that newer sources might have more accurate and up-to-date information.

Javier also reminded me that it was his turn to access the Internet that day. Were I to repeat this project, I would have attended more carefully to strategies for online reading because, as Jill Castek et al. note, this type of reading requires skills in addition to those required for print text (e.g., dealing with the nonlinear format of Internet sources). Nevertheless, students gained some information from these sources. I also asked students to tell me one piece of information

about their animal that they were eager to know but had been unsuccessful in finding. We made calls and sent emails (e.g., to the biology department of the local university) in a last attempt to determine answers to their questions.

It was my policy to introduce new strategies when one child needed them. By our seventh week, Sam was ready to begin drafting—that is, taking his skeletal notes and crafting sentences and paragraphs from them. I suggested that they compose drafts on loose-leaf paper, skipping lines to leave room for any small additions or corrections, and writing on only one side of the page in case they wanted to cut up their work and re-arrange it. As a practice, students used notes I had generated from a book about pandas and proposed sentences drawn from those notes. Javier, for example, took the note "bamboo forests" on the *where they live* page and suggested, "They live in bamboo forests." At this point, I went through the students' notebooks, indicated which pages were ready to go into their drafts and which required more information; for the latter, I suggested a source for the additional information.

Reconstituting their notes as sentences proved more difficult than I had expected. Some students had trouble remembering what their skeletal notes meant. Bella erroneously employed the first/next/then/finally structure she had been taught for procedural writing, and Sam occasionally used words that, when pressed, he could not explain the meaning of. Yet as the drafting process got underway, Javier's enthusiasm continued to grow. The physical act of writing did not come easily to him and spelling was a source of great frustration. Yet he was committed to what he wanted to say and stuck with it, proceeding step-by-step through his notes.

We met for updates on each other's work. I asked the students to think about something they would like to know about the animals their friends were studying. Javier was delighted and responded easily and accurately to all questions posed to him. When asked which oceans sharks live in, he pointed to the answer in his notes and said, "*Look here. It says all over the ocean*." When asked what sharks' bodies are like, he asked, "*What do you want to learn about their body?*" and then went on, "*They have gills to help them breathe and they are [reading from*

his notes] in the fish family … They have 3000 razor-sharp teeth. They have a good sense of smell."

Javier was equally interested in others' work. Some of the students seemed to simply go through the motions, just repeating questions that were part of the organizing structure of their note-taking (e.g., What does X eat? Where does X live?). In contrast, Javier's questions were clearly genuine. He wanted to know what animals were predators of coyotes and which were prey of warthogs. He was impressed with Sam's information on the coyote's eating habits: "*Dang! Lots of stuff.*" Javier was also known for his tough questions; "*I always give the hard questions to answer,*" he noted.

I introduced a variety of different "special" pages for the authors to choose from: About the Author, Contents, Index, and Glossary. Students looked through a range of books that included these pages, coming to understand the roles they played via immersion. The children each selected at least two of these pages to include in their books. Early on, I read aloud a book my own son had written when in elementary school, including his About the Author page. Javier was especially excited about writing his own version of this page, listing his many interests as my son had done. As a child completed one of these pages, s/he served as "consultant" for the others. Javier, for example, helped Sam to select important words for his glossary.

Editing and Publishing

Students supported each other throughout the drafting process; they demonstrated interest in their peers' topics, helped each other find information, and assisted in crafting sentences from notes. When we began the revision process during Week 9, however, they were of little help in listening to each other's drafts and noting parts that did not make sense to them. For example, I caught Javier reading a library book while his partner read her draft to him. Only Sam noted a place of confusion in a friend's piece. I came to believe that this practice was developmentally inappropriate for this age group, so I met with each student and we went through sentence-by-sentence, adjusting as we went. Javier was open to this process. He worked with

me to clarify confusing sentences, and when I noted a fact I believed to be inaccurate, he readily returned to his sources to double-check it.

Students were more capable of proofreading, a process which began for some children during our tenth session. I provided a conventions checklist that included looking for errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and fragments/run-ons. They were expected to go through their drafts multiple times, focusing on one issue each time to achieve greater accuracy. They also circled words they believed might be misspelled, fixing those they could. At this point, I went through the drafts, marking their papers with symbols that showed which lines of text still exhibited problems; for example, if a period was missing, a P was written in the margin. They then completed their editing. In preparation for publishing, we met one final time to decide where page breaks would go and which pages would include an illustration.

Next came publishing which lasted about four weeks. I took the completed drafts home, typed the text, sewed pages together, and bought tagboard to serve as covers. Students illustrated many of their pages, we glued the text and pictures into the pages, and we used colored tape to bind the book. Javier demonstrated a remarkable knack for drawing pictures that allowed the reader to view the various underwater scenes from different angles. In one such picture, we see only a person's legs hanging down into the water, with a shark circling below. In another, the shark's egg case was drawn to resemble a suitcase, complete with handle. Initially, Javier had intended to place an illustration on every page, but his enthusiasm diminished partway through, leaving a somewhat lopsided monograph. All in all, however, he delighted in researching, writing, and book-making, and he formed closer connections with his peers through this process.

We celebrated the completion of the books during our last meeting (see Figure 1 for the cover of Javier's book on sharks and Appendix A for his complete text). The students read them to the rest of the group. Everyone applauded and offered specific compliments about the content: expressing encouragement for action-filled pictures, enjoying information on the About the Author pages, and noting unusual facts. We also played a version of *Jeopardy!* using questions based on information provided in their books. I could never convince Sam or
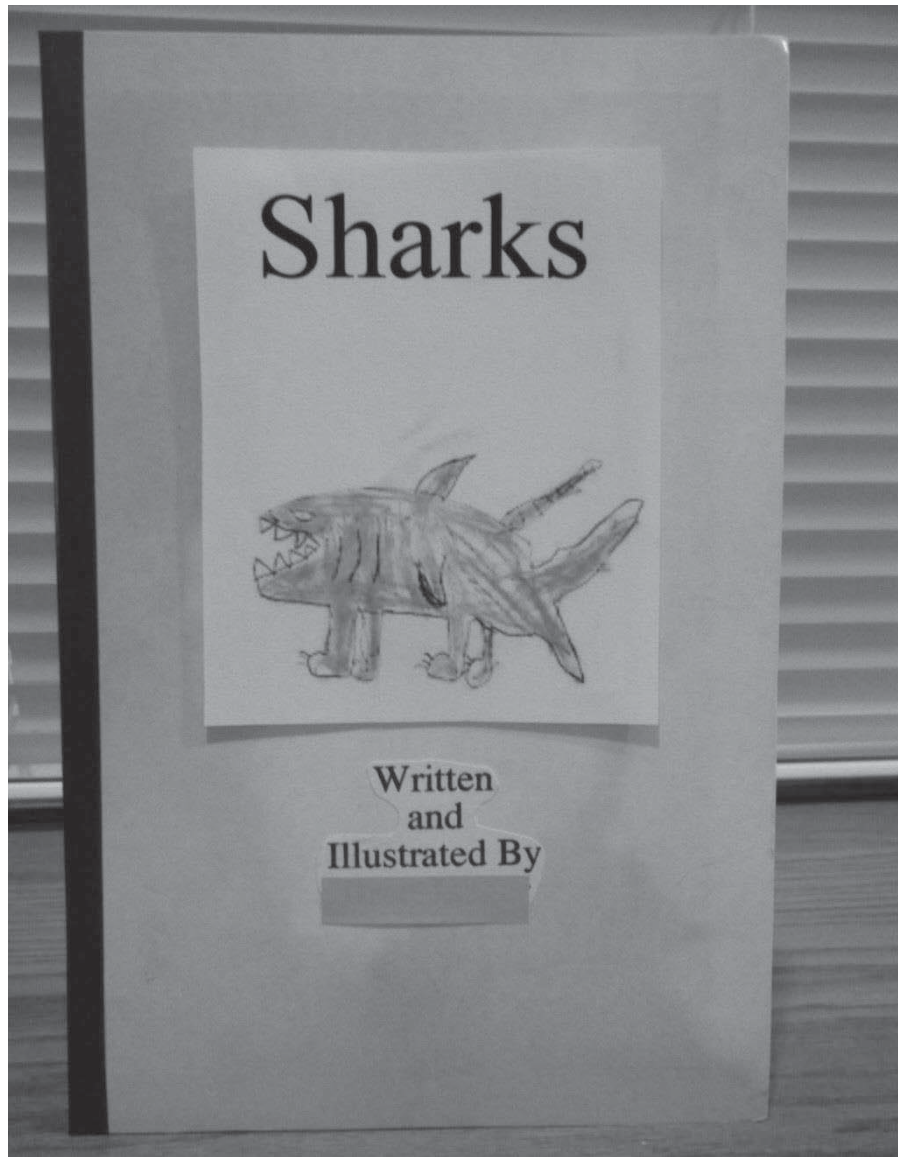
Figure 1: Javier's Shark Book

Timmy to read their books to their classmates, nor allow me or their teachers to do so, but Bella shared hers energetically and to great approval. Sadly, Javier moved away that week and never had an opportunity to read his book to others. All the other students took their books home and read them to their families. This inquiry

project had gone a long way in building a sense of camaraderie in our little group and positioned these students—rarely acknowledged within their classrooms—as knowledgeable and committed scholars.

Reflection

I return here to the questions that guided my inquiry: In what ways did carefully-designed student research practices play out in the Study Circle setting? and, How did these practices enhance the engagement of a student dealing with considerable academic challenges?

Supportive Research Practices

From the beginning, student choice was critical to our endeavor. The children made a variety of decisions from the substantive (what they would research) to the mundane (whom they would sit with as they worked). Although I set up the framework for the project, I depended on them to know best what engaged them, what materials they needed, and who was likely to provide strategic advice along the way. I guided the questions they were to investigate, but the miscellaneous page allowed for them to include whatever struck their fancy. It's unsurprising, then, that each finished product was unique, expressing the interests and personality of its author.

Student choice was balanced with explicit strategy lessons and ongoing follow-up. Because I expected that this project was the first of its kind for these students, it was important to provide the kind of structure that would facilitate success. As a result, I took nothing for granted. Mini-lessons addressed the following strategies:

- What does it mean to study something? Viewing research as a process that required ingenuity and hard work was important.
- What resources serve my research process? Books, videos, and the Internet were obvious choices, but I also wanted them to understand that it was best to begin with the knowledge they already possessed—as well as that of their peers. This knowledge provided a frame on which to "hang" new information.

- How does reading for research purposes differ from reading for pleasure or to obtain the gist of expository texts? It might mean employing the contents or index to skip around through the text to find the answers to specific questions rather than starting at the beginning and reading all the way through. When reading online, it might mean following a series of links.
- How do I record information from resource materials to avoid simply copying large chunks of text? Beginning with a sentence including the necessary information and cutting it down to its bare bones before writing it on a notebook page with appropriate heading was the process they learned and employed.
- How do I reconstitute notes to draft a text that foregrounds my voice? Taking information from several sources and organizing it to best support the reader was the lesson to be learned here.
- What processes assist me in refining my draft? Students participated in revision pairs and teacher-student conferences. They employed editing checklists and codes on drafts to polish their work.
- What can I do to make my book engaging for my readers? A cover illustration, placement of text on the page, and within-text pictures contributed to this goal.

These mini-lessons occurred as students began a specific part of the process, but reinforcement was ongoing.

Student-to-student interaction was another key aspect of this project. The children discussed topic choices and offered bits of information unknown to the author. They eagerly shared facts collected in their research and responded to questions asked by their peers. They served as "experts" for everything from word pronunciation to text meaning and offered less formal support to each other as needed. They traded ideas about illustrations and supplied some of the drawing for their friends, if asked. Finally, they came together to celebrate the work they had accomplished, offering compliment after compliment.

Although process was privileged over product, the children knew they would have something material to show for their hard work, and this was also key. They regularly asked me, "Are we *really* making books? Are we *really* taking them home when we are done?" as if they could not quite believe it to be true. So rarely does work in school result in a product that demonstrates the outcome of task after challenging task. This was not a worksheet or a quick sketch or a page of multiplication problems. The children were proud of what they had accomplished, and the book symbolized their accomplishment.

Adjustments for a Full-Class Project

This unit occurred in a small-group pull-out setting. Were this to be taught in a full classroom, the teacher's challenges would be greater due to the sheer number of students involved. Additional sessions might be needed, although working on the project for some time each day would compress the length of the unit as a whole. It would take longer to collect the necessary print research materials, although this would be mitigated if students had access to digital resources. Students to whom the research process comes most easily might partner in a more extensive way with children who struggled a bit, and the teacher might meet with small groups of students who needed extra support as the research and writing work proceeded. Older students could serve as effective peer editors; children who worked more quickly might collaborate with their peers in the publishing process or begin a second research project.

Javier's Journey

Whereas I came to know Javier as the curious, intelligent, and tenacious child he truly was, in no way was he anyone's traditional model of the "good student." When I first met him, he struggled to read and write even simple sight words. He dug in his desk when his teacher talked and loudly regaled his classmates with irresistible jokes during work time. Javier was frequently ill and family circumstances precluded necessary medical visits. Ultimately, his mother lost her job and was forced to move in with family in another town, so we lost Javier in December.

This was not, however, the child who entered Study Circle in early October. On our first day together, he asked whether he would get some kind of reward if he behaved, trying, I think, to determine exactly what sort of universe he had entered. I responded that I suspected that would not be necessary because I had not found it necessary to establish such a system for other groups of students with whom I had worked. Javier set about to prove me right. His thinking was highly conceptual, he quickly grasped strategies for learning, he worked for long periods of time without interruption, and he was a helpful and sought-after partner. Javier was an active and enthusiastic participant at every step of the inquiry process: a process that emphasized student choice, strategy instruction with ongoing support, and student-to-student interaction.

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APPENDIX A

Sharks

Sharks have gills to help them breathe. Sharks have sharp teeth. They have 3000 razor teeth. Sharks are in the fish family. They do not have smooth skin. There are 30 different sharks. Sharks have a good sense of smell. They can smell a little drop of blood from a mile away.

Sharks eat people, other sharks, sting rays, sea urchins, cans, birds, turtles, and shrimp. They are good hunters.

Sharks live in every ocean.

Some sharks lay eggs and some give birth. They lay eggs in cases. The mom doesn't care for their babies born in eggs. Mom does care for babies born alive.

Be calm if you see a shark. People eat shark fins. Sharks are the most ancient animals. Sharks were in the dinosaur age. Some people put shark scarecrows on the shore to scare animals. Rays are related to sharks. Sharks are eaten by other sharks, killer whales, and people. Sharks usually live 20-30 years but some live up to 100 years.

About the Author

Javier is 9 years old. He likes sports like football, basketball, soccer, baseball, and 4-square. He loves history and math.

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