

## Science Leadership Case: Writing for Clarity in Reflection

Putting your thinking down on paper requires you to slow down, be specific, and get clear. For this reason, writing is a good tool for metacognition.

During writing time today you have three options. If you get a draft of one of the options together, you can move on to the next piece.

Remember that you have resources to draw on: several case examples from October, your “testing a seed idea” note-sheets and freewrite from January, and your perspectives protocol notes from this morning. These can be very helpful as you begin to draft.

### OPTION ONE:

*If you have missed previous sessions and opportunities to do some of the pre-writing work, you can use the protocols to organize your thinking. TOSAs can provide you with the forms.*

### OPTION TWO - Developing the Context

Your case is essentially the story of a challenge along your science leadership journey. Like all stories, cases generally include a short section that provides the reader with some context or background – just some basic facts that set the stage. This might include, among other things:

- School level/organization
- Classroom demographics
- Teacher experience
- District history

It depends on what will be helpful for the reader. If your case is focused on the classroom, a two sentence history of the district is likely not necessary. On the other hand, if your dilemma focuses on changing district priorities for educational reform, that history might be very important. Here are a few examples of how some case writers began their context sections:

*Each morning I make the commute to Riverside High School. The scenery during the drive changes slowly, but noticeably. Billboards begin to appear in Spanish as well as English, apartment complexes become more frequent, and people in need of spare change . . .*

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*Gina and Pat were both third-grade teachers at Jefferson Elementary School. Gina had been teaching inquiry-based science for a couple of years, using science units*

*or kits designed for hands-on exploration. Jefferson had recently decided to use kits throughout the school, from kindergarten through sixth grade . . .*

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*We just finished our fourth year of Lesson Study in our newly reconfigured K-6 elementary school. Five years ago, I secured two years of funding through a leadership grant. Our group's initial focus was to establish collaboration between our nine 5<sup>th</sup> grade and multiage 4-5-6 teachers . . .*

As you can see, there are a variety of ways to go about this. Since this is a draft, you can just try something out and see how it works.

### OPTION THREE – Revealing the Dilemma

Like all good stories, cases also include a conflict. At some point in your case you will need to let the reader know what the dilemma is. You might reveal the dilemma to your reader in a dialogue or conversation between two people. Or you might reveal it by sharing what you were thinking at a particular time. Here are some examples:

*I heard a knock on my door. It was Mr. Ruiz, the principal, and he asked if he could come and talk about my unit on water. I was thrilled! The students must have already gone home and discussed the lesson with their parents, and parents had called the principal to praise my clever unit. "Sure, come on in," I said calmly preparing to be commended for my efforts. Mr. Ruiz took a seat in a student's desk close to mine. "Steve," he began, "you've been a great asset to the school . . . but this time you have made a mistake. . ."*

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*"That worksheet," Gina thought to herself, "takes all the science right out of this lesson. It's hands-on, all right, but not really inquiry-based science. In fact," she ruminated as she wandered about the room, helping students spread the soil in the terrariums and place the creatures and plants, "it's not even really science . . ."*

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*Unfortunately, early on, her [lesson study] group bombed, with several members choosing to leave meetings early, not participating fully, gossiping, not staying on task and purposely trying to sabotage the group's work. Marie came to me ready to throw in the towel and swearing to me that she "would never put herself in that position again." Terrific. Did she feel conned by me for convincing her to do this? Was it my responsibility to report back to the principal on this problem in her group so that he could deal with it? Should I intervene and talk to the other group members? How far did my leadership role stretch?*

A good way to locate a scene in which to reveal your dilemma is to think about when you first realized the dilemma was there. Where were you? What were you doing?