

FOREWORD

Everyone who knows me knows that I hold my own learning in high regard. Professional growth is a daily priority that inspires me to devour books, webinars, seminars, Twitter, or any resource I find at my learning-hungry fingertips. These amazing opportunities help me infuse new thinking into existing understandings through the lens of incredible others.

Like most educators, this means I have a perpetual “To Be Read” stack vying for attention. My book love desperation moved me to create a professional reading strategy that has served me well over the years. Simply put, I begin at the end by using the last chapter to envision a journey the author promises to take me on and then return to the first chapter where that journey unfolds.

So when Kelly Boswell sent me a copy of her new book, *Write This Way from the Start*, I didn’t hesitate to put my “Mary Method” into action. I was instantly smitten when I found her promise in the form of an invitation nestled in the pages of Chapter 6:

“I conclude this book with an invitation. I’m inviting you and your students to play—to have some fun with writing and thinking and drawing. Give your students a purpose for the words and phrases and sentences they are crafting. Trust that they have something valuable to say and then give them the freedom and space and time to say it.” (p. 187)

Needless to say, I was enthralled to launch a journey of playful purpose with Kelly at the helm. My enthusiasm was already sparked, but it quickly spread when I turned to Chapter 1, where beautiful beginnings of an invitational journey beckoned anew.

“What you hold in your hands is an invitation—an invitation to spend the first three weeks of the school year establishing a daily, purposeful, joyful, and sustained time for students to explore letters and language, sentences and surprises.” (p. 15)

Using my professional reading bookends of ending to beginning, I was confident our collaborative journey would be a fulfilling one. And Kelly did not disappoint as I happily traveled from page to page into the glorious middle with occasional twists and turns along the way driven by my passionate curiosity to see the writing process through Kelly’s eyes.

As I made my way across this magical book, I found myself caught up in what became an exploratory journey of writing from the heart. Through Kelly’s words, I began to envision the power and purpose of writing where we design learning opportunities to welcome every writer into the *writing club*. This message of student success reverberated from beginning to end and step-by-step through the enticing middle as Kelly asks us to keep our sights on what truly matters in our teaching. She illuminates

the way with words of wisdom from the sidelines as we learn the power and purpose of Writer’s Workshop through Kelly’s teaching points lovingly sandwiched between tips, ideas, and tidbits of inspiration.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Kelly offers detailed writing lessons for grades K–1 and 2–5. She leaves nothing to chance as we join forces to celebrate and nurture our writers with instructional models that make thinking visible. Each of her lessons permeates this power and purpose using flexible designs of possibilities that invite each of us to the decision-making table. With step-by-step detail, Kelly *shows* us how to become more intentional listeners and watchers of children, ready to notice the always there signs leading to new possibilities. She graciously invites us to pick and choose experiences that make the most sense for the writers in front of us to ensure that they remain steadfastly at the center of our every effort.

Kelly’s book is a celebratory venture that offers a blueprint for writing with playful purpose through thoughtful planning, implementation, organization, and application, with helpful suggestions interwoven in between. Her lessons offer a catalyst to new opportunities that will embrace Kelly’s deep respect for engaging and responsive daily writing with talk as the “glue” that holds student thinking together. She models key ingredients of the writing process so that we can gently nudge our writers from where they are to where they could be. She helps us to envision a culture of talk and choice where children write from the heart in the company of others. Through Kelly’s passion for student writing, we too come to value engaging dialogue as a springboard to awaken new learning awaiting us just out of view.

Kelly describes writing as a “messy, nonlinear, recursive, and magical process,” and she offers the research support to help us get there. Her focus on the *process* of writing celebrates both the writer and writing as she reminds us not to allow product-based conventions to blur the craft-centered lines. Her inspired lessons and myriad of helpful suggestions breathe life into this visible process. With each think-aloud, she models how to make children privy to the very thinking she then turns over to teachers so we can add new life to those lessons with our students.

Kelly’s book is quite honestly a gift to writing teachers everywhere who share her belief that student-centered talk-inspired writing grounded in choice is our professional responsibility. I am so honored to share my joyfully fulfilling journey in this foreword and elated by the idea that each of you is about to embark on your own happy travels from beginning to end and across the magnificent middle—a journey that is sure to enrich the writing lives of students everywhere.

— Dr. Mary Howard
National Literacy Consultant and Author