

## Remembering Moments Shared With Marie Clay

### Marie, the Teacher

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Dr. Clay is my teacher. She's guided me through troubling and challenging times. Times such as these when many of us find ourselves torn between our educational values and the policies and power structures that are affecting our children's lives.

As policymakers continue to make decisions that don't always meet the interests of the students I teach, I have wrestled with my own personal beliefs and knowledge. I've wondered how my district, my state, and even my nation can be so adrift.

And when I am filled with doubt so overwhelming that I can hardly breathe, her work becomes my haven. I open my Guidebook or *Change Over Time*, or *Becoming Literate* and more recently, *Literacy Lessons*. And my questions, my doubts ebb away, my breathing evens out, and I find my way again.

Dr. Clay is my teacher. She's clarified for me that my goal and purpose as an educator is to nurture lifelong, confident readers. She guides me in creating and maintaining a reflective and critical perspective as I navigate my way through the maze of all that tries to rob me of my professional bearings and all that might jeopardize my students' learning.

David Pearson stated and Marie Clay's teaching breathes — that a teacher's job is always to bridge from the known to the new. Children are who they are. They know what they know. They bring what they bring. He says that our job is not to wish that students knew more or knew differently. Our job is to turn students' knowledge and the diversity of knowledge we encounter into a curricular strength rather than an instructional inconvenience.

Marie Clay taught me and is still teaching me how. Thank you Dr. Clay.

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*Remarks from the tribute to Marie Clay, June 4, 2007, at the 2007 Teacher Leader Institute & North American Leadership Academy in Vienna, Virginia*