A study of the positive influence of a Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program on the High School Proficiency Assessment scores of eleventh grade students at the Creative Arts High School

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A STUDY OF THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF A LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY PORTFOLIO PROGRAM ON THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT SCORES OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS AT THE CREATIVE ARTS HIGH SCHOOL

by
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A Thesis
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ABSTRACT

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A STUDY OF THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF A LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY PORTFOLIO PROGRAM ON THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT SCORES OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS AT THE CREATIVE ARTS HIGH SCHOOL
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Dr. Theodore Johnson
Masters of Arts in Administration

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of a Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) scores of eleventh grade students at the Creative Arts High School of Camden, New Jersey. Eleventh grade students were divided into two SAT Prep classes. For the purposes of the study, class one was labeled group A while class two was group B. Students in group A used the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program to support the traditional SAT Prep curriculum. Conversely, students of group B followed the traditional SAT Prep curriculum and were not exposed to the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program. Both groups were periodically tested for growth in language arts skills utilizing a computer-based program, Measuring Up. Test analysis revealed no significant difference in the test results of students in groups A and B, challenging the influence of the Language Arts Literacy Program.
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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Focus of the Study

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The Act represented President Bush’s educational reform plan and contained numerous changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. NCLB modified the federal government’s role in K-12 education by concentrating on school success as measured by student achievement. The Act also contained the President’s four basic education reform principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that had been proven to work (http://www.state.nj.us/njded/grants/nclb/).

Inadvertently, the No Child Left Behind Act was placing extraordinary requirements on educators nationwide. Schools throughout the nation were expected to meet state standards as measured by individual state assessments. One such assessment was the High School Proficiency Assessment, which was administered by high schools in the state of New Jersey. In order to graduate with a diploma endorsed by the state of New Jersey each high school student had to achieve a passing score on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). The exam measured student attainment of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in the areas of language arts literacy and math. As President Bush explained in his January 8, 2002, speech at the University of
New Hampshire, "If a school can’t change, if a school can’t show the parents and community leaders that they can teach the basics, something else has to take place. In order for there to be accountability, there has to be consequences."

In accordance with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards as well as the No Child Left Behind Act, the Creative Arts High School of Camden, New Jersey had made major strides in the area of language arts literacy with a total of 81% of its students scoring at a level of proficiency on the 2002 HSPA and over 84% of its students scoring at a level of proficiency on the 2003 HSPA. Contributing factors to the school’s level of success included the strong collaboration demonstrated by staff as well as the school’s focus on novel-based instruction. However, with a required passing score of 85% on the New Jersey HSPA, the Creative Arts High School was still focusing on methods to enhance the language arts literacy program. This interest in increasing student performance on the HSPA increased when student language arts literacy scores decreased to the minimum Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) passing rate of 75% in 2004. The focus of the study was to implement the eleventh grade language arts literacy portfolio assessment program in order to increase student-writing opportunities in preparation for the HSPA as well as to provide an additional method of student preparation and assessment along with the Camden City School District initiative, Measuring Up.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the language arts literacy portfolio study was to assist in the process of increasing the language arts literacy scores of the eleventh grade students attending the Creative Arts High School on the New Jersey High School Proficiency
Assessment (HSPA) by exposing these students to a variety of reading and writing opportunities, affording them an alternative method of formative assessment, and by empowering them as active learners in the instructional process.

Definitions

1. AYP= Adequate Yearly Progress
2. HSPA = 85% of students from each high school in the state of New Jersey were required to pass the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in the areas of Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics. The test was administered during the spring of each school year.

Limitations of the Study

The language arts literacy electronic portfolio study was conducted with one class of seventeen eleventh grade students at the Creative Arts High School of Camden, New Jersey. The students participated in the study during their weekly SAT Prep class consisting of several other academic activities and limiting the implementation of the portfolio study to once a week.

Setting of the Study

The city of Camden, New Jersey, located in the southern region of the state of New Jersey was rated as one of the poorest cities in the country in 2003 and the most dangerous city in the United States in a 2004 poll. Due to the large exodus of manufacturers and industry during late sixties and early seventies following increased crime and race riots, a succession of corrupt Mayors and a poor public image, Camden, which was once the embodiment of vitality, posed limited employment opportunities for its residents. One-third of its residents lived below the poverty line in 2003. The city struggled with numerous economic and social problems including high unemployment, crime, welfare, and high school dropout rates.

The Camden City School District was an urban district consisting of 20,382, 96%
of which were students of color (Census, 2000). The school district was one of New Jersey’s thirty Abbott Districts having as many as 7,570 families living in poverty (Census, 2000). Abbott districts were urban school districts receiving increased state funding as a result of the Abbott v. Burke New Jersey Supreme Court ruling. This ruling ordered the state to compensate school districts with a low tax base. The ruling provided that all students were entitled to a thorough and efficient education. The students who attended Camden City Public Schools continued to perform well below their peers in higher-income areas. Less than 59 percent of fourth graders scored proficiently on state literacy tests in 2002, and only 34 percent of eighth graders achieved proficiency. Camden high school students averaged slightly over 700 on the SAT. (TeachforAmerica.org) As a means of providing that students in the city of Camden received a more thorough and efficient education, Camden City established a succession of magnet schools. The Creative Arts High School, which was a school established to attract students with an interest in the Arts, was one example of such efforts.

The Creative Arts High School was the first performing arts high school to be built in the Southern New Jersey area. Established by the Camden City School District in 1999, the school was in its fifth year of existence at the time of the study. The Creative Arts High School was located in the southern region of the city of Camden. In spite of the impoverished neighborhood surrounding the school, the staff endeavored to provide its nearly two hundred students with both academic and artistic instruction in the various arts areas. The Arts areas or majors as was termed at the school, included drama, dance, instrumental music, vocal music, visual arts, and costume design.

The Creative Arts High School was comprised of a population of students that
was 65% African-American, 30% Hispanic, 3% Asian and 2% White. The instructional staff was a combination of 50 highly qualified teachers and instructional assistants who, like the students, reflected a diversity of cultural backgrounds. The instructional staff was comprised of a staff which was 55% African-American, 30% White, 12% Hispanic and 3% Asian.

The criteria for enrollment at the Creative Arts High School differed from that of the traditional high school enrollment, which was generally a promotion to the local high school. As a magnet school, the Creative Arts High School held yearly auditions each spring for students interested in attending the school. Students had to possess a talent in one of the Arts areas: dance, instrumental music, vocal music, costume design, or drama in order to be accepted into the school.

Significance of the Study

In January of 2001 President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, which required that all students meet State determined proficiency levels of 100% by 2014. In order to reach the 100% passing goal, New Jersey and other states have developed incremental benchmarks- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. The language arts literacy AYP for New Jersey high schools taking the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in the year 2003-2004 was 73%. However, this figure increased from a 73% passing rate to 79% passing rate for the 2004-2005 school year. The language arts literacy portfolio program was a part of a collaborative effort to increase student achievement in the area of language arts literacy in order to surpass the state AYP and to meet the passing score of 85% on the HSPA. Students at the Creative Arts High School had yet to meet the passing score of 85% on the HSPA with scores of 81.3% in 2002, 83.7% in 2003 and 79.5% in 2004.
Relationship of Study to ISLLC Standards

ISLLC Standard 2 was reflected as it related to the use of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program as a tool to improve the instructional environment of the students. Standard 2 of the ISLLC Standards provided that an instructional leader promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional programs that are conducive to student learning as well as staff professional growth. Standard 2 provided that there was diversity in and multiple opportunities for learning experiences. In addition, Standard 2 provided for the utilization of technology in the instructional process. The language arts literacy portfolio was a computer-based program. Finally, the use of the language arts literacy portfolio promoted the use of multiple assessment strategies, which was also a characteristic of Standard 2.

Organization of the Study

The study was organized to include an extensive Literature Review reporting the positive influence of Language Arts Literacy Portfolios, the Design of the Study, as well as a detailed Presentation of the Research Findings that included a comparative analysis of student progress in the area of Language Arts Literacy from September to March. The paper was also organized to include all conclusions and implications of the study as well as any possibilities for further study.
Portfolios have been with us for a very long time. People growing up during the 1950's or earlier recognize portfolios as reincarnations of large memory boxes or drawers in which their parents collected starred spelling tests, lacy valentines, science fair posters, early attempts at poetry, and (of course) the obligatory set of plastic hands (Hebert, 2001). In the business investment world, portfolio means the collection of stocks, bonds, and other investment that a person owns or controls at a particular time- very much a picture of that individual in the eyes of other investors (Farr, 1998). Proposals to use portfolios in language arts instruction and assessment have, as Elaine Parker has noted (1995), always been rationalized metaphorically, comparing the methodology to aspects of humanistic development and to many careers and life situations which portfolios are used. The intent has been to emphasize the methodology’s potential to reveal both process and product-not just to the teacher, but also and primarily to the student as a developing self-assessor (Farr, 1998). As a practical enterprise, the literary portfolio usually comprises a folder with situated samples of student reading and writing performance (Calfee, 1996). By definition, the portfolio “is a collection of work that exemplifies an individuals expertise in an area, as an artist’s portfolio contains various pieces showing what the artist can do. By adapting this idea for student assessment, a portfolio can be used to collect and evaluate multiple sources of information that show a student’s competence in terms of process and product. (Mundell, 1994) The use of
portfolios in instruction is not new; nor is their use in assessment a new practice. But more widespread use of portfolio assessment in language arts instruction is relatively recent, and the reason for its increasing popularity appears to be that it is compatible with better understanding of how language abilities develop (Farr, 1994).

**Language Arts Portfolios**

Interest in portfolios as tools to measure performance and influence instruction has been growing in the US since the late 1980s (Stecher, 1998). Many educators and researchers feel that a portfolio assessment is a superior and more accurate indicator of student progress than the more conventional types of assessment (Gibbs, 2004). Portfolios are developed for three purposes: 1) as Learning Portfolios, which are a formative evaluation method used to support professional development; 2) as Assessment Portfolios, which are a summative performance-based evaluation method; and 3) as Employment Portfolios, used for specific positions in various career fields that would be supported by the demonstration of electronic documents and projects (Lynch, 2004).

The focus of the language arts portfolio was essentially the utilization of authentic pieces of writing selected for the evaluation process by both the teacher and the student. Students as well as teachers were effectively creating a plethora of writing material to be utilized in the assessment process. The language arts portfolio provided an alternative method of formative evaluation to teacher-made tests and workbook activities. This form of assessment has been characterized as authentic assessment. In a 1990 article entitled *Setting Direction for Language Arts Portfolios*, Roger Farr suggests, “...as we move toward the use of integrated language arts portfolios in the classrooms, we must determine which purposes they serve best (Farr, 1990). Farr adds, “Present practice
suggests portfolios can effectively provide students the means to reflect on their own reading and writing by ensuring access to a wide range of their own reading and writing activities; supply teachers with a range of reading and writing activities so they can plan reliable and thoughtful instruction; allow opportunities for students and teachers to discuss literacy activities; support more valid, reliable assessment of a student’s literacy development through the use of a range of performance activities in both reading and writing (Farr, 1990). In other words, “If portfolios are to enhance learning and to support improvement in English language arts instruction, then they must document effective instruction; that is, students must be engaged in purposeful reading and writing activities” (Murphy, 1997).

The language arts literacy portfolio not only afforded students an opportunity to become engaged in the learning process but also provided teachers and students with a more tangible method of assessing growth. Portfolios provide authentic and meaningful documentation of students’ abilities (Cole, 2000).

**Electronic Portfolios**

As emerging technologies expand the dimensions of the classroom, demands that education professionals be familiar with not only their potential but also their application increase as well (Nicholson, 2004). Digital teaching portfolios, sometimes referred to as Multimedia portfolios, electronic portfolios, e-folios, webfolios, and electronically augmented portfolios contained much of the content traditional teaching portfolios included but presented the materials in digital format. In digital teaching portfolios, professional materials are presented using a combination of multimedia technologies, including, but not limited to, audio recordings; hypermedia programs; and database,
spreadsheet, video, and word processing software. (Kilbane, 2003). These types of portfolios are stored on disks, CDs, ZIP discs. Electronic portfolios are easier to distribute, economical to store and produce, easy to replicate, easy to store in a digitized format, secure, easy to maintain, versatile, and demonstrate more quality in providing evidence of competence, than paper portfolios (Lynch & Purnawarman, 2004).

The Creative Arts High School language arts literacy portfolio utilized the Portfolio Builder program, which incorporated a Microsoft’s PowerPoint presentation program, originally created for business use but is widely utilized in K-12 schools. The process of saving portfolios created in PowerPoint was simplistic enough not to divert the attention from the primary focus, language arts instruction and assessment. A portfolio created in this program would consist of one slide show file that incorporates various slides containing graphics, sounds, videos, and text (Kilbane, 2003). The development and presentation of the portfolio in the electronic environment is a means to an end, not an end in itself; thus, it is important to maintain the focus on the assessment rationale for the process (Nicholson, 2004).

**Standardized Testing**

In accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools throughout the nation were required to meet state standards as measured by individual state assessments. Most states had some centralized testing requirement—either state-developed examinations or commercial tests—but few use portfolios (Stecher, 1998). Standardized tests tended to have a universal theme; easy alignment with curriculum standards, easy administration and cost effectiveness. However, a wealth of research suggested that total reliance on standardized tests as a measure of student progress as inconsistent with what we knew about student learning. Kathleen and James Strickland explain, “Tests do not
improve learning. In fact, many studies show that children learn more and better when
not given any grades but are offered constructive comments instead...Students from
primary to college level have greater trouble in understanding new material when they
know they will be tested and scored” (Strickland, 2002). Grant Wiggins (1993) elaborates,
“understanding is not cued knowledge; performance is never the sum of drills; problems
are not exercises: mastery is not achieved by the unthinking application of algorithms. In
other words, we cannot be said to understand something unless we can employ our
knowledge wisely, fluently, flexibly, and aptly in particular and diverse contexts”
(Strickland, 2002). Nevertheless, teachers are forced to employ uninspired methods such
as practice drills and the excessive use of practice tests in an effort to attain levels of
proficiency among students.

The most common measure of educational quality is student performance on
standardized tests that measure student aptitude, knowledge, and skills (Kilbane, 2003).
The New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) was a standardized test
developed to assess the academic progress of eleventh grade students in the areas of
Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics. The test, aligned to the New Jersey Core
Curriculum Content Standards, was administered during the junior year of high school,
was a part of New Jersey’s graduation high school requirements. All New Jersey high
school seniors were required to pass this test in order to receive a diploma. Students were
required to pass this test at a level of proficiency in the areas of Language Arts Literacy
and Mathematics. The result of student performance on this test was then compared at
state and national levels through a process called standardization. The results from
standardized tests had become society’s measure of student progress in various
communities, affecting property value and becoming a determinant or deterrent from residency in certain school districts. The lack of success on such standardized tests also negatively affect government funding to school district as per the No Child Left Behind Act signed by President Bush in January of 2001.

Within the past three years a little less than 85% of the juniors at the Creative Arts High School of Camden, New Jersey had demonstrated the required level of proficiency in the area of language arts on the HSPA. The state of New Jersey required that in order for a school to meet state requirements 85% of the students must pass the HSPA at a level of proficiency in the area of language arts. A key to successful teaching is evaluation that leads to instructional improvement (Cole, 2000). The use of the language arts literacy electronic portfolio at the Creative Arts High School was an attempt to increase the language arts literacy scores of eleventh graders on the HSPA by exposing them to organized reading and writing opportunities and by affording them an active role in an alternative method of assessment.

*Portfolios in Action*

Many state and local school districts across the country were experimenting with performance assessment as described by the language arts literacy portfolio. A few were experimenting with ways to use and evaluate portfolios for large-scale assessment as well. The intention had not been to replace or discontinue standardized multiple-choice tests, but the interest in alternative forms of assessment appeared to be a desire to get at the "application" of student learning (Farr, 1994). One such school district was the Bay Village school district of Cleveland, Ohio. Beginning in 1988 the Bay City school district began to implement the initiative of moving the sole focus of schools from standardized
tests to more performance-based forms of assessment, including portfolio assessment.

The school district began to seek a balance in the assessment of students. As described in an article by Carol McCabe, the endeavor was an arduous one to say the least involving intense staff development, restructuring of curriculum immense parental support.

The Bay City school district was faced with the reality of uncertainty as they embarked upon the challenge to change the system. “We had to engage the staff in what appeared to be an unplanned path. How can we model assessment in classrooms? What are our purposes? How can we students develop the ability to self-assess? What impact can we expect on teachers, students, and parents? What definitions apply? Answers to these questions evolved as we embraced the process and explored new avenues” (Calfee, 1996). Nevertheless, the school district boasts of vast improvements in student achievement. The Union City school district of New Jersey has also made major strides in the utilization of language arts portfolios as is reflected in gains on state standardized tests. Union City students are expected to reflect on and judge their work over time. "Self-evaluation," according to Union City's language arts department, "is one of the best ways to empower students, giving them ownership over their learning." Portfolios - electronic, multimedia, or on paper - allow students to collect examples of their projects and research, pinpoint strengths and weaknesses, and demonstrate growth. Since portfolios account for at least 50 percent of each student's grade (with the remainder based on test scores, classroom behavior, and other measures), students and teachers alike take the contents seriously (Tully, 2003).

In an article entitled *The Consequences of Portfolio Assessment: A Case Study*, Terry Underwood revealed the findings of a yearlong case study of a quasi-experiment of
language arts portfolio assessment system in a northern California middle school. The study focused on both external and internal systems of assessment as used by English teachers. The external system involved the utilization of norm-referenced tests. Federal law currently required the use of the external system for schools to receive categorical or special funds, infusing the external system with considerable economic importance (Underwood, 1998). The internal system was characterized as the use of grade books and school report cards. The tools for this system included written essays, projects, quizzes, tests, oral presentations, oral questioning, observation and portfolios (Underwood, 1998). A mixed model ANOVA was conducted with reading achievement as the dependent variable measured across time, placement (portfolio vs. non-portfolio classroom placement) as a fixed explanatory variable, and teacher as nested, random, explanatory variable (Underwood, 1998). The findings were that although there was no substantial difference found in the writing ability of the students in the study groups, the students exposed to portfolios showed a significant difference in their reading development as measured by the site’s direct reading assessment which contained open-ended opportunities for response. Underwood noted several constraints in the writing program that affected its success, namely the teachers’ need to appease standardized test requirements. Underwood also found that students in alternative assessment classrooms registered significantly higher levels of learning-goal orientation than did students in customary classrooms.

Across the nation school districts were making efforts to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act by changing instructional approaches and assessment method. School districts were forging new ground when utilizing alternative methods of
assessment. However, proponents of alternative assessment method had an uphill battle when it came to appeasing parents and the community. Parents and members of the community had opinions about how assessment should be conducted and most polls showed that parents were more comfortable with traditional forms of assessment. A 1993 poll by Shepard and Bliem revealed that 92% of public school parents still approved of the use of standardized tests versus performance based assessments (Calfee, 1996). Calfee went on to clarify that the positive support of standardized testing did not denote support for the use of performance-based assessments for parents on local levels. He went on to emphasize that standardized tests are simply seen by parents and members of the community as a more tangible form of assessment and accountability.
CHAPTER THREE

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Description of the Research Design

In accordance with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards as well as the No Child Left Behind Act, the Creative Arts High School of Camden, New Jersey had made major strides in the area of language arts literacy with a total of 81% of its students scoring at a level of proficiency on the 2002 HSPA and over 84% of its students scoring at a level of proficiency on the 2003 HSPA. Contributing factors to the school’s level of success included the strong collaboration demonstrated by staff as well as the school’s focus on novel-based instruction. However, with a required passing score of 85% on the New Jersey HSPA, the Creative Arts High School was still focusing on methods to enhance the language arts literacy program. This interest in increasing student performance on the HSPA increased when student language arts literacy scores decreased to the minimum Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) passing rate of 75% in 2003.

The Creative Arts High School was the first performing arts high school to be built in the Southern New Jersey area. Established by the Camden City School District in 1999, the school was in its fifth year of existence at the time of the study. The Creative Arts High School was located in the southern region of the city of Camden. In spite of the impoverished neighborhood surrounding the school, the staff endeavored to provide its nearly two hundred students with both academic and artistic instruction in the various arts areas. The Arts areas at the school, included drama, dance, instrumental music, vocal
music, visual arts, and costume design.

The Language Arts Literacy Electronic Portfolio Program was implemented at the Creative Arts High School of Camden, New Jersey and included all eleventh grade students taking the SAT preparation class. The Creative Arts High School was comprised of a population of students which was 65% African-American, 30% Hispanic, 3% Asian and 2% White. The instructional staff was a combination of 50 highly qualified teachers and instructional assistants who, like the students, reflected a diversity of cultural backgrounds. The instructional staff was comprised of a staff which was 55% African-American, 30% White, 12% Hispanic and 3% Asian. The language arts literacy portfolio program was a part of a collaborative effort to increase student achievement in the area of language arts literacy in order to surpass the state AYP and to meet the passing score of 85% on the HSPA.

The Language Arts Literacy Electronic Portfolio

The Creative Arts High School language arts literacy portfolio utilized the Portfolio Builder program, which incorporated a Microsoft’s PowerPoint presentation program, originally created for business use but is widely utilized in K-12 schools. The process of saving portfolios created in PowerPoint was simplistic enough not to divert the attention from the primary focus, language arts instruction and assessment. Student writing progress were charted and graphed utilizing the computer program Microsoft Excel Program. The teacher reviewed writing samples on a weekly basis. Each student’s Language Arts Literacy Electronic Portfolio was assessed at the end of each of the marking period.
Another focus of the study was the reviewing of material culture as provided by the use of test reports supplied by the Measuring Up program. In accordance with the Camden City School District School Improvement Initiatives Eleventh grade students were required to take monthly Measuring Up diagnostics. Measuring Up was a computer-based program in which students from grades two through twelve were tested on a monthly basis in preparation for the state standardized tests administered in the state of New Jersey each spring. The Measuring Up program required that teachers in the City of Camden utilize both instructional and test preparation materials from the People's Publishing Company on a daily basis. The entire school district paced its instruction based on the scheduled testing dates established by the Peoples Publishing Company. The tests, which were administered each month, provide data on the progress of each student’s mastery of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Students were drilled daily and practiced activities aligned to monthly diagnostics that were also aligned to state tests. The instructional materials consisted of selected workbooks that provided students opportunities to drill for reading, writing and math skills found on the New Jersey State tests. Camden City School teachers received training in scanning, importing and retrieving reports utilizing the computer-based program. The reports generated from The Measuring Up program provided data that measured the skill development of the Eleventh grade students.

The reports supplied teachers with data that enabled them to review student strengths and weaknesses in specific skills.

Teacher Survey

Upon receiving permission from the school principal as well as the submission of
a permission request to the Camden City Board of Education, a survey was administered to the teachers of the Creative Arts High School during the weekly faculty meeting. Language teachers were asked to complete questions regarding their perceptions of the influence of a Language Arts Literacy Portfolio.

Focus on Research Instruments

A survey was administered to all teachers at the Creative Arts High School utilizing a Likert Scale. A typical question using a Likert Scale might pose a statement and ask respondents whether they Strongly Agree- Agree-Undecided- Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Subjects were given 10 statements on their perceptions of the influence use of Language Arts Literacy Portfolios. The data collected were ordinal: they had an inherent order or sequence. The data was summarized using a median and mode. In this case a mode will be utilized. The observations were displayed in a bar chart.

Sample and Sampling Technique

As demonstrated later in Table 1, a sample of teachers of the Creative Arts High School were surveyed using a Likert Scale survey prior to using the Electronic Language Arts Literacy Portfolio in order to assess preconceived notions about its use. The five teachers in the language arts department were given a brief demonstration of the portfolio and then surveyed on their perceptions of its effectiveness.

Data Collection Approach

The teacher survey was distributed during a staff meeting at the Creative Arts High School. The Language arts literacy teachers were requested to respond to ten statements regarding the influence of the portfolio. Responses were organized in a bar chart utilizing the Microsoft Excel Program. Questions focused on the effects of the
portfolio on academic performance as well as their attitudes toward their education. Other data collected was the results of the Measuring Up Tests of Language Arts Literacy skills taken by Creative Arts High School eleventh grade students during the months of October and March.

Data Analysis Plan Results

Reports were distributed to teachers after the administration of each Measuring Up diagnostic. These reports revealed the level of student growth in the basic skills areas such as reading and writing. The use of this Measuring UP data in collaboration with the data collected from the use of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio provided the material culture necessary to assess student academic performance in the area of Language Arts Literacy. If student scores on the Measuring Up Test demonstrated a sizeable increase in student proficiency levels in language arts literacy from October to March, then it could be assumed that the use of the language arts Literacy Portfolio had a positive influence on student levels of proficiency in language arts.

What Type of Evidence Can Be Gathered To Prove That The Project Is Having An Impact?

It was assumed that the use of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio in conjunction with the Camden City School District Initiative, Measuring Up, would improve student performance on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment. The Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program was utilized with one class out of two classes of eleventh grade students at the Creative Arts High School in Camden, New Jersey. The evidence of the projects success was grade students did not provide ample time for the assessment of the students’ long-range growth on the whole.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

What Information Was Found?

The researcher was attempting to ascertain whether the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program would enhance student scores in language arts literacy at the Creative Arts High School.

Table 1 Teacher Survey Results

A survey (Appendix A) was administered to all language arts teachers at the Creative Arts High School to determine teacher perceptions of the positive influence of

21
the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program (Appendix B). Teacher responses prior to utilizing the program reflected a positive perception of the influence of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio as was demonstrated in Table 1. A sample collected after the administration of the September 2004 Measuring Up Comprehensive Test revealed that eleventh grade students at the Creative Arts High School scored slightly better than the Camden City School District as well as the State.

However, an overall view of the total points possible demonstrated a need for improvement in the area of Language Arts Literacy.

Table 2 Comprehensive Test Results of Grade Eleven Students
The October 2004 Measuring Up Diagnostic was not comprehensive in nature but provided eleventh grade students with the opportunity to be scored in a particularized area of Language Arts Literacy. The results demonstrated in table 3 reflect the scores of the eleventh grade class that utilized the Electronic Language Arts Portfolio. The results revealed that of a possible score of 19, of the fifteen students tested, the average score was 6.9 or an average score of 36%. This score reflected a strong need for improvement in the area of Language Arts Literacy.
Table 4 October 2004 Measuring Up Scores for Non-portfolio class (Class B)

Table 5 February 2005 Measuring Up Results for Portfolio Class (Class A)

A similar sample was collected for the eleventh grade class excluded from the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio project. As indicated by the graph, the average score for
the twenty-two students excluded from the project (Class B) was 7.6 or an average score of 40%. This score was slightly greater than that of (Class A) the portfolio class.

The average points earned on the February 2005 Measuring Up Test was 10.6 out of 19 possible points with an average score of 56% by the portfolio-based class.

Table 6 February 2005 Measuring Up Results for Non-portfolio class (Class B)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Points Received</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average points earned on the February 2005 Measuring Up Test was 11.3 out of 19 possible points with an average score of 60% by the non-portfolio-based class.

What Did It Mean?

The information collected clearly indicated that the use of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program had no demonstrative influence on the increase of proficiency levels of Creative Arts High School eleventh grade students. In reviewing the testing data from both the October 2004 Measuring Up Test and the February 2005 Measuring Up Test for classes A and B, one could see that Class B, or the non-portfolio class began the
year with the strongest average in Language Arts Literacy and ended the year with an even stronger average than class A, the class that utilized the Language Art Portfolio.
Conclusions and Their Implications

Based on the results of the data collected, one could have concluded that the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio had no apparent effect on the instructional process. One might even have inferred that the portfolio merely served as a tool of organization. The data clearly indicated that the class that was not exposed to the portfolio began with a stronger average in Language Arts Literacy and ended with the strongest average in Language Art Literacy. This seemed to challenge all arguments for the use of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio. The conclusions of the test results in February seemed to implicate that the Language Arts Portfolio had minimal if any influence on student proficiency levels in Language Arts Literacy as it pertained to the Measuring Up Test and would therefore have minimal impact on student results on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA.) However, one could not limit conclusions to the overall average score on the Measuring Up Test. One had to review the individualized growth of each student as it pertained to their reading and writing skills as well as those skills immeasurable by the Measuring Up diagnostic, which included organizational skills, communication skills, as well as computer skills. It is also important to measure the degree of growth in each class as it pertains to the Measuring Up Test.

The class that utilized the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program (Class A) demonstrated an average score of 36% in October as compared to a 20% increase in
February with an average score of 56%. Although not extremely high, the 20% increase in the average Language Arts Literacy score for the class that utilized the portfolio could not be overlooked. The class that did not utilize the portfolio experienced a similar 20% increase in the average score. However, it should be noted that the skills acquired by the portfolio group extend to other areas of instruction. Students in Class A demonstrated better organization than those in Class B, as their work could easily be located on disk/internet. This organization is also evident on the second and third marking period report cards, as the average report grade for students in Class A was the grade B as compared to the average grade in Class B was the grade of C+. This can only be explained in terms of student focus and organization.

The students that participated in the portfolio project became more organized, as their work was stored in an easily accessible location on the Internet. They also became stronger editors as editing and revision is a large component of the portfolio. Finally, they became more computer savvy, as the portfolio process required considerable computer usage.

How Did This Study Effect Your Leadership Growth per the Dictums of the ISLLC Standards?

The introduction of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio into the Creative Arts High School culture was reflected in ISLLC Standard 2: ISLLC Standard 2 was reflected in the use of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program as it was a tool to improve the instructional environment of the students. Standard 2 of the ISLLC Standards provided that an instructional leader promoted the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional programs that are conducive to student learning as well as staff professional growth. The ultimate goal of
the usage of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio was to enhance instruction and to influence the literacy scores of all of the students at the Creative Arts High School. The use of the program would eventually extend beyond the sample group. ISLLC Standard 2 provided that there was diversity in and multiple opportunities for learning experiences. Additionally, Standard 2 provided for the utilization of technology in the instructional process. In conjunction with exemplifying the components of Standard 1, the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program also demonstrates the components of Standard 1 as it relates to conveying a vision of high expectations, continuous improvement, and reflective practice. Also in accordance with this Standard 1, the project clarified my vision for a school that is student centered and incorporates the alternative best instructional practices.

How Did It Change the Organization?

Regardless of the findings, the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio Program was a welcomed addition to the culture of the Creative Arts High School as several teachers received training in its usage and have begun implementing use of the portfolio in their Writing classes. The eleventh grade SAT Prep students have began utilizing the program for organizational purposes in subject areas other than SAT Prep.

What Further Study is Needed?

The Language Arts Literacy Portfolio was new to the eleventh grade students of the Creative Arts High School. This certainly had an effect on its influence on test scores as students were adjusting to its usage. Any further study of the Language Arts Literacy Portfolio would begin with the tenth grade as to extend the time-line for usage of the portfolio and enhance all opportunities for effectiveness.
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APPENDIX A

TEACHER SURVEY
TEACHER SURVEY

This survey is being administered as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested.

For questions 1-3, check the correct response or fill in the blank.

1. Are you: (check the correct response) ____Male ____Female

2. Length of service at Creative Arts High School _________________

3. Have you ever used portfolios as an alternative instructional tool or form of student assessment. (check the correct response) ____Yes ____No

For questions 4-13, circle the appropriate response.

4. The Language Arts portfolio has a positive influence on student academic performance.
   a.) strongly agree b.) agree c.) neutral d.) disagree e.) strongly disagree

5. The Language Arts portfolio enhances student writing.
   a.) strongly agree b.) agree c.) neutral d.) disagree e.) strongly disagree

6. The Language Arts portfolio enhances the teacher's ability to assess student performance.
   a.) strongly agree b.) agree c.) neutral d.) disagree e.) strongly disagree

7. The Language Arts portfolio helps to improve student attitudes toward HSPA preparation.
   a.) a.) strongly agree b.) agree c.) neutral d.) disagree e.) strongly disagree

8. The Language Arts portfolio enhances student organization.
   a.) strongly agree b.) agree c.) neutral d.) disagree e.) strongly disagree

9. The Language Arts portfolio should be incorporated into the Language Arts Literacy curriculum.
   a.) strongly agree b.) agree c.) neutral d.) disagree e.) strongly disagree

10. The Language Arts portfolio enhances teacher organization.
    a.) strongly agree b.) agree c.) neutral d.) disagree e.) strongly disagree

Thank you for answering these questions.
APPENDIX B

STUDENT SAMPLE OF LANGUAGE ARTS PORTFOLIO
Apannya Dickerson

Language Arts Literacy Portfolio
Grade 11
Creative Arts High School
2004-2005
Hello, my name is Ayanna Dickerson and I am the author of this power point. This power point will contain all of my research papers, and essays on all of the novels that the junior class have covered. Hopefully you will enjoy it and learn something from. Thank you and set back relax and enjoy.
A Look At

Ayanna Dickerson

Biography

Ayanna Dickerson was born to Robert and Wanda Dickerson on January 14, 1988 in Camden New Jersey. Ayanna is the youngest of four children. She is an eleventh grade Instrumental Music major at the Creative Arts High School of Camden, New Jersey. Ayanna was inducted into the National Honor Society in 2004 and is currently serving as the Junior Class Parliamentarian. Ayanna has been playing the clarinet since the third grade, and is currently playing trombone. She plans to further her carrier by going to college.

Grade Level – 11  Major – Instrumental Music
SUBJECT MENU

Poetry

The Street

Sula

The Bluest Eye

Invisible Man
The Street (Part 2)

Have you ever read a novel and it made you feel as though you are a character in the novel? Well, that is how Anne Petry's novel The Street makes you feel. One may feel that the main idea of the novel was money. Every character in the novel was money hungry. It was like the saying "money is the root of all evil." However, Ann Petry's first novel "The Street" was very inspirational, you were able to learn excellent lessons, on the other hand it was very tragic.

The Street

a novel

Ann Petry

"Years ago Ann Petry brought the world to its feet with the artistry in this painfully honest and wrenching novel. Once again a standing ovation is due for this American classic."

—GLORIA NAYLOR

MARINER BOOKS
The novel was very inspirational. After reading the novel one may feel that there is nothing that will be able to hold them back. Lutie went through a lot of trials and tribulations in her life and still never gave up. Inspiration is defined as a person or thing that puts life or force into others and arouses them to do well. This is what Lutie did to me as I read the novel. It felt like Lutie had to go through all of this in the time that she lived in and still tries to get by then anything that you put your mind to is possible.

The Street (Part 3)

The novel was very inspirational. After reading the novel one may feel that there is nothing that will be able to hold them back. Lutie went through a lot of trials and tribulations in her life and still never gave up. Inspiration is defined as a person or thing that puts life or force into others and arouses them to do well. This is what Lutie did to me as I read the novel. It felt like Lutie had to go through all of this in the time that she lived in and still tries to get by then anything that you put your mind to is possible.
This could have helped anyone who was going through the same problem. For an example, I learned that if something happens that is wrong you should tell someone immediately. You should never let it get out of hand. This is what Lutie did wrong and changed her hold life. Nonetheless, this story is very tragic. One may fell that it is also heart warming. To see one person go through all Lutie went through and try to put your self in her shoes then you can understand better. At one point it was like Lutie had all her basically under control, and then one thing happened and her hole life feel apart. The story really gets under the readers skin. This was a very triumph story.

"Years ago Ann Petry brought the world to its feet with the artistry in this painfully honest and wrenching novel. Once again a standing ovation is due for this American classic."

—GLORIA NAYLOR
The Street (Part 5)

After evaluating the novel I came to the conclusion that it is an excellent novel. Although I would like for it to have ended better it was still good. I would have been satisfied with the novel if Ann Petry would have one good character at the end. Instead all the characters failed. On the other hand, Ann made it seem like all the characters seemed very realistic. It also have very good information for an example when Mrs. Pizzini quoted “it’s best that the man do the work when the babies are young. Not good for the woman to work when she is young. Not good for the man.” This was a very good quote.
The Bluest Eye (Part 5)

As I conclude, I can honestly say from the bottom of my heart that there is no way we can put this man behind bars. However, I am not saying keep him on the streets, but as I stated before he belongs in an a mental institution. If every one of you in this jury can look deep inside your heart, I know you can find some forgiveness and sympathy for this mean. After all, he has a very disturbing pass, he suffers from a mental disorder, and his wife doesn’t make his condition any better. Just take a moment and look back on your life there is something you may have done and you were going to be in trouble for it, but someone went deep inside their heart and gave you a second chance. That is all I am asking of you today, and think about the saying he is a God of second chances. My client is trying his best to change he attends church service every Sunday, he is currently visiting a Psychiatrist, and he is on the road to being healed. Just think what would, Supreme being, do? Thank you for your time.
Corretta Scott King quoted novel as “A powerful, uncompromising work of social criticism. To this day, few works of fiction have so clearly illuminated the devastating impact of racial injustice.” To conclude one can see that the novel was very inspirational, likewise you learned very valuable lessons, yet it was tragic. I really enjoyed the novel, and will read it over. When I first looked at the book I figured all another corny novel, but that was not the issue, it was excellent. I recommend this novel to any highschool student who is in the right mind set.
I feel that this was a very interesting novel. The Street by Anne Petrey was a very good novel. One was able to relate to this novel as I read it and that made the research paper even more interesting.
My name is Sula and some may know me and others
may not. A lot of folks think I'm crazy, but I'm not crazy
just full of resentment, and hatred. I mean can you blame
me? In 1923 I set and watched my mother Hannah burn to
death, and I was hoping she went right to hell. I sure did I
can care less about that stupid ho. Some may wonder why I
did that, and a couple of years ago I couldn't tell you why, but
know that I am older I can tell you exactly why I let her dumb
ass burn. I watched her because every sense I was a little girl
she never stopped once to tell me she loved me or even say I
was pretty. Even though I knew I was ugly I would have felt
better if she lied. Do you know what was worse?

November 15, 2004
I think she loved all them men that she had sex with more than she loved me. Due to her doing this to me I yarnd for attention. Like that time them three little stupid crackers kept giving me trouble I cut my damn fingers so they could leave me the hell alone. Please don't think for one minute I didn't know what I was doing. I let that little boy drown because I wanted to I didn't care about him cause he didn't care about me. So as you can see I did all this on purpose. I wanted people to think I was crazy so I could get attention, and everyone thought I was crazy. So call me crazy if you want I really can care less, but do me a favor take a step in my shoe and see how crazy you would be. As for the lady I called mom I hope you are burning in hell for doing this to me. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ..........

Sula Continued
February 8, 2005

The Bluest Eye

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury I will prove to you without a shadow of a doubt that Charlie Breedlove is not guilty of raping his ten-year-old daughter Pecola Breedlove. As a licensed attorney at law I must say that this man does not belong incarcerated, however he may belong in a mental institution. It is impossible to blame someone for a mental condition they have. I understand that majority of people may feel that his actions were unjust and harmful to his whole environment. Nevertheless, I will not put up with the fact of Charlie being put behind bars, but he needs help. I say this because of his past, he suffers from Acute Stress Disorder, and Pauline contributions to his actions. Charlie Breedlove had to suffer all of his life, why help this cycle to continue?
The Bluest Eye (Part 2)

I will like to take everyone back into the life of Charlie Breedlove. When Charlie was only four days old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and a newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by the railroad as if he were a doll baby. Only if it was not for Charlie's great-aunt Jimmy who rescued him, he more than likely wouldn't be on trial today. Cholly never had the pleasure of meeting his mother as most of us have, and to add on when he went to meet his father, he was brushed off as if he were a fly. His aunt raised him majority of his life until her death. He had to fend for himself. The night of his aunts' funeral he was confronted with a very uncomfortable situation, what could be the reason why he is on trial today. He was forced by two Caucasian police officers to have intercourse with a very good friend of his. These Caucasian men oppressed him, and ordered him to have sex with the girl by saying things such as, "Get on wit it, nigger, make it good." That was not the end they continued to say "come on coon, faster, you isn't doing nothing for her." Now tell me how would you feel if someone in this world continued to say these things?
The Bluest Eye (Part 3)

After examining Charlie fully a famous psychiatrist, which we all know as Dr. Phil has diagnosed Charlie with Acute Stress Disorder. This occurs when a person experienced, witnessed, or was comforted with an event or events that involved actually of threatened, death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others. This takes us back to Charlie childhood and the situation with the Caucasian police officers. When they forced him to have sex with the young lady and oppressed him that was a threat to the physical integrity of Charlie. So as a result, I believe without a shadow of a doubt that his disorder is what led him to raping Pecola. At this time I will help everyone to better understand the rape scene. It was on a Saturday afternoon Charlie staggered into the house drunk and he noticed Pecola in the kitchen washing dishes. When Charlie saw her, he quoted “I could not tell what I saw nor felt, although he knew he was uncomfortable and not too long after that turned into pleasure and aroused him.” He continued to say “I felt guilty, pity, then love.”
He then commenced to have sexual intercourse with her. He also said "after raping her my hatred mixed with tenderness and I walked away and covered her." This is not something that a normal rapist would do. This is an act of a person with psychological problems. So, there is no way we can put him behind bars he needs to be monitored at all times.

Furthermore, I believe that Pauline contributes to his actions. If it were up to me, she would be on trial right now not my client. She is a child abuser as well as neglect her children. On the contrary, she continues to add onto my clients problems by making him feel that love and lust is related to fighting and arguing. For instance, after every fight they encounter they commence to have intercourse afterwards. So, Charlie not knowing no better feels that this is the right thing to do and he continues the cycle.
Many educators and administrators feel that music restrains children's ability acquire knowledge. However, as an adolescent I must disagree. Music is very important to many students. Music is an expression of one's emotions, moods, and individuality. Music can be viewed as entertainment for some, but like life for others.

Many entertainers express their emotions through their songs. For instance, Jadakiss a popular rap artist has a song entitled "Why." In his song he is expressing how he feels about the world's problems. This song is very influential because it discusses education, the previous election, the fades and trends of today's society, and much more. A wise man once quoted "music is a universal language."
Popular Music (continue)

Due to music’s ability to help one express ideas, one can be transformed into a certain mood. Not all music brings students to an uproar. Many songs can help soothe a person and transform one into a more comfortable mood. For an example, when I am not feeling well, I listen to music, and many times it is like a pain reliever to my body. So, as you can see music can set a mood and change ones actions at the same time.

As a result of expressing ones emotions and moods one is able to express their individuality. Individuality is defined as a person’s personality, and the way act or reacts to things. So, what can be a better way for one to express them self that through music? Many artists demonstrate their individuality through their songs. Music also helps you understand some ones demeanor.
In conclusion, as I have demonstrated, I am against the banning of popular music by schools during the academic day. No one person should allow the music they listen to shape him or her. So, educators and administrators can better understand a person's demeanor through their reaction to music. Music is a reaction of one's emotions, moods, and individuality. So, as you can see there is no way we can blame popular music for the destruction and desensitizing of today's youth. However, we can blame the parents!
Meet My Parents

These are my parents Robert and Wanda Dickerson. They mean so much to me.
Meet My Siblings

This is my Sister and Brothers. Nasir, Jamal, and Atiya.
Family is very important that is why I have them on my page.
My Hobbies

This is my praise dance group that I have been dancing with for a very long time. We were blessed to be the 2004 McDonalds Gospel Fest Winners, and is going back this year to perform.
My Hobbies (continue)
This is my Karate School that I have been in all my life.
My Hobbies (continue)

This is my African Dance Group. I love to African Dance because it makes people happy, and show me something of my culture.
Thank You

This was a very interesting presentation to do. I hope everyone enjoyed it and was inspires by it. Thank you for you time

Sincerely,
Ayanna Dickerson
Measuring Up

to the

New Jersey
Core Curriculum
Content Standards

Test 1

Language Arts Literacy

HSPA
The following language arts literary practice test contains different types of text and different activities. In the first part of the test, you will look at a picture and then complete a writing task. In this activity, you have an opportunity to demonstrate how well you can organize and express your ideas in written text. You have received a Writer's Checklist of important points to remember as you write. Educators who read your writing will consider these important points when they read and score your writing.

You will have 30 minutes to complete the writing task. Take a few minutes to think about the task and to plan what you want to say before you begin to write. You may use the prewriting/planning space to plan your text, but your prewriting will not be scored. Only your writing on pages 5–6 will be scored. Do your best to make your writing clear and well organized. Keep your purpose in mind as you write and use your checklist.

You may either print or write your final copy. You may not use a dictionary or any other reference materials during the test. However, you may use the Writer's Checklist. If you finish before the time is called, review what you have written using the Writer's Checklist to read critically and improve what you have written. Then, close your test booklet and wait quietly until you receive further instructions.
WRITING TASK A

An ancient proverb says, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Regardless of the artist's original intent, what we see in the picture can be very different from what others see. What words would you use to describe what is happening in this picture? Use your imagination and experience to speculate what the story is about or to describe what is happening.
NEW JERSEY HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT
Writer’s Checklist

Important Points to Remember as You Write and Critically Read to Revise/Edit Your Writing

CONTENT/ORGANIZATION

1. Focus on your purpose for writing and your audience.
2. Develop a clear topic or central idea.
3. Support your ideas with details, explanations, and examples.
4. Put your ideas in the order that best communicates what you are trying to say.

SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

5. Use clear and varied sentences.

USAGE

6. Use words correctly.
7. Use varied and vivid vocabulary.

MECHANICS

8. Capitalize, spell, and punctuate correctly.
9. Write neatly.
When you finish your planning, turn to the next page.
THE LINES BELOW FOR THE PICTURE PROMPT.