5-19-2003

The effects of writing process instruction on student compositions

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THE EFFECTS OF WRITING PROCESS INSTRUCTION ON STUDENT COMPOSITIONS

by
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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May, 2003

Approved by _____
Dr. Urban

Date Approved May 19, 2003

ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECTS OF WRITING PROCESS INSTRUCTION
ON STUDENT COMPOSITIONS
2002-2003
Dr. Stanley Urban
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

Writing instruction has undergone many changes throughout the years. In the 1970's, instruction involved repetitive grammar drills. During the 1980's, instruction moved completely away from these drills and instead focused on creative writing. Currently, wiring instruction seems to incorporate both philosophies, often times, through implementation of the writing process.

This study was designed to accomplish three purposes: first to clearly delineate and describe each stage of the process, second, to provide procedural suggestions for its implementation, and third, to document the effectiveness of such an approach on student writing.

The subjects of this study were 42 third and fourth grade students. The participating teachers were given training in the writing process and were provided with materials to aid in the implementation of each stage. Instruction was then provided on a daily basis and included direct instruction, scaffolded application, and independent writing.

The effectiveness of this program was documented through analysis of student attitude surveys and teacher observation checklists. In addition, student performance was evaluated through the use of the *New Jersey Holistic Scoring Rubric.* Students were given both pre and post assessments. All assessments indicated that student performance improved through the use of writing process instruction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis project would not have been possible without the help of certain individuals. First, I would like to thank Dr. Stanley Urban who provided the help and guidance necessary to complete the undertaking of this project. Such a project can easily become overwhelming at times; however, his knowledge and assistance always kept things in perspective. I would also like to offer a heart felt thank you to the teachers at Van Zant School who volunteered their time and energy to be a part of this study. Without them, this project truly would not have been possible. I would like to thank my parents, Ronald and Patricia Kane, who, from a young age, have instilled in me a love of education and a drive to succeed. And, finally, I would like to sincerely thank my husband, Brian, who offered not only his endless support and encouragement, but also his expertise and skills in computer programming. He showed infinite patience as I worked to finish this project and to earn my Master's Degree.

Thank you!

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

Education has traditionally focused on the "three 'r's" in instructing children: reading, writing, and arithmetic. While these subject areas have always been and continue to be emphasized in schools, they are currently not being taught, practiced, or assessed in the ways that they once were. There have been major shifts in the paradigms in each of these academic domains, with each shift bringing about more challenging expectations for both students and teachers. The current literature documents new strategies for instruction, proposes new activities for practice, and devises new, comprehensive methods for assessment. While new research is continually being published in all three of these subjects, writing, in particular, has become increasingly prominent in recent years: Writing.

During the last decade, educational personnel at both the state and district levels have been working to develop tools to comprehensively assess student writing. This is evidenced by such tests as the *Elementary School Proficiency Assessment,* the statewide test for fourth grade students in New Jersey. No longer are students being asked to simply edit preprinted sentences. They are now being required to provide writing samples that are cohesive, unified, and well written.

Because of this focus on expressive writing, many schools are designing and adopting curricula that have a greater emphasis in this area. Many are implementing school wide goals and assessments to improve students' performance in writing.

Teachers are being encouraged, and sometimes mandated, to teach writing in their classrooms. But, what exactly does it mean to teach writing? Does it involve students' creativity or is it teacher directed? Is it simply the memorization of grammar and spelling rules? Do the children write freely or are they taught specific skills? What are they supposed to write about?

When these questions are posed to teachers, a wide range of responses is provided. In fact, the questions that teachers, themselves, have about writing instruction are numerous, and rightfully so. When examining all aspects of the writing process, there is no simple, brief answer. Often times, teachers are not exactly sure what to teach when they are told to teach "writing." A thorough investigation is needed to determine all the components of this important skill.

A DEFINITION OF WRITING

Writing is a complex process that involves a repertoire of skills. It requires higher-level cognitive skills such as creativity, organization, sequencing, and word usage, as well as lower mechanical skills such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (Rooney, n.d.). Many times, teachers feel that in order to effectively incorporate writing into the classroom, their instruction has to revolve around either creative writing *or* the rules of basic grammar. Writing is actually a combination of the two sets of skills, which is why it is so complex. Writing requires the juggling and mastery of all such skills and components in order to form a cohesive piece of work (Bradley, et al. 2001).

This multi-dimensional process can best be conceptualized as a problem solving process. Students attempt to produce visible, legible, and understandable language that clearly and creatively reflects either their knowledge on a topic or their thoughts and feelings on a specific matter (Berninger & Hooper, 1993). As problems arise, students are required to use many different skills in order to be successful. Therefore writing instruction is not grammar *or* creative writing. It is a combination of both the mechanical

skills such as spelling and punctuation, and the written language skills such as organization and creativity. Both must be interwoven into the daily instruction and practice as children work on their writing pieces. Writing instruction is the teaching of complete sentences one day and similes and metaphors the next. Just as professional authors incorporate both grammatically correct writing and figuratively descriptive writing into their novels and stories, so must students be taught this balance of skills.

"The road traveled in becoming a...writer is lifelong" (Barr & Johnson, 1997, p. 4). Teachers have the serious responsibility of providing the roadmaps and directions to this road so that students can reach their destinations successfully.

THEORY

Writing instruction has been studied and examined since the 1950s. However, it has only been in the past two decades that, "the importance and value of writing have been acknowledged, and writing has achieved an established place in our curriculum" (Johnson & Barr, 1997, p. 225). Students today are truly writing and composing original, written pieces as opposed to simply completing the contrived, rote, grammar exercises that once dominated "writing" instruction years ago.

Once expressive writing began to establish such a prominent place in school districts' curricula around the nation, educators began searching for the most effective way to teach students how to write. The search seemed to be fulfilled when the writing process was discovered. This process has students compose written pieces such as stories, articles, and poetry. To develop these written pieces, students use the writing process and take part in the five essential steps of composition: brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Proponents of the writing process proclaim that it is the most effective way to help students become proficient writers. It, "has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy for increasing the overall quality of students' written expression" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 154).

The premise that instruction in the writing process will improve student writing has been researched by authors such as Donald Graves, Anne Hass Dyson, Janet Emig, and Lucy Caulkins (Barr & Johnson, 1997). These authors have helped to mold and shape the current views and practices of the writing process in the elementary classroom. They are crusaders for the curricular components that support the writing process; components such as sustained daily writing time, strategy instruction, author choice, risk taking, and sharing of work. Because of their contributions, children of all ages, in many of today's schools, are writing drafts, conferring with others for feedback, revising, and publishing. As students are given these opportunities to think and experiment with their own ideas, their writing develops (Barr & Johnson, 1997). The theory underlying the writing process approach is simply this: allowing students to work though writing assignments, while providing them with instruction in each stage, fosters growth and development in children as writers.

This theory applies, not only to regular education students, but for those with special needs as well. Researchers such as Graham and MacArthur have documented the positive effects of a process writing approach for students both in regular and special education (Berninger & Hooper, 1993). They have found that this approach, when coupled with strategy instruction, can be productive with all students (Berninger & Hooper, 1993). Because heterogeneous classrooms are common in today's schools, teachers need such a process that will reach all of their students. "All children can and need the opportunity to write: to express themselves, to demonstrate their learning, to communicate with others" (Barr & Johnson, 1997, p. 225). The writing process allows them to do this.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The educational research in writing is relatively new when compared to research in other academic domains. Because of this, there is not the wealth of information

available on this subject there is in other areas. This creates the need for such a study to be completed.

This study will help teachers extend their knowledge of the writing process. With the increased emphasis on writing instruction in many districts, teachers are often expected to teach a language arts curriculum revolving around the writing process. However, districts often do not provide appropriate training in how to teach these skills. There is not always adequate time and/or resources to instruct teachers in these methods.

This can be problematic for both new and veteran teachers. Many new teachers enter the profession having no experience in teaching writing. There are still many collegiate teacher preparation programs that do not yet incorporate such instruction into the coursework. For many experienced teachers, teaching writing in this way is something completely new and represents a complex process that is entirely different from their experience with instruction in the past.

By taking part in this study, teachers will know the exact steps to follow as they work through the writing process. A brief, but thorough, explanation of each stage will be provided so that teachers have the conceptual knowledge needed to understand the process. Procedural knowledge, which is equally important in the classroom, will also be presented. Many times, books and articles on this subject present the issue from a purely research based perspective, failing to take into account present day classroom realities. Teachers sometimes find this daunting and unrealistic. The writing information in this study will be presented and explained using previous research findings and will also be accompanied by clear, procedural suggestions.

This study is also needed to analyze the specific effects that the entire writing process has on student work. Much current research states that the writing process improves writing. However, often times, this research examines only one stage of the process and its effect on writing, rather than the process as a whole. In addition, many times, a school wide goal is simply to "improve writing." However, the specific areas in

which progress is expected to be made are not as closely examined, thereby making the goal vague and difficult to measure. By completing this study, teachers will observe specific areas of improvement after students participate in the five stages of the writing process. It will highlight areas that the process most affects, as well as areas that may still need further investigation.

In conclusion, the need for this study is great. It will delineate and clearly describe each stage of the writing process, provide procedural suggestions for its implementation, and explicitly pinpoint the skills that are improved upon and the skills that will need continued work after such implementation.

VALUE OF THE STUDY

While writing instruction has progressed from the over simplification of basic grammar and spelling lessons, student writing still is in need of improvement. A study that was completed as part of the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress found disheartening results in regards to student writing performance. The study examined a nationally representative sample of more than 3,600 fourth and eighth graders. It found that only 1% of the fourth grade stories were considered "developed." The majority of narrative papers were "underdeveloped" as scored on a rubric scale of one to six (Teacher Magazine, 1995). Gary Phillips, the associate commissioner at the National Center for Education Statistics, stated that, "...writing is not very good in the nation...Even the best is mediocre" (Teacher Magazine, 1995, p. 12). However, while this study reported poor results for student writing in the nation, it did find one positive component. It found that students using process-writing strategies wrote better than those that did not use this approach (Teacher Magazine, 1995).

It is hoped that by explaining the process and pinpointing key skills from the scoring rubric that student writing will improve. There will also be a student writing survey, which will be completed before and after implementing the writing process

instruction. It is hoped that by examining student attitudes towards writing, teachers can work towards making them more positive, thereby increasing performance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be answered:

Research Question 1: What effects does systematically teaching the steps of the writing process have on students' written compositions?

Research Question 2: What effects does systematically teaching the steps of the writing process have on students' views and perceptions of writing?

Research Question 3: What effects does systematically teaching the steps of the writing process have on student writing behavior?

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this research, the following operational definitions will be used:

Elementary State Proficiency Assessment (ESPA): The fourth grade state test that every public school student in New Jersey must take during the spring of his/her fourth grade year. (Students with exceptional needs may receive accommodations.) Areas tested are mathematics and language arts literacy. Students are assessed as either partially proficient, proficient, or advanced proficient in each area.

Writing Workshop: The instructional time when the writing process is taught and practiced.

Writing Rubric: A criterion that guides the teacher and student to assess and evaluate a written piece (Barr & Johnson, 1997).

Writing Attitudes Survey: A questionnaire for students to complete regarding their perceptions of various dimensions of their writing.

Picture Writing Prompt (Picture Prompt): The type of writing assessment that will be used as a pre and a post assessment. Students will be presented with a picture and asked to write a story about the picture.

Pull Out Replacement: The fourth grade special education students in this study are instructed in the resource center for reading, writing, and math. This is a separate setting than their regular education classroom.

In-Class Support: The third grade special education students in this study receive all of their instruction in the regular education classroom with instructional support provided by the special education teacher in the classroom.

Pre Assessment: The writing assessment which participants completed in October of 2002 before any instruction in the writing process had been provided; also referred to as the "Pilot Study."

Post Assessment: The writing assessment which participants completed in February/March of 2003 after instruction in the writing process had been provided.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations that need to be taken into account when generalizing the results of this study:

1. The assessment tools are informal measurements and are not standardized writing assessments.

2. Subjects have had varying degrees of experience with writing, prior to this study.

3. The sample size is limited to 42 subjects across third and fourth grades.

4. The sample represents a convenience group that was accessible to this researcher and does not represent a random sample.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

"The more a man writes, the more he can write."

This quote by 19th century writer, William Hazlitt, exemplifies the importance of daily writing instruction in today's classrooms (Graham & Harris, 1997). With this simple statement, Hazlitt emphasizes the fact that in order to become a talented writer, one must practice the skill as much as possible. "Although this homily oversimplifies the process of teaching writing, it emphasizes that children don't progress as writers unless they are given the opportunities to apply and develop their craft" (Graham & Harris, 1997, p. 416). The teaching of this "craft" and the time devoted to it in classrooms has truly evolved over the years.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

In looking back over the past four decades, one can see the changing theories that have driven writing education. The focus of writing instruction has shifted from the product (e.g. its capitalization, punctuation, grammar, thematic content, discourse structure) to the function of text and the processes that generate that text (Berninger & Hooper, 1993). Now, instead of solely focusing on the finished piece, students are being encouraged to focus on all of the stages they participate in as they write.

Studies of writing began in the late 1950s when the National Council of Teachers of English commissioned a study to find out what was known about the teaching of composition. The official title of the report, which was published in 1963, was *Research in Written Composition*, but it is better known as the *Braddock Report* (Smith, 2000). The study found that the understanding of writing instruction was rudimentary; that teachers knew little about how to teach students to compose and write well (Houlette,

1998). The report also found that instruction was mainly prescriptive and product-centered; focusing around correct usage and mechanics and emphasizing the traditional modes of discourse. After studying writing instruction in classrooms, the researchers concluded that, "Some (writing) terms are being defined usefully, a number of other procedures are being refined, but the field as a whole is laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations." (Smith, 2000, p. 1). As a result, the study called for further research to be completed in the area (Houlette, 1998).

Donald Graves's Ford Foundation study (1976) also revealed results that cast a doubt on the writing instruction taking place in schools. The study found that schools were, in reality, spending little time teaching children to compose; that the teaching of writing was virtually being ignored (Barr & Johnson, 1997).

Studies such as these prompted a new philosophy to take hold in writing instruction during the next two decades. "Between the mid 1960's and the late 1970's, 'creative writing' appeared as a curricular issue (in elementary schools) because many students clearly were not being exposed to composition..." (Poindexter & Oliver, 1998/1999, p. 420). Educational literature began to support this creative writing that allowed students to express their thoughts and ideas through stories and compositions. In addition, process rather than product began to be emphasized (Smith, 2000).

In the 1970s and the 1980s, this trend continued and the research began presenting process writing as a multifaceted approach that included prewriting activities (e.g. setting goals, brainstorming, organization plans) and multiple drafts. It recommended teaching students strategies for reviewing, editing, and revising and emphasized the importance of feedback from peers (e.g. author's chair) and the teacher (e.g. teacher conferencing). Teacher modeling was also a key component in the writing process (Berninger & Hooper, 1993).

Yet, while this new writing technique of emphasizing process was dominating professional literature, it was not being widely implemented in the classrooms.

Traditional, product centered writing was still being emphasized. In the mid 1980s, a researcher named Arthur Applebee began studying classroom writing instruction. He found that the process approach was not widely being used in schools and that, when it was, it was often misconstrued and not helping students' writing abilities. Often, activities included in process writing became separated from the purposes they were originally supposed to serve, preventing students from developing a generalized concept of the writing process (Smith, 2000).

After completing his study, Applebee came to certain conclusions about his observations. He believed that the reason why the process approach was not being effectively implemented had to do with teacher knowledge. As in other academic fields, most teachers and school districts were basing their instruction in writing on what they felt experts in the subject did. They then taught students to follow these examples. The problem arose with the teachers' conceptions of what professional writers did. They were misunderstanding how actual writers worked, and, therefore, were ineffectively teaching the writing process. Applebee felt that educators needed to develop more adequate conceptualizations of professional writers' processes and actions in order to effectively teach writing (Smith, 2000). To help children grasp these actions of professional writers, an instructional technique called "scaffolding" was recommended. This technique gained recognition as a way to help students learn new things through modeling and then through a gradual release to independent work (Smith, 2000).

As the years went on and educators found themselves moving through the 1980s and into the 1990s, writing instruction again underwent a paradigm shift as a result of this research from the previous years. The focus remained on the writing process; however, teacher intervention was becoming more prominent. As schools were visited during the 1980s and 1990s, this shift in the teaching of writing was noticed. First and foremost, it was noted that more structured, instructional time was being devoted to writing (Barr & Johnson, 1997). Children were still being given sustained writing time; however, it was

now coupled with strategy instruction from the teacher.

Presently, writing instruction seems to have come full circle. It seems to have moved through three major phases. The first phase of writing instruction was the product-oriented approach, which emphasized the strict, recitation of grammar rules and their uses. Instruction then moved to the second phase when the writing process was first introduced and children took part in free times of creative writing, completely moving away from instruction in grammar and basic skills. Now, finally, current instruction seems to be a combination of the first two phases, teaching the writing process with lessons in both compositional techniques and writing mechanics. The writing process is beginning to dominate instruction in classrooms and is now viewed as a way of learning and developing that is a disciplined, creative activity" (Smith, 2000).

THE WRITING PROCESS

Now that research has supported this instructional approach to teaching writing, it would seem imperative to begin using it in the classroom as soon as possible. However, the writing process is a complex, multi-step instructional method that can sometimes be overwhelming to both students and teachers if not presented in a systematic way. The components of the process must be understood clearly before it is implemented in the classroom.

The writing process involves five main steps in producing a written piece: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Students start the process by gathering ideas in the prewriting phase. As they finish with this idea generation, they move on to the drafting phase where they write the first edition of the story. They then move to the revision and editing phases, reworking their pieces so that they are more polished. The final phase is publishing where the students write their finished product. Classes involved in the writing process usually spend several days on each stage. The writing process stresses student ownership because each student is working on his

individual piece as he is taken through each phase of the writing process. It emphasizes decision making, as well, as students work on their own stories and develop their writing through specific skill based activities presented at each stage (Marchisan, 2001).

In addition to following these steps, proponents of the writing process emphasize the critical factor of time in writing. As exemplified by William Hazlitt, in order for students to be able to practice these skills and apply them to their written pieces, they must be provided with daily, sustained periods of time to work independently. Recommendations for time periods range from 30 to 90 minutes depending on the age and ability level of the class. "It is difficult to imagine that students will develop the knowledge, skill, will, and self regulation underlying effective writing if they are not encouraged to write frequently and for extended periods of time" (Graham & Harris, 1997, p. 416). In fact, if adequate time is not provided, not only do writing skills remain undeveloped, but an actual apprehension of writing does develop within students (Schweiker-Marra, & Marra, 2000).

During these sustained periods, teachers begin by instructing students in a particular skill. The targeted skill typically revolves around the phase of the writing process which the students are working on. For example, if the class is in the prewriting phase, a typical lesson may be on how to complete a prewriting organizer. The teacher would demonstrate how to complete it, with the help of the students. After the model is completed and explained, students are given time to complete their own organizer. During this time the teacher can monitor student work, providing feedback as needed. Peers can also meet to provide feedback.

Numerous researchers and authors have studied children working independently during these sustained periods of time in classrooms around the country. They have watched and observed as students moved through the steps of the writing process. They have provided descriptions of what occurs during each phase and the effects each step has on student achievement in writing, as well as their attitudes towards writing. A

description of each phase and its supportive research follows in the following sections. In addition, presentation and management strategies are also examined.

STAGE 1 OF THE WRITING PROCESS: PREWRITING

The prewriting stage is the first step that a writer takes in developing a story. It, "is a writer's warm-up allowing the writer to be prepared to write" (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000, p. 100). This is the time when the author brainstorms his ideas and organizes his thoughts for his future story. It involves two main tasks: choosing a topic and generating ideas for that topic.

The first task is to decide on the topic of the writing piece. To help students do this, teachers need to provide direct, explicit instruction on how to think of a topic for a story. "Children learn through imitation. (Therefore), (a)n effective way to help students determine the purpose, audience, and tone of their writing is through demonstration" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 156).

The teacher begins the instruction by performing a 'think aloud' during which he vocalizes his thoughts as he brainstorms possible ideas for a story topic. He then again verbalizes his thoughts as he narrows his possible topic choices to one so that students can witness the processes of a competent writer. Discussion after the think aloud is also important to help students internalize the process for themselves (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000). After group discussion, students can then create their own lists of possible topics. They can then follow the teacher's example in how to choose the one topic to write about.

The next task is idea generation. Here, the writer wants to think of as many ideas as possible to help develop the topic. The author is not worried about things such as spelling, punctuation, or writing flow at this point. It is merely a time to record ideas and plan how these ideas will unfold in the actual draft.

Once students begin brainstorming, the question arises about how they record

these free flowing ideas. Just as adult writers use an outline to guide their writing, students should also use a type of organizational tool to help them effectively record their brainstorming ideas. This organizational tool can be in the form of a basic outline, a writing web, or a simple list of ideas. Writers, particularly those that are reluctant, may feel more confident in their abilities if they are given such templates from which to write. In addition, "Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of writing models used to enhance children's writing when composing poetry, stories, and reports with students with and without disabilities" (Staal, 2001, p. 243). Writing organizers help students to focus by providing the framework for important story elements such as character, setting, and plot.

While having these organizational tools available to students is of the utmost importance for writing success, it is not the sole component. These tools must be coupled with effective modeling and instruction.

The teacher must first explain the chosen organizer and all of its elements. The teacher can then model how he completes an organizer by thinking aloud as he brainstorms ideas and places them on the organizer. As students feel comfortable observing the teacher, they can help by collaboratively offering ideas to help complete the organizer (Marchisan, 2001). A discussion of the model follows. The teacher then asks the students to free write about the model that they have observed and taken part in creating. This helps to enhance their understanding of it (Staal, 2001). "After this prewriting procedure has been demonstrated, the teacher can guide students to brainstorm and develop their own story plans" (Marchisan, 2001, p.156).

In addition to providing students with writing organizers, a method known as Self Regulated Strategy Development has also been proven to be very effective to help students during this stage (Graham, Harris, Mason, & Saddler, 2002). This strategy development involves teaching students a mnemonic to remind them of what they have to do. One such mnemonic is SPACE. Each letter stands for an important story component.

The "S" stands for the setting, which includes the place, time, and characters. The "P" stands for the purpose of the story or what the main character is striving to achieve. The "A" stands for the action of the story, and the "C" stands for the conclusion or the results of the action. Finally, the "E" stands for the characters' emotions (Graham et al., 2002). In order for students to effectively use this story planning technique, they must have the strategy explained, modeled, and supported. They then must memorize the mnemonic and practice it independently (Graham et al., 2002). This type of Self Regulated Strategy Development has been, "empirically validated in over 20 studies implemented in small groups and whole classrooms..." and can be used in combination with a writing organizer to help plan story development (Graham et al., 2002, p. 111).

The effects of such prewriting instructional strategies are promising. In one study completed by Karen E. Schweiker-Marra and William T. Marra (2000), at risk elementary students were exposed to a writing program, which utilized prewriting activities. Direct instruction focused on such concepts as choosing a topic, considering a purpose, identifying the audience, and gathering and organizing ideas. Typically, the teacher and children participated in a 30 minute learning activity, followed by independent writing. The quantitative results from the study showed a significant improvement in the students' written expression (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000).

In addition, the children's attitudes towards writing improved as well. One student that participated in the study shared, "I used to hate to have a writing assignment, because I had no idea how to get started. Now, in class we talk about it with partners or use bubble mapping. When I get lost on what to write next, I just go back to my map and work on the next bubble" (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000, p. 106). Another student shared his positive experiences with the prewriting strategies. "I am learning how to use those skills my teacher taught us on organizing my writing so that it makes sense and is easy to understand" (Schweiker-Marra &Marra, 2000, p. 107).

Most studies to date, such as this one, relate successes with prewriting activities.

In fact, "Many educators consider the most crucial of these (writing process) stages to be the prewriting stage" (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000, p.99-100). After all, it lays the foundation for all that is to come.

STAGE 2 OF THE WRITING PROCESS: DRAFTING

The second stage of the process is the actual writing or drafting of the story. During this time, the writer uses the organizer to help him compose. Again, the author is not concerned with proper spelling and punctuation at this point in time. On the contrary, "When writing a first draft, the student should focus on clear and sequential expression of content without regard to the mechanical aspects of writing. If the student is overly concerned about spelling, grammar, and punctuation at the writing stage, his or her writing fluency may be inhibited" (Marchisan, 2001, p.157). The student needs to be completely focused on creating his written piece, using the ideas he had conceived of in the prewriting stage. Often, once the pressure of writing a "perfect paper" is lifted, students will be more willing to express their ideas through writing.

In applying this step of the writing process to classroom instruction, the teacher, again, must first model how to draft a story before expecting students to write on their own. An important component that the teacher must explicitly demonstrate is using the organizer to draft the story. Many times, children make an organizer, but then, completely disregard it when drafting their stories. In demonstrating this skill, the teacher needs to have the organizer visible as he writes, perhaps even checking off elements from the organizer as he incorporates them into his story. Again, as the teacher is composing his draft, he needs to vocalize his thoughts so that students know what they should be thinking about as they write. Teachers can tell the story as they write, talking to themselves as they think of what they will say and write next. After the teacher finishes the demonstration, a discussion is held before having the students turn to their stories. This discussion helps the students to internalize the processes they

witnessed and also provides a deeper understanding of what they are supposed to be doing.

When it is time for the students to compose their stories, certain things can be done to help the children with their writing. First of all, "To assist students in the clear expression of their ideas the teacher may want to provide students with various types of word banks" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 157). Verb and adjective word banks may help students to compose more vivid stories. It may also help to prevent "writer's block." Also, encouraging the students to skip lines in their rough drafts will help to make the writing easier to read and revise at a later point. In addition, giving students ample time over several days or weeks to work on a particular piece is also important. They need to see the value of reworking the same piece over time in order to produce their best work.

One such student who was taken through the writing process in this way and allowed to draft freely shared the following thoughts: "Mr. ____ (name omitted for confidentiality) taught us this thing called free writing where we write down everything in our heads about the topic without worrying about grammar or spelling. You won't believe all the ideas I have in my head about something. That gives me lots of things to put in my writing piece" (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000, p. 106).

Once this stage is completed, the author will have a rough draft of his story; a draft from which he will be able to work and revise as he continues through the process.

STAGE 3 OF THE WRITING PROCESS: REVISING

The third stage of the writing process is revision. During this phase, the author examines his rough draft and makes changes to improve upon his original ideas. Students in this stage, "...evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the form and content of their writing piece and make changes based on these judgments" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 158). Changes may come in the form of substituting more vivid word choices, rearranging

sentence order, adding description and elaboration, or changing an opening or a closing to the story. "It is a cognitive problem-solving process...(and)... involves... decisions about...desired changes, and making the desired changes" (Perez, 2001, p. 27). Students are encouraged to add, delete, reorder, and replace components of their stories. They look for ways to revise organization so that their ideas are presented and connected in a clear and logical way (Marchisan, 2001).

In order to make these changes, students need to be taught how to revise, for it does not come naturally to most children. Many students feel that after they have written something once, they are finished with it. "...few children, especially young children, revise on their own" (Perez, 2001, p. 27).

When children do revise, they often make mechanical substitutions, rather then meaningful changes. An NAEP study found that students' efforts in revision in grades 4, 8, and 11 were devoted to changing spelling, punctuation, and grammar (Lehr, 1995). In addition, students are not always able to recognize problems in their own writing, and, when they do, they are not always able to improve upon them (Brakel Olson, 1990). To overcome these difficulties, students need to be instructed in the art of reflective analysis, the practice of looking back to examine what they have done (Underwood, 1998).

But, how can teachers teach this complex skill? One method that is widely used in writing classrooms is the "mini lesson." Direct, explicit instruction of targeted writing skills is provided in short, intense "mini lessons." This type of instruction promotes effective error correction (Marchisan, 2001). Targeted skills can be derived from observed weaknesses in student writing or by specific skills for which students will be assessed. In the present study, revision lesson objectives were defined by the skills listed on the *New Jersey State Holistic Scoring Rubric.*

How does such a mini lesson fit into the writing routine? After students have finished drafting their stories, they are ready to take time to review their stories and examine them for specific elements. To help them look at these specific elements,

teachers can incorporate strategy mini lessons at the beginning of their writing time. "The teacher can begin the daily writing period by providing a short lesson (5-10 minutes) of specific writing skills" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 158-159). For example, if a teacher sees that his students are not incorporating strong openings into their stories, he could use this as a foundation for a mini lesson. He could first present various authors' openings to students and have them discuss the different techniques. The teacher could then revise the opening from his own story in front of the students. Finally, the students could choose an opening method that they like, incorporate it into their story, and change their original draft. Having students make their revisions in a different color pencil or pen is also helpful. It is easier for both the teacher and student to see all the work that has been done with a particular piece.

As students are revising, providing them with a list of guiding questions revolving around targeted skills may help them to focus their efforts. "These questions may guide students through the evaluation of the content, organization, and style of their drafts" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 159). Discussion of student reflections and changes is also key, either as an entire class or in small group situations. Often times, sharing stories with peer partners allows students to recognize themselves and classmates as writers. It also forces them to take an active role in listening and in helping each other to revise. Reflective analysis is a complex act of social learning. It must be done within a community of writers for students to profit from it (Underwood, 1998).

To examine the effects of such instruction in revision, Fitzgerald and Markham conducted a study in 1987. They examined the effect of direction instruction in revision. Their results indicated that students became more knowledgeable and effective revisers after receiving such instruction. Student writing improved as well as student attitude towards writing (Graham & Harris, 1997).

Robinson also conducted such a revision study in 1985. He examined the revision practices of students in grades two through six. Initially, these students did not revise a

great amount, and the revisions they did, did not necessarily produce improved writing. Once these students were exposed to guiding questions, their revision skills improved. Teachers created these questions around specific skills and content. Robinson found that the quality of the stories became better when students were provided with these questions (Lehr, 1995).

STAGE 4 OF THE WRITING PROCESS: EDITING

The fourth stage of the writing process is the editing stage. This phase resembles the traditional teaching of writing, where the author proofreads his work for mechanical aspects. "When proofreading a revised draft, the writer rereads his or her writing and corrects grammar, usage, and other mechanical errors" (Marchisan, 2000, p. 160).

There was a recent time in writing instruction when the popular trend was to de-emphasize the role of mechanics in writing. However, this trend was simply a reaction to the traditional literacy instruction, where the skills were the primary focus of teaching, and little, if any time, was spent on actual writing (Graham & Harris, 1997). Now that writing instruction has evolved through the phases, a balance of both expressive writing and mechanics has been found to be most effective for children. "While many researchers generally agree that text production skills should not be the primary or exclusive focus of writing instruction, teachers are doing children no favor when they ignore these skills or suggest, even implicitly, that they are not important" (Graham & Harris, 1997, p. 149). There must be instruction in both, which is why this phase still remains important in the writing process.

Providing effective editing instruction has changed from traditional methods. No longer is it recommended that students participate in rote drills from workbooks, completely separated from their own writing. Increasing evidence suggests the importance of teaching skills such as spelling and punctuation in conjunction with skills such as organization, text structure, and revision techniques (Gersten, Baker, & Edwards,

1999-2002). Instruction in writing mechanics is more meaningful to children when it is related to their work. "...(M)any text production skills, such as grammar and word usage, may be best learned within the context of students' writing. Researchers have amassed considerable evidence that traditional exercises (diagramming sentences, studying parts of speech, and so forth) are ineffective, resulting in little or no transfer to children's actual writing" (Graham & Harris, 1997, p. 419).

How, then, is a teacher supposed to teach these important skills? The answer is through the use of children's work. "Instead of introducing students to skills of grammar and usage in a set of sequence or through workbook activities, teachers can use children's actual writing as a springboard for deciding what skills should be introduced and when" (Graham & Harris, 1997, p. 419). Translated to an actual classroom situation, the teacher could use student writing samples from either the present or past years on the overhead projector (without names) that are in need of a certain editing skill. The teacher and students can collaboratively edit the writing piece together, discussing what is being done and why. The teacher may even want to provide copies for students to promote a better class discussion (Marchisan, 2001). Again, the skills would come from the needs the teacher sees in the students' writing. By teaching mechanics in this way, it becomes more meaningful for students.

An effective strategy to help students check for mechanical errors involves the use of mnemonics. "COPS" is the mnemonic used in a strategic approach that helps students to detect and correct common writing errors. Each letter stands for an aspect of writing that students need to check for accuracy (NICHCY, 1997). The letter "C" reminds students to check for Capitalization of appropriate letters. "O" reminds them to examine the Overall appearance of their papers. The "P" is a reminder to check for proper punctuations and the "S" is for Spelling accuracy. In order to be used consistently and effectively, the strategy must be modeled and explained explicitly, and students must memorize and practice the strategy. Research evidence shows that when students use

such mnemonics, their proofreading skills improve (NICHCY, 1997).

STAGE 5 OF THE WRITING PROCESS: PUBLISHING

The fifth and final stage of the writing process is the publishing stage. During this time, the author rewrites his story to make it his final and best copy. "Writing a final version involves preparing a clean copy of a revised and proofread paper. The writer should follow the standards for correct manuscript form or specific instructions for the paper" (Marchisan, 2001, p.160). Once the published copies are finished, students present them to their audiences.

By incorporating this stage into the teaching of writing, teachers add another source of motivation for students. It gives them a goal as to why they are working so hard on a written piece. If children do not have a purpose for writing (i.e., an intended audience) then writing becomes an exercise for a non-communicative event, an exercise with no purpose. The audience becomes the writer's stimulus-the purpose for writing (Simic, 1993).

Publishing work can be completed in a variety of ways from typing it on the computer to making a "big book" with pictures, to simply writing it on specially designed paper. Publishing for early writers may mean simply reading their writing to their teachers, a group of children, a friend, or a parent. Publication may mean showing or displaying the work (Simic, 1993).

One specific method of student sharing that is incorporated in many writing classrooms is the Author's Chair. The Author's Chair is a special place, and often times a special chair, in the classroom where students can share their work with others. It allows students a place to participate in the final and ultimate writerly pleasure of finding their words come alive in the faces of their listeners and their readers (Simic, 1993).

A study conducted by Schweiker-Marra & Marra found that incorporating and emphasizing the publishing stage into classroom instruction made writing more

meaningful to the fifth grade students who were involved in the study. "The students collectively stated that having their writing pieces published made the writing more important to them and gave them a feeling of success" (Schweiker-Marr & Marra, 2000, p. 106). Boersma and his partners also conducted research in publishing in 1997. They too found that student writing improved when work was published and displayed (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000).

THE WRITING OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

"Producing effective and interesting written expression is an overwhelming task for many students, especially those with disabilities who have had a history of failure" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 154). These students' difficulties with writing are well documented in literature and research. They often, "...produce writing that is shorter, less cohesive, and poorer in overall quality. In addition they have demonstrated a progressively more negative attitude towards writing" (Harris et al., 2002, p. 110).

There are many reasons why a student with learning disabilities may produce a shorter composition than his peers. One reason involves a lack of general knowledge and ideas. Learning disabled students often lack the information and interest in a topic that their regular achieving peers may have because they simply do not have a substantial fund of knowledge. This sometimes leads them to focus on the lower functioning skills in writing, which they feel they can better control. "Students who struggle to write, too often construe writing as perfect spelling and grammar and/or neat penmanship" (Bradley & Lock, 2001, p. 118).

Students with learning disabilities have also been observed to stop the composing process too early, before they have accessed all that they know. "In a study by Graham (1990), children with writing difficulties spent only six or seven minutes writing an opinion essay, but when prompted to write more, generated two to four times more text, with at least one-half of the prompted material being new and useful" (Graham & Harris,

1997, p. 414).

In addition to these difficulties, certain students with learning disabilities suffer from a neurological disorder, called Dysgraphia, which is a disability that affects writing and spelling (http.//www.ld.org.info/indepth/dysgraphia.cfm). A child who has dysgraphia does not have the basic prerequisite skills for motor movements and letter formation. Therefore, it requires a great amount of energy to perform the simple tasks of forming the letters and putting actual writing on the paper. This does not leave the student with energy to think about his ideas and the components of his written expression. Therefore, these students do not often write a great deal of information.

A second characteristic of learning disabled students' writing is that it is generally less cohesive and more difficult to understand than the writing of their typical peers. Because they are so concerned with the mechanical aspects of writing, their ideas and expression often suffer. They typically convert writing tasks into tasks of telling what one knows, doing little planning or reflection in advance of their writing. It becomes a retrieve and write process with each preceding idea stimulating the next with very little metacognitive control. Little attention is paid to the organization of the text or the development of their goals (Graham & Harris, 1997). Because of this, their writing is less coherent.

A final writing characteristic of children with learning disabilities is a poor attitude towards writing. Because writing is a highly complex task that requires a number of skills to be performed simultaneously, it requires self-regulation, a skill that many children with learning difficulties do not have. They often do not know how to self-regulate their behavior before, during, and after writing which leads to a cycle of frustration and avoidance (Harris et al., 2002). "Once the cycle of writing failure sets in, teachers who deal with resistant writers begin to resist teaching writing" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 155).

What can be done to help these students produce well-written pieces? The answer

is the writing process. "Teaching the writing process in a series of stages has been shown to help unskilled writers organize their thoughts in order to be better writers" (Schweiker-Marra &Marra, 2000, p. 99). Providing them with sustained amounts of time on a daily basis where they receive instruction and the chance to write about meaningful and personal topics is key in improving writing. However, it must be remembered that this immersion in the writing process is not enough for many of these students. Students with learning problems need explicit procedural instruction in applying many parts of the process: brainstorming, organizing ideas, linking plans to first draft writing, and editing the composition. Explicit strategies for each part of the process play a prominent role in many successful interventions for students with writing problems (Gleason & Isaacson, 2001).

Teaching this population of students the writing process through direct, explicit instruction will help them to improve both their writing and their self-esteem. "When students with disabilities are assigned meaningful writing tasks and taught to write using a process approach, they make greater gains in the quality of their narrative and informative writing" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 155). In addition, "Writing models are effective interventions for students of all abilities exhibiting difficulty with writing. It helps to develop their writing skills which increases their confidence and motivation, which in turn directly impacts their learning success, academic achievement, and gives them a stronger sense of self efficacy" (Staal, 2001, p. 247).

To support the use of this theory with the learning disabled population, Gambrell and Chasen completed a study in 1991 with low performing students. For the control group, they provided instruction in story structure awareness and story examples. In the experimental group, they taught these components, but added teacher modeling and teacher-guided story generation as well. Students in this experimental group outperformed the control group (Gleason & Isaacson, 2001).

As these strategies start to take hold in regular education classes, they must be

implemented in the special education rooms as well. In past years, little time was devoted to writing instruction, particularly in special education classrooms. When it was implemented, it revolved around worksheets and skill recitation. It is imperative to demand that special education classes spend as much time on actual writing as their regular education counterparts. After all, "Resistant writers can be taught to write using the writing process approach (when it is) paired with...direct instruction, and a committed, well-trained teacher" (Marchisan, 2001, p. 161).

CONCLUSION: WRITING PROCESS RESEARCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Even with this documented research on these effective methods to use when teaching writing, expressive written language is still considered one of the most difficult areas of academic achievement. "This difficulty has been attributed to the fact that writing is considered the highest level of language development and a skill that is continuously refined and impacted throughout life" (Staal, 2001, p. 243). The simple task of beginning a writing assignment can lead to procrastination, anxiety, tension, low self-esteem, and lack of motivation; all of which make writing an unpleasant experience for both teacher and student alike.

However, there is hope in making writing a more pleasant experience for all involved. As documented by research, the teaching of writing as a process leads students to become more productive and efficient writers. Implementing strategy instruction and interventions through mini lessons within the writing process improves student performance even further.

A study involving eleven expressive writing groups of 436 children found evidence to support such claims. During the study, the students were explicitly taught the stages of the writing process and were provided with models and examples to follow as they wrote. They were also provided with frequent feedback about the quality of their

work. After the process was complete, the results were promising. "Overall, the investigators (of the study) had clear evidence that the instructional writing interventions used in the 11 studies led to significant improvements in the quality of students' writing...the effects of these interventions were quite large" (Gersten et al., 1999-2002).

A second study documenting this research was completed with at risk fifth graders by Karyn E. Schweiker-Marra and William Marra (2000). The participating students in the study were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received explicit instruction in the stages of the writing process and practiced the skills presented in each stage. The control group received the traditional grammar based instruction. Students that participated in the experimental group not only improved their writing abilities, but their writing attitudes as well. One student that took part in the study shared the following: "I never felt writing was important before this class, it was just something that my teachers made us do for the state test. Now I write all the time in my journal. I tell my inside thoughts and feelings on topics that my teacher lets the group make up" (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000, p. 105). Another student was quoted as saying, "I used to write only when my teacher made us, now I do it for everything, everyday. Writing isn't scary anymore. It's just a way of telling my thoughts and thinking them through" (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000, p.105-106).

Students from this study learned valuable life lessons about writing. Not only did they learn the practical uses of writing, but they also learned about the writing process, which allowed them to be more cognizant of their own writing ability (Schweiker-Marra & Marra, 2000).

This process approach to teaching writing has been demonstrated to be an effective and dynamic instructional technique for increasing the overall quality of students' written expression (Marchisan, 2001). Children are taught to focus on the process as much as the product. By breaking down the overwhelming task of composing

a story into manageable steps, students, both with and without learning difficulties, can better meet with success, both in the classroom and as life long learners.

CHAPTER III: DESIGN OF THE STUDY

POPULATION

The subjects who participated in this study were third and fourth students from an upper middle class, suburban community. They attended the same elementary school and were in heterogeneously grouped classes.

There were a total of 42 participants in the study with 23 male students and 19 female students. Of the 42 subjects, eight of the children were identified as special education students and were eligible for services under the category of "Specific Learning Disability." Four of the special education students received all of their instruction in the regular education classroom with in class support, and four of them received pull out instruction for reading, writing, and math.

All of the participants had been previously exposed to writing instruction in their primary years. Their experience with writing included free response writing, writing mechanics instruction, and weekly spelling units; however, the amount of instruction and the way in which it was received was varied.

METHOD OF SAMPLE SELECTION

The participants represented a convenience group and were selected based in part on their age and grade levels. To be participants of the study, students were required to be either in the third or fourth grade. To involve the students in the project, teachers were asked to volunteer to take part in this study. As an incentive, the teachers received instructional support and materials for implementing the writing process in their classrooms.

INSTRUMENTATION

This writing study was quite involved and extensive and, therefore, involved the use of many different instruments in its implementation. To understand the scope and sequence of this study, it is best viewed in three separate phases. Phase 1 was the Pilot Study where baseline information was collected before any formalized writing instruction from the study was presented. Phase 2 was the Intervention Phase where writing process lessons were presented to students. Phase 3 was the Post Assessment where students participated in a final sampling of their writing, with the hopes that they incorporated the newly learned information into their compositions.

During Phase 1, the Pilot Study, the instruments were compiled into a packet and distributed to the participating teachers. The packet was accompanied by a set of standardized instructions to be used by the participating teachers. [See Figure 1 contained in Appendix A]. The first writing instrument used during this time was a Writing Attitudes Survey for students to complete. [See Figure 2 contained in Appendix A]. The next instrument used during this phase was the actual Picture Prompt that the students used to compose their stories. This picture prompt was accompanied by directions to the students, mirroring the writing instructions found on the New Jersey State *Elementary School Proficiency Assessment.* [See Figure 3-4 contained in Appendix A]. The final instrument used during this Pilot Study was a teacher checklist, which teachers used to note various writing behaviors of students as they composed their stories. [See Figure 5 contained in Appendix A].

During the Intervention Phase of the study, Phase II, several materials were used to teach the writing process. These materials included prewriting organizers, practice worksheets, and feedback forms. These materials are found in Appendix B. During this time, teachers presented systematic lessons revolving around the writing process, using a picture prompt writing piece to practice skills. Each lesson began with direct, teacher modeling, followed by group practice. The final segment of the lesson was independent

practice and application. Students applied newly learned skills to previously drafted stories they had written in response to a picture.

The final phase of the study, the Post Assessment, used many of the same materials that were used in the Pilot Study. A packet was again issued to teachers with the same set of standardized directions. [See Figure 1 contained in Appendix A]. The students then completed the Writing Attitudes Survey to examine the effects of the interventions on student attitude and affect towards writing. [See Figure 2 contained in Appendix A]. The next instrument used was a Picture Prompt Writing Response with standardized instructions. [See Figure 6 contained in Appendix A]. For standardization purposes, the directions read exactly as they did in the Pilot Study. [See Figure 4 contained in Appendix A]; however, the actual picture prompt was changed. The final instrument of this phase was the teacher checklist, which teachers used to note student writing behavior. [See Figure 5 contained in Appendix A].

ASSESSMENT

Three assessment tools were used to document student performance and attitude during both the Pilot Study and the Post Assessment. These assessment tools are located in Appendix D and consisted of a Student Writing Attitude Survey, a Teacher Observation Checklist, and a holistic writing assessment rubric.

The first evaluation measure was the Student Writing Attitude Survey which students completed prior to actual story writing in both the pre and post assessment. [See Figure 1 contained in Appendix A]. It was intended to measure student attitudes, beliefs, and feelings towards writing. It was hoped that by participating in this study, student affect would improve in regards to expressive writing.

The Teacher Observation Checklist was utilized while the students participated in the pre and post assessment. [See Figure 3 contained in Appendix A]. As the students worked on their writing pieces, teachers were asked to actively monitor their students and

take note of their behaviors using the checklist. The behaviors on the checklist were targeted behaviors in which productive writers take part. These behaviors were modeled and emphasized in the teaching design.

The final assessment measure used was the *New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric, which* is used to assess writing in the fourth grade state test: *The Elementary* State *Proficiency Assessment.* [See Figure 1 contained in Appendix C]. The rubric assesses writing on a numeric scale of 0 to 6. Two scorers assess the writing piece blindly so that one scorer does not know what score the other has given the piece. After it has been scored twice, the two scores are added together for a maximum total of 12 points. If there is more than a one point difference between the two scores, a third scorer is assigned and an average is taken to determine the writer's final score. The rubric evaluates the writing piece in such areas as content and organization, usage, sentence construction, and mechanics. Specific elements examined include openings, closings, focus, sequence, compositional risks, and elaboration. The students' command of the language is derived from the final score. The spectrum ranges from an "inadequate command" of the language, which would be a single score of 0 or 1, all the way up to a "superior command" of the language, which would be a single score of 6.

PILOT STUDY

All subjects participating in this study first took part in a Pilot Study in October of 2002. Teachers were provided with a packet of information including administration instructions, student prompts and directions, teacher observation checklists, and student attitude surveys. [See Figures 1-6 contained in Appendix A]. All teachers were required to read the same instructions to students so that results could be compared fairly.

On the first day of the pilot study, teachers distributed the Writing Attitude Survey to students. Standardized instructions were provided and students were told to write their honest answers in regards to their feelings about writing. To be sure that students

understood what to do, teachers were asked to read through the survey together with their class, explaining each question. Teachers were then asked to collect the surveys for later analysis.

The second step of the pilot study required the students to actually take part in the writing experience. Using a standardized picture prompt and instructions, teachers explained to students what they were to do. Students were told that they would be given as much time as needed and could use whatever resources they felt necessary to improve their writing. They were instructed to do their best writing. After students finished their stories, they were given back to them and told that they could make any changes they felt necessary. While students participated in this process, their teachers monitored their work, taking note of their behaviors using the Teacher Observation Checklist. When students finished their stories, they were instructed to hand them in to the teacher and read quietly at their seats until all classmates were finished.

COLLECTION OF DATA

The teachers who participated in the study collected student work and surveys, as well as their own observation checklists. At the end of the post assessment, all writing pieces, checklists, and attitude surveys were given to the researcher who, along with a second objective scorer, scored the papers using the *New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric.* Both the researcher and the second scorer were trained in holistic scoring. Once all writing pieces were scored, results from the Pre and Post Assessments from each class were charted, with students being identified by their first name. Information was also collected from both the teacher surveys and student attitude surveys and compiled using a tally chart for each class.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of this study revolved around teaching the writing process to students.

It incorporated explicit instruction in each of the five stages of the writing process with hopes that students would internalize such strategies and improve upon their own writing.

The study (with the exception of the Pre Assessment) was conducted over a four to five week period beginning in January of 2003. Writing instruction was provided on a daily basis during a 45 to 55 minute block of time. During each of these writing periods, instruction was delivered in three separate activities. The first activity of each lesson involved direct instruction from the teacher focusing on the day's writing objective. Explicit instruction and modeling of the targeted skill were provided during this time. This portion of the writing period was scheduled to last for approximately ten minutes. The second phase of the lesson involved group practice in which the teachers and students worked together to practice the targeted skill. This was also scheduled to take about ten minutes of the period. The final portion of the lesson was allocated for independent work. During this time, students practiced and applied the new skill to their written stories and met with each other and/or the teacher for feedback. This was scheduled for the remaining 25 to 35 minutes of the period.

Teachers participating in the study were provided with information and instruction on the five stages of the writing process. They were exposed to research based studies documenting effective strategies used for this type of instruction. In addition, they were made aware of the components of the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric.

Once the participating teachers felt comfortable in their conceptual knowledge of the writing process, they were provided with 18 lessons revolving around its five stages. These 18 lessons were sequenced in accordance with the stages of the writing process so that the first set of lessons presented prewriting skills, the second set, drafting skills, etc. A different lesson was presented, modeled, practiced, and applied each day. Targeted objectives and procedural suggestions were provided, as well as instructional aides and worksheets. Students and teachers practiced these skills using a picture prompt.

In the prewriting phase, lessons focused around concepts such as identification of

writing process stages, topic finding, idea generation, and webbing/organizing story ideas. For the drafting stage, instruction was provided on using the web/organizer to organize and write the story. In the revising stage, specific, targeted mini lessons were taught based upon skills from the scoring rubric. Lessons included elaboration/details, paragraphing, dialogue, figurative language, openings, closings, word choice, and story elements. In the editing stage, instruction was provided on how to use the mnemonic COPS to edit and proofread stories (NICHCY, 1997). Finally, in the publishing stage, students were taught how to publish their stories. The sequence of lessons, as well as necessary materials and worksheets, were given to teachers to use with their students. Appendix B contains a sampling of the instructional materials used by the teachers in this study.

Once teachers completed the 18 lessons with their students, a post assessment was given to determine if students would use the process strategies independently. Students were given a new picture prompt and were read the same instructions as in the Pilot Study. Students were given as many days as needed to complete their story.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The collected data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Data from the Student Writing Attitude Survey and the Teacher Observation checklist were charted using the likert scale responses that were received. An overall summary of the study's impact on student behavior and attitude was then derived from the charted responses.

Two independent scorers used the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric to assess the narrative stories. Scores from both the pre and post assessment were then charted to document the study's impact on student writing and performance.

CHAPTER IV

ANAYLSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

INTRODUCTION

Writing instruction has significantly changed throughout the past three to four decades. It has evolved from a product-centered approach to a process centered approach. Years ago, it was recommended that instruction revolve around the memorization of usage rules and that writing time be spent completing rote drills and practice sheets. Now, research suggests that instruction should focus on the writing process and its components. In addition, while it is recommended that a portion of the writing time be used to teach techniques and skills, it is also suggested that the majority of the time be left for children to compose and draft original stories, applying such instruction to authentic writing pieces.

However, as this new philosophy in writing instruction is becoming more prominent in classrooms across the nation, research of the process, as a whole, has been somewhat neglected thus far. The research in writing is relatively new when compared to the research in other academic domains. Because of this, teachers, and even school districts, are sometimes confused about the most effective way to teach writing to their students.

This study was designed to first inform educators of the components of the writing process. Its second purpose was to document the effectiveness of teaching the writing process to students. This effectiveness was evaluated in several different ways. The first component analyzed was its effect on student achievement in writing; the quality of students' written pieces. The second component examined was the effect on student attitude towards writing. The final element assessed was student behavior during writing.

To evaluate these areas, an assessment tool was used for each. First, the *New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric* was used to assess the quality of the students' writing. Secondly, a Student Attitude Survey was used to measure student beliefs and feelings towards writing. And, finally, a teacher observation checklist was used to document student behavior. Each of these instruments was used during a Pre Assessment in October and also, a Post Assessment in February/March.

As can be seen by the results below, student performance, attitude, and behavior did change throughout the implementation this study.

RESULTS: STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE

The first area examined was overall student achievement. This was measured by the *New Jersey Holistic Scoring Rubric*, which rates student papers on a scale of zero to six. Each student paper was evaluated by two independent scorers. After such scoring took place, the two scores were added together for a maximum total of 12. Tables 1, 2, and 3 display the results from each participating class.

Table 1: Pre and Post Assessment Scores from the Third Grade Regular Education Class (N=19)

NAME	PRE ASSESSMENT SCORE	POST ASSESSMENT SCORE
Robbie C.	0	1
Summer	0	3
Robbie O.	0	6
David	2	1
Alexis	2	5
Melanie	2	6
Danielle	2	8
Alexandra	2	8
Kevin	3	5
Radhika	3	7
Alexa F.	3	7
Alexa K.	4	1
Sean	4	5
Andrew	4	6
Hiren	4	7
Andrew	5	4
Zach	5	6
Jamie	6	6
Madison	6	8

Total Number of Students Assessed: 19
Number of Students Improved From Pre to Post Assessment: 15
Number of Students Who Stayed the Same From Pre to Post Assessment: 1
Number of Students Who Declined From Pre to Post Assessment: 3

Pre Assessment Average Score: 3.0
Post Assessment Average Score: 5.3

Table 2: Pre and Post Assessment Scores from the Fourth Grade Regular Education Class (N=19)

NAME	PRE ASSESSMENT SCORE	POST ASSESSMENT SCORE
Michelle	2	8
Richard	3	6
Mike	4	6
Janelle	5	4
Alyssa	5	5
Cheryl	5	8
Bobby	5	8
Connor	6	4
Dimitra	6	5
Lauren	6	5
Austin	6	7
Dom	6	7
Danny	6	8
Gigi	6	9
Shane	7	4
Olivia	7	8
Garrett	8	6
Melanie	8	9
Brett	10	11

Total Number of Students Assessed: 19
Number of Students Improved From Pre to Post Assessment: 13
Number of Students Who Stayed the Same From Pre to Post Assessment: 1
Number of Students Who Declined From Pre to Post Assessment: 5

Pre Assessment Average Score: 5.5
Post Assessment Average Score: 6.7

Table 3: Pre and Post Assessment Scores from the Fourth Grade Special Education Class (N=4)

NAME	PRE ASSESSMENT SCORE	POST ASSESSMENT SCORE
Rich	4	4
Stephen	4	6
Jonathan	5	5
Erich	5	6

Total Number of Students Assessed: 4
Number of Students Improved From Pre to Post Assessment: 2
Number of Students Who Stayed the Same From Pre to Post Assessment: 2
Number of Students Who Declined From Pre to Post Assessment: 0

Pre Assessment Average Score: 4.5
Post Assessment Average Score: 5.2

RESULTS: STUDENT WRITING ATTITUDE

The next area examined was student attitude towards writing. This was assessed through a Student Attitude Survey, which was administered to the students both before and after instruction in the writing process was completed. The students were required to respond to a series of eight statements about writing, via a likert scale. They were also asked to document whether they created webs/organizers for their stories and whether they generally revised and edited their stories. Tables 4, 5, and 6 document the student responses to each statement both before and after the writing process lessons of the design were introduced. The tables first list each writing statement that was on the survey. They then display the range of student responses that were possible. Underneath each possible response, the number of students who selected that response in both the pre and post assessment is documented.

Table 4: Pre and Post Student Attitude Survey Responses from the Regular Education Third Grade Class

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE (1)	MOSTLY AGREE (2)	UNSURE (3)	MOSTLY DISAGREE (4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (5)
It really does not matter how you go about writing as long as you finish your story	Pre: 5 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 7 students Post: 3 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 6 students	Pre: 3 students Post: 6 students
Writing is a waste of time.	Pre: 5 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 2 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 1 student	Pre: 1 student Post: 2 students	Pre: 8 students Post: 13 students
Setting goals before you start writing is important.	Pre: 7 students Post: 12 students	Pre: 4 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 3 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 2 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 1 student Post: 2 students
Thinking about who will be reading your writing is an important thing when you write.	Pre: 4 students Post: 7 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 4 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 2 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 2 students
I like to write.	Pre: 4 students Post: 11 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 3 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 3 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 7 students Post: 2 students
The approach I'm using for writing now is a lot better than the approach I was using last year.	Pre: 9 students Post: 11 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 2 students
I am a good writer.	Pre: 4 students Post: 7 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 4 students	Pre: 4 students Post: 4 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 1 student	Pre: 3 students Post: 1 student
Before you start writing, creating an outline or a web that shows the organization of your story is important.	Pre: 7 students Post: 12 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 5 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 3 students

Students were also asked to mark which of the following statements best reflected their actions when writing. The Pre and Post Assessment responses are listed below.

RESPONSES	I ALMOST NEVER MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING	I USUALLY DON'T MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING	I USUALLY DO MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING.	I ALMOST NEVER EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.	I USUALLY DON'T EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.	I USUALLY DO EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.
PRE ASSESSMENT	3 students	6 students	8 students	1 student	5 students	11 students
POST ASSESSMENT	3 students	8 students	6 students	3 students	1 student	13 students

Table 5: Pre and Post Student Attitude Survey Responses from the Regular Education Fourth Grade Class

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE (1)	MOSTLY AGREE (2)	UNSURE (3)	MOSTLY DISAGREE (4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (5)
It really does not matter how you go about writing as long as you finish your story	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 5 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 1 student Post: 1 student	Pre: 7 students Post: 16 students
Writing is a waste of time.	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 1 student	Pre: 2 student Post: 5 students	Pre: 16 students Post: 12 students
Setting goals before you start writing is important.	Pre: 15 students Post: 7 students	Pre: 3 students Post: 5 student	Pre: 1 student Post: 6 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student
Thinking about who will be reading your writing is an important thing when you write.	Pre: 6 students Post: 8 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 3 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 8 students	Pre: 5 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students
I like to write.	Pre: 6 students Post: 5 students	Pre: 11 students Post: 11 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 2 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 2 students
The approach I'm using for writing now is a lot better than the approach I was using last year.	Pre: 7 students Post: 12 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 6 students	Pre: 7 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students
I am a good writer.	Pre: 3 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 7 students Post: 6 students	Pre: 7 students Post: 10 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student
Before you start writing, creating an outline or a web that shows the organization of your story is important.	Pre: 14 students Post: 17 students	Pre: 5 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student

Students were also asked to mark which of the following statements best reflected their actions when writing. The Pre and Post Assessment responses are listed below.

RESPONSES	I ALMOST NEVER MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING	I USUALLY DON'T MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING	I USUALLY DO MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING.	I ALMOST NEVER EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.	I USUALLY DON'T EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.	I USUALLY DO EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.
PRE ASSESSMENT	0 students	11 students	8 students	2 students	5 students	12 students
POST ASSESSMENT	0 students	2 students	17 students	0 students	1 student	18 students

Table 6: Pre and Post Student Attitude Survey Responses from the Special Education Fourth Grade Class

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE (1)	MOSTLY AGREE (2)	UNSURE (3)	MOSTLY DISAGREE (4)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (5)
It really does not matter how you go about writing as long as you finish your story	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 3 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 student	Pre: 2 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students
Writing is a waste of time.	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 2 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 2 students
Setting goals before you start writing is important.	Pre: 3 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 student Post: 1 student
Thinking about who will be reading your writing is an important thing when you write.	Pre: 3 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 0 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 2 students
I like to write.	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 1 student Post: 1 student	Pre: 2 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students
The approach I'm using for writing now is a lot better than the approach I was using last year.	Pre: 3 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 2 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 student	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students
I am a good writer.	Pre: 2 students Post: 3 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 1 student	Pre: 2 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students
Before you start writing, creating an outline or a web that shows the organization of your story is important.	Pre: 2 students Post: 2 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 0 students	Pre: 1 student Post: 2 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students	Pre: 0 students Post: 0 students

Students were also asked to mark which of the following statements best reflected their actions when writing. The Pre and Post Assessment responses are listed below.

RESPONSES	I ALMOST NEVER MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING	I USUALLY DON'T MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING	I USUALLY DO MAKE AN OUTLINE OR WEB BEFORE WRITING.	I ALMOST NEVER EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.	I USUALLY DON'T EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.	I USUALLY DO EDIT AND REVISE MY WRITING.
PRE ASSESSMENT	0 students	0 students	4 students	0 students	0 students	4 students
POST ASSESSMENT	0 students	0 students	4 students	0 students	0 students	4 students

RESULTS: STUDENT WRITING BEHAVIOR

The final area examined was student behavior during writing. This was measured by a Teacher Checklist used during both the Pre and Post Assessment. As students worked on their writing pieces, teachers were asked to monitor their behaviors, using a checklist, which included seven targeted behaviors. The teachers had to determine whether a few students, half the students, or a majority of the students were taking part in each behavior. The results are listed in tables 7, 8, and 9.

Table 7: Student Behavior from the Regular Education Third Grade Class

BEHAVIOR	**PRE ASSESSMENT**	**POST ASSESSMENT**
The students make webs or organizers before writing.	No students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students who made webs or organizers refer back to and use them when drafting their stories.	No students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students write for a sustained amount of time.	A few students in the class.	About half the class.
The students conference with each other to help them with their writing.	A few students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students revise their work.	No students in the class.	About half the class.
The students use available resources to revise and edit their work.	No students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students rewrite their final copies.	No students in the class.	A majority of the class.

Table 8: Student Behavior from the Regular Education Fourth Grade Class

BEHAVIOR	PRE ASSESSMENT	POST ASSESSMENT
The students make webs or organizers before writing.	A majority of the class.	A majority of the class.
The students who made webs or organizers refer back to and use them when drafting their stories.	A few students in the class.	A majority of the class.
The students write for a sustained amount of time.	About half the class.	A majority of the class.
The students conference with each other to help them with their writing.	A few students in the class.	A majority of the class.
The students revise their work.	About half the class.	A majority of the class.
The students use available resources to revise and edit their work.	About half the class.	A majority of the class.
The students rewrite their final copies.	About half the class.	A majority of the class.

Table 9: Student Behavior from the Special Education Fourth Grade Class

BEHAVIOR	PRE ASSESSMENT	POST ASSESSMENT
The students make webs or organizers before writing.	No students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students who made webs or organizers refer back to and use them when drafting their stories.	No students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students write for a sustained amount of time.	A few students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students conference with each other to help them with their writing.	No students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students revise their work.	A few students in the class.	A few students in the class.
The students use available resources to revise and edit their work.	No students in the class.	No students in the class.
The students rewrite their final copies.	A majority of the class.	No students in the class.

SUMMARY

Results from this study suggest promising implications for instruction in the writing process. Cumulative data suggests that such instruction has a positive impact on writing performance, writing attitudes, and writing behavior.

In examining student performance, each child's holistic writing score from the pre and post assessments was compared. Of the 42 students who took part in this study, well over half of them improved in their writing performance. When examining all papers from this study, 30 students improved their performance, four students remained the same, and eight students declined in their performance. In examining each class's overall performance, class averages all increased by a point or more. These results indicate that instruction in the writing process does indeed increase student performance.

But, in what specific ways does this process help children to improve? In examining all of the papers from this study, it becomes obvious that the instruction and emphasis on prewriting activities, such as planning, helped students to write more coherent papers. In comparing the papers from the pre and post assessments, the latter were easier to follow and understand. Many of the pre assessment papers seemed to be a simple recitation of fact after fact with little metacognitive control. Conversely, the papers written during the post assessment, seem to be more planned and organized, making it easier for the reader to understand the writer's thought processes and patterns.

A second characteristic of the papers was their length and elaboration. Many of the papers written during the pre assessment in October were simply brief descriptions of the presented picture without any elements of a story, such as elaboration or character development. Most papers were a page or less; some only a few sentences. However, the

papers from the post assessment were lengthier and were more focused around a central idea. It seems that the instruction in story writing and the emphasis on sustained writing time had motivated these children to create such stories.

Other areas of improvement revolved around the techniques taught during the revision stage of the process, areas which the mini lessons were based upon. One such area of instruction was in story openings or leads. In general, the children's leads were much improved during the post assessment. Whereas many of the pre assessment papers included mundane openings such as, "One day," or "There once was...," the post assessment papers presented a variety of opening techniques. Some children began their stories with a quote from a character, others began with onomatopoeia, using an exciting sound word that led into the story. Other stories addressed a question to the audience, while still others flashed back to a specific date or time. These openings display a more sophisticated style of writing than was evident in the pre assessment papers.

A second skill area improved upon by many students was the their closings (endings) to their stories. Many of the pre assessment papers from the fall were left rather open ended, leaving the reader wondering if the story was finished or not. There was not a sense of closure to many of the students' papers. However, in the post assessment papers from the spring, students wrote endings that concluded what they were trying to express throughout the story. Some included endings that incorporated a moral or taught a lesson. A few students even successfully attempted a cliffhanger closing where it was evident that the story was finished, but left the reader wanting to read more.

Still another area that was improved upon by many students was in the use of dialogue. During the pre assessment, many students did not include dialogue at all, and,

the few that did , did not write it properly, leading to confusion for the reader. During the post assessment, students effectively used dialoged to enhance their stories. In addition, they seemed able to effectively balance their dialogue with elaborated description, which further enhanced the quality of the stories. They also correctly paragraphed the changing dialogue in their stories more frequently during the post assessment.

Word choice, description, and transitional phrases were also used more effectively in the post assessment writing samples. Whereas many of the students included vague characters, such as a "boy and a girl" in their pre assessment stories, they gave their characters names and descriptions in their post assessment stories. Instead of repetitively using the word, "said," in their stories as they did during the pre assessment, they used words such as "yelled," "replied," "ordered," and "exclaimed" in their post assessment stories. They also used exemplary descriptive words such as "dreadful," "slithered" and "trotted" more frequently after the lessons of the design were implemented. In addition, effective transitional phrases were also more evident in their post assessment pieces. During the pre assessment, the words "then" and "so" dominated the papers; however, during the post assessment, there were a variety of words and phrases that helped to make the papers more fluent. Transitions such as, "After a while," "All of a sudden," and "Soon it was morning," show a sophistication that was not present in the fall. Again, revision lessons in these areas seemed to take hold in the children's writing.

Other writing improvements were seen in some of the higher-level students' papers, but were not evident in the majority of the pieces. Skills such as compositional risks, figurative language, and variety of sentence structure were seen scattered throughout some papers, but not all.

In examining student attitude towards writing, it seems that, in most cases, attitudes and beliefs did improve. This was measured by examining the eight surveyed statements of the Student Attitude Survey from both the pre and post assessment. After taking part in the design, many of the students came to feel that it did indeed matter how they go about planning a story. Regular education students seemed to grasp this concept better than the special education students, suggesting that more emphasis on planning needs to be implemented in special education classrooms.

By the end of the study, most students disagreed with the statement, "Writing is a waste of time," and agreed or strongly agreed that they, "like(d) to write." When asked to compare this type of process approach with the approach that they used last year in writing, most students either "strongly agree(d)" or "mostly agree(d)" that this approach was better. After taking part in this study, a majority of the students agreed that creating a web or an organizer was important and also indicated that they edited and revised their stories more frequently.

While more than half of the students agreed that setting goals was somewhat important, this seems to be an area that needs continued reinforcement and emphasis, as does consideration of audience. Also, the statement, "I am a good writer" brought a variety of responses. Interestingly, it seemed that the majority of third graders agreed with this after taking part in the study, while the fourth graders seemed to question themselves more in the spring. It is unclear whether their confidence dipped or whether they became more realistic in how they saw themselves as writers. Further investigation into this would be beneficial to delve into the reasons why they felt this way.

The final area examined was student behavior. As can be seen by tables 7, 8, and

9, there was general improvement in most of the targeted behaviors. After instruction in the writing process, an increased number of students made some type of organizer before writing and then referred back to them while drafting their stories. In addition, during the post assessment, an increased number of students wrote for a longer period of time, conferenced with each other for help, revised their work, used available resources, and rewrote their final drafts. It seemed that improvement in these areas was seen more with the regular education students than with the special education students. Perhaps more directed instruction and scaffolded practice would help to increase these behaviors with this population of students.

As can be seen by Tables 1 through 9, the instruction recommended in this study proved to be a valuable means of improving student writing. Out of the 42 students that took part in this design, the majority of them made improvements in their writing to some degree. It seems that by providing direct instruction in the stages of the writing process, students can and will internalize the instructed strategies to become more proficient writers.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Writing instruction has undergone many changes throughout the years. Until the 1970's, instruction mainly involved repetitive practice drills focusing around grammar rules and mechanics. The instruction of the 1980s began to move completely away from these drills and instead focused on creative and expressive writing. Currently, writing instruction seems to incorporate both philosophies, often times through implementation of the writing process.

This study was designed to accomplish three purposes: first to clearly delineate and describe each stage of the process, second, to provide procedural suggestions for implementation of writing process instruction in elementary classrooms, and third, to document the effectiveness of such an approach on student writing.

The subjects of this study were 42 third and fourth grade students. The participating teachers were given training in the writing process and were provided with materials to aid in the implementation of each stage. Instruction was then provided on a daily basis and included direct instruction, scaffolded application, and independent writing.

The effectiveness of this program was documented through analysis of student attitude surveys and teacher observation checklists. In addition, student performance was evaluated through the use of the New Jersey Holistic Scoring Rubric Students were assessed before any instruction had been given. Upon completion of the sequenced lessons, students were administered a post assessment. All assessments indicated that

student performance, as well as attitude towards writing, improved through the use of the writing process writing process instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that systematic, planned writing instruction based on procedures that follow writing process instruction can improve student performance in writing, as well as student attitude towards writing. By devoting sustained amounts of time to writing on a daily basis where the stages of the writing process are introduced, explained, and modeled, student performance will improve. In addition, incorporating a routine involving direct instruction, scaffolded practice, and independent writing is also a key component to any writing program. The skills for the direct instruction can be derived from the needs of the class, from the curriculum standards of the school district, or from the scoring rubrics that will ultimately be used to assess writing. Planning such a program will likely improve student performance as it did in this study.

DISCUSSION

This study infused the writing process into third and fourth grade elementary classrooms by first explaining each of the five steps to students. They were then shown what actions to take during each step and given opportunities to practice these actions before trying them independently. By providing students with direct instruction, guided practice, and independent writing time, their skills improved, as did their beliefs and attitudes towards writing. Regular education students, as well as those with identified

learning disabilities, made strides towards becoming better writers.

Further, implications of this study indicate that continuous practice needs to be provided to children in order for their writing to continue to improve. While overall performance did increase, the skills presented, as well as new skills, need to be taught and practiced repeatedly in order for the children to master them. In addition, for children who struggle with writing, including those with learning disabilities, it was found that skills needed to be slowly scaffolded before students would attempt them on their own.

To help all students apply skills, it would be interesting to study the effects of keeping a *Writer's Checklist*, where students document what skills have been taught. This may help to keep them accountable for applying learned skills. It may also serve as a reminder when attempting to write their stories. Further study is needed in this area.

Finally, from studying the Writer's Attitude Surveys, it seems that teachers need to make it explicitly clear why goals need to be established before writing. Post assessment results showed that a number of students did not seem to understand the effectiveness and reasoning behind this. A second area that needs to be made explicit is the consideration of audience. This was not significantly addressed in this study, and, therefore, the students, as a whole, did not seem to understand the importance of considering the audience in their written products. A follow up study in which students wrote for different aged audiences would be valuable to teach them this importance. It would also be interesting to see if this impacted their feelings towards audience consideration. .

In conclusion, this study demonstrated the effectiveness of writing process implementation on student performance and attitude. While gains were made in all

classes that participated, further study would be valuable in the areas of student accountability of skills, goal setting, and consideration of audience.

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APPENDIX A

WRITING PROJECT

Day 1
Please give out the writing survey and allow the children time to fill it out. When giving it out, please say....

"We're going to do a writing survey today so that I know some of your thoughts and feelings about writing. It will help me to better plan what we're going to be doing in writing. Please fill it out as best as you can. The most important thing is to be honest. If you love writing, write that down, if you hate writing, write that down. It's your feelings, so no matter what, it's o.k. You're not going to get graded on this survey. It's just to help me figure out what we should be doing."

Please go through it and read each question together to explain any part they don't understand

Day 2 (can be combined with day 1)
Please begin the class by saying....
"We're going to be doing some writing using a picture over the next few days. It's important for you to do your best work so that I can see how you write."

Give out picture prompt and read the directions with the students. Allow them as much time as needed to write.

**During the time when children are writing, both on day 1 and the following days, please walk around to monitor what they are doing. Please fill out the attached Teacher Checklist to note their behavior. You only need to complete one checklist during the Pre-assessment and one checklist during the Post-assessment.

Days 3 and beyond (you can use as many days as you think are needed to revise and 'publish')

"I'm going to give back your stories from the other day. I'm going to be

Figure 1: Standardized instructions for teachers

grading your stories, so the one that you hand in to me for a grade should be the best story that you can do. You can use anything or anyone in the room to help you. You will have as many days as you need to do your best work. Since everyone will be finishing at different times, you can read quietly after you give me your story."

Figure 1: Standardized instructions for teachers

Name _____ Date _____

WRITING SURVEY

Instructions: The questions below ask you to tell how you feel about different aspects of writing. For each question, circle the number that best shows how you really feel.

1=strongly agree
2=mostly agree
3=unsure
4=mostly disagree
5=strongly disagree

1	2	3	4	5	It really does not matter how you go about writing as long as you finish your story.
1	2	3	4	5	Writing is a waste of time.
1	2	3	4	5	Setting goals before you start writing is important.
1	2	3	4	5	Thinking about who will be reading your writing (your audience)is an important thing when you write.
1	2	3	4	5	I like to write.
1	2	3	4	5	The approach I'm using for writing now is a lot better than the approach I was using last year.
1	2	3	4	5	I am a good writer.
1	2	3	4	5	Before you start writing, creating an outline or a web that shows the organization of your story is important.

Figure 2: Student Writing Attitude Survey

☐ I almost NEVER make an outline or a web before writing because:

☐ I USUALLY DON'T make an outline or a web before writing because:

☐ I USUALLY DO make an outline or a web before writing because:

(You can check all the reasons that apply to you)

_____ I know the writing will be short so that I don't need an outline or a web.
_____ I'm not sure how to make an outline or a web.
_____ Outlining or webbing is too much trouble.
_____ I usually forget to make an outline or a web.
_____ Making an outline or a web won't make a difference in my grade.
_____ I can never think of ideas to write on my outline or my web.
_____ I'm not very good at making outlines or webs.
_____ I usually don't have time to make an outline or a web.
_____ Nobody important will read what I have written.
_____ I never end up following the outline or the web anyway.

☐ I almost NEVER edit and revise my writing because:

☐ I USUALLY DON'T edit and revise my because:

☐ I USUALLY DO edit and revise my because:

(You can check all that apply to you)

_____ I rarely need to edit and revise anything I write.
_____ I'm not very good at editing or revising.
_____ I usually don't have time to edit or revise.
_____ I usually forget to edit and revise.
_____ Editing and revising won't make a difference in my grade.
_____ I'm not sure how to edit and revise.
_____ Editing and revising are too much trouble.
_____ Small mistakes don't matter.
_____ Nobody important will read what I have written.
_____ I usually catch my mistakes and correct them as I write.

Figure 2: Student Writing Attitude Survey

Figure 3: Pre Assessment Picture Prompt

Using the picture as a guide, write a story about what might be happening.

Here is a checklist for you to follow to help you do your best writing. Before you begin writing, read the checklist silently as it is read to you. Reread it as often as you need. After you write your story, read what you have written. Use the checklist to make certain that your writing is the best it can be.

Writer's Checklist

Did you remember to

- ☐ keep the central idea or topic in mind?
- ☐ keep your audience in mind?
- ☐ support your ideas with details, explanations, and examples?
- ☐ state your ideas in a clear sequence?
- ☐ include an opening and a closing?
- ☐ use a variety of words and vary your sentence structure?
- ☐ state your opinion or conclusion clearly?
- ☐ capitalize, spell, and use punctuation correctly?
- ☐ write neatly?

Figure 4: Picture Prompt Instructions to Students

Teacher name _____ Grade _____

Date _____ Circle one: Pre/Post

THE WRITING PROCESS

Teacher Checklist

As your students work on their writing, please monitor their work and note your observations.

1. The students make webs or organizers before writing.	a few students in the class	about half the class	a majority of the class
2. The students who made webs or organizers refer back to and use them when drafting their stories.	a few students in the class	about half the class	a majority of the class
3. The students write for a sustained amount of time.	a few students in the class	about half the class	a majority of the class
4. The students conference with each other to help them with their writing.	a few students in the class	about half the class	a majority of the class
5. The students revise their work.	a few students in the class	about half the class	a majority of the class
6. The students use available resources (dictionary, thesaurus, etc.) to revise and edit their work.	a few students in the class	about half the class	a majority of the class
7. The students rewrite their final copy.	a few students in the class	about half the class	a majority of the class

Figure 5: Teacher Checklist

Figure 6: Post Assessment Picture Prompt

APPENDIX B

SPACE

Setting (Who is the main character(s)? Where and when does the story take place?)

Purpose (What does the character want to accomplish?)

Actions (What are the character's actions in the story)

Conclusions (How does the story end?)

Emotions (How does the character feel about what happened?)

Figure 1: Prewriting Lesson on the Mnemonic "SPACE"

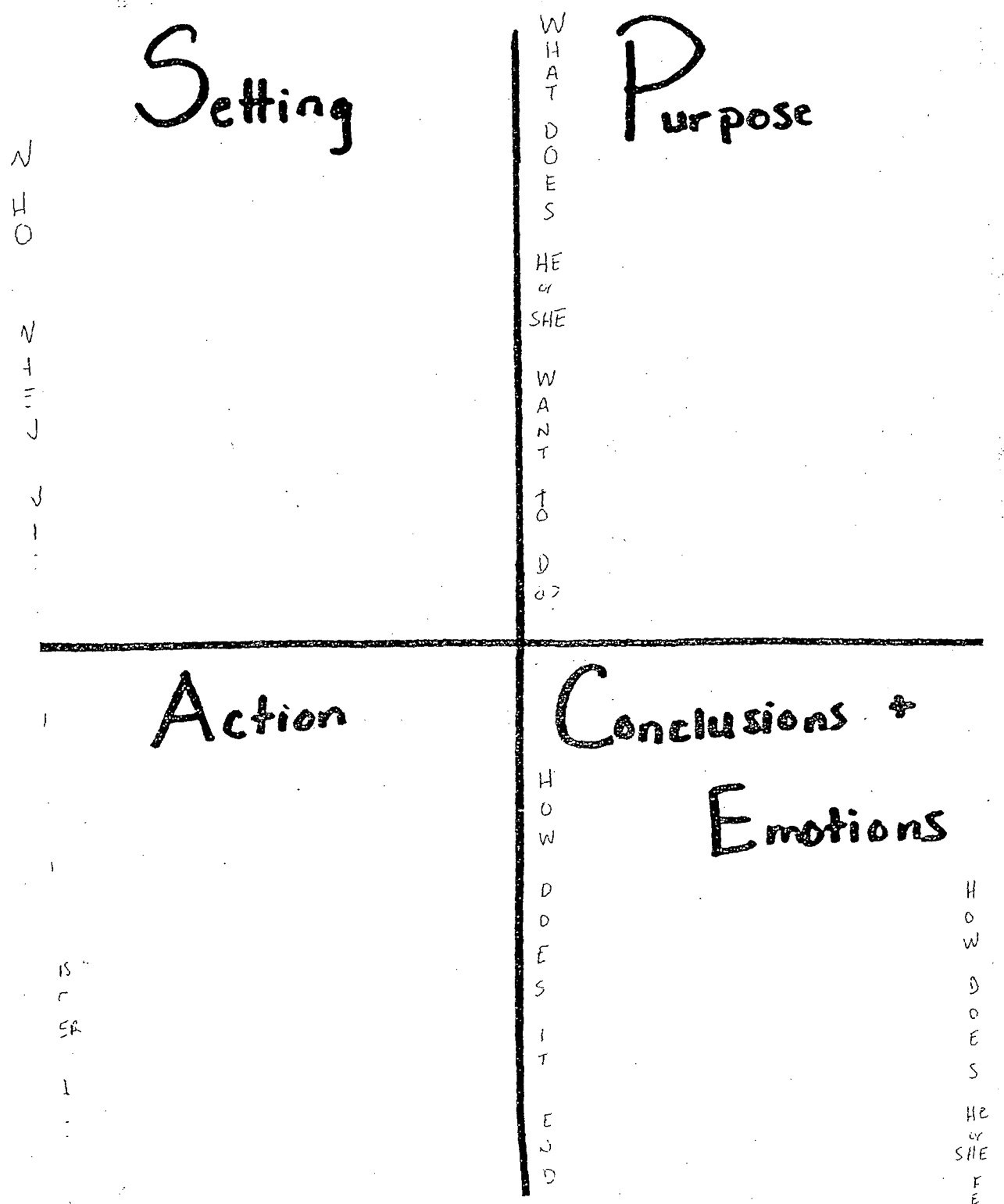

Figure 2: Prewriting Organizer

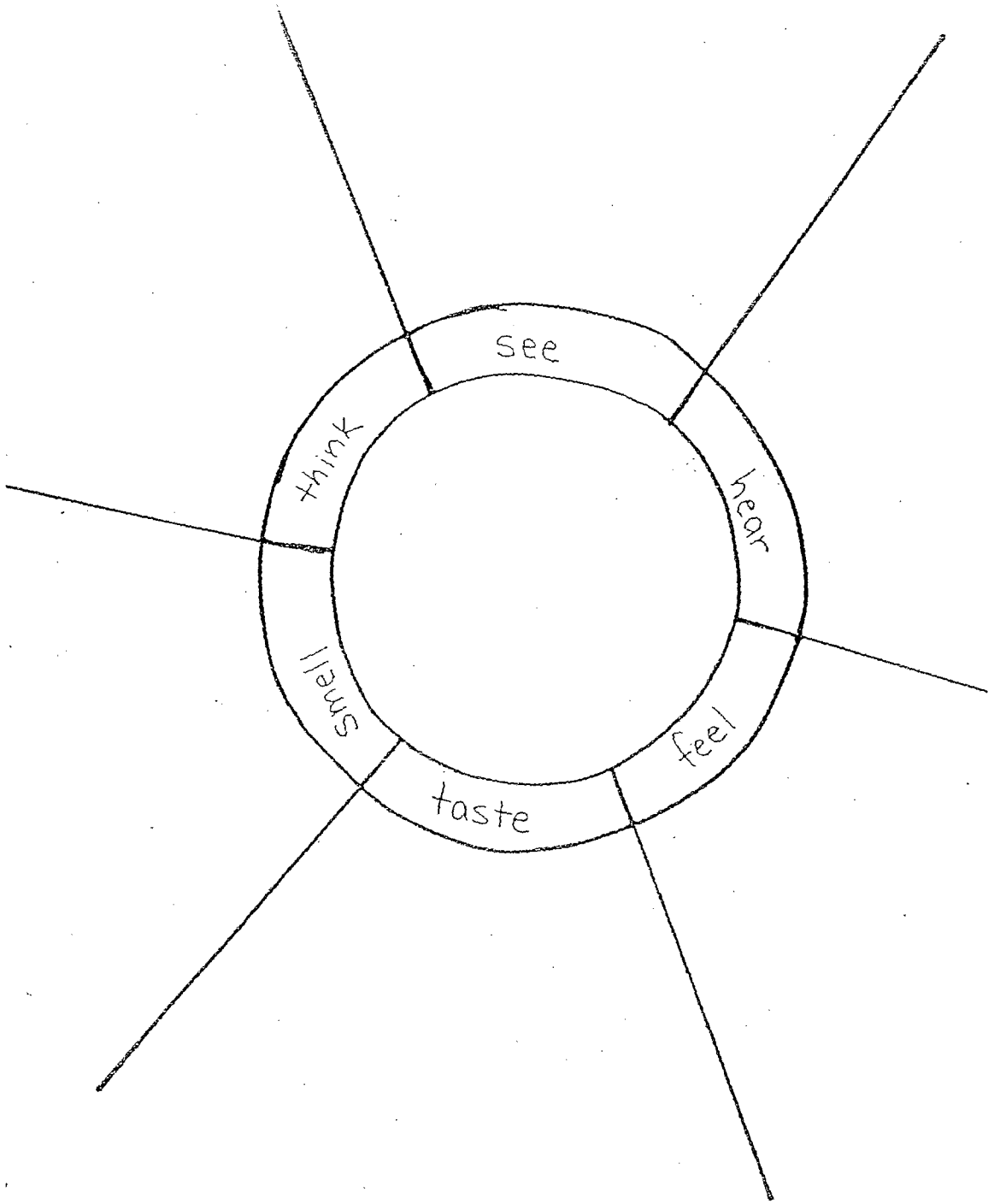

Figure 3: Revising Lesson on Detail Elaboration

Hook Your Reader with a Good Lead !

Type of Lead: ______________________

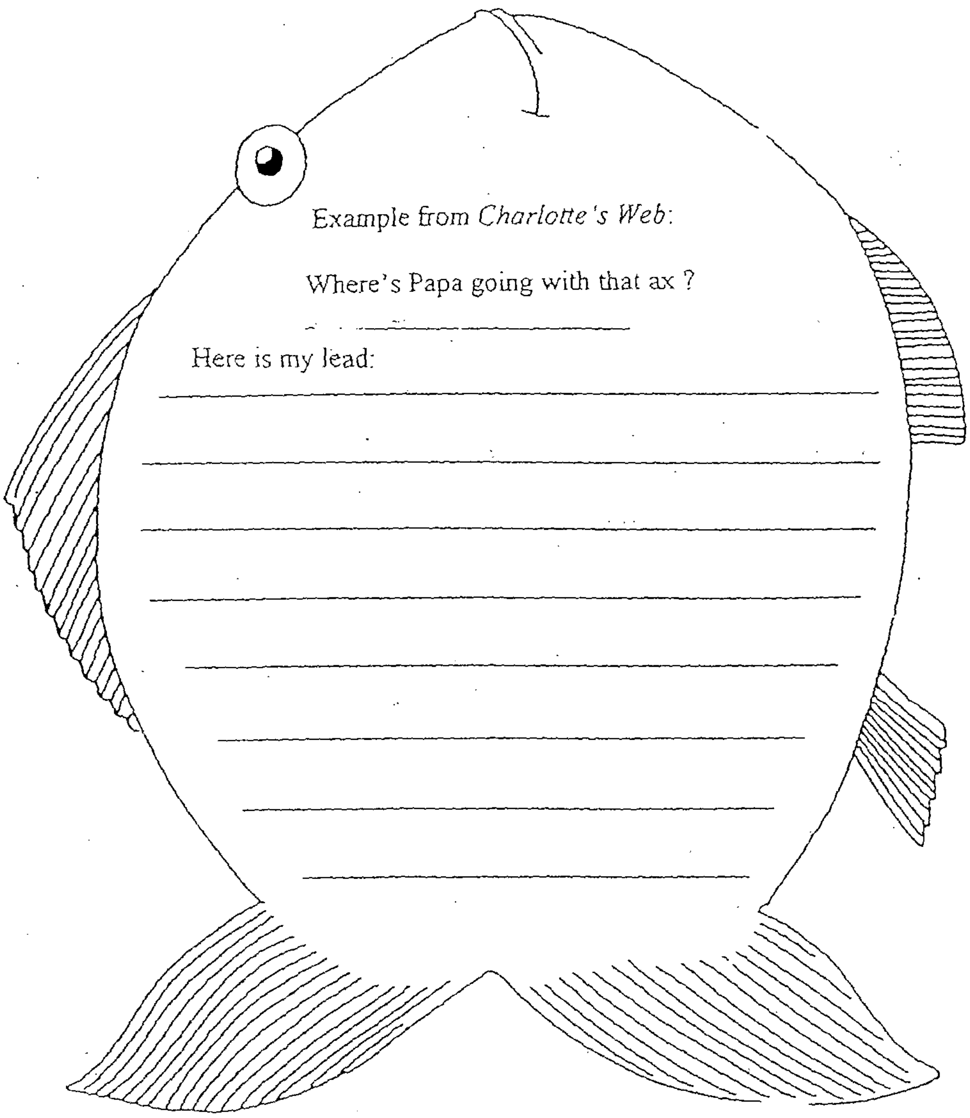

Figure 4: Revising Lesson on Story Leads/Openings

Name _____

List some of the ways that you have learned for effective closings/endings

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Identify which technique is used:

She looked at her flock hanging from the ceiling. As she watched, a light autumn breeze made the birds rustle and sway. They seemed to be alive and flying out through the open window. How beautiful and free they were! Sadako sighed and closed her eyes.

She never woke up.

_____

Then, turning toward the door, with a wide smile and a cheerful wave of his free hand, Jimmy gave the command— _____ Forward!"

Figure 5: Revising Lesson on Story Closings/Endings

sample paragraph page

The man and woman had been planning their boating trip for weeks. They were excited to go and set sail on the lake. They had packed everything they thought they would need for the fun and relaxing afternoon. However, once they had sailed out to the middle of the giant lake, dark clouds began rumbling in. The wind began to whip around their faces and the water sprayed into their eyes. They were beginning to worry! Suddenly, a huge wave began to grow. The man paddled backwards as fast as he could. Using all his strength, he tried to catch the wave with the boat and ride it into shore. Luckily, the wave pushed the boat to shore. The man and woman were safe and sound on the beach. They thought to themselves, "Maybe a relaxing day at home would be fun!"

Figure 6: Revising Lesson on Paragraphing

overhead

SIMILES

Explain:

1. Why each sentence is a simile.
2. What two things are being compared
3. What is the point the author is making

THE LIGHTNING WAS LIKE A KNIFE CUTTING THROUGH THE DARK SKY.

THE OCEAN ROARED AS LOAD AS A LION TRAPPED IN A CAGE.

THE RAIN POURED ON THE WINDOWS LIKE A LOUD DRUM.

THE GIRL SCREAMED AS LOUD AS A FIRE ENGINE COMING DOWN A STREET.

Figure 7: Revising Lesson on Similes

cops handout

edit with COPS

Capitalization (beginnings of sentences, proper nouns)

Organization (make sure the sentences and paragraphs are in an order that makes sense)

Punctuation (check for periods, exclamation points, question marks, and quotation marks)

Spelling (Check your spelling...use a dictionary, word wall, a buddy, etc.)

Figure 8: Editing Lesson on the Mnemonic "COPS"

PEER CONFERENCE SHEET

Writer _____ Listener _____

WRITER

What is your title? _____

Is there anything special you would like to ask your partner for help with?

_____

LISTENER

Check the things the writer did well:

word choice	exciting sentences	good character description
transition wds.	grabbing lead	easy to understand
expanded sent.	elaboration w/ details	good setting description
strong focus		

Check the things the writer may want to work on:

word choice	exciting sentences	good character description
transition wds.	grabbing lead	easy to understand
expanded sent.	elaboration w/ details	good setting description
strong focus		

What did you like about the story:

_____

_____

What revisions may the writer want to think about?

_____

_____

Plan of Action:

Step 1 _____

Step 2 _____

Writer's Signature _____

Listener's Signature _____

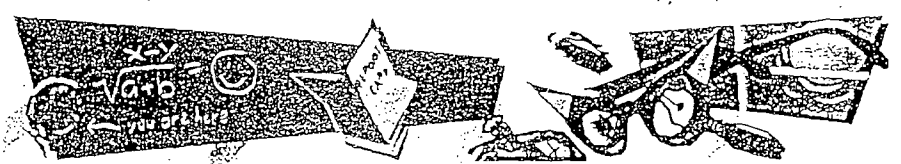

Figure 9: Peer Conferencing Sheet

APPENDIX C

NEW JERSEY REGISTERED HOLISTIC SCORING RUBRIC

...n, consider the written language	Inadequate Command	Limited Command	Partial Command	Adequate Command	Strong Command	Superior Command
Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
Content and ...ganization	• May lack opening and/or closing	• May lack opening and/or closing	• May lack opening and/or closing	• May lack opening and/or closing	• Generally has opening and closing	• Has opening and closing
	• Minimal response to topic; uncertain focus	• Attempts to focus • May drift or shift focus	• Usually has single focus	• Single focus	• Single focus • Sense of unity and coherence • Key ideas developed	• Single, distinct foc • Unified and coher • Well-developed
	• No planning evident; disorganized	• Attempts organization • Few, if any, transitions between ideas	• Some lapses or flaws in organization • May lack some transitions between ideas	• Ideas loosely connected • Transitions evident	• Logical progression of ideas • Moderately fluent • Attempts compositional risks ← NOT ALWAYS	• Logical progressio ideas • Fluent, cohesive • Compositional risk successful
	• Details random, inappropriate, or barely apparent	• Details lack elaboration, i.e., highlight paper	• Repetitious details • Several unelaborated details	• Uneven development of details	• Details appropriate and varied	• Details effective, v explicit, and/or pertinent
Usage	• No apparent control • Severe/numerous errors	• Numerous errors	• Errors/patterns of errors may be evident	• Some errors that do not interfere with meaning	• Few errors	• Very few, if any, e
Sentence ...nstruction	• Assortment of incomplete and/or incorrect sentences	• Excessive monotony/same structure • Numerous errors	• Little variety in syntax • Some errors	• Some errors that do not interfere with meaning	• Few errors	• Very few, if any, e
...echanics	• Errors so severe they detract from meaning	• Numerous serious errors	• Patterns of errors evident	• No consistent pattern of errors • Some errors that do not interfere with meaning	• Few errors	• Very few, if any, e

CORABLE ...NSES*	(FR)	Fragment	Student wrote too little to allow a reliable judgment of his/her writing
	(OT)	Off Topic/ Off Task	Student did not write on the assigned topic/task, or the student attempted to copy the prompt.
	(NE)	Not English	Student wrote in a language other than English.
	(NR)	No Response	Student refused to write on the topic, or the writing task folder was blank.

Content/Organization	Usage	Sentence Construction	Mechanics
• Communicates intended message to intended audience • Relates to topic • Opening and closing • Focused • Logical progression of ideas • Transitions • Appropriate details and information	• Tense formation • Subject-verb agreement • Pronouns usage/agreement • Word choice/meaning • Proper Modifiers	• Variety of formations • Correct construction	• Skills intact in: • Spelling • Capitalization • Punctuation

Figure 1: New Jersey Holistic Scoring Rubric