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COGNITIVE WRITING STRATEGIES

by
Arlene A. Paris

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 5, 2003

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved May 6, 2003
May 6, 2003

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ABSTRACT

Arlene A. Paris
COGNITIVE WRITING STRATEGIES
2002/2003
Dr. Stanley Urban
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of cognitive strategy instruction in teaching writing. Writing is a process that results in a product. The learning that takes place will be continually developing and changing. Our goal as teachers of writing is to have our students produce quality written products. How does one accomplish this? Strategy instruction which includes metacognition and self-regulation can empower the writer. Students develop as writers when cognitive strategy instruction is used in the classroom. It requires knowledge, strategies, motivation, and practice with constructive feedback. (Harris & Graham, 1996)

The individuals who participated in this study are 20 students from this researcher's elementary classroom. The 9 males and 11 females, ranging in age from 8 years 4 months to 9 years 8 months have been selected as a convenience group (N=20) of third grade students. They have been in this researcher's classroom since September, 2002. The participants were selected because they are readily available to this examiner. The accessible population of interest is all third grade classes in this examiner's school. Generalization of results will be to this population.

The spontaneous writing sample entitled "My Secret Place" was utilized as both the pre-test and post-test writing activity. The participants as members of this examiner's class were assessed on October 14, 2002.

Self-regulated strategy instruction was subsequently implemented in this researcher's classroom. The six basic stages of instruction which are: (1) Develop and activate background knowledge, (2) Discuss it, (3) Model it, (4) Memorize it, (5) Support it, and (6) Independent performance, were used by this researcher to introduce writing strategies. Mnemonics were used to facilitate retention of components of the final product.

The post writing sample was given to the 20 participants on March 11, 2003. The writing prompt was identical to the prompt given to the study group on October 14, 2002. The samples were scored holistically defining performance levels based on written descriptors. Numeric scores range from a score of 1-Inadequate Command of written language to a score of 6-Superior Command of written language. There was an increase of 1.0 points in the mean scores from the pre-test (2.5) to the post-test (3.55).

MINI-ABSTRACT

Arlene A. Paris
COGNITIVE WRITING STRATEGIES
2002/2003
Dr. Stanley Urban
Master in Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study is to examine the application of cognitive strategy instruction in teaching writing. A spontaneous writing prompt was given at the beginning and the end this study to evaluate growth in writing skills. Self-regulated strategy instruction in writing was implemented in the classroom. Six basic stages of instruction were used to introduce writing strategies. Mnemonics were used to facilitate retention of components of the final writing project. Students were taught to maintain and generalize the use of strategies. Pre-test and post-test writing samples were scored holistically using written descriptors which ranged from 1-Inadequate Command of written language to 6-Superior Command of written language. Results of this study indicated an increase of 1.0 in the mean scores from the pre-test(2.5) to the post-test(3.55).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cultural, sociological and familial forces have resulted in significant changes in the population of children that come to school today. The National Assessment of Educational Programs has documented many deficiencies in the basic skills of United States children. Among the weaknesses noted is the area of written expression. Although the trend in the teaching of writing has been to focus on writing as part of the whole language process, teachers need to know what kinds of materials, strategies, and activities will work best for their students. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students can benefit from educational research to discover ways that will enable students to produce high quality written expression

The concept of whole language which originated decades ago, is a teaching philosophy that refers to meaningful, real, and relevant teaching and learning. (Routman, 1988) Whole language which includes listening, speaking, reading and writing, in addition to spelling and handwriting, are learned naturally and in meaningful context as a whole not in individual parts.

The term “whole language” has been defined numerous ways and has often been misused. Routman (1988) prefers using the term “process teaching” which values both the process and the product. This process implies continuous learning and developing on the part of the teacher and students.

Written language before the 1980’s, consisted of understanding syntax, semantics, and the phonology of our language. Students were proficient in noun/verb agreement, diagramming sentences, and vocabulary building not constructing meaningful stories.

Written language today, an important part of whole language, should be learned naturally and in a meaningful context.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the application of cognitive strategy instruction in teaching writing. Writing is a process that results in a product. The learning that takes place will be continually developing and changing. Our goal as teachers of writing is to have our students produce quality written products. How does one accomplish this? Strategy instruction which includes metacognition and self-regulation can empower the writer. Students develop as writers when cognitive strategy instruction is used in the classroom. The ability to write is a skill that must be systematically taught to students. It requires knowledge, strategies, motivation, and practice with constructive feedback. (Harris & Graham, 1996)

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is found in the low writing scores of students throughout our state and the country, in general. Since writing is a major component on the ESPA, GEPA, and HSPA in New Jersey, teachers and administrators are looking for methods of teaching that will allow them to improve written output.

Since 1990 the sample school in this study which is composed of a K-8 public school district has implemented process writing in its language arts curriculum. Achievement scores on the 2002 Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA)

given in fourth grade were highest in the writing component. The statewide “just proficient” mean score was 10.9 with a possible score of 20. Writing scores for the 98 fourth grade students are as follows:

Total students: 14.6
 General Education students: 14.9
 Special Education students: 13.1

Other scores in the school that was the sample for this study was as follows:

	<u>Language Arts Literacy</u>		
	Reading	Working with Text	Analyzing Text
Possible Points	(23)	(10)	(13)
Just Proficient Mean Scores	9.1	4.5	4.6
Average of All Students	13.9	6.6	7.2
General Education Students	14.4	6.8	7.5
Special Education Students	10.8	5.4	5.4

This sample school district assesses students in grades 3 through 8 using a criterion based writing sample. Writing samples are scored using a rubric based on a 12 point scale. A sample of the rubric is contained in Appendix A. The assessment is read by 2 readers who assign a rating from 0-6 (with 12 being the highest score). No cut off scores are used and data on each child’s performance represents an ordinal measure. The results of the

2002 district writing sample are as follows:

	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 4</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>
Subject School	7.40	7.49	6.18
District average	7.33	7.34	6.74

The results of the New Jersey ESPA and district writing objectives emphasize that the methods we are implementing in the classrooms must continuously be evaluated and modified to meet our students' needs as the demands for writing performance increases.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Historically, writing was taught in the content of English classes, which included drilling, completing worksheets, diagramming sentences, and memorizing vocabulary. Upon completion of course requirements, the student would be fairly proficient in those areas only. Composing reports, stories, or analyses was only highlighted in the classroom. When the student entered the work force or the college classroom, he/she felt inadequately prepared for the job or classroom requirements. Thus, our curriculum had to change to meet the needs of its students.

Today, a person's teaching philosophy drives that individual throughout his/her profession. How we speak to children, what we expect from them, our teaching style, all reflect our beliefs. As teachers of writing we grow by examining, reflecting, refining, and changing to meet the needs of our students.

Karen Harris and Steven Graham, Professors of Special Education at the University of Maryland, share interest in how children learn to write and how this development can be fostered. They have studied what children know about writing,

writing mechanics, and what strategies are used in story composition. Their research will be extensively reviewed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following general research questions will be answered in this study:

Research Question 1: What effect will empirically derived writing strategies have on students' written expression?

In order to answer this general question the following 2 sub questions will be answered.

1. Will students score higher on holistically scored writing pieces after receiving instruction in the use of writing strategies?
2. Will students maintain and generalize these strategies to other subject areas?

DEFINITIONS

The following list of words have been defined for the purpose of understanding this research.

1. Cognitive strategy instruction focuses on self-speech, and self-instructions, or the things we say to ourselves while working on an assignment.

2. Process approach is the use of procedures by the writer to plan, generate ideas, organize, and revise text.

3. Metacognition simply is thinking about thinking. A person's knowledge of their learning and cognitive processes and the constant regulation of those processes to enhance learning and memory. (Ormrod, 1999)

4. Modeling is demonstration by a teacher or peer of a specific assignment using self-instructions of things people say to themselves while they work.

5. Self-speech refers to a child's own speech that is used to plan, direct, and evaluate his/her own activities. Overt self-speech occurs from early on and increases until the age of 6 or 7. Overt self-speech then decreases and self-speech becomes primarily covert or internal by the age of 8 to 10. As children's cognitive abilities increase, children become aware that talking to yourself out loud is not socially acceptable. After the age of 10, covert self-speech becomes abbreviated and condensed and essentially becomes "pure thought". (Harris & Graham, 1996)

6. Self-instructions is covert self-speech used by an individual to help that student comprehend what is expected of him/her.

7. Goal setting is a plan that a student establishes to achieve certain goals in the writing process.

8. Self-regulation teaches students to set goals and monitor their work in the writing process.

9. Scaffolding refers to the structured guidance the teacher provides to each student gradually decreasing support as the student masters the writing process.

10. Booster sessions can: a) review strategies mastered, b) provide collaborative practice of the mastered strategies, c) provide collaborative problem solving regarding any problem the students have experienced, and d) allow for discussion of successful experiences with strategy use or generalization.

11. Holistic scoring is a grading system that uses points ranging from 0 (unsatisfactory) to 6 (excellent) based on a rubric.

12. Rubric refers to a tool used to grade an assignment. Points range from 0 to 6 (unsatisfactory to excellent). The rubric explicitly specifies characteristics required at each numeral represented.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations which must be taken into account when generalizing the results of this study. They are as follows:

1. The 21 students are members of a regular third grade classroom and represent a convenience group. They were not randomly selected.
2. The assessment tools used in this study are curriculum based and not standard writing assessments. No reliability and validity statistics are available. The levels of achievement using a writing rubric are based upon a class of 21 third grade students and not normed on a representative population.
3. The 21 third grade students will be exposed to strategy instruction by one teacher, the researcher, thus, the methodology and the specific teaching style of the implementers will be confounded.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Effective writing instruction must be made available to all students if adequate writing achievement is to be obtained. The opportunity to learn has long been considered one of the major factors influencing achievement, in addition to pedagogical practice and aptitude (Carroll, 1963). Donald Graves(1985) states that students should write for at least 30 minutes a day, at least 4 days a week, as opposed to a national average of writing 1 day in 8.

Simply allowing time for writing each day will not result in improvement in writing. Frank Smith (1982) believes a writer should work as both the author and the secretary where matters of content and mechanics are both addressed. When the writer works as author he is concerned with content, organization, voice, and so on. When the writer works as secretary he concerns himself with proofreading such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Attention to mechanical skills will not improve composition. Conversely, emphasis on composition will not guarantee acquisition of mechanics in the content of authentic writing experiences (Kame'enui, 2002). According to Kame'enui, writing intertwines both the roles of author and secretary. Parallel instruction in content and mechanics from conceptualization to publication integrates the focus of writing. Knowing what skilled writers do as they compose, what specific strategies they use when they write, will help students to become better writers.

PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

All teachers have an explicit and implicit philosophy of education. How we speak to children, what we expect from them, and how we conduct ourselves reflect our beliefs. We observe, reflect, and refine new teaching ideas. Good teachers as we evaluate new educational research and theory, discuss these ideas with colleagues and continually search for new ways to instruct and motivate children.

A teachers educational philosophy should be grounded in current research and theory. Teachers must feel confident in what and how they are teaching their students.

Regie Routman (1988) believes educators should focus on:

- * Teaching students vs. teaching programs
- * Teacher as facilitator vs. teacher as manager
- * Process orientation vs. product orientation
- * Development of a set of strategies vs. mastery of a series of skills
- * Celebrating approximation and risk taking vs. celebrating perfection
- * Promoting and respecting individual growth and differences vs. fostering competition
- * Capitalizing on a student's strengths vs. emphasizing remediating weaknesses
- * Promoting independence in learning vs. dependence on the teacher

Some educators are frightened by the implication of this education. However, if we are to recognize the unique attributes of each child, we must respect their individuality and abandon the cookie cutter method of teaching.

ESTABLISHING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

During a conference of the National Council of Teachers of English, a teacher asked the author Avi, "What do you suggest doing if kids won't write?" Avi responded, "Well, first you have to love them. If you can convince your children that you love them, then there's nothing you can't teach them" (1987). Trust, respect, support, and high expectations must be generously and genuinely present for all children (Routman, 1988). The emotional tone the teacher creates in the classroom may well directly effect the success of the writing program.

Routman(1988) believes that children need to be encouraged to try out different ideas, to refine, to makes changes, and to take risks in their reading and writing procedures. Children need to feel safe and valued in their environment for maximum learning to take place.

Frank Smith (1982) believes that necessary conditions for learning anything include: demonstration, engagement, and sensitivity with classroom teachers as facilitators and guides. Individuals enjoy joining clubs because they want to be a part of that community. Smith (1988) advocates "literacy clubs" where children can become part of the community of learners. Members have the opportunity to work in partnerships, or small groups on activities that are worthwhile, relevant, interesting, and meaningful.

Lucy Calkins (1991) usually begins her school year by filling the classroom with activities from children's lives. Her children bring in photograph albums, share family stories, and institute classroom museums. These activities provide intensity and engagement with life in the classroom (Calkins, 1991). John Goodlad (1984) found that emotional neutrality and student passivity are the norm in American education. Children who sit passively with glassy eyes can't wait until school is over to run through the school doors into the excitement of their lives. Bring that excitement into the classroom through

literacy. Writing should be on topics of great significance, close to your heart and soul (Calkins, 1991).

THE PROCESS APPROACH

The writing process which centers on stages through which writers most frequently work began 39 years ago when Herum and Cummings (1970) wrote on the writing process for college students. Graves (1983) is the individual who is credited with introducing this writing approach in the public schools.

The steps in the writing process are generally consistent from source to source but vocabulary may differ.

1. **Planning:** This step uses brainstorming and graphic organizers to gather ideas on the topic. This step helps to organize ideas and develop a plan.
2. **Drafting:** This step allows the author to look at the ideas in the planning stage and develop meaning and sequence in story form.
3. **Editing/Revising:** Revising refers to changes that are made to the content of the story. It is rewriting of the text to enhance meaning. Editing focuses on secretarial skills such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
4. **Publishing:** This is the final step in the writing process where students display their work in its best form. Many students take great pride in their written accomplishments (Kame'enui, 2002).

Donald Graves, Susan Sowers, and Lucy Calkins (1983) conducted a 3 year study of children's writing at the Atkinson Academy, a public school in New Hampshire. The 4

step writing process is an outline for the teaching of writing. Elaboration of ideas and mini lessons are necessary for increases in writing performance. Graves (1983) suggests ways to choose topics, teacher modeling, conferencing, revising principles, using a writing folder, and many other areas.

WRITING STRATEGIES

The writing process consists of 4 steps: planning, drafting, editing/revising, and publishing. Transitioning from steps in the writing process to the final published work is comprehensive and sequential. Teachers must assist their students through demonstrations, making connections between writing and their lives, and make generalizations to other genres.

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) believe that reading out loud and showing the thinking readers do is central to learning. When we read and write, thoughts fill our mind. Getting students to think when they write, to develop an awareness of their thinking, and to use strategies to complete their product is their goal. The writer is reader, just as the reader is writer. When you write you envision experiences, you engage in the events and the characters as your own. As the reader, you bring your own thoughts, knowledge, and experiences to mind as you read the writer's text.

In Making the Writing Process Work: Strategies for Composition and Self-Regulation, Karen R. Harris and Steve Graham (1996) present cognitive strategies for writing and focus on becoming a self-regulated writer aware and in control of the writing processes. They credit the work of numerous researchers and theorists, three of whom strongly influenced their work.

The first was Donald Meichenbaum, often called the Father of Cognitive Behavior Modification, successfully used five steps in teaching children how to give themselves instructions to guide their behavior.

1. Cognitive modeling: An adult model performs the desired task while verbalizing instructions that guide performance.
2. Overt, external guidance: The child performs the task while listening to the adult verbalize the instructions.
3. Overt self-guidance: The child repeats the instructions aloud while performing the task.
4. Faded, overt self-guidance: The child whispers the instructions while performing the task.
5. Covert self-instructions: The child silently thinks about the instructions while performing the task

The adult initially serves as a model not only for behavior itself but also for self-instructions. Responsibility for performing the task and for guidance about how to perform the task is gradually turned over to the child (Ormrod, 1999).

Lev Vygotsky, the Soviet theorist and researcher, also influenced the work of Harris and Graham. Vygotsky believed that many thinking processes have their roots in social interactions with other people. The process through which these social activities evolve into internal mental activities is called *internalization* (Ormrod, 1999). Thought and language initially develop independently of each other, then the two become interdependent when children are about two years old (Ormrod, 1999).

When thought and language merge we begin to see *self-talk*, where children talk to themselves out loud. This eventually becomes *inner speech*, where children talk to themselves mentally rather than out loud (Ormrod, 1999). By talking to themselves, children learn to guide and direct their behavior through difficult tasks and maneuvers.

children learn to eventually give themselves directions.

Finally, Donald D. Deshler and his colleagues at the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities have also influenced the work of Harris and Graham. Deshler's work with *superimposed meaningful structures*, or mnemonics, imposes a familiar structure on the body of information to be learned (Ormrod, 1999). The structure can be an acronym, sentence, story, poem, or anything else already meaningful to the learner. The superimposed meaningful structures facilitate memory for lists of items (Schumacker & Deshler, 1994). As stated previously in this chapter, developing a personal philosophy which emphasizes the student and the student's needs is at the center of authentic instruction.

Today, Harris and Graham (1999) see their students develop as a community of learners who:

- * share and help each other
- * make personal choices about what they read or write
- * take ownership and responsibility for their learning
- * take risks in their reading and writing, and
- * collaborate in evaluating their efforts and progress.

What do skilled writers do as they compose? Skilled writers have a complete repertoire of strategies for planning, generating, organizing, and revising text (Harris & Graham, 1996).

A vignette provided by Karen Harris is instructive. One day she was doing homework with her daughter, Leah, where she modeled a math counting problem. A few days later when Leah encountered a similar math problem she said, "Oh, Mommy, now I know the *trick of it*." The "*trick of it*" is helping young writers to develop when they are ready and want to know how. Planning, revising, and managing the writing process are

the “*tricks of it*’ or the “*know-how*” they need to become strategic writers (Harris & Graham, 1996).

Irving Wallace said, “I work a novel out, in chronological sequence, over many weeks, in my head and then roughly on paper before beginning it...” His approach illustrates many of the procedures skilled writers use when composing. Strategies for planning and revising will improve writing. Self-regulation procedures, such as goal-setting and self-evaluation can be applied informally on their own.

Self-regulated strategy development requires teachers to play an active, facilitative role in the development of writing abilities, through activities such as, conferencing, modeling, prompting, and dialoguing (Harris & Graham, 1996). Teachers provide a level of structured guidance appropriate to each student, gradually decreasing this support as the student masters the writing process.

Six basic stages of instruction can be used to introduce and integrate the strategy and self-regulation components. They are:

1. Develop and activate background knowledge
2. Discuss it
3. Model it
4. Memorize it
5. Support it
6. Independent performance

Self-regulated strategy development represents a *metascript*, or general format and guidelines. There are many ways in which the six stages can be reordered, and combined that will work best for the students.

There are six major characteristics that are critical to the success of effective strategy instruction. They are: collaboration, individualization, mastery-level instruction, anticipatory instruction, enthusiastic teachers working within a support network, and

developmental enhancement.

Writing is a skill that we learn, requiring considerable effort to master the necessary know-how. A “family of writing strategies” is a compilation of ideas that students may draw upon when writing and revising stories (Harris & Graham, 1996). The mnemonic TREE is used to help students remember the key words in the frame. Say “PLAN WHAT TO SAY USING TREE”.

- * Note Topic sentence.
- * Note Reasons.
- * Examine reasons-Will my reader understand this?
- * Note Ending.

Using the mnemonic SPACE the student can generate content concerning setting, the plot of the story, the main character’s purpose, the character’s thoughts and feelings, and the results of the action. Say “PLAN WHAT TO SAY USING SPACE”.

- * Note Setting.
- * Note Purpose.
- * Note Action.
- * Note Conclusion.
- * Note Emotions.

Strategy instruction requires conferencing, modeling, dialogue, sharing, prompting, and assessment. As teachers engage in collaborative instruction they must have knowledge of: writing and self-regulation strategies, difficulties students may encounter, facilitating student development, and how to promote sustained and generalized performance. As students develop their writing abilities within authentic contexts and enter the middle and secondary grade levels, the demand for writing performance increases. Harris and Graham’s approach to the teaching of writing offer explicit

instruction and greater support or scaffolding in their use of strategies. This explicit instruction and support of writing strategies is critical to making the writing process work.

CHAPTER 3
DESIGN OF THE STUDY
POPULATION AND METHOD OF SAMPLE SELECTION

The individuals who will participate in this study are 20 students from this researcher's elementary classroom. The 9 males and 11 females, ranging in age from 8 years 4 months to 9 years 8 months have been selected as a convenience group (N=20) of third grade students. They have been my students since September, 2002. The participants were selected because they are readily available to this examiner. The accessible population of interest is all third grade classes in this examiner's school. Generalization of results will be to this population.

The demographic information listed below was obtained from the *New Jersey School Report Card, 2000-2001* school year. This report provides information about my elementary school pertaining to district finances, teaching staff, class size, in addition to other data which compares my school to the New Jersey state average.

<u>2000-2001 School Year</u>				
<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>School Total</u>		
	98	527		
 <u>Students with Disabilities</u>				
English	99%	Spanish	0%	
Korean	1%	Gujarati	0%	
Taiwanese	0%	Polish	0%	
Albanian	0%	Others	0%	
Percent of LEP (Limited English Proficient) Students				0%

<u>Average Class Size</u>	<u>Grades 1-3</u>		<u>School-Wide</u>	
	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	18.3	20.4	18.8	20.8

<u>Student Attendance Rate</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	96.2%	94.9%

<u>Student Mobility</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	6.8%	13.4%

<u>School Suspensions</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	0.6%	4.8%

<u>Student/Faculty Ratio</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	13.2:1	12.9:1

<u>Faculty Attendance Rate</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	97.6%	96.1%

<u>Student/Administrator Ratio</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	527.0:1	314.1:1

<u>Student/Computer Ratio</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	6.6:1	5.2:1

Administrator and Faculty Degrees

<u>My School</u>		
	BA/BS	77%
	MA/MS	23%
	PhD/EdD	0%

<u>Length of School Day</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	6 hrs: 24min	6 hrs: 24min

<u>Instructional Time</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
	5 hrs: 40min	5 hrs: 34min

<u>Per Pupil Expenditures</u>	<u>My District</u>	<u>State</u>
Total Comparative Cost Per Pupil	\$7,806	\$8,321

TREATMENTS AND METHODOLOGIES

The spontaneous writing sample entitled “My Secret Place” will be utilized as both the pre-test and post-test writing activity. The participants as members of this examiner’s class were assessed on October 14, 2002.

Participant characteristics of importance are noted. The students possess beginning skills in written expression. They have had exposure to the Writing Process. They are developing their skills in Planning, Drafting, Editing/Revising, and Publishing. Modeling by the teacher, mini-lessons, conferencing with peers and teacher are all areas of familiarity but continue to be developed.

The students engage in Writer’s Workshop daily which allows the students to self-select literature. Upon completion of their book, the student responds in written form then shares their piece with classmates.

Effective instruction in writing must be made available to all students if adequate achievement is to be obtained. Children should be taught how to incorporate meaningful text in an organized manner, thus, integrating the author and secretary as one in their writing. At the conclusion of my treatment, this researcher expects to answer the following questions:

1. What effect will empirically derived writing strategies have on students’ written expression?

2. Will students score higher on holistically scored writing pieces after receiving instruction in the use of writing strategies?
3. Will my students maintain and generalize these strategies to other subject areas?

The strategies employed in this study are cognitive writing strategies developed by Karen R. Harris and Steve Graham (1996) of the University of Maryland, College of Education. It is their goal to help their students with ways to construct sophisticated use and ownership of powerful writing and self-regulation strategies.

INSTRUMENTATION

The researcher will use an informal assessment tool to gather information about the current status of the students concerning performance in writing. The students' performance will be compared to specific writing goals. Informal tools are not standardized. When giving informal assessments, the time given to its design, administration, scoring and interpretation must be taken into account (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2001). Informal assessment tools tend to focus on one or more subskills within a curriculum area in an attempt to assess specific skills thoroughly. Their purpose is to gather sufficient information to allow teachers to monitor student progress or make instructional decisions.

Informal assessments are usually teacher-developed and include informal reading inventories, checklists, surveys, and interview guides. The choice of assessment tool should be appropriate to the assessor's needs.

Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is a direct approach to the assessment of student's current skill levels in important school subjects (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2001). The technique that will be used in this study is diagnostic teaching. According to

McLoughlin & Lewis (2001) diagnostic teaching systematically evaluates the relative effectiveness of two or more instructional strategies. The steps in diagnostic teaching are:

1. Identify the current instructional condition, the baseline condition, by using the spontaneous writing prompt called “My Secret Place”.
2. Select or design an informal assessment tool, the N.J. Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric, to monitor student performance.
3. Assess the student’s performance under the current instructional condition to provide an adequate picture of the student’s current performance.
4. Select one or more instructional strategies to evaluate.
5. Implement the first new instructional strategy.
6. Continue to informally assess students’ performance through teacher observation.
7. Implement the second new instructional strategy.
8. Continue to regularly assess students’ performance through teacher observation.
9. Assess student’s performance on a spontaneous writing prompt by using the N.J. Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric.
10. Score both the pre- and post-writing samples using the rubric.
11. Plot performance for the baseline condition and the intervention phases on the graph. Compare performance across the conditions. (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2001)

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This research will be qualitative in design. Thomas and Nelson (2001) state that

qualitative research focuses on a hypothesis that is inductive with a small and purposive sample. The real world setting allows the researcher to gather data. The design of the study is flexible with analysis of data descriptive and interpretive.

Interviews and observations will be conducted. The interviewer will ask the same questions of all the participants. Rapport has been established. Questions will be asked in a way that the respondent feels he/she can talk freely.

Observations of participants behaviors during the pre and post-test writing prompts will be noted. When strategies are taught and implemented, students' behaviors should be recorded for later analysis. Self-reports will also be used to record student's knowledge and attitude toward strategy instruction. The very essence of qualitative research is the search to find out "what is going on here." It involves the systematic study of the perceptions and experiences of individuals within the context of the local setting (Thomas & Nelson, 2001).

The assessment tool that will be used is the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric. Airasian (1996) defines scoring rubrics as "brief, written descriptions of different levels of pupil performance." The performance levels may be indicated by a

numerical scale (e.g., 1 through 6) or verbal labels that range from "Inadequate Command" to "Superior Command". Each performance level is then linked to a description of student performance exemplary of that level. The rubric to be used in this study comes from the New Jersey Language Arts Curriculum Framework for assessing written language. Attached is a copy of the scoring rubric.

Evaluation using rubrics is subjective. The teacher must consider standards of performance then rate work samples in reference to those standards. These standards are not objective but, holistic, qualitative descriptions that require the evaluator to use judgement. This tool does provide rich descriptors of student's writing proficiency which

leads to informed planning and delivery of instruction and offers the student an opportunity to reflect on themselves as learners (N.J. Language Arts Literacy Curriculum Framework, 2002).

At the conclusion of strategy instruction, writing performance will be assessed. Pre and post writing samples will be combined. Names will not appear on papers but codes will be substituted for names. Investigator bias will be minimized by having a third grade colleague score the writing samples. This individual has been trained in holistic scoring and has ten years of teaching experience. She assesses her own students' written work holistically.

Analysis is ongoing. During data collection the researcher sorts and organizes data. Speculation of outcomes is occurring. Analysis will become more intense upon completion of scoring of writing samples. Descriptions will be given and results will be graphed.

Analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. It is reporting what has been seen through stages of organizing, abstracting, integrating, and synthesizing.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS
INTRODUCTION

Writing is an important component of literacy programs. Effective writing instruction must be made available if adequate writing performance is to be achieved. The purpose of this study is to determine what effect empirically derived writing strategies will have on students written expression. Will students score higher on holistically scored writing samples after receiving instruction in writing strategies? Will students maintain and generalize those strategies to other subject areas? These two sub-questions will aid this researcher in answering the general research question.

Process writing, a systematic approach an individual uses to complete a written task, was implemented in this researcher's classroom in September, 2002. The students were instructed in the four step process which consists of planning, drafting, revising, and publishing. This process is one which is self-regulated and facilitates the completion of the writing process in an organized manner. The students routinely use the writing process in developing self-selected topics, picture prompts, poem-linked tasks, or other forms of expository writing.

Twenty third grade students were given a spontaneous writing assignment entitled "The Secret Place". The directions were read by the teacher. They are as follows: "Today, you will do a writing assignment. The poem below, "The Secret Place", may give you ideas for your writing. Read the poem to yourself while I read it to you."

The Secret Place

There's a place I go, inside myself
Where nobody else can be,

And none of my friends can tell it's there-
Nobody Knows but me.

It's hard to explain the way it feels,
Or even where I go.
It isn't a place in time or space,
But once I'm there, I *know*.

It's tiny, it's shiny, it can't be seen,
But it's big as the sky at night...
I try to explain and it hurts my brain,
But once I'm there, it's *right*.

There's a place I know inside myself,
And it's neither big nor small,
And whenever I go, it feels as though
I never left at all.

Dennis Lee

In the poem, "The Secret Place", Dennis Lee tells you about a place he likes to go. It is a special place to him.

Write about a place you like to go. It could be a secret place you go to be alone, or a place you go with others. It might be far away, close to home or even in your own house. It might be a real place or an imaginary one. Include the ideas that follow in your writing: (1) Name and describe your special place, (2) Tell why this place is special to you, and (3) Describe the things you do while in your special place.

You may take notes, create a web, or do other prewriting work on your paper. Then, write your description on the lined composition paper.

The 20 participants in this study wrote on this topic using the skills that they had acquired in first and second grades and approximately six weeks in this researcher's classroom.

Self-regulated strategy instruction was subsequently implemented in this researcher's classroom. The six basic stages of instruction which are: (1) Develop and activate background knowledge, (2) Discuss it, (3) Model it, (4) Memorize it, (5) Support it, and (6) Independent performance, were used by this researcher to introduce writing strategies. The mnemonic TREE was used to help students remember the key words in the framework. Say "PLAN WHAT TO SAY USING TREE".

- * Note Topic sentence.
- * Note Reasons.
- * Examine reasons-Will my reader buy this?
- * Note Ending.

Using the mnemonic SPACE the student can generate content concerning setting, the plot of the story, the main character's purpose, the character's thoughts and feelings, and the results of the action. Say "PLAN WHAT TO SAY USING SPACE".

- * Note Setting.
- * Note Purpose.
- * Note Action.
- * Note Conclusion.
- * Note Emotions.

This researcher created an environment where there was time each day not only to write, but to think and reflect on what they had written. The students were encouraged to ask questions about their writing and share their writing with their peers. Students had

the opportunity to select their own topics, work with a partner, and take risks in their writing.

This researcher would structure the writing period, referred to as Writers' Workshop. During Writers' Workshop, the students were instructed to use self-talk, where the students focused on the cognitive processes underlying writing. Teachable moments provided on-the-spot teaching or mini-lessons on aspects of writing that occurred with my students. Conferencing with the teacher occurred before, during, and after they wrote. Modeling, discussion, and collaboration were taking place in this researcher's classroom. The environment in the classroom was conducive to listening, sharing, asking questions, and helping each other to develop as young writers.

The post writing sample was given to the 20 participants on March 11, 2003. The writing prompt was identical to the prompt given to the class on October 14, 2002. It was entitled "The Secret Place". Directions were given, the poem was read aloud, and students were directed to include specific ideas in their writing.

RESULTS

The pre and post writing samples were combined into one group. The samples were scored by a colleague of this researcher who has been trained in registered holistic scoring. The assessment tool used in scoring the samples was the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric (NJRHSR). This rubric defines performance levels based on written descriptors. Numeric scores range from a score of 1-Inadequate Command to a score of 6-Superior Command.

The evaluator looked for the following elements of written expression: content and organization, usage, sentence construction, and mechanics.

The results of this study are as follows:

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pre-Test Score</u>	<u>Post-Test Score</u>	<u>Difference in Scores</u>
M.A.	2	2	0
J.A.	2	3	+1
S.B.	2	4	+2
M.B.	3	3	0
M.B.	2	4	+2
D.C.	2	3	+1
M.C.	3	3	0
T.C.	3	3	0
J. D.	3	2	-1
J.F.	4	5	+1
P.G.	2	4	+2
O.H.	2	3	+1
B.M.	3	3	0
J.M.	2	4	+2
E.M.	3	5	+2
V.M.	3	4	+1
T.P.	4	4	0
E.P.	2	5	+3
S.V.	2	4	+2
A.W.	1	3	+2

The mean score of the pre-test writing samples was 2.5 with the range of 1 to 4.

The mean score of the post-test writing samples was 3.55 with a range of 2 to 5.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

There was an increase of 1.0 in the mean scores from the pre-test (2.5) to the post-test (3.55). This chart depicts the number of students and the scores they attained.

<u>Pre-Test</u>		<u>Post-Test</u>	
<u>Score</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
1	1	1	0
2	10	2	2
3	7	3	8
4	2	4	7
5	0	5	3

J.F., E.M., and E.P. each received scores of 5 on their post writing samples. Indicators on the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric (NJRHSR) award a score of 5, a “Strong Command” of written language. These stories generally have an opening and closing, a single focus with a sense of unity and coherence. These students wrote in a style of logical progression of ideas and moderate fluency. The students displayed their knowledge of usage by writing sentences with subject-verb agreement. These stories contained good word choice. Sentence construction was correct with students using a variety of sentence forms. Few errors were noted in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

S.B., M.B., P.G., J.M., V.M., T.P., and S.V. received scores of 4. Indicators on the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric award a score of 4, an “Adequate Command” of written language. These students showed evidence of lack of an opening or closing. Eventhough there was a single focus throughout their stories, ideas were loosely

connected. Details were unevenly developed. In usage, some errors were noted, but these errors did not interfere with meaning. In addition, errors in sentence construction and mechanics did not show a pattern or interfere with meaning.

J.A., M.B., D.C., M.C., T.C., O.H., B.M., and A.W. all received a score of 3 on the post writing samples. Indicators on the NJRHSR award a score of 3, a “Partial Command” of written language. Stories receiving a score of 3 may lack an opening and/or closing. While the stories usually have a single focus there are some lapses or flaws in organization. Transitions between ideas may be missing. Repetition of details may be present, in addition to, several details left unelaborated. In sentence construction, there is usually little variety. In both usage and mechanics, patterns of errors may be evident.

M.A. and J.D. received scores of 2 on their post writing samples. Indicators on the NJRHSR award a 2, a “Limited Command” of written language. Stories receiving a score of 2 may lack an opening and/or closing. There is an attempt to focus story ideas but this focus may drift. There is an attempt at organization with few, if any, transitions between ideas. This paper lacks details. There are numerous errors in usage, sentence structure, and mechanics.

No students received a score of 1 which indicates an “Inadequate Command” of written language, or a score of 0, which is awarded if a story is fragmented (F), off-topic (OT), or no response (NR) was received from the student.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of cognitive strategy instruction in teaching writing. Writing is a process that results in a product. The learning that takes place will be continually developing and changing. Our goal as teachers of writing is to have our students produce quality written products. How does one accomplish this? Strategy instruction which includes metacognition and self-regulation can empower the writer. Students develop as writers when cognitive strategy instruction is used in the classroom. It requires knowledge, strategies, motivation, and practice with constructive feedback. (Harris & Graham, 1996)

The individuals who participated in this study are 20 students from this researcher's elementary classroom. The 9 males and 11 females, ranging in age from 8 years 4 months to 9 years 8 months have been selected as a convenience group (N=20) of third grade students. They have been in this researcher's classroom since September, 2002. The participants were selected because they are readily available to this examiner. The accessible population of interest is all third grade classes in this examiner's school. Generalization of results will be to this population.

The spontaneous writing sample entitled "My Secret Place" was utilized as both the pre-test and post-test writing activity. The participants as members of this examiner's class were assessed on October 14, 2002.

Self-regulated strategy instruction was subsequently implemented in this researcher's classroom. The six basic stages of instruction which are: (1) Develop and activate background knowledge, (2) Discuss it, (3) Model it, (4) Memorize it, (5) Support it, and (6) Independent performance, were used by this researcher to introduce writing

strategies. Mnemonics were used to facilitate retention of components of the final product.

The post writing sample was given to the 20 participants on March 11, 2003. The writing prompt was identical to the prompt given to the study group on October 14, 2002. The samples were scored holistically defining performance levels based on written descriptors. Numeric scores range from a score of 1-Inadequate Command of written language to a score of 6-Superior Command of written language. There was an increase of 1.0 points in the mean scores from the pre-test (2.5) to the post-test (3.55).

FINDINGS

This study demonstrates that cognitive strategies can improve written expression. Utilizing the cognitive strategy approach from October 14, 2003 to March 11, 2003, this researcher's students improved their writing scores with an increase of 1.0 points in the mean scores for the pre-test (2.5) to the post-test (3.55) when scored holistically using a 1 to 6 point descriptive rating scale.

DISCUSSION

This researcher's goal was to discover what effect the use of writing strategies would have on students' written expression, and if the students' scores on holistically scored writing pieces would increase. In addition, would the students maintain and generalize these strategies to other subject areas?

Cognitive strategy instruction took place over a five month period of time. The six basic stages of instruction which are: (1) Develop and activate background knowledge, (2) Discuss it, (3) Model it, (4) Memorize it, (5) Support it, and (6) Independent

performance, were used by this researcher to introduce writing strategies. The six stages of instruction provided individuals with opportunities to acquire, implement, evaluate, and modify use of cognitive strategies.

Mnemonics were used to help students remember the key words in the framework. The mnemonic TREE was used to help students remember the key words in the framework. Say "PLAN WHAT TO SAY USING TREE".

- * Note Topic sentence.
- * Note Reasons.
- * Examine reasons-Will my reader buy this?
- * Note Ending.

Using the mnemonic SPACE the student can generate content concerning setting, the plot of the story, the main character's purpose, the character's thoughts and feelings, and the results of the action. Say "PLAN WHAT TO SAY USING SPACE".

- * Note Setting.
- * Note Purpose.
- * Note Action.
- * Note Conclusion.
- * Note Emotions.

This researcher structured the writing period, referred to as Writers' Workshop. During Writers' Workshop, the students were instructed to use self-talk, where the students focused on the cognitive processes underlying writing. Teachable moments provided on-the-spot teaching or mini-lessons on aspects of writing that occurred with my students. Conferencing with the teacher occurred before, during, and after they wrote. Modeling, discussion, and collaboration were taking place in this researcher's classroom. The environment in the classroom was conducive to listening, sharing, asking questions, and helping each other to develop as young writers.

Maintaining and generalizing the use of strategies in the areas of writing and other subject areas was also a focus of this study. Individuals can maintain these skills through the use of self-talk or self-instructions. Through the use of self-instructions students could help to comprehend the writing task, implement effective writing strategies, and use these strategies to monitor their writing behavior. As the subjects of this study worked on writing pieces, this researcher encouraged the use of cognitive processes, including self-talk, imagining, anticipating, and self-monitoring. The researcher would model what internal dialogue would sound like, "How can I hook my readers?" or, "No, that sentence doesn't make sense." or, "I need to use better descriptive words." Self-instructions were used in all steps of the writing process.

A spontaneous writing prompt entitled "The Secret Place" was given on October 14, 2002 (pre-test) and subsequently on March 11, 2003 (post-test). The assessment tool used in scoring the samples was the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric (NJRHSR). This rubric defines performance levels based on written descriptors which include the elements of written expression: content and organization, usage, sentence construction, and mechanics. Numeric scores range from a score of 1-Inadequate Command to a score of 6-Superior Command.

The results of this study indicated an increase of 1.0 points in the mean scores from the pre-test (2.5) to the post-test (3.55). The participants have shown through the use of self-instructions that they can generalize the use of cognitive strategies to tasks in other subject areas. This researcher actively involved students in the identification of opportunities to generalize the use of a strategy. Support and reinforcement by this researcher was also given to remind students to generalize. As students mature and experiences increase, those students should continue to develop an understanding of where, when, and how to use cognitive strategies.

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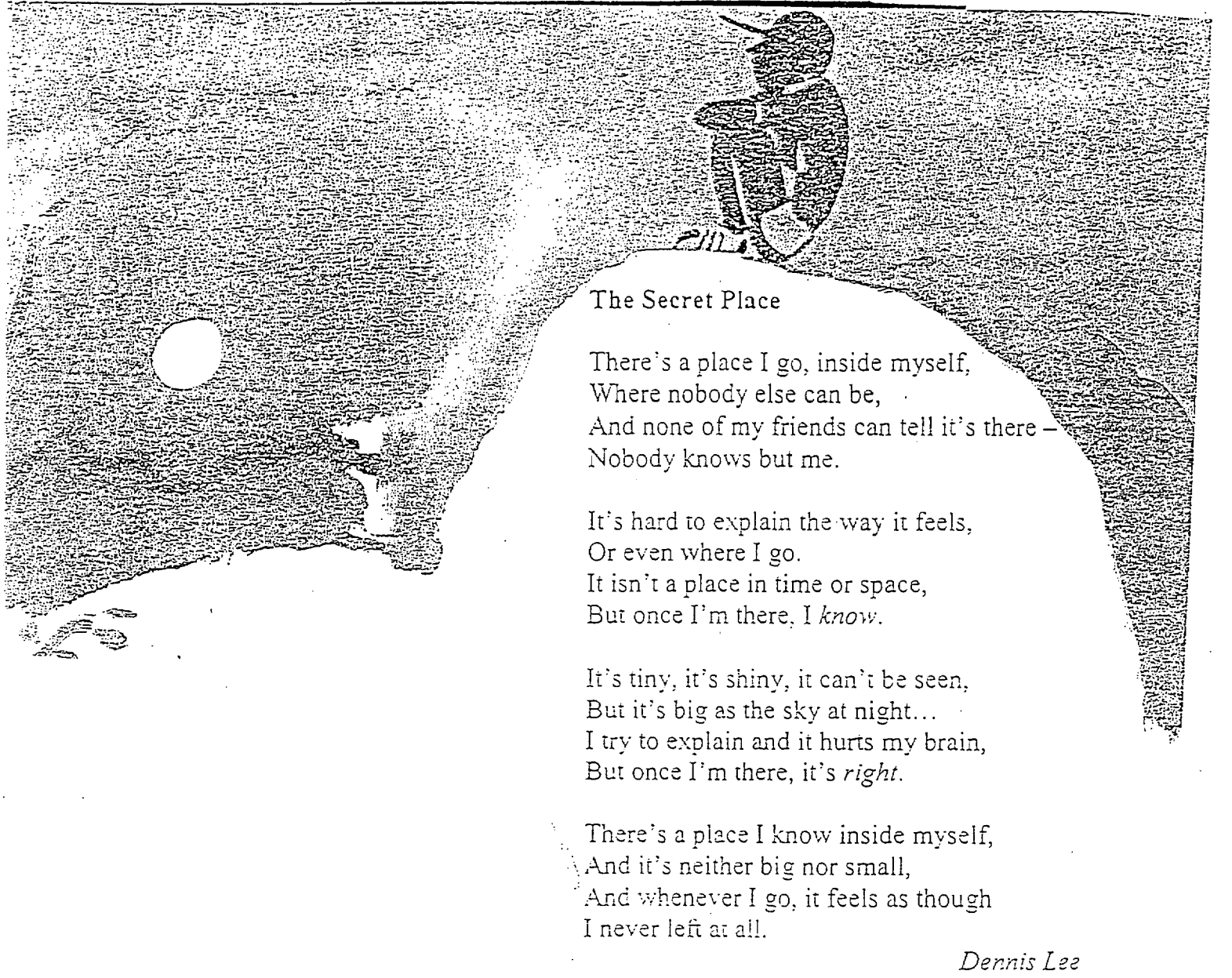
APPENDIX

WRITING TASK

Grade 3

(Distribute to students and read aloud)

Directions: Today you will do a writing assignment. The poem below, "The Secret Place", may give you ideas for your writing. Read the poem to yourself while I read it to you.



The Secret Place

There's a place I go, inside myself,
Where nobody else can be,
And none of my friends can tell it's there -
Nobody knows but me.

It's hard to explain the way it feels,
Or even where I go.
It isn't a place in time or space,
But once I'm there, I *know*.

It's tiny, it's shiny, it can't be seen,
But it's big as the sky at night...
I try to explain and it hurts my brain,
But once I'm there, it's *right*.

There's a place I know inside myself,
And it's neither big nor small,
And whenever I go, it feels as though
I never left at all.

Dennis Lee

(Read to students)

In the poem, "The Secret Place", Dennis Lee tells you about a place he likes to go. It is a special place to him.

Write about a place you like to go. It could be a secret place you go to be alone, or a place you go with others. It might be far away, close to home or even in your own house. It might be a real place or an imaginary one.

Include the ideas that follow in your writing:

- Name and describe your special place
- Tell why this place is special to you
- Describe the things you do while in your special place

You may take notes, create a web, or do other prewriting work on your colored paper. Then, write your description on the lined composition paper. You may use additional paper as necessary.

DISTRICT WRITING ASSESSMENT
SPRING 2002

New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric

	Inadequate Command	Limited Command	Partial Command	Adequate Command	Strong Command	Superior Command
Score Range	2 or 3	4 or 5	6 or 7	8	9 or 10	11 or 12
<u>Content And Organization:</u> ✓ Communicates intended message to intended audience ✓ Related to topic ✓ Opening and Closing ✓ Focused ✓ Logical progression of ideas ✓ Transitions ✓ Appropriate details and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May lack opening and/or closing Minimal response to topic; uncertain focus No planning evident; disorganized Details random, inappropriate, or barely apparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May lack opening and/or closing Attempts to focus May drift or shift focus Attempts organization Few, if any, transitions between ideas Details lack elaboration, i.e., highlight paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May lack opening and/or closing Usually has single focus Some lapses or flaws in organization May lack some transitions between ideas Repetitious details Several unelaborated details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May lack opening and/or closing Single focus Idea's loosely connected Transitions evident Uneven development of details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally has opening and closing Single focus Sense of unity and coherence Key ideas developed Logical progression of ideas Moderately fluent Attempts compositional risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has opening and closing Single, distinct focus Unified and coherent Well-developed Logical progression of ideas Fluent, cohesive Compositional risks successful Details effective, vivid, explicit, and/or pertinent
<u>Usage:</u> ✓ Tense formation ✓ Subject-verb agreement ✓ Pronouns usage/agreement ✓ Word choice/meaning ✓ Proper modifiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No apparent control Severe/numerous errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Errors/patterns of errors may be evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some errors that do not interfere with meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few, if any, errors
<u>Sentence Construction:</u> ✓ Variety of formations ✓ Correct construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assortment of incomplete and/or incorrect sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive monotony/same structure Numerous errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little variety in syntax Some errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some errors that do not interfere with meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few, if any, errors
<u>Mechanics:</u> ✓ Skills intact in: ✓ Spelling ✓ Capitalization ✓ Punctuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Errors so severe they detract from meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous serious errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patterns of errors evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consistent pattern of errors Some errors that do not interfere with meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very few, if any, errors

Non-Scorable Responses Score: 0	(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.
	(NR) No Response	Student refused to write on the topic, or the writing task folder was blank.

Adapted from:
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