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An editing framework guiding students toward self-correcting errors in writing

Stacey Gasper

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AN EDITING FRAMEWORK
Guiding Students Toward Self-Correcting Errors in Writing

By
Stacey Marie Gasper

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Education
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Special Education
At
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Sydney Jay Kuder

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Stacey Marie Gasper

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Abstract

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2010/11
Dr. Sydney Jay Kuder
Master of Arts in Special Educations

In order to have a successful school experience, a student must be able to write effectively. It is a skill that transfers to nearly every content area, especially once students reach the high school level. From our first year of education to our last, teachers stress the importance of working through the writing process. Unfortunately, for many students getting started proves a struggle to organize ideas, developing those ideas is exhausting, and by the time they complete a draft they want to turn it in without looking back. Furthermore, struggling writers often do not know where to begin analyzing their work for improvement. This study measures the success of a structured activity that makes editing a more concrete process. It focuses on five freshmen in a Resource Language Arts setting. With the specific guidelines provided, editing became a visual, tangible process that directed the students to the particular areas of their writing that needed improvement.

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CHAPTER 1

Defining the Topic

Introduction:

In order to have a successful school experience, a student must be able to write effectively. It is a skill that transfers to nearly every content area, especially once students reach the high school level. From our first year of education to our last, teachers stress the importance of working through the writing process. However, in my nine years as an educator with this goal in mind, I have learned that it is a continuous struggle for many students, especially those with learning disabilities.

Year after year my ninth-graders can rattle off the steps of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. I am familiar with the district curriculum. I know that they have heard the lessons, seen the posters in their Language Arts classes, and are aware of what is expected when assigned a writing task. For my struggling writers, unfortunately, getting started proves a great effort to generate and organize ideas, developing those ideas is exhausting, and by the time they complete a draft they want to turn it in without looking back. When gently reminded to revise and edit, they grumble while glancing at their draft, fix one or two things to make it look like they have put in some time, and hand it back to me.

Why don't students revise and edit their work? It can be for a number of reasons; laziness and lack of motivation certainly seem to play a role, particularly for struggling writers. It seems to be more than that though. When faced with the task, many students appear as if they do not know where to begin. That was the impetus for

my research. I choose to focus on the editing piece in particular. I wanted to teach my ninth-grade special education students how to “see” the editing process. I hoped to find that when it became a visual, tangible process students would be able to better recognize what to improve in their writing.

Research Question:

Given a specific framework for editing, will my ninth-grade special education students be able to identify and correct mistakes within their own writing?

Key Terms:

Revising- rethinking, reorganizing, and developing ideas

Editing- clarifying language, correcting errors in grammar and mechanics

Resource Center- a small group setting taught by a special educator that allows for more individualized instruction and attention

In-Class Support/ Mainstream- a general education setting that follows the mainstream curriculum and has two teachers, one content area teacher and one special education teacher, in order to meet the needs of all students

Implications:

It is my hope that this process will teach students how to edit their drafts and that their writing will show signs of improvement. Furthermore, if students internalize this progress, they may be inclined to transfer the learning to all writing assignments across the content areas.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

According to national statistics, the majority of student writers fail to excel past basic levels of writing competency. 56% of 8th graders write at only a basic level, while 12% fail to achieve that. That is an alarming statistic. Only 31% score proficient and 2% measure advanced. By the time they complete high school, the Department of Education calculates that only 57% reach basic proficiency levels, while the below basic level grows to 18%. Proficient achievement drops to 23% and advanced to 1%. (US Department of Education, 2008) These alarming markers call for a change in writing instruction.

Furthermore, college professors estimate that nearly half of high school graduates are ill-prepared for college-level writing. (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2007) These professors are referring to writing performance for students with or without learning disabilities. Moreover, writing ability is cited as a major factor in determining promotions in the workplace. (Mason & Graham, 2008; The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2007)

For eight years, Doug Enders, professor of English at North Carolina Wesleyan College, began his freshman composition class with a survey asking students to evaluate their preparation for college level writing. He sought to find out where they felt they were well prepared and where they felt deficient. Of the students surveyed, 90% were recent high school graduates. Students reported again and again that learning to

analyze their own writing directly impacts their ability to improve it. The survey further revealed that while students were exposed to exercises in the grammar and mechanics, they had little practice with editing their own work to implement these skills. (Enders, 2001)

Editing is an essential step in developing proficient writing skills. Minchew and Amos (2000) measured the success of a cooperative editing activity with first year college students in remedial composition classes. They focused their study on students whose test scores fell between 15 and 18 on the ACT English, revealing writing deficiencies. The four remedial classes, with a total of 79 subjects, were divided into two groups, the control group (41 participants) and the treatment group (38 participants). Both sets received the same grammar and writing instruction, covering topics such as organization, development, word choice, and sentence structure. The only difference emerged in the method of teaching editing. (Minchew S. S., 2000)

The term cooperative editing came out of the researchers' efforts to incorporate grammar instruction and cooperative learning into the writing process. Because of the remedial nature of the students, the grammar instruction was considered essential in teaching them to identify and correct errors. This priority was addressed in two ways; the control group received instruction taken from a textbook, while the treatment group implemented a researcher-developed editing sheet. The handout trained students to identify and correct grammatical errors within their own writing. Students first implemented this strategy by working in groups of three or four on a piece of sample

work. They collaborated on error correction and turned in one final draft of the exercise. (Minchew S. S., 2000)

Minchew and Amos utilized a system of record keeping that monitored the types of errors each student tended to make, along with the frequency of these errors. They added to this chart after each in-class paper to track individual improvement. This chart helped the students to focus their efforts on individual weaknesses, and also allowed the instructors to identify common errors that required revisiting during grammar instruction. In order to compare the progress of the students from the experimental group to the control group, both groups completed the same pretest and posttest papers. These papers were analyzed to compare between classes the average number of major grammatical errors, such as verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, fragments, or run-ons. The results of these assessments revealed that the experimental group, the one that utilized the researcher-designed checklist, made significantly fewer grammatical mistakes in these areas than the traditionally taught control group. (Minchew S. S., 2000)

Furthermore, Minchew and McGrath (2001) conducted a follow-up study with these same students to examine whether they retained their knowledge. These students began with remedial composition and moved to first semester freshman composition, the next level course. Of the original 79 students, 57 had completed the subsequent level course when the second study was conducted. The control group lost 15 of the original 41 students. Of the 15 missing students, 10 had not registered for the

course, 4 chose not to enroll at the school (it is unclear why), and 1 did not pass the remedial course. The experimental group, originally consisting of 38 individuals, lost 7 students. Of the 7, 4 did not take the course, and 3 failed to pass the previous class. (Minchew S. S., 2001)

This second study reinforced what was found in the original; not only was the cooperative editing more successful in teaching this important skill, but this experimental group retained their learning and demonstrated a higher level of performance in the next course when compared to the control group. When measuring the grade point averages of these groups, the mean of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control. Additionally, 82% of the students from the experimental group completed their coursework, compared to 63% of the control individuals. (Minchew S. S., 2001)

Both studies support the argument that cooperative editing is an effective means for improving student writing. While this research was collected using first year remedial college students, the process lends itself to all grade levels. The researchers support generating material and incorporating grammar that corresponds directly to the specific student errors seen in collected writing samples. This allows for individualization and adaptation to different age groups and ability levels. Research monitoring this process with middle school or secondary level students would be beneficial. (Minchew S. S., 2000; Minchew S. S., 2001)

Cooperative editing is only one option for implementing the process.

Karegianes, Pascarella, and Pflaum (2001) studied 49 tenth grade struggling writers in an economically and educationally disadvantaged area. Their intention was to examine the success of peer editing (experimental group) versus teacher editing (control group). This was the only variable presented in the treatment. All other instruction on grammar and composition remained the same for both groups. They also implemented consistent measures for assessment. Students did not receive letter grades on essays, but instead were measured on the rate of their improvement, and this was based on the researcher-provided editing/rating sheets. (Karegianes, Pascarella, & Pflaum, 2001)

During each week of treatment, the peer-editing group was paired off by the teacher. They exchanged work and utilized the guidelines provided on the editing/rating sheet. The work was then returned to the author, and the two would discuss the suggestions made on each essay. The teacher stayed out of the process, at no point viewing the student work prior to or during the peer-editing process. (Karegianes, Pascarella, & Pflaum, 2001)

The control group went through a different conferencing process, but they were allowed the same amount of time to improve their work. The teacher provided recommendations on the same editing/rating sheet, and took time to conference with each individual. During this time, they had the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on the editing suggestions made by the teacher. (Karegianes, Pascarella, & Pflaum, 2001)

This study supports the belief that peer-editing is beneficial. The results clearly indicated that the experimental group displayed significantly higher essay achievement than did the control group. The researchers further suggest that the exercise of peer-editing may also increase a student's attention to details as they compose their own drafts, providing an advantageous instructional technique. Because the students are familiar with the errors they look for, they start to avoid them within their own work. As these findings are considered, attention must also be brought back to the target audience receiving this intervention, disadvantaged adolescents who are significantly behind their age group. (Karegianes, Pascarella, & Pflaum, 2001)

Of course, it is the ultimate goal that students will eventually self-regulate their way through the writing process. Hence, Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD). With SRSD, students are taught explicit procedures to direct them through the writing process. (Graham & Harris, 1999) Children with learning disabilities often approach writing in a way that minimizes the importance of planning or monitoring. They frequently neglect to think about how their sentences connect, instead simply using one thought to create the next. Because they don't take the time to plan this out, they may forget ideas before they are able to record them on paper. This usually makes their writing unorganized and under developed. (Graham & Harris, 1999) Graham and Harris sought to teach students specific guidelines for monitoring their own way through the writing process. They identified six steps for implementing SRSD with writing education. These steps are: develop background knowledge, discuss it, model it, memorize it,

support it, and independent performance. The ultimate goal is that they will internalize these strategies and implement them on their own.

Graham and Harris utilized the SRSD technique with a 12 year old boy named Alvin. When Alvin came to the study, his detest for the writing process was evident. He avoided the task whenever possible, put forth little time or effort, made negative remarks about writing in general, and put down his own abilities. Alvin's test scores for intellectual ability, reading, and math all fell within the normal range, but the Test of Written Language-2 revealed a writing problem 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. Alvin was later administered the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery. The results on Basic Writing Skills and Written Expression further confirmed that Alvin had serious difficulties with writing. (Graham & Harris, 1999)

From this point, Alvin's teacher used the six steps of SRSD to teach him an explicit strategy for planning and composing writing. After reviewing the basic elements of writing, Alvin was taught a mnemonic specific to the writing task at hand. Once he demonstrated memorization and successful implementation of a certain mnemonic, the focus switched to a different type writing. For essay writing, he utilized DARE (**D**evelop a topic sentence, **A**dd supporting details, **R**eject arguments from the other side, **E**nd with a conclusion), and for story writing he used SPACE (**S**etting, **P**roblem, **A**ction, **C**onsequence, **E**motion) and SEE (**S**top, close your **E**yes, **E**xamine the scene).

Alvin's teacher reported being very pleased with the progress he made using these strategies. He now takes time to consider what he wants to say before writing,

generating 15-20 ideas to include in his work. Furthermore, his writing has increased drastically in length, approximately 2-3 times longer than his previous assignments. In addition, his work was better organized, more developed, and easier to follow. While writing may never be his favorite subject, his attitude toward the task improved noticeably. (Graham & Harris, 1999)

Chalk, Hagan-Burke, and Burke (2005) utilized SRSD with 15 high school sophomores to determine how effective the method is in teaching writing skills to learning disabled students in the resource setting. They followed the six step framework for implementing SRSD. First, they developed background knowledge by reviewing the basic structure of an essay. They reviewed this using the mnemonic DARE (**D**evelop a topic sentence, **A**dd supporting details, **R**eject arguments from the other side, **E**nd with a conclusion). Students recited this until committed to memory.

Once the mnemonic was memorized, each student met with the teacher to discuss individual writing goals based on the errors from a baseline writing sample. They also reviewed the rubric on which their pieces would be scored. Students were encouraged to chart their progress and keep all of their work for future reference. (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005)

As the class began the essay, they were presented with a posterboard. The poster read: (a) Think, who will read this and why am I writing it; (b) Plan what to say using DARE; and (c) Write and Say more. (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005) This outline provided a starting point for the assignment. In addition, the teacher modeled

the strategy on an overhead using a “think aloud,” self-questioning ideas and format as the essay was generated.

In order to encourage memorization of this strategy, each student was required to make a visual prompt to be kept in their folder for reference while writing. They included examples of self-instruction questions. Again using the overhead, the class generated a group essay, which the teacher recorded as they worked their way through. While the teacher led the instruction, the students composed the essay. (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005) After this final collaborative practice, the students were on their own to create two independent essays. The visual prompts were available, but were utilized on an as-needed basis.

The results of this study indicated that students profit from developing guidelines for each step in the writing process. Not only did the subsequent writing samples increase in length, but they also improved in quality. This suggests a promising role for SRSD in writing instruction. (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005)

In her study of SRSD, Susan De La Paz (1999) targeted 22 suburban middle school students split between three classes, two 7th grade classes and one 8th grade class. All individuals were currently placed in inclusion settings, where they had the benefit of both a regular education and special education teacher. The study included students with and without learning disabilities. To assess baseline ability, the classes were administered the written expression component of the Weschler Individual Achievement Test. This test categorized them as low, potentially low, average, and

high-achieving. (De La Paz, 1999) Two pupils from each class were randomly selected from every ability level, with the exception of a 7th grade class which had no students test at the high-achieving level. This yielded a total of 22 middle schoolers, 11 girls and 11 boys. Of the group selected, 5 were identified as having a learning disability.

Once the students were selected, the teachers received two days of training on SRSD. They were given a manual with scripted lesson plans and material. During the workshop, they learned not only how to use the provided materials, but also how to personalize the instruction for each class. Because the upcoming state testing required an expository essay, this was the type of writing that they chose to focus on, creating an authentic goal for the students to work toward. All writing probes during baseline, post instruction, and maintenance followed identical procedures and held a time limit of 35 minutes as determined by the allotted time during the state test. (De La Paz, 1999)

Each teacher used the mnemonic PLAN for prewriting (**P**ay attention to the prompt, **L**ist main ideas, **A**dd supporting ideas, and **N**umber your ideas in the order you will use them) and the mnemonic WRITE for composing (**W**ork from your plan to develop your thesis statement, **R**emember your goals, **I**nclude transition words for each paragraph, **T**ry to use different kinds of sentences, and **E**xiting, interesting, \$100,000 words). The class spent considerable time reviewing the importance of each step provided by these strategies. (De La Paz, 1999)

Once the students were comfortable with the mnemonics, the teachers spent time activating their prior knowledge of essay construction. After reviewing the basic

structure of an essay and each of its parts, models were provided. As a class, the students were given the opportunity to discuss the elements presented in the model and make suggestions regarding improvements to the writing, such as forming more complex sentences and using better vocabulary choices. (De La Paz, 1999)

Next, the teachers took time to conference one-on-one with each student. This time was used to discuss individual writing goals as determined by their baseline assessments. Together they reviewed the expectations for the upcoming state test, along with the scoring rubric that would be used. The teacher gave each student a copy of the rubric with highlighted target areas to improve. The student was then encouraged to identify one or two goals to develop each weakness.

Following the SRSD guidelines, the teachers next used the PLAN and WRITE strategies to model the composition of an essay. While working through the process, they utilized think alouds to demonstrate the application of the mnemonics to manage their way through the writing process. They used the same materials that the students would during these steps, including cue cards for brainstorming and an essay sheet. (De La Paz, 1999)

After this, the students were given time for collaborative practice. This stage was handled differently between teachers. One essential piece remained the same; as a group, they planned and constructed an expository essay following the procedures as modeled. Two out of the three classes were able to compose two group essays. Of these two classes, one class wrote two as a whole group, while the other chose to write

the second in smaller groups of two or three. The third class was only able to write one due to time lost for snow days.

The final phase is independent practice. During this step, the instructors gradually pulled away from providing support, and the students accepted the responsibility for working through the writing process. Furthermore, as more independent practice was allowed, the use of cue cards and essay sheets was faded until they were composing using only regular sheets of notebook paper. Throughout each stage, even the independent practice, the class would periodically hold brief practices to recite the steps of PLAN and WRITE to ensure memorization. (De La Paz, 1999)

Before learning to PLAN and WRITE, only seven of the 22 students utilized any form of prewriting. Generally, their essays consisted of few ideas, lacking any real development of length. Essays often included text that was off-topic and failed to include essential items, such as a concluding statement. While the students with learning disabilities scored lowest, none of the students involved wrote well at baseline. (De La Paz, 1999) It is also interesting to note that while absences are always a variable when working with students in a school setting, the students with learning disabilities and low-achieving students were significantly more likely to miss school than those from the average-achieving and high-achieving groups.

After instruction, every student utilized prewriting before drafting. Likewise, essay lengths for every student increased; students with learning disabilities increased

250%, while low-achievers and average achievers doubled, and high achievers increased 215%. In addition to generating more text, more of that text was on-topic. The percentage of irrelevant or nonfunctional text went down. The overall quality of every pupils' writing improved, albeit to different degrees. (De La Paz, 1999) What is more, the maintenance probe demonstrated evidence that the students continued to implement planning and drafting techniques.

Upon reflection of this process, the teachers were all enthusiastic about the growth made in their classrooms; however, they did have suggestions for future implementation. Ideas for future use include slowing the pace down and adding instruction on how to reflect and revise before moving on to the next piece of writing. (De La Paz, 1999)

The progress demonstrated using SRSD to teach children writing skills is promising. However, the teachers from De La Paz's study are correct. Students do not learn to work their way through the entire writing process. Once they learn to successfully navigate their way to a complete first draft, they need instruction on how to make improvements. Editing is an essential step in the writing process. The fundamentals of SRSD could be used in a similar fashion to teach students how to complete this step as well.

SRSD includes characteristics that have been successful in other methods of editing instruction, such as cooperative editing and peer editing. After the teacher models a procedure in SRSD, supported practice is often carried out in groups where

students collaborate. The framework lends itself to not only teaching prewriting and drafting, but the other steps in the writing process as well. Research should extend to measure the success of applying the principles of SRSD to the editing process.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Setting:

This study was conducted at a public high school in a middle class suburban area in Central New Jersey. It is a particularly academic environment where, in general, the student body is driven to do well in school. The school day operates on a rotating block schedule, where each block is designated one hour of instructional time. In 2010, the school was ranked 16 according to New Jersey Monthly. It boasts a 100% graduation rate, with approximately 95% planning to attend post-secondary education, 86% at a four-year school.

The school houses approximately 1,600 students between grades nine and twelve. The wonderfully diverse student body brings with it 33 different languages. The population represents a variety of racial and cultural groups (48 % Asian, 40% Caucasian, 6% African American, and 6% Hispanic).

Subjects:

This study focused on five ninth-grade special education students, four boys and one girl. All five students are currently placed in a Resource Center Language Arts class for students working significantly below grade level. Their ages range from 15-17. The curriculum in this setting parallels the mainstream Language Arts classes as closely as possible. The class reads literature based on the same themes, utilizing adapted texts when necessary. Additionally, it covers the same types of writing tasks, only it breaks assignments into smaller pieces and allows for more individual guidance. Because it is a

Language Arts class, it has the responsibility of covering a lot of subject matter. In addition to literature and writing, it also covers speaking skills, vocabulary building, and grammar instruction.

Method:

I chose to focus on this population because deficient writing is one of the major reasons students are placed in the Resource Center class. I hoped to help them improve this important skill through the use of a structured editing activity. All writing instruction, composition, and development were scheduled to take place during the class period to eliminate the variable of incomplete work and ensure that every student completed what was necessary to participate in each step of the process.

The students focused on writing literary analysis, which was the type of writing that the marking period was primarily dedicated to. Throughout the quarter, they began at the paragraph level and worked up to writing a four paragraph essay, complete with textual support. While instruction walked them through each step of the writing process, the focus was specifically on how students improved their writing while editing. Only the four paragraph essay was assessed to collect formal data.

Because editing was the focal point of this research, I began with an activity that modeled each step of this process. The students were given the editing framework activity (Appendix A) that guided them in identifying errors within their writing. Then, I provided them with a worksheet that explains all the necessary parts of a well developed paragraph, utilizing the comparison that “an essay is like a hamburger.” (Appendix B) During the lesson, we drew on this common analogy, comparing the top

bun to a topic sentence, the meat to the details and explanations, the bottom bun to the concluding statement, and the toppings and condiments to descriptive language and personal writing style. On the same worksheet, there was a sample paragraph with errors.

I broke the class into two groups. They worked together with these writing teams for the quarter. Together as a class, we marked up the paragraph according to the steps of the editing activity, one at a time. After each step, the groups discussed how to correct the errors discovered. Once all corrections were made, each updated paragraph was transferred onto an overhead and presented to the class. We discussed each change that was made. I did not want to rush the activity; I wanted to allow ample time for groups to agree upon alterations and improvements, and so I allotted two class periods for this assignment.

The next writing lesson, which was also designated two class periods, asked the students to compose a group paragraph. We walked through the writing process together, beginning with the prewriting. On day one, the students were given a graphic organizer similar to the one on the handout with the sample paragraph, only this time the hamburger graphic was blank for them to enter their ideas. (Appendix C) The worksheet was structured to help reinforce this image so that they remembered exactly what pieces needed to be included and how they should be organized. Additionally, they were expected to reference the handouts accumulating in the writing section of their binder. Once they collaborated on constructing a paragraph, the students typed a draft of their work.

On the second day of the activity, the students got back together with their groups. They worked through the steps of the editing activity, just as before, only this time using the text that they generated as a group. The students were expected to support one another and collaborate on ideas for fixing up their paragraph. Finally, they went back onto the computers and made any necessary changes before publishing the final product. I collected both drafts in order to compare them and assess the alterations.

Throughout our study of literary analysis writing, the class edited one provided paragraph and one student generated paragraph. We then finished the marking period with a four paragraph essay. (Appendix D) Again, we worked through the process together, completing each step during class. I dedicated five full class periods to this assignment, one hour for each of the five steps in the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing). We followed the same process as when writing paragraphs, which was familiar by now, only this time we spread it out over more time to accommodate a larger final product. After each period, I assessed their progress toward meeting the final goal in the allotted time.

Only the formal essay was analyzed to assess the students' ability to identify and correct errors within their own writing. All preliminary writing and editing was considered instruction and practice. The rubric for evaluating their work mirrored the editing framework handout. (Appendix E) All of this was shown to the class in advance, so that they were aware of the assignment's goal.

Materials:

In order to review the structure of a paragraph and the editing process, I used two worksheets, the sample paragraph (Appendix B) and the editing framework checklist (Appendix A). I created overhead versions of each and used a projector to model the steps as the students marked up their own papers. The steps of the framework require four different colored pencils for each student, and four different colored overhead markers for the overhead.

As the students worked in groups to generate their own writing, they used an organizer (Appendix C) designed to mirror the graphic from the sample paragraph. The organizer aided them in structuring their writing, and then each group typed a copy of their paragraph on the computer. They utilized the same editing process and materials when correcting errors in their work, then made the improvements on the computer.

Finally, the students composed a formal essay on their own. They were each given a literary essay graphic organizer (Appendix D) to help them arrange their ideas. Again, they went onto computers to type their drafts. Once the drafts were complete, we followed the same editing process, once more utilizing the same materials. This time, I shared with the students the rubric (Appendix E) that would assess the changes that they made between drafts. They utilized the computers to make their final alterations and turn in a finished product.

CHAPTER 4

Results

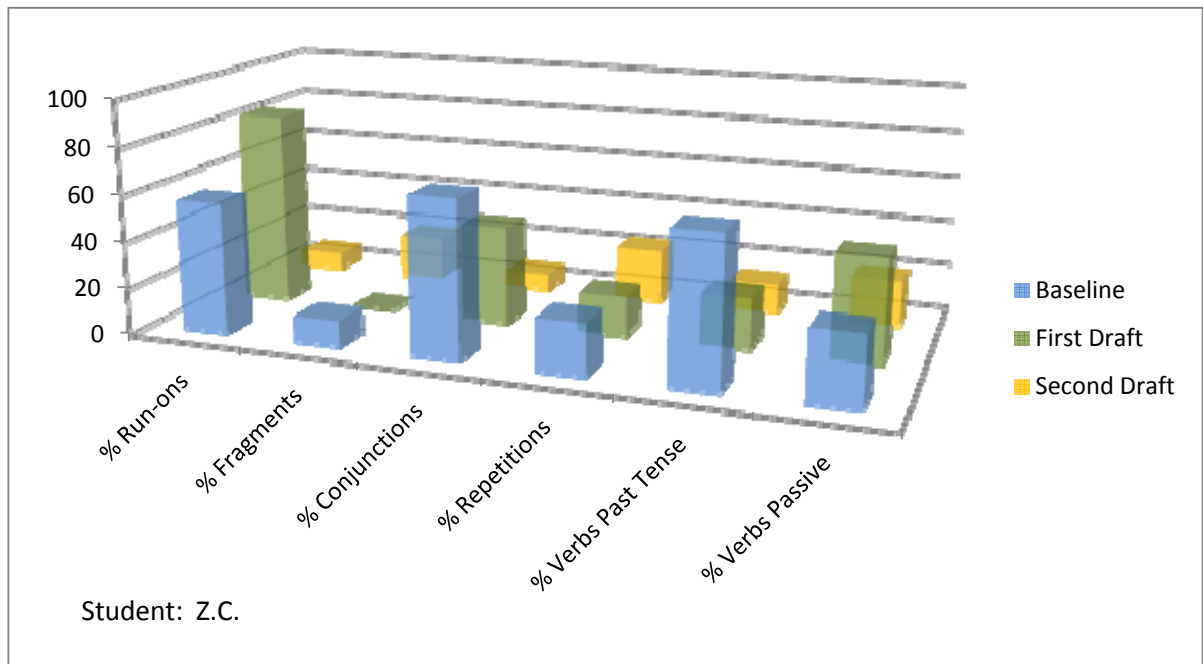
Research Question:

Given a specific framework for editing, will my ninth-grade special education students be able to identify and correct mistakes within their own writing?

Data Collection:

Before beginning, a baseline analysis of the students' writing was constructed to determine specific areas of concern for the class to focus on. From there, the editing framework activity was adjusted to address these specific goals. The data was collected using a teacher-constructed rubric for analyzing student writing samples, which was designed to mirror the target areas listed on the activity.

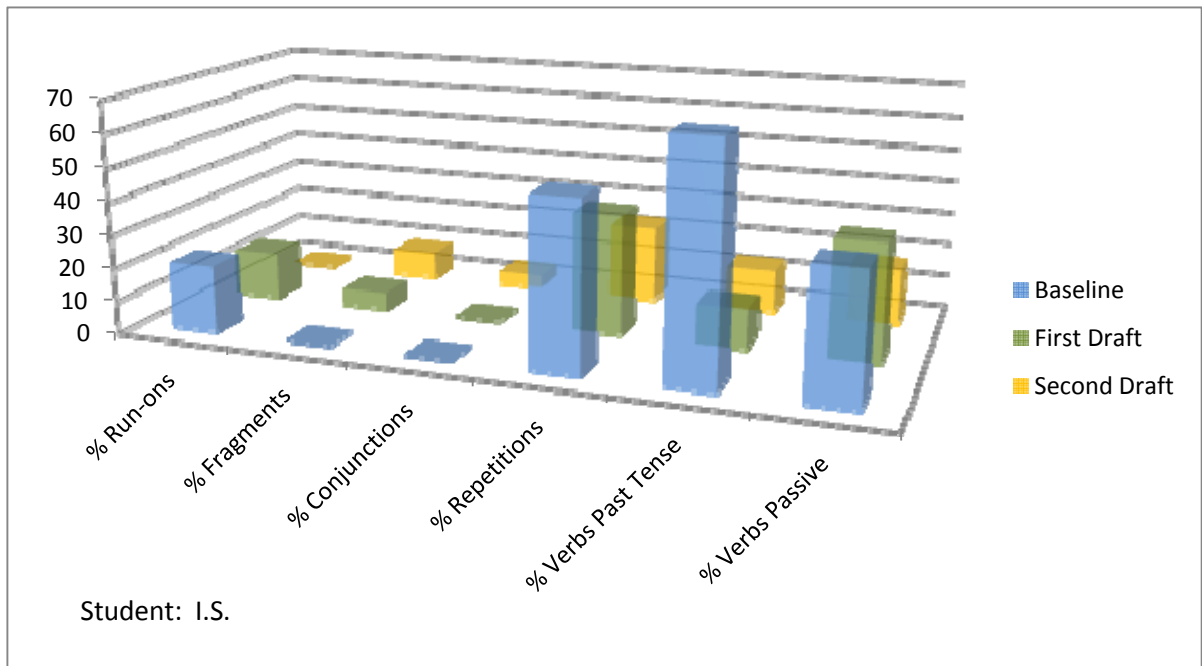
Figure 1: Changes in writing measures for Z.C.



The results between the first and second draft of Z.C.'s literary essay are illustrated in figure 1. His sentence structures changed drastically. To begin, his first draft consisted of 12 sentences, while his second draft had 31. His work started out with no sentence fragments, but 83% of his sentences were run-ons. His editing resulted in the appearance of sentence fragments at 19% but a decrease of run-ons to 7%. Of his original sentences, 42% started with conjunctions; his corrections brought this number down to 7%. However, 17 % of the sentences began with repetitions of the same words, and this number increased to 23% in his following draft.

Z.C also made important changes in his word choices. 22% of the verbs he started with were past tense, and 44% of them were passive. His corrections resulted in the decreases of past tense verbs to 13% and passive verbs to 20%. Furthermore, his first draft used 5 contractions and 5 "ugly" words. In his second draft, there were 4 contractions and 2 "ugly" words.

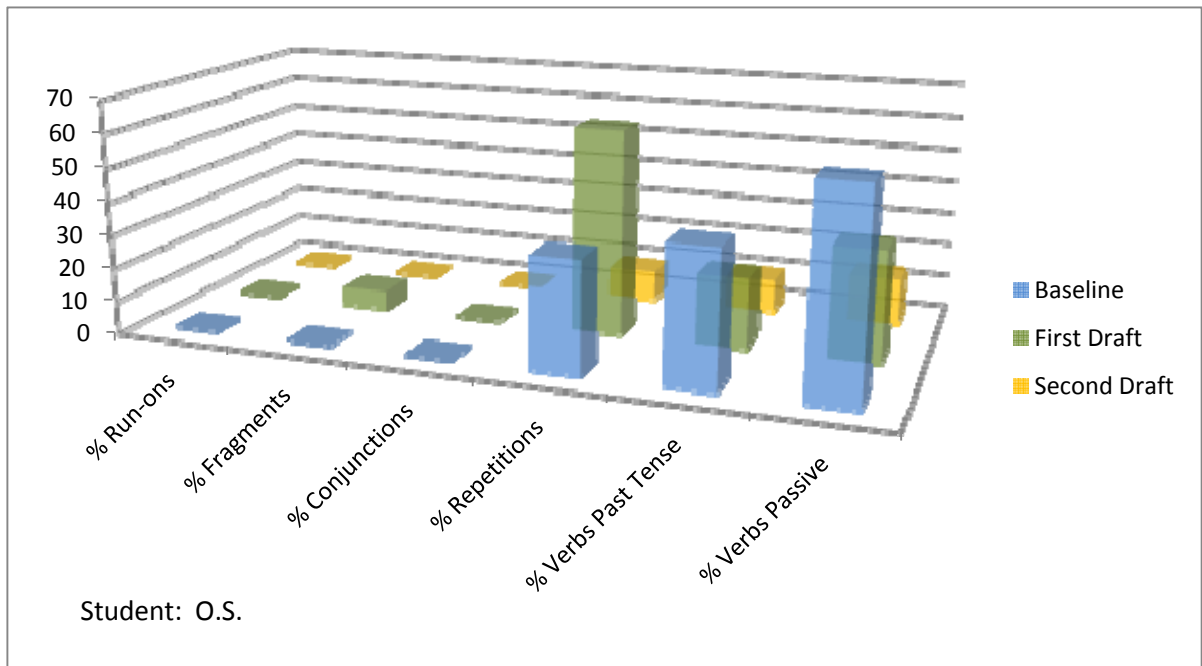
Figure 2: Changes in writing measures for I.S.



The results between the first and second draft of I.S.’s literary essay are illustrated in figure 2. At the start, I.S.’s first draft included 22 sentences. After making changes, his second draft consisted of 26. Of his sentences, 14% of began as run-ons and 5% as fragments. His editing resulted in a decrease of run-ons to 0%, but an increase of fragments to 8%. None of his original sentences started with conjunctions, but his second draft had one (4%). However, 36 % of his initial sentences began with repetitions of the same words, and this number decreased to 23% in his following draft.

I.S. made many changes to his choice of words. In his early draft, 12% of the verbs were past tense, and 35% were passive. In making alterations, his past tense verb usage increased slightly to 13%, while his passive verbs decreased to 17%. In addition, his first draft used 3 contractions and 12 “ugly” words. His second draft included no contractions and 5 “ugly” words.

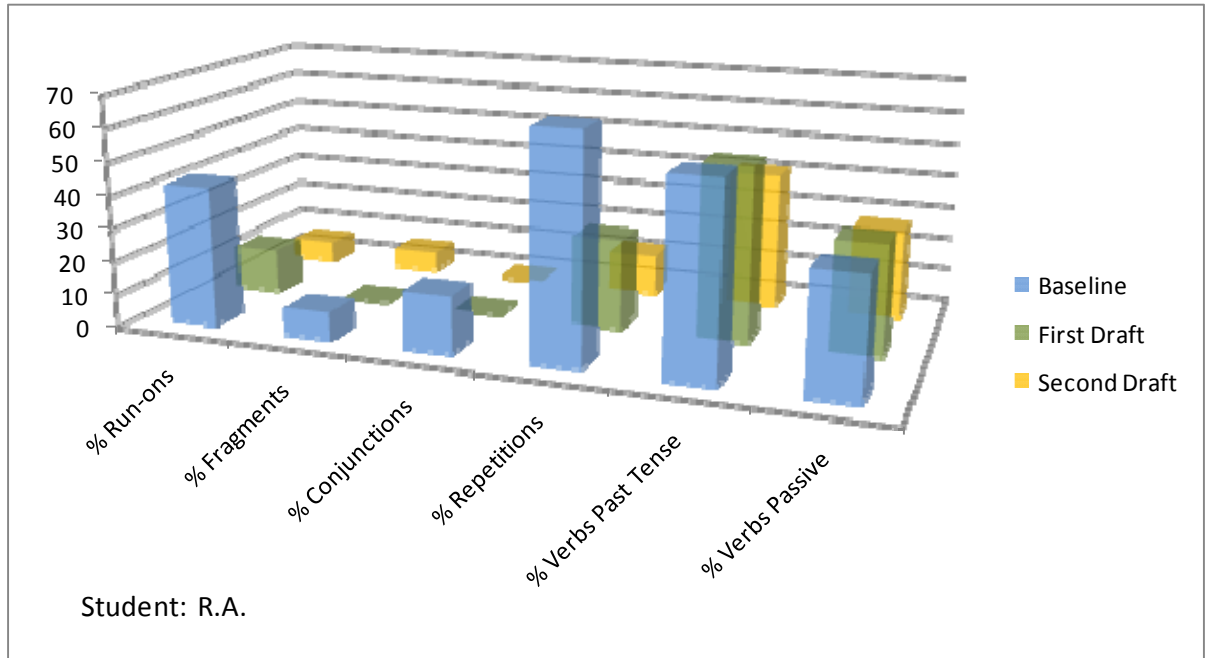
Figure 3: Changes in writing measures for O.S.



The results between the first and second draft of O.S.'s literary essay are illustrated in figure 3. Initially, O.S.'s draft included 18 sentences. Alterations on his second draft increased this number to 22. Of his original sentences, none were run-ons and only 6% were fragments. After editing, his draft contained no run-ons or fragments. Likewise, none of his original sentences began with conjunctions, but 61% of his sentences started with repetitions. His following draft decreased the number of repetitions to 9%.

Many of O.S.'s changes were in the area of word choices. Of the verbs in his first draft, 21% were past tense and 33% were passive. After editing, his past tense verbs decreased to 10%, and his passive verbs decreased to 14%. Another change included the elimination of a contraction between drafts. His use of "ugly" words did not alter, using the same 2 in his work.

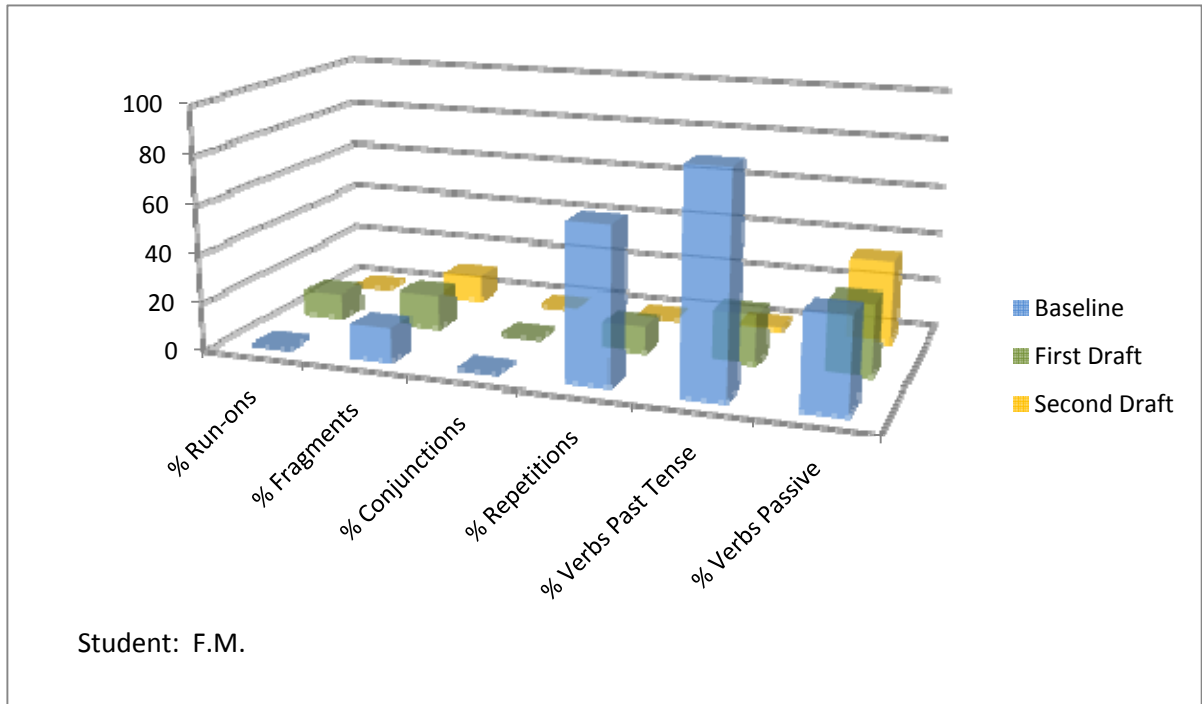
Figure 4: Changes in writing measures for R.A.



The results between the first and second drafts of R.A.'s literary essay are illustrated in figure 4. Between drafts, R.A.'s sentences increased from 15 to 17. Initially, her work included no sentence fragments, but her second draft had one (6%). Further editing decreased the number of run-ons from 13% to 6%. None of her original sentences began with conjunctions, but 27% started with repetitions. The subsequent draft decreased the number of repetitions to 12%.

Concerning word choices, when R.A. began 52% of her verbs were past tense and 33% were passive. After editing, both numbers decreased; past tense verbs reduced to 41% and passive to 27%. She also eliminated 2 contractions, moving from 3 in her first draft to 1 in her second. Neither draft included any "ugly" words.

Figure 5: Changes in writing measures for F.M.



The results between the first and second draft of F.M.'s literary essay are illustrated in figure 5. F.M.'s early draft consisted of 21 sentences, while his following draft had 20. Of his original sentence structures, 10% were run-ons and 14% were fragments. These numbers decreased between drafts, run-ons to 0% and fragments to 10%. Neither draft contained a sentence that began with a conjunction, but 10% of his first set started with repetitions. He eliminated these and had no repetitions in his subsequent work.

Within his initial sentences, 20% of the verbs were past tense and 29% were passive. Between drafts, his past tense verbs decreased to 1%, but his passive verbs increased to 34%. He eliminated his one contraction and used no "ugly" words.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Connections to Prior Research:

Cooperative editing, peer editing, and SRSD all share common characteristics with the methods of instruction used while implementing the editing framework activity. Discussion, modeling, supported practice, and independent work are common elements in all of the aforementioned. Karegaines, Pascarella, and Pflaum (2001) discussed the improved effort demonstrated by students when working together to peer edit. Minchew and Amos (2000) reported their success with cooperative editing, particularly in the practice work that their students completed in groups. For this reason, I wanted to have my students support each other through their practice of editing. I, too, found that working with peers was a motivator in presenting their best work.

SRSD also includes this successful component of cooperative and peer editing. In designing my instruction, I considered many elements that were found successful in using SRSD. I found the modeling process particularly helpful. Much like De La Paz et al (2005), I provided a piece of sample work, then had my students suggest improvements as a class. This way I was able to monitor their understanding of the editing process, discussing and elaborating on skills as necessary. Chalk, Hagan-Burke, and Burke noted that providing guidelines proved a most beneficial element of SRSD. My framework was an effort to do exactly that. While SRSD has been found an effective method for writing

instruction, De La Paz recognized the need for the instruction to extend from composition to include revising and editing.

Implications:

The 5 students in my Resource Center Language Arts class were placed there in large part to their difficulties with writing. After a relatively short time with this editing framework, I feel that all 5 demonstrated important progress in their ability to identify errors and make corrections in their own work.

Furthermore, the activities were easy to implement in a group setting. By the time they edited their essays, they were able to work through the checklists on the framework at their own paces, allowing them to spend their time as needed on areas of personal weakness. Moreover, while I chose to target the errors that were prevalent in the writing of my particular students, they are areas of literary analysis writing that all students should review. The framework leaves room within the checklists to individualize based on a student's ability.

Limitations:

This study provides only a preliminary look at the success of an editing activity such as this. The results are limited to a small sample size of only 5 students. Additionally, the course in which it was administered was Language Arts, not Writing. This meant that not every day could be dedicated to the writing process. The time frame of this study only allowed for analysis of one formal writing sample. In a Language Arts class, the teacher must cover curriculum in writing, literature, vocabulary,

grammar, and speaking skills. Unfortunately, time lapsed in between writing activities as the group had to cover other content. The flow of instruction was further interrupted by snow days and student absences, both of which are realities in teaching and are out of an educator's control. Not only might it be beneficial to provide more consistent practice, but the students may also benefit from additional time to carry out the steps in the process.

I am cautious, but optimistic about the possibilities that this activity could hold in teaching students to self-correct errors in their own writing. More research should be conducted to analyze how continued practice would impact student work.

Conclusion:

Across the content areas, a student must be able to effectively communicate his or her ideas in writing. It is a skill that grows increasingly important once students reach the high school level. While teachers often stress the importance of the writing process, many students struggle to make their way through. By the time they get words down on paper, they want to turn it in and be done with it. What is more, individuals with writing difficulties often do not know where to begin analyzing or editing their work. The structured editing activity created for this research made the editing step in the writing process more concrete. With these specific guidelines, editing became a visual process that directed the students to the particular areas of their writing that needed improvement. More attention should be dedicated to this important skill in future research.

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Name: _____

EDITING FRAMEWORK

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

Check the organization and content to be sure you have included all the necessary parts of your paper.

CHECKLIST

- _____ Does my essay have an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion?
- _____ Does my essay have a strong thesis statement?
- _____ Does each body paragraph have a topic sentence and concluding statement?
- _____ Do I use transition words to begin my paragraphs?
- _____ Are the paragraphs in a logical order and easy to follow?
- _____ Does each paragraph only discuss one thing?
- _____ Are my ideas clear and well-developed, providing enough detail and explanation?

NOW YOU ARE READY TO EDIT:

1. Using two different colored pencils, underline each sentence in your essay, alternating colors as you go.

CHECKLIST

- _____ Did I check each long sentence to be sure it is not a run-on?
- _____ Did I check each short sentence to be sure it is not a fragment?

2. Using another color, put a **box** around the first three words in each sentence.

CHECKLIST

- _____ Did I make sure that no sentences begin with a conjunction?
- _____ Does each sentence begin in a different way?

3. Using yet another color, **circle** each verb.

CHECKLIST

- _____ Are all the verbs present tense?
- _____ Do I use active verbs? (Count up your passive "to be" verbs and cut them in half!)

FINALLY:

Reread each sentence one last time and check the punctuation and vocabulary. Eliminate any contractions. (can't = can not) Remember that you want to use a variety of sentence structures, as well as a variety of vocabulary. Cross out ugly words, such as *really*, *very*, *so*, *stuff*, *good*, *bad*, *happy*, *sad*, *etc.* Replace them with more **vivid** language. Add descriptive adjectives and adverbs to enhance your writing. Use a thesaurus!

~~really angry~~ = furious

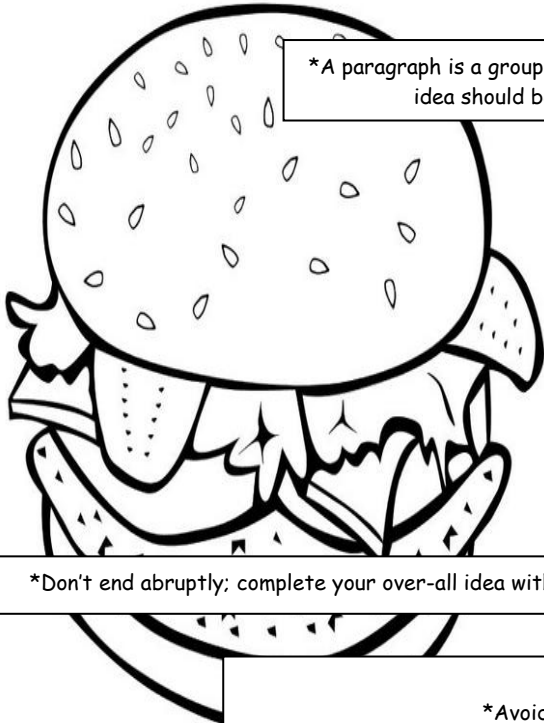
~~very happy~~ = elated

~~so sad~~ = devastated

YOU GET THE IDEA!

Name: _____

TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS



*A paragraph is a group of sentences that work together to create a main idea, and this main idea should be expressed in one sentence called the **TOPIC SENTENCE**.

*A good paragraph displays **UNITY**, which means **ALL** the sentences that follow support the main idea in the topic sentence.

*Each sentence should relate logically to the next one, giving the paragraph **COHERENCE**.

*Remember to stay **FOCUSED** on the topic.

*Incorporate textual support to prove your point.

*Don't end abruptly; complete your over-all idea with a **CONCLUDING STATEMENT** that rephrases your topic sentence.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

*Avoid wordiness, fragments, and run-on-sentences.

*Use your best vocabulary, and try not to repeat words.

*If you are writing about literature, keep your verbs in **present** tense.

*Strive for **AT LEAST 5** sentences. Sometimes your topic will require more.

* Introduce the quotation with your own words and integrate it grammatically into the sentence.

LET'S PRACTICE EDITING:

The American Dream was a prevalent theme in John Steinbeck's novella *Of Mice and Men*. George and Lennie's desire to own their own land and control their own futures is a direct reflection of this idea. George and Lennie so badly wanted to reap the rewards of their hard work. Instead, they spent backbreaking hours working on someone else's land for small pay and bad accommodations, just as their dream appeared within reach, everything is lost. Upon reflection of this loss. George says, "—I think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her." (p.94) George was aware of something that Lennie was not George knows the unlikelihood of actually fulfilling this goal in a time when men are losing everything despite their efforts. So Steinbeck uses his novella to convey the message that during the Great Depression the American Dream is no longer in existence.

Name: _____

HAMBURGER PARAGRAPH ORGANIZER

Discuss ONE central theme in the novella Of Mice and Men. What general truth about life is being stated by the author?

TOPIC SENTENCE

**What is the author's main point/theme?*

EXAMPLE(S)

QUOTE

EXPLANATION/DETAILS

**Describe the key example of this theme.*

**Include a quote to support your example.*

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

**Reinforce your thesis statement by reiterating how the theme is shown through the literature.*

Literary Essay Outline

Introduction

1. Construct a compelling introductory statement which includes the title and author of the story.

2. Provide a BRIEF summary of the story. Include only enough background information to prepare the reader for the rest of the essay. (*What is the general plot of the story?*)

3. **THESIS STATEMENT** (*What is the character's dream and what is their ultimate goal?*) **Remember that the thesis statement controls the ENTIRE ESSAY and should represent the main idea.**

Body Paragraphs

*Provide evidence to support the thesis.

*Only address one piece of evidence per paragraph.

*Don't stray off topic or summarize the plot.

Topic Sentence (*What is this character's dream in the beginning of the play?*)

Examples/Explanation (*Explain the character's dream and its impact on him/her. Consider why this dream is deferred. Provide a QUOTE.)*

Concluding Statement (*Link your argument back to your thesis statement.*)

Appendix D

Topic Sentence (*What do we learn is the character's ultimate goal?*)

Examples/Explanation (*How is the goal revealed? How would this dream help him/her accomplish his/her overall goal? Provide a QUOTE.)*

Concluding Statement (*Link your argument back to your thesis statement.*)

Conclusion

*Bring together your ideas and reinforce the thesis statement.

(*How does the reader come to realize the character's underlying motivation?*)

Reiterate the importance of the character's need for personal fulfillment. Does the character find this fulfillment in the end?

CLINCHER STATEMENT

Rephrase your thesis. (*Consider Hansberry's message about the power and importance of working toward dreams.*)

Appendix E

Name: _____

RUBRIC FOR MONITORING CHANGES

Category	First Draft	Second Draft
Total Number of Sentences		
Total Number of Verbs		
Using two different colored pencils, <u>underline</u> each sentence in your essay, alternating colors as you go.		
Number of Fragments		
Number of Run-ons		
Using another color, put a box around the first three words in each sentence.		
Number of Conjunctions		
Number of Repetitions		
Using yet another color, circle each verb.		
Number of Past Tense Verbs		
Number of Passive Verbs		
Eliminate contractions and use a variety of vocabulary. Get rid of ugly words, and replace them with more vivid language.		
Number of contractions		
Number of "ugly" words		