5-19-2023

MULTICULTURAL MENTOR TEXTS IN 2ND GRADE WRITER'S WORKSHOP

Ellen R. Carbonaro
Rowan University

MULTICULTURAL MENTOR TEXTS IN 2ND GRADE WRITER'S WORKSHOP

By
Ellen R. Carbonaro

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Reading Education
at
Rowan University
May 16, 2023

Thesis Chair: Susan Browne, Ed.D., Professor, Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education

Committee Members:
Xiufang Chen, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education
Valarie G. Lee, Ed.D., Professor, Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, best friend, and other half, Anthony T. Carbonaro IV. I am forever grateful for all your love and patience; your unwavering support over the past two years has reminded me of how lucky I am to have you as my partner in life. Thank you for encouraging me to follow my heart and making my dreams your own. I will never forget all the pep talks, proofreads, and hand-delivered meals. This would have been impossible without you.

Acknowledgements

There are numerous individuals who inspired and supported me through this process. First, I would like to thank my students who were more than eager to help me with my "homework"; the future of our world is bright because of you. I would also like to recognize my thesis supervisor, Dr. Browne, who has been supportive of my goals since my entry into this program. Your endless feedback and guidance have helped me flourish into the educator I am today. Additionally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my school district administration for allowing me to conduct research in my classroom. To my building principal, Mr. Andrew Moskowitz, thank you for encouraging me to pursue my career goals, and most importantly, for believing in me. I would like to extend the warmest thank you to my family (especially my parents and siblings) and friends for always being understanding, lending a listening ear, and for never failing to put a smile on my face. To my peers in the MA in Reading program, I am so grateful for the bonds we created and am beyond proud of all our accomplishments. Lastly, to my dog, Brutus, thank you for being by my side during every reading, discussion board post, lesson plan, and signature assignment; you are equally deserving of a master's degree. I know I would not be where I am today without the most incredible support system by my side.

Abstract

Ellen R. Carbonaro
MULTICULTURAL MENTOR TEXTS IN 2ND GRADE WRITER'S WORKSHOP
2022-2023
Susan Browne, Ed.D.
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of the utilization of relevant multicultural mentor texts during writer's workshop instruction in the second-grade classroom. The specific aim is to understand how students relate these diverse texts to their development of literacy skills. This study is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of culturally relevant education and reader response theory. Upon data triangulation analysis, the following themes were identified: 1. Multicultural Literature Promoted Engagement with Literacy, 2. Multicultural Mentor Texts as a Guide for Writing, and 3. Writing as a Social Practice within the Writer's Workshop Model. Implications regarding the significance of multicultural literature and best practices for elementary writing instruction are also discussed. Ultimately, the research suggests that students benefit from literacy instruction that incorporates multicultural literature and offers opportunities for socialization during writing instruction.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents (Continued)

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

Be the person you needed when you were younger. (Ayesha Siddiqi)

Vignette

Throughout my graduate school studies, I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on my own elementary school experience. Looking back, I realize that I was probably labeled as an "at-risk" or "problematic" student. Besides being born to a single, "teen mom," I was one of the youngest students in our class with an early August birthday. My first experience in a school setting was enrolling in our district's half-day kindergarten program; I never attended pre-school or even daycare because I was lucky enough to have my grandmother watch me. Despite these factors working against me, I immediately fell in love with literacy upon my first school experience. I fondly remember how my kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Lewis, utilized the "Letter People" program to introduce us to each letter in the alphabet; she would hide a laminated letter in the classroom, and we would all race to find the cut-out in a fierce scavenger hunt. At the end of the year, we had a class celebration and dressed as our favorite letter person. My mother, in her typical, above-and-beyond approach, drove all over South Jersey to assemble the best "Ms. E" ensemble. She dressed me in a teal, checkered print dress, pinned a red letter 'E' on the front of the dress, styled my hair in the most even pigtails imaginable, and created dumb bells for me to carry around out of Styrofoam. My teacher's passion for foundational literacy skills and my mother's mirrored support ignited a love for reading within me as a young girl.

Without this positive, initial experience, I am unsure if I would have developed into the learner and educator I am today. In first grade, my teacher approached my mother about my reading performance; she suggested that I receive additional support through the basic skills program. My mother agreed and explained to me that I would be pulled out of class a few times per week for a little "extra help." Our school reading specialist would come around to all the first-grade classes and pull a few students for her small group. I remember how excited I was to see what book she would pick for us and place in my hot-pink book pouch. Remarkably, I had no feelings of embarrassment or negativity about being pulled out of class. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to receive special attention from the "reading teacher." During this time, I began to play school with all my stuffed animals and any family members who would willingly comply. My grandfather refinished a wooden, antique student desk and decorated it with Barbie stickers especially for me. Not only would that seat function as my "teacher desk" during my imaginary play, but I would also do my homework there. After my first-grade year, I grew and no longer needed basic skills support. Over the next few years of elementary school, I continued to fall in love with literacy. I was completely captivated and engaged by my teachers' read alouds of *Marvin Redpost* and *Sideways Stories by Wayside School* on the classroom rug. These read alouds sparked my desire to become a teacher as early as second grade. Additionally, I found my own love of independent reading through the *American Girl Doll* books. I would read the historical fiction texts from morning to night and bring them into school to share during recess and dive into during Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) time. I am extremely thankful to have received the encouragement

and positivity from my teachers and family. I know not every struggling reader is as lucky as me.

My second-grade dream of becoming a teacher became a reality when I was accepted into Rowan University as an elementary education major. I decided to pursue a Teacher of Students with Disabilities certification due to my strong feelings regarding differentiation and my younger brother's experience in school as a student with special needs. During my undergraduate studies, I worked tirelessly to earn straight As in my classes because I believed my performance reflected my capabilities as a teacher. I joined countless clubs and societies as well as attended numerous professional development sessions to gain additional knowledge and experience. As I proudly walked across the stage during commencement, I knew it would not be long before I returned to continue my studies in reading education as a master's student. After teaching for four years in early childhood classrooms, I decided it was time to apply for entry to graduate school.

Although over twenty years have passed, my favorite time of the school day continues to be the literacy block with my second-grade students. My passion constantly reignites as I help them learn how to read fluently, express their thoughts in writing, and comprehend both fiction and nonfiction texts. I am filled with pride as I watch my learners grow and flourish in their reading groups. It is my goal to help develop a lifelong love of reading and learning in my students, despite their backgrounds and levels, as my teachers had done for me.

Story of the Question

"Not Christmas again!" I heard a voice cry as the upper elementary band students shared an excerpt of their winter concert performance in my classroom the week before winter break. My head whipped around to find one of my students in a huff; he had previously shared with me that his family is Jewish. He even had asked me earlier in the month if I celebrated Hannukah. Initially, I was bothered that he would shout out such a bold comment while other, older students were taking their time to visit all the classrooms in a caroling style to share their rendition of *Jingle Bells*. I gave him "the look," and he returned to begrudgingly watching the performance. After *Jingle Bells* concluded, the band transitioned to a tune I was not as familiar with. I watched as the same student perked up in excitement with an ear-to-ear smile; the band students started playing *Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel*. As someone who did not grow up in a Jewish household or even in a community with many Jewish members, I realized how meaningful this small moment was for my student and likely many others in the classroom. I went into winter break wondering what else I could do to make my students feel represented, appreciated, and included in the school and community.

Only three months later, lockdown began for the Coronavirus. I took the extra "down time" to apply for admission to the graduate program. During this time, I felt more disconnected from my students than ever. Additionally, the Black Lives Matter movement reawakened after the murder of George Floyd. The outrage I felt and witnessed on the news and social media reminded me of my student's reaction to the *Jingle Bells* performance. I pondered about how I could make virtual learning meaningful to my second graders; teaching sequence of events and three-digit addition and

subtraction seemed so insignificant compared to what was going on in our world. I was at a loss about what I could do for my students to support them during such a critical time in their childhood. At the end of the school year, I set a personal goal to make my teaching more relevant in the fall – a concept I would soon learn more about in my graduate school courses.

When I began my coursework in the Reading Education program, I did not realize how much my studies would impact my current teaching. My end goal was to become a reading specialist, but the coursework truly encouraged me to reflect on my own pedagogy and beliefs. The first course, Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Grades, helped me recognize flaws within our basal program's writing instruction. Rather than facilitating writing through a workshop model or structured program, we used thematic prompts to teach writing at the surface level. My principal's voice was also in the back of my mind; he was hoping to pilot the Writing Workshop program with our grade level prior to the pandemic. In our Multicultural Literature course, I realized how much more I could be doing for my diverse students. It was not enough to just add authentic multicultural literature to my classroom library, but I had to include authentic texts that represent the students in my instruction. During our summer clinic program, I consistently reflected about how my research could improve my instruction as well as my students' relationships with literacy. One day, a light bulb went off in my mind, and I realized I could merge these two concerns through my research; I could use multicultural mentor texts to teach writing in a workshop model. While it seemed like a big feat, I immediately recognized the potential lasting impact this research could have on my students and the community.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

While the population of students enrolled in United States schools is becoming increasingly diverse, most educators remain homogeneous. Culham (2019) recognizes that 82% of teachers in the United States are white. Not only should white teachers consider and examine their own ideologies and biases when working with their students, but their pedagogical practices should reflect the children in their classrooms (Kelly, Becker, Lipscomb, & Robards, 2020). Evans (2010) argues that since schools are obligated to appeal to individual students, the curriculum should represent the culture of the community. By employing authentic multicultural literature that embodies the cultures of students to teach literacy skills, educators acknowledge the significance of students' backgrounds within learning (Norton, 2013). The utilization of multicultural literature functions as one method for teachers to ensure that the diverse cultures of their students are represented in curriculum, therefore minimizing the opportunity gap.

Since the inclusion of multicultural literature is vital in today's diverse classrooms, it is imperative that teachers understand the significance of these texts as well as best practices. The utilization of multicultural literature benefits all students in the classroom as these texts function as windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1997). Evans (2010) found that read-alouds of multicultural literature can increase awareness, acceptance, and respect in students. Students learn to empathize with characters who may look different from them through multicultural literature (Kemmerlin & Wilkins, 2020). Numerous researchers have indicated that multicultural literature also enhances student engagement in literacy (Kemmerlin & Wilkins, 2020; Machado & Hartman, 2020; Piper, 2019; Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012). Additionally, teachers should learn how to critique the books

available to their students and as well as evaluate if their libraries reflect their students' realities (Culham, 2019). The inclusion of authentic multicultural literature encourages students to engage with literacy which increases student learning.

Teachers can utilize multicultural literature as mentor texts for writing instruction to both model and teach exemplary writing practices as well as make learning relevant for students. Mentor texts help students develop ideas for "content, structure, language, and conventions" in their own writing (Kelly et al., 2020, p. 153). By teaching writing through reading, students can "try out those same techniques" (Culham, 2019, p. 510). Machado and Hartman (2020) find, "when teachers bring mentor texts into their classrooms, they offer students opportunities to notice and name an author's craft moves and consider trying them out in their own work" (p. 345). Various researchers have indicated that the selection of multicultural literature for writing mentor texts increases student writing engagement and skill development (Culham, 2019; Evans, 2010; Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012).

This research problem has led me to focus on how the utilization of authentic multicultural literature impacts students during the writing process. Research questions include: *What happens when multicultural mentor texts are used during second grade writing instruction? How do second grade students relate and respond to mentor texts with characters who look like them? How do students discuss and refer to multicultural texts when conferencing with each other during writer's workshop?*

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to study how the utilization of multicultural mentor texts in writer's workshop instruction impacts student writing experiences. The goal of this research project is to develop a more culturally relevant writing curriculum that integrates cultural diversity while simultaneously supporting student writing skill development.

Guided by the theoretical frameworks of culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Alim & Paris, 2017). and reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1982), this study will explore how students respond to the utilization of multicultural literature both socially and in writing. For the purposes of this study, culturally relevant education refers to both culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). These theoretical frameworks will help the researcher approach and answer the research questions.

Organization of the Paper

This paper features four more chapters to provide additional background information for the study and present and analyze the research. Chapter two encompasses a review of relevant literature including an overview of the writer's workshop model, significance of mentor texts and multicultural literature, and the effects of culturally sustaining pedagogy on instruction. Chapter three describes the design and context of the study including the school and classroom. Chapter four reviews and presents the data and research findings. Chapter five assesses the findings and offers implications as well as limitations. Each of these chapters work to answer the research questions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

> Writing is a response to what is going on in the kids' lives and in the classroom. (Troia, Lin, Cohen, & Monroe, 2011, p. 168)

Introduction

Elementary literacy teachers consistently strive to implement effective instructional strategies as well as offer meaningful learning experiences to help their students learn and grow. Literacy blocks of instruction in elementary classrooms typically include a variety of instructional areas: word study, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Although these strands might have assigned time slots within the literacy block of instruction, student growth in one area typically benefits the other strands of literacy. Despite the importance of writing as a strand within literacy instruction, Grisham & Wolsey (2011) report that teachers of all levels lack preparation and experience with teaching writing. Many educators, both novice and veteran, struggle with identifying and implementing effective writing strategies (Grisham & Wolsey, 2011). "In teacher preparation programs, a strong emphasis on teaching reading has relegated writing instruction to a less important status (Grisham & Wolsey, 2011, p. 348). Consequently, students struggle to gain writing skills and might even withdraw from writing activities. Another critical piece of literacy instruction, multicultural literature, is often omitted for similar reasons. Teacher education programs lack a focus on multicultural literature coursework (Culham, 2019). There also seems to be a lack of professional development training in multicultural literature at the professional level (Evans, 2010). Researchers

have explored how quality writing instruction and the inclusion of multicultural literature enhance the literacy experience for elementary students.

Theoretical Framework

Gloria Ladson-Billings proposed her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy to advocate for the need of relevant learning and curriculum in relation to students in classrooms. CRP functions as a model of teaching that focuses on student cultural identity to ensure that all students succeed academically while simultaneously "challenging inequities" in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). Ladson-Billings (1995), discusses that the purpose of CRP is to, "produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who can demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order" (p. 474). For teachers to be culturally relevant, they must examine their "conceptions of self and others," "consider how social relations are structured," and "address their conceptions of knowledge" (pp. 478-481). Ladson-Billings argues that it is the responsibilities of educators to ensure that content and curriculum are relevant to the students they are teaching.

Developed by Django Paris and H. Samy Alim, the theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy can be studied and utilized to teach students through a cultural lens. Built upon culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy "seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 1). Alim and Paris (2017) argue that schools should work with community members to sustain the culture "rather than eradicate" it (p. 2). While Alim and Paris (2017) offer specific strategies that educators

can implement in classrooms, schools, and districts, they recognize that culturally sustaining pedagogies will look different depending on the community and members within it. In a 2017 EducationWeek interview, Paris and Alim discuss specific teaching strategies for educators to embrace culturally sustaining pedagogies: "a critical centering on dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledges," "student and community agency and input," "historicized content and instruction," "a capacity to contend with internalized oppressions," and "an ability to curricularize these four features in learning settings." Not only do educators need to have a positive relationship with community members, but they need to understand the culture within the community to sustain it. By understanding the history, values, and needs of the community that they teach in, teachers can integrate languages and practices into curriculum which will in turn sustain the culture.

According to Louise Rosenblatt's (1982) reader response theory, "reading is a transaction, a two-way response, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances" (p. 268). Rosenblatt (1982) proposes that all students comprehend and analyze texts differently because of their unique background knowledge. Readers experience a "constant series of selections from the multiple possibilities offered by the text and their synthesis into an organized meaning" (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 268). Rosenblatt (1982) defines two types of reading stances: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent stances imply reading for meaning while aesthetic stances refer to pleasure reading (Rosenblatt, 1982). Although readers can fall between the two stances, these stances do affect meaning generated from texts read. Although students need both experiences, aesthetic reading is often omitted in schools (Rosenblatt, 1982). Rosenblatt (1982)

argues, “we have the responsibility first of all to develop the habit and the capacity for aesthetic readings” because this reading leads to greater comprehension (pp. 273-273). This theory suggests that it should be the goal of teaching literacy to elicit aesthetic responses with texts (Rosenblatt, 1982).

Writer’s Workshop and Elementary Students

Many elementary educators utilize workshop models of writing instruction to support student writing development. “Writing Workshop is an interactive approach to teaching writing in which students learn and practice the importance of rehearsal, drafting/revising, and editing their own work” (Calkins, 1986; Graves; 1983, as cited in Jasmine & Weiner, 2007, p. 131). Machado and Hartman (2020) state, “writing workshop models seek to emphasize children’s authorial choices, center their lived experiences, and cultivate their writerly voices” (p. 343-344). “A writer’s workshop focuses on writers and how to do the things that writers really do – research, explore, collect, interview, talk, read, and write” (Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012, p. 14). Writer’s workshop lessons consist of four critical components: minilesson, independent writing, conferencing, and sharing (Units of Study, 2011). As the teacher facilitates the transition between the components within writer’s workshop, students develop their writing skills as well as take on the role of an author. “The texts they create during writing workshops play an active role in shaping students’ social identities” (Seban & Tavsanli, 2015, p. 218).

When educators utilize writer’s workshop, they offer opportunities for student choice as well as social collaboration within writing instruction (Grisham & Wolsey, 2011; Woodard et al., 2017; Machado & Hartman, 2020; Behizadeh, 2019; Seban & Tavsanli, 2015; Kelly et al., 2020). Grisham & Wolsey (2011) argue that students need

choice in writing to be successful writers. Woodard et al. (2017) state that providing student choice in writing is a culturally relevant practice. By offering students choice with their writing, writing becomes meaningful, personalized, and relevant to their lives. Along with choice, it is critical that students have opportunities for collaboration and sharing during writer's workshop (Machado & Hartman, 2020; Behizadeh, 2019). Process writing should be a social practice as students develop their concepts of what it means to be literate (Seban & Tavsanli, 2015). Kelly et al. (2020) discuss that when writing becomes a social practice, as exemplified in Writer's Workshop, students "have a greater sense of agency and ownership" over their writing (p. 149). Choice within writing topics and a social approach to writing encourage students to invest in the writing process and in their writing pieces.

Research indicates that Writer's Workshop has proven to be an effective method of writing instruction for elementary students. In an empirical study involving nineteen first graders in New Jersey, Jasmine and Weiner (2007) administered pre surveys to the students prior to beginning writer's workshop and post surveys after the intervention. The researchers discovered that after utilizing Writer's Workshop, the post survey revealed an increase in enjoyment and enthusiasm towards writing and sharing, confidence towards writing, and a "greater commitment towards writing" (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007, p. 138). Jasmine and Weiner (2017) also found Writer's Workshop creates a "positive writing atmosphere" due to "opportunities for students to choose what they wished to write, to work with peers, and to experience individual time with the teacher" (p. 138). In a case study involving the utilization of writer's workshop with six elementary writing teachers, Troia et al. (2011) found that this model appeals to students experiencing opportunity

gaps because of the built-in opportunities for differentiation including lengthened and increased conferences, specific areas of focus, and student grouping. Additionally, Troia et al. (2011) found that by the end of the year, the teachers "less frequently taught writing skills or engaged in reteaching" (p. 177). Not only does Writer's Workshop enhance student writing skills for diverse students, but children develop better relationships with writing through this model of instruction (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Troia et al., 2011).

Mentor Texts as a Scaffold for Writing

Mentor texts are critical scaffolds that should be used during writing instruction for students to identify exemplary writing strategies. Schrodt et al. (2021) define mentor texts as "pieces of literature that offer inspiration and guidance for children to try out new strategies, genres, and craft moves in their writing" (p. 45). In a case study involving interviews with nine writing teachers, Woodard et al. (2017) found "reading, writing, and talk are intimately connected in the writing curriculum" (p. 220). Through their research with teacher candidates, Grisham and Wolsey (2011) also identified reading in the form of mentor texts as a significant component of writing instruction. Culham (2019) argues, "the more students read, the better writers they become" (p. 510). While reading and writing might be viewed as separate entities within literacy instruction, research has indicated that these two strands should be connected through the usage of mentor texts. Many researchers have cited the significance of mentor texts in writing instruction (Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012; Culham, 2019; Kelly et al., 2020; Machado & Hartman, 2020). Teachers should consider the desired learning outcomes as well as students' needs when selecting mentor texts (Schrodt et al., 2021). Machado and Hartman (2020) indicate, "When teachers bring mentor texts into their classrooms, they offer students opportunities

to notice and name an author's craft moves and consider trying them out in their own work" (p. 345). "Good mentor texts inspire children to try out new writing techniques … writing conventions … and writing craft moves … as they establish their own identities and skills as writers" (Schrodt et al., 2021, p. 45). Mentor texts help students develop ideas for "content, structure, language, and conventions" in their own writing (Kelly et al., 2020, p. 153). Culham (2019) discusses that by teaching writing through mentor texts, students feel encouraged to "try out those same techniques" (p. 510). "The most effective mentor texts offer teachers and developing writers ideas for writing about diverse characters, settings, and topics while sparking their own creativity" (Schrodt et al., 2021, p. 46). Writing instruction should involve reading in the form of mentor texts to help students recognize writing moves as well as develop their own writing skills.

Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of mentor texts with elementary aged students during writing instruction. In a case study involving two kindergarten classrooms, Schrodt et al. (2021) investigated how read alouds of picture books influenced student writing and their writing mindsets. Schrodt et al. (2021) found that these mentor texts encouraged students to identify exemplary writing moves and attempt to utilize these strategies in their writing. Specifically, these mentor texts helped the students develop ideas, surface-level features, theme, and voice in their writing (Schrodt et al., 2021). Schrodt et al. (2021) also noted that the utilization of mentor texts increased student confidence towards writing. Schrodt et al. (2021) discuss their findings, "as we shared more mentor texts throughout the year, children learned new tools and tried out increasingly complex writing moves on their path to authorship" (p. 51). One of the most significant benefits of mentor texts found by the authors was the ability for both teachers

and students to return to these scaffolds throughout the writing process (Schrodt et al., 2021). “When students can return to the text and view it through a writer’s lens, they can fully immerse themselves in both meaning *and* craft” (Schrodt et al., 2021, p. 46).

Dollins (2020) identified similar findings in her study of mentor texts with third and fourth grade students. In this study, Dollins (2020) investigated how teaching students the EASE (examine, assess, suggest, envision) strategy would help them identify exemplary writing moves in mentor texts in both whole group and independent reading activities. “Mentor texts demonstrate to students how to use similar moves mirrored from great authors in their own writing projects” (Dollins, 2020, p. 191). Dollins (2020) found that the use of highlighting writing moves in mentor texts was more effective than teaching skills in isolation. The research also suggested that mentor texts provided the explicit writing instruction students needed as well as encouraged students to take an inquiry approach to writing (Dollins, 2020). Additionally, Dollins (2020) found mentor texts assisted students with reading comprehension and helped them learn to “think like an author.” Lastly, Dollins (2020) identifies that mentor texts as a strategy for writing instruction aligns with the Common Core State Standards. Scholarly research suggests that mentor texts function as effective scaffolds for elementary writing instruction.

Significance of Multicultural Literature

Distinguished and renown scholar Rudine Sims Bishop advocates for the inclusion of multicultural literature in classrooms. Multicultural literature “is rooted in the call for inclusion and curricular reform by groups who have traditionally been marginalized in this society, and generally is used to refer to literature by or about people from such groups” (Bishop, 1997, p. 14). She goes on to say that educators “should

include books that reflect the racial, ethnic, and social diversity that is characteristic of our pluralistic society and of the world" (Bishop, 1997, p. 15). While Bishop's (1997) definition of multicultural refers to literature "by or about" diverse groups, she claims that this literature is "for all students" (pp. 14-15). Bishop (1990) argues that multicultural literature functions as mirrors and windows for all students; multicultural literature is a mirror for students who identify within the cultural group and a window into others' lives. The exclusion of multicultural literature in schools has significant consequences: "students who do not see any reflections of themselves or who see only distorted or comical ones come to understand that they have little value in society in general and in school in particular" (Bishop, 1997, p. 16). She further asserts that:

> The function of multicultural literature is to ensure that students have the opportunity to reflect on it in all its rich diversity, to prompt them to ask questions about who we are now as a society and how we arrived at our present state, and to inspire them to actions that will create and maintain social justice. (Bishop, 1997, p. 31)

Importantly, Bishop's (1997) call for the inclusion and utilization of multicultural literature has inspired countless scholars, researchers, and educators to recognize the significance and need for this literature in all classrooms.

Qualitative research indicates that multicultural read alouds and related dialogue can promote social justice transformation within students. When authentic multicultural literature is regularly utilized and discussed in classrooms, students experience an increase in respect, empathy, and understanding of social justice issues. In a case study involving multicultural read alouds in a fourth grade classroom, Evans (2010) found

students experienced “increased awareness about the values, beliefs, and social practices of cultures other than their own and heightened their acceptance and respect for people different from themselves,” “increased understanding and acceptance by students of their own culture and of cultural similarities and differences,” and “increased knowledge and understanding of prejudice, bias, and tolerance” (pp. 97-98). Students’ ideologies and perspectives transform after listening to multicultural read alouds and by responding to these texts in writing (Evans, 2010). Students can also develop “advocacy stances” by engaging with multicultural read alouds (Kemmerlin & Wilkins, 2020, p. 40). When selecting multicultural texts, teachers should be mindful of identity, agency, and social justice, include specific themes such as diverse family structures, and feature authors that represent the backgrounds of the students (Machado & Hartman, 2020; Kemmerlin & Wilkins, 2020; Woodard et al., 2017). Piper (2019) argues that while the implementation of multicultural read alouds is a start to initiating social justice change, classroom discussions must ensue. It is important that students are supported in their environment and feel comfortable participating in “critical dialogue about societal issues that impact their development” (Piper, 2019, p. 9). Multicultural read alouds and paired discussion can transform social mindsets within students.

Multicultural Literature and Student Motivation and Engagement

Along with promoting social justice change, empirical research suggests that multicultural literature can also enhance student motivation and engagement. Piper (2019) argues that for students to be motivated, they need to be able to connect with the text and characters. The plot, themes, and character development within multicultural texts are relatable to diverse students in classrooms. Therefore, according to Piper (2019),

students would be motivated through the utilization of multicultural literature. By studying the effects of diverse read alouds on second grade students, Kemmerlin and Wilkins (2020) discovered these texts increased student engagement in literacy-based discussions. Machado and Hartman (2020) found that second grade students were motivated to produce quality writing pieces when the teacher selected and read aloud relatable examples of multicultural literature as mentor texts. In a study involving first, second, and fifth graders in eight different elementary schools, Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) investigated the effects of reading students critical texts that "invite readers to problematize and make visible socially significant issues in communities and the world" (p. 14). The researchers found that "students revealed more about their feelings, fears, and lived experiences than they previously shared with peers and teachers" (Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012, p. 15). When educators include authentic and relatable examples of multicultural literature in their instruction, students experience increased motivation and engagement in learning.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy through Multicultural Literature and Writing Instruction

Despite the need for culturally sustaining pedagogy in today's diverse classrooms, educators are faced with many challenges when utilizing this approach to instruction. Piper (2019) states that when teachers are forced to follow scripted curriculum, it is challenging for them to utilize culturally sustaining pedagogy. In her study involving the effects of interactive multicultural read alouds on elementary-aged children, Piper (2019) found, "traditional schooling and scripted programs negatively impact their racial identity development and could decrease their motivation to read, thus having an unfavorable

outcome on student achievement" (p. 8). Educationalist Lisa Delpit (1986) also addresses the potential consequences of not teaching through a cultural lens: "students need technical skills to open doors, but they need to be able to think critically and creatively to participate in meaningful and potentially liberating work inside those doors" (p. 384). Delpit (1986) argues, "I would explain that I believe that skills are best taught through meaningful communication, best learned in meaningful contexts" (p. 384). By utilizing culturally sustaining pedagogy, educators can support their students in the "liberating work" while simultaneously teaching literacy skills. All stakeholders need to understand the need for culturally sustaining pedagogy in today's classrooms.

Empirical research suggests that teachers can utilize multicultural literature and strategically plan writing instruction to integrate culturally sustaining pedagogy in their classrooms. Evans (2010) argues that not only should teachers incorporate read alouds of multicultural literature, but they must take a critical stance to help facilitate conversations surrounding the texts to promote social justice change. When teachers take a critical stance, lead conversations surrounding the themes of the multicultural texts, and ask students to share their thoughts, they are embracing the key principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy. The selection of multicultural mentor texts for writing allows students to identify and learn strong writing skills while also encouraging them to explore cultural backgrounds and social justice issues (Culham, 2019). Kelly et al. (2020) investigated the effects of implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy during writing instruction in a fifth grade classroom. The authors note that culturally sustaining pedagogy encourages teachers to evaluate their own perspectives to avoid "viewing others through a deficit lens" (p. 148). Kelly et al. (2020) found that when students wrote

"I'm From" poems and "The Best Part of Me Essays," they simultaneously "embrace[d] their identity and culture" and strengthened their writing skills (Kelly et al., 2020 p. 154). Machado and Hartman (2020) also emphasize the importance of utilizing a critical approach during writing instruction to encourage students to gain power and strength (pp. 343-344). The findings from these research studies suggest that to successfully integrate culturally sustaining pedagogy, teachers must also facilitate conversations around the focus texts and/or writing assignments.

To further enhance culturally sustaining pedagogy in relation to writing instruction, scholar Nadia Behizadeh (2019) proposes a specific "powerful writing pedagogy" (p. 261). Behizadeh (2019) argues, "classroom teachers are in an ideal position to work with youth to examine and engage with complicated and controversial issues, especially through writing instruction" (p. 261). By supporting students with critical thinking and writing skills, students learn to connect writing instruction to their "lived experiences" (Behizadeh, 2019, p. 262). Behizadeh (2019) provides a definition for her powerful writing pedagogy: "a pedagogical approach to writing that centers on critical literacy practices, incorporates all discourses of writing, and addresses power in multiple ways" (p. 262). This powerful writing pedagogy "combines three specific approaches to writing instruction that are attentive to social inequality in schools: evidence-based practices (EBPs); methods for increasing authenticity; and critical composition pedagogy" (Behizadeh, 2019, p. 265). Behizadeh (2019) claims that for writing to be authentic, a student needs to perceive the task as "connect[ing] to their life" (p. 269). Regarding what writing should look like in classrooms, Behizadeh (2019) suggests, "students should be composing fanciful stories that stretch their imaginations,

designing creative compositions that provoke questions or reflect beauty, and writing reflective pieces that help them understand themselves" (p. 271). This method of writing instruction aligns with the principles within culturally sustaining pedagogy. Within this powerful writing pedagogy, students are encouraged to write about their experiences. Not only does this demonstrate that educators value their students' lived experiences, but they learn about their students' lives and further sustain community values. For writing instruction to be culturally sustaining, students need to obtain power through writing by integrating their values and beliefs; this will help them find their voice.

Multicultural Mentor Texts and Social Justice Change

Teachers can use multicultural literature during writing instruction to further enhance their culturally sustaining pedagogy. Machado and Hartman (2020) investigated the role that bilingual mentor texts had on fourth grade students; they found that multicultural children's literature can help students "take a critical stance in writing" (p. 361). The authors argue, "we suggest teachers might strategically select mentor texts focused on issues of social justice and facilitate writerly inquiry" (Machado & Hartman, 2020, p. 363). In a related case study involving a different group of fourth grade students, Evans (2010) reports that students' ideologies and perspectives transformed after listening to multicultural read-alouds and responding to these texts in writing. Leija and Peralta (2020) explored how a second grade teacher used multicultural mentor texts about Dia de los Muertos in a classroom with a dual language program. The results of the study suggest that these mentor texts encouraged students to reflect on culturally sustaining principles such as family and community values (Leija & Peralta, 2020). Leija and Peralta (2020) emphasize the importance of providing students with authentic writing

opportunities, another culturally sustaining practice. When teachers select multicultural mentor texts during writing instruction, students engage in culturally sustaining practices.

Relatedly, Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) investigated how first, second, and fifth grade students responded when mentor texts with social justice issues were utilized in Writer's Workshop instruction. Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) "worked with eight elementary school teachers in two different schools as they shifted their teaching practices and professional identities" (p. 13). Prior to the study, the teachers indicated that their writing instruction was impersonal and did not embrace key principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy. The teachers also reported a general lack of confidence in their writing instruction. Therefore, the researchers worked with the teachers to implement a workshop approach to writing instruction to help develop authentic, deep relationships and encourage students to write about social justice issues (Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012). As the teachers shifted their pedagogy, they read the students critical literacy texts that featured a variety of social justice issues in their communities and society such as "divorce, bullying, homelessness, war, and natural disasters" (Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012, p. 13). By focusing on relevant, significant issues in the students' communities, the teachers implemented culturally sustaining pedagogy in their classrooms (Alim & Paris, 2017). The students' narrative writing samples highlighted their experiences and feelings surrounding these critical issues; the teachers reported that they learned more about their students than ever before (Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012). The critical texts also encouraged students to "experiment with language forms and structures in their own writing" (Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012, p. 15-16). Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) argue, "integrating critical literacy texts within the poetry study provided students with

opportunities to *transmediate*, or work across, texts" (p. 16). Not only did these critical texts inspire the students to navigate and work through relevant social issues, but they seized opportunities to try new writing moves and strengthen their skills. Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) conclude, "because these topics are on children's minds, teachers can use social justice texts and poetry to help children make sense of their worlds" (p. 18). The research conducted by Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) highlights how utilizing critical literature as mentor texts during the writer's workshop model of instruction can encourage students to both reflect on relevant social issues and strengthen their writing skills.

Conclusion

These research studies suggest that multicultural literature can be used within writer's workshop instruction to help motivate students to produce quality writing pieces. By utilizing multicultural literature as mentor texts, students will learn to recognize exemplary writing moves as well as see themselves and their peers within the literature. This initial identification, paired with related discussion, can lead to social justice change. It is important that educators of all levels receive professional development and other training opportunities to continue to learn best practices for both writing instruction and the utilization of multicultural literature in elementary classrooms. Using multicultural literature within the writer's workshop model offers one instance of how to implement culturally sustaining pedagogy in elementary classrooms.

Chapter 3

Research Design

Methodology

Because of my unique role as the practitioner and researcher, I decided to use qualitative methods to investigate my research questions. Teacher researchers often function as "agent(s) for educational and social change" as they identify problems in their classrooms and schools and collect data to understand and enhance their educational practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 37). According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009),

> Teacher researchers work in inquiry communities to examine their own assumptions, develop local knowledge by posing questions and gathering data, and – in many versions of teacher research – work for social justice by using inquiry to ensure educational opportunity, access, and equity for all students. (p. 40)

Additionally, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) claim that teacher researchers are in a unique position because they are "working from the inside" as they participate in the "inquiry process" (p. 41). As the classroom teacher of the study site, I will conduct my research as I simultaneously lead instruction during the literacy block. Klehr (2012) explains that teacher research is mainly qualitative because "attending to the naturalistic conditions and multiple layers of classroom life demands a subjective, holistic, and flexible approach" (p. 123). Since teacher researchers experience many complexities due to their role as practitioners, a qualitative approach is extremely effective because data

can be analyzed narratively (Klehr, 2012). A narrative analysis can assist teacher researchers with examining and presenting the data regarding the subjects in their classrooms. By utilizing qualitative methodology, I can collect and analyze data using a naturalistic and narrative approach while recognizing my position as the teacher researcher.

Context of the Study

Community Context

Vicksburg (pseudonym), located in southern New Jersey, is a large suburb located less than twenty miles outside of the city of Philadelphia. The focus classroom of the study is in one of the community's elementary schools. According to City data from 2019, the total population of the town was 29,536. The racial data was 69.7% White, 16.1% Asian, 8.5% Black, 3.4 % Hispanic or Latino, 2.0% two or more races, 0.1% American Indian, and 0.03% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The median age resident was 44.8. The median household income was listed as $103,403 with 7.1% of residents with income below the poverty level. Many people who live in Vicksburg grew up in the town and are proud to raise their families here. Other families venture to the community because of its close location to Philadelphia as well as its positive reputation as a closeknit town with a strong school district.

Vicksburg offers numerous resources and attractions for its residents and other local citizens. Along with the fire department that is housed in two fire stations, the police department is dedicated to keeping the community safe. A hospital that is categorized as a regional medical center is located off one of the main highways in the

community. The “Town Center” includes an indoor mall, apartment complex, and a variety of restaurants and shops. There are numerous parks with playgrounds and pet-friendly areas as well as hiking trails and exercise equipment. The skate zone is the practice location for one of the National Hockey League teams. Other attractions include a movie theater, golf clubs, a swim club, a banquet hall, and a Veterans Wall. Children in the community participate in a variety of activities: baseball, ice hockey, football, cheerleading, softball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, and more. The community draws in a significant number of visitors and traffic due to all the available amenities.

District Context

Within the Vicksburg school district, there are four elementary schools (for grades pre-K through fifth) and one middle school (grades sixth through eighth). Once students graduate from the middle school, they transition to the regional high school which encompasses three local communities, including Vicksburg. Niche.com reports that there are approximately 2,938 students in the district with about 11.5% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. About 74% of students are proficient in reading while 60% are proficient in mathematics. The student-teacher ratio is 16:1. The district has the following mission statement posted on their website,

> The Vicksburg Public School community values the varied and unique contributions, needs and experiences of its members. While promoting an environment of respect among all people, it provides instructional delivery systems that nurture the potential of all students, giving them the ability to become successful adults. The Board of Education strongly upholds the

expectation that all students will achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) at all grade levels.

All schools advertise the district slogan: “Inspire, Engage, Innovate.” Many community members attend and are active in local board of education meetings.

School Context

Edmund B. Howard elementary school (pseudonym), commonly referred to as Howard, is one of the four elementary schools in the Vicksburg school district. According to the NJ Department of Education for the years of 2020-2021, there were approximately 380 students enrolled in the school. Enrollment by racial and ethnic groups includes 63.4% White, 6.6% Hispanic, 6.3% Black, 17.6% Asian, 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 0.0% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 5.8% two or more races. Other populations include <1% Non-Binary/Undesignated Gender, 6.1% Economically Disadvantaged, 19.5% Students with Disabilities, and 1.3% English Learners. The following languages are spoken at home: 86.6% English, 2.1% Spanish, 1.6% Russian, 1.3% Gujarati, 1.3% Hindi, and 7.1% other. Attendance rates are listed as 25% for 0 absences, 62% for 1-5 absences, 7% for 6-10 absences, 4% for 11-15 absences, and 2% for over 15 absences. While this data is very similar to two of the other elementary schools in the district, one elementary school has significantly higher Hispanic, Black, and Asian populations.

In terms of staff, Howard Elementary School houses a variety of educators in the building: elementary teachers, special education teachers, a basic skills teacher, a reading specialist, special area teachers, a school nurse, a speech therapist, a school counselor, a

school psychologist, and a principal. The NJ Department of Education reports that there is a 11:1 student to teacher ratio at Howard school. With 35 total teachers, the average years of experience in public schools is 11.8, average years of experience in the district is 10.6, and the percentage of teachers with tenure is 65.7%. In terms of education, 68.6% of teachers have a Bachelor's Degree while 31.4% have a Master's degree, and 0.0% have a Doctoral Degree. Teachers are offered a variety of professional development opportunities including staff-to-staff training, online trainings and webinars, professional days, and tuition reimbursement.

Teachers at Howard Elementary School utilize a variety of programs and resources to help their students achieve academic and social emotional success. The following curriculum programs are utilized: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Journeys as the primary language arts program, Wilson's Fundations for phonics instruction in Grades K-2, Savvas Learning Company's enVisions 2.0 for mathematics instruction and their science program, Elevate, and McGraw Hill's Impact program for social studies instruction. The online program, i-Ready, is used for reading and mathematics benchmark testing; teachers are encouraged have their students utilize the instructional component for forty-five minutes per week for each subject. To support students' social and emotional health due to the effects of the pandemic, the district purchased the Move This World program to be used in homeroom classes. The district offers a morning "reading club" taught by Howard teachers for students in grades 2-5 who scored below grade level on the first i-Ready benchmark of the school year. The program takes place for 200 hours/school year; students enrolled in the program come into school an hour early for each session. For extra curriculars, students in fourth and fifth grade can join the school

band and choose from a variety of instruments. There is also a winter concert for all students in which they present songs practiced in music class. Many of the students in Howard school participate in Vicksburg Township activities such as soccer, basketball, baseball, and softball. The students at Howard School receive many academic and social emotional supports to help their development.

Teacher and Students

This research study occurred in my second-grade classroom at Howard Elementary School during the 2022-2023 school year. I conducted my research during the writing portion of the literacy block of instruction. As the researcher, it was imperative that I acknowledged my role and potential biases. I am a white, cisgender female, seventh-year teacher who is concluding her graduate studies in Reading Education. I used my research journal to analyze my reflections and confront any potential biases caused by my own beliefs and values due to my unique role as the teacher and researcher. Analyzing audio recordings also enabled me to reflect on my instructional decisions with each individual student.

Of the 20 students who were invited to participate in the study, 17 were given permission to be subjects. 8 boys and 9 girls participated in this study. Students' ages ranged from 7 years old to 8 years old. Students identified as White, Asian, and Hispanic based on school records. All students are primary English speakers. Only one of the subjects has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a learning disability but does not require placement or support outside of the general education second grade classroom. As previously stated, the district uses i-Ready as a benchmark testing system which also helps determine eligibility for special programs such as Basic Skills and

Response to Intervention services. According to their beginning of the year i-Ready testing, students' overall grade-level placements ranged from kindergarten to Grade 3. 5 of the 17 students receive basic skills support (one during the school day and four before the school day) in reading based on this i-Ready data. Three students were referred to the enrichment program due to their above grade level performances on this testing as well as other classroom testing and observations. These 17 subjects prove to be extremely diverse in terms of their backgrounds as well as academic performance.

The Study

Timeline for Study

Data was collected during a personal narrative writing unit for a total of ten instructional weeks from November 2022 to January 2023. Writing instruction typically took place 2-4 times per week for about 30-40 minutes. Some weeks only consisted of a single day or two of instruction because of changes in schedule due to benchmark and placement testing, holiday closings, and winter concert rehearsals. I collected all data independently. During Week 1, I introduced the students to personal narrative writing using an anchor chart, read the first mentor text, *Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!)*, captured the students' initial reactions to the story, and had them brainstorm ideas for a personal narrative using a heart map. Week 2 consisted of selecting an idea for a personal narrative, brainstorming the beginning, middle, and end of the personal narrative using a graphic organizer, and learning and experimenting with different techniques for openings. Week 3 only featured one instructional day and focused on developing beginnings with one-on-one teacher conferences and author's chair sharing. During Week 4, the students learned how to transition from a hook to the beginning of

their personal narratives through teacher modeling, teacher and student writing conferences, and author's chair shares. At Week 5, the students were introduced to the second mentor text, *A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India*; they wrote their reflections as well as identified personal narrative features within the text. I modeled how I developed the middle of my personal narrative. There were also numerous student and teacher conferences and author chair shares. During Week 6, I led a mini-lesson on endings while students continued to draft their beginning, middle, and endings. Student and teacher conferences and author's chair shares continued. At Week 7, I showed the students an "I'm Done" check-list and modeled how I would begin a final draft. I also held individual check-ins with each student. For Week 8, I taught a mini-lesson on how to design a front cover and continued my individual check-ins while students developed their final drafts. The final two weeks, 9 and 10, consisted of students completing their final drafts and sharing their writing with their peers.

Table 3.1

Mentor Texts and Features Modeled

	Bubbie and Rivka	*A Gift for Amma*
Personal Narrative Features Modeled	• Small moment • Plot development • Author's voice • First person narration • Detail • Feelings	• Small moment • Detail • Plot development • Illustrations • Author's voice • Detail • Feelings

Selection of Mentor Texts

Understanding the community, school, and classroom context played a significant role in the selection of the two multicultural mentor texts for the study. Since the study is investigating how multicultural mentor texts influence student writing during a personal narrative unit, it was important to find, select, and utilize texts that the children would identify with. To best represent the classroom of students, I decided to research Jewish and Indian children's literature. After analyzing numerous texts for cultural authenticity and demonstration of personal narrative features, two mentor texts were selected: *Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!)* (Sarah Lynne Reul, 2022) and *A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India* (Meera Sriram, 2020).

In *Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!)*, a young, Jewish girl, Rivka, narrates the story of how her and her Bubbie learned to make the perfect challah bread with much trial and error (Reul, 2022). According to criteria described by Norton (2013), this story presents as an authentic piece of Jewish children's literature. Regarding Jewish literature, Norton (2013) states, "picture storybooks develop themes about relationships and the importance of family or depict important holidays in the life of the Jewish community" (p. 255). The theme and importance of family shines throughout the entire story of *Bubbie and Rivka* (Reul, 2022). At the beginning of the story, Rivka shares that her and Bubbie decide to make challah-baking a Friday night tradition; the two will spend every Friday night together baking this symbolic Jewish food for the foreseeable future. Themes of "Jewish customs, holidays, and celebrations" are prevalent in authentic Jewish literature (Norton, 2013, p. 255). Not only does Rivka cherish her time with her Bubbie, but the illustrations in the story demonstrate how she admires her grandmother despite

her lack of experience baking challah. Rivka is often seen watching and observing her grandmother with much respect and adoration. Norton (2013) claims that women are often depicted as having grace and wisdom in Jewish literature. While the relationship between Rivka and Bubbie is central to the story plot, additional family members are also mentioned and focused on. Before Bubbie and Rivka dive into their challah-baking, they look through numerous old family photographs. This further highlights the importance of remembering and family in authentic Jewish literature (Norton, 2013). Some of the photographs in the illustration include "Bubbie's Bubbie" making challah, Rivka's mother as a baby reaching for hamantaschen, and Bubbie, Rivka's mother, and a younger Rivka all huddled at Bubbie's workplace. These photographs demonstrate the significance of matriarchs in Jewish families. Other family members are also shown throughout the story's development: Rivka's younger sister and her grandfather. During the middle of the story, Bubbie and Rivka attempt many strategies to bake the perfect challah bread. As the two experiment and learn together, Bubbie remains patient throughout the process, further demonstrating her grace as the family's matriarch (Norton, 2013). Learning and cooperation both present as significant themes within authentic Jewish literature (Norton, 2013). After numerous Friday nights, Bubbie and Rivka finally bake the "best ever challah – so far!" After the narration, Reul (2022) includes a recipe for challah bread at the end of the story. The text also features numerous Jewish and Yiddish words and phrases: bupkis, hamantaschen, and oy gevalt. Not only does *Bubbie and Rivka* represent authentic Jewish children's literature, but the narration represents true features of personal narrative writing.

A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India tells the story of a young girl shopping for the perfect gift for her mother in her hometown market in India. This text functions as an authentic piece of Indian children's literature based on Norton's (2013) criteria. According to Norton (2013), many Asian children books feature young protagonists that familiarize themselves with their culture. Values that appear in Indian literature include community and family (Norton, 2013). Many texts also feature the "importance of small cultural artifacts" (Norton, 2013). The girl visits numerous stands in her community market searching for a "treasure" for her mother (Sriram, 2020). It is evident that the girl admires, respects, and cares for her mother since she is willing to spend her own "pocket money" on Amma (Sriram, 2020). As she narrates the story, the girl describes in detail the culturally significant objects she comes across at the different stands: saffron, marigolds, terracotta pots, and more (Sriram, 2020). The illustrations coordinate with the objects the girl finds at the market stands; each page seems to have a color theme (Sriram, 2020). Both the text and illustrations work to highlight significant cultural artifacts as well as combat stereotypes. The girl encounters numerous female merchants, and the characters are all dressed differently; some wear saris while others are dressed in shalwar kameezzes. At one stand, the girl finds vermilion, but she states, "But Amma never dots her forehead" (Sriram, 2020). This works against common stereotypes that American children might be familiar with. Once the girl finds rainbow colored bangles, she realizes they are the perfect gift she has been searching for. At the end of the book, Sriram (2020) includes an informational section that describes the significance of the market and the objects the girl found. Sriram (2020) explains that the market in the story is "based on the Vadapalani and Mylapore markets" in her hometown. Sriram (2020) also

highlights the cultural significance of the different objects. For example, she explains how charcoal is used for cooking and baking, jasmine is worn as a head decoration, and turmeric is used for cooking and medicine (Sriram, 2020). *A Gift for Amma* functions as an authentic example of Indian children's literature that can be used as a mentor text for personal narrative writing.

Procedure and Data Collection Methods

Before beginning research, it was important to develop a general format for the writer's workshop lessons. Troia et al. (2011) argue that for writing workshop lessons to be successful and effective, teachers need strong classroom management strategies as well as predictability in format for students to understand expectations and procedures. I began each writing lesson by gathering the students at the carpet and informing them of the daily focus: introducing a new mentor text, a particular feature of personal narratives, editing, etc. Next, I referred to the mentor text to discuss how the author used this given strategy or technique. After, I modeled how I would incorporate the strategy with my own personal narrative. Then, the students were given the opportunity to write and work on their personal narratives. Lessons included peer conferences and/or teacher conferences. Lastly, the lessons would conclude with a few students sharing in the author's chair.

To best answer my research question, three methods of data were collected. Qualitative data triangulation will ensure that there is a comprehensive approach to data collection as well as efforts to eliminate potential bias. The first method for data collection was practitioner (teacher) observation. I maintained a research journal throughout the study; I wrote anecdotal notes during writing lessons as well as reflected

after each lesson. A second method for data collection involved student work samples. I collected, copied, and analyzed student writing journals including their reflections to mentor texts and writing pieces. The last method for data collection used was audio recordings of teacher and peer writing conferences. I transcribed these recordings to understand how students interacted with the writing process and the mentor texts.

Plan for Data Analysis

The data collected throughout the course of this study was used to draw conclusions about the influence of multicultural mentor texts during writer's workshop instruction. The three methods of data collection, teacher research journal, student work samples, and audio recordings, were initially analyzed independently, then compared to identify common themes and trends. The teacher research journal revealed my reflections over time; I reflected upon my teaching methods and strategies, noted students' responses to mentor texts, and documented anecdotal notes on my observations of the students. By reviewing student work samples in their writing journals, I read their initial reactions to the multicultural mentor texts as well as recognized how their writing pieces progressed throughout the study. Recordings of teacher writing conferences demonstrated how students responded to praise and feedback. I also referred to the mentor texts during these conferences. The recordings of peer conferences exhibited how students interacted with each other during writing as well as the influence of the mentor texts. Chapter 4 will present the common themes identified through data analysis.

Chapter 4

Data Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data in the study conducted to answer the research question: *What happens when multicultural mentor texts are used during second grade writer's workshop instruction?* This study took place during a personal narrative writing unit in a second-grade classroom over the duration of ten instructional weeks, a total of 23 sessions, from November 2022 to January 2023. Data collection methods included a teacher research journal, student work samples, and audio recordings. I used my teacher research journal to write anecdotal notes during lessons as well as reflect after each session. Each of the 17 students had a writing journal that I collected for their work samples. I recorded numerous sessions of teacher writing conferences, peer writing conferences, and author's chair sharing sessions. After independently analyzing all data sources, data triangulation methods were used to compare findings. Three major themes emerged in the study: 1. Multicultural Literature Promoted Engagement with Literacy, 2. Multicultural Mentor Texts as a Guide for Writing, and 3. Writing as a Social Practice within the Writer's Workshop Model. All students were given pseudonyms for confidentiality purposes.

Multicultural Literature Promoted Engagement with Literacy

The personal narrative writing unit featured two multicultural mentor texts: Reul's (2022) *Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!)* and Sriram's (2020) *A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India*. Both mentor texts were introduced through teacher read-

alouds at the classroom rug. After, the students wrote reflections in their writing journals; they were encouraged to write about how the text made them feel and to include any personal connections.

Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!) (Reul, 2022)

During the first week of the study, I read aloud the first mentor text: *Bubbie and Rivka* (Reul, 2022). After explaining the role of mentor texts during the writing process, I showed the students the front cover of *Bubbie and Rivka* (Reul, 2022). Before I could introduce the story and present the title, numerous students called out comments:

Mike: I love challah!

Gabrielle: I've made challah before!

Victor: Why does it start with 'c' 'h' ?

Adam: What is that?

As revealed by the students' initial comments, some children had background knowledge about challah bread while others were unsure what it was. Regardless of their schema, the students seemed to be captivated by the front cover of this multicultural book. In my teacher research journal, I noted how excited the students were as they smiled and shared their observations about the cover. After finishing the read-aloud, I reflected upon this initial experience in my teacher research journal:

> As I was reading the story aloud, the students were so engaged. It was so different from any of the read-alouds from our basal program. They called out predictions, laughed at the silly parts, and maintained their attention the entire time. I remember looking up as I shared the illustrations and ALL of their eyes were on

me. As much as they were excited, they were also focused. Along with their participation, there just seemed to be overall positivity surrounding the experience. It was like I was able to reach each student with this one book.

This reflection suggests that this single example of multicultural literature encourages students to engage with reading comprehension. As identified by Kemmerlin and Wilkins (2020), multicultural read-alouds can increase student engagement and participation in literacy-based discussions. The students demonstrated numerous comprehension skills in this one read-aloud: making personal connections, making predictions, and drawing conclusions. Their significant and authentic engagement with the story revealed their strong comprehension of the text.

Similarly, the students' reflections in their writing journals revealed significant engagement with *Bubbie and Rivka* because of their personal connections and positive feelings surrounding the story. As previously noted, after completing the read-aloud, the students were asked to reflect on the experience in their journals. Some of the students made personal connections to the main plot point of baking the challah bread:

Penelope: We read Bubbie & Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (so far). The book was so existing [exciting]. It made me feel happy because I like challah to. The book was adout [about] makeing [making] challah. There grandmom was there to make it with them. It was prfit [perfect]. It was so exsiting [exciting] that thay [they] made it. I liked it. It was soooo good.

Gabrielle: It riminded [reminded] me of food. It made me feel hungre [hungry]. I like the story. It aslo [also] riminded [reminded] me of the first time I tride [tried] Challah it tased [tasted] dilishos [delicious] and I want to have it again.

While some students personally connected to the challah bread, other students thought of how Rivka's baking experience reminded them of their own traditions:

Shaun: My reaksn [reaction] was I like the book. it remind me of when me and my mom made the best pezza [pizza]. it tack [take] us 3 trise [tries]. in the 4th trie [try] we made it. it was delictis [delicious].

Victor: This book reminds me of the time we were making a pancake and it burned up. Bubbie & Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (so far!) was the best funny story my teacher ever read…

Tim: It rminded [reminded] me of my mom mom and it mabd [made] me feel happy than [then] it rminded [reminded] me osow [also] of thengsgeving [Thanksgiving] to I loveed [loved] that story because I love thengsgeving [Thanksgiving] to …

As demonstrated by these reflections, the students were able to make personal connections to the plot of the multicultural text even if they were unfamiliar with challah bread. According to Piper (2019), personal connections lead to an increase in comprehension. This suggests that multicultural mentor texts have the potential to help strengthen students' comprehension skills because of their connections with the stories. Many students also shared their own conclusions in their reflections following the read-aloud:

Abby: The book made me feel like no matter how many times you try something you will make something good even if you don't like what you made.

Lauren: I liked the ilstrashin [illustrations]. It is like a big world of wonder. You can see and amajin [imagine] it in your minde [mind].

Amy: it mad [made] me feel happy to because I feel good things.

These examples suggest that the students were able to activate higher-level comprehension with one read-aloud of *Bubbie & Rivka*. Abby identified the central message of the story: never give up. Lauren began to recognize an important feature of narrative writing: illustrations. Amy's reflection revealed that she acknowledged her feelings while listening to the read-aloud: happiness. In summary, the first read-aloud of

Bubbie & Rivka seemed to inspire the students to activate their higher-level comprehension skills due to their investment in the story.

A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India (Sriram, 2020)

During Week 5, I introduced the students to the second mentor text, *A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India*. Similar to their experience with *Bubbie & Rivka*, this read-aloud also elicited many positive responses from students which demonstrated their engagement with the multicultural text. While their oral responses were positive, they differed from the Week 1 read-aloud of *Bubbie and Rivka*:

Kelly:	I like the pictures. They are detailed and colorful.
Kyle:	The pictures show movement.
Penelope:	The story matches the pictures.
Gabrielle:	There are a lot of spring colors.

The comments shared during the read-aloud suggest that the students were paying attention for features of personal narratives; they recognized how illustrations are meaningful and that the images should align with the text.

One student, Victor, shared a personal connection during the read-aloud of *A Gift for Amma*. In the story, the main character, a young girl, is visiting different stands in an Indian market in search of the perfect gift for her mother (Sriram, 2020). At one stand, she is offered ghee (Sriram, 2020). As I read this part, Victor raised his hand and stated, "I'm Indian so I know what ghee is. It's oil. We cook with it at home." Not only did Victor feel comfortable sharing his personal connection, but he seemed proud to have this background knowledge. The read-aloud of *A Gift for Amma* not only gave Victor the

opportunity to share a piece of his culture with the class, but he fully engaged with the story because of this personal connection.

The students' reflections in their writing journals also demonstrated significant and authentic engagement with *A Gift for Amma*. Analysis of the reflections suggest a variety of patterns that all indicate increased engagement: connections to India and/or Indian culture, personal connections with the plot, and identification of exemplary personal narrative features. Many of the students reflected on their connections with Indian culture:

Gabrielle:	It reminded me of a friend who moved who was Indian.
Adam:	A Gift for Amma reminds me of someone in [first grade teacher's class]. I forget her name. All I remember is she was Indian. Anyway, I liked the book. And if I like it, other kids will like!
Victor:	It reminded me of the time I was six months old and I went to India.
Kyle:	My reacshin [reaction] for this was good. some of the [it] was in indiain [Indian] cause it hard to under stand. but it was very colerful [colorful] and I like the movement and a lot of art.

While Gabrielle, Adam, and Victor were able to make personal connections, Kyle shared an honest opinion about his difficulty understanding some of the language in the text. Despite complexity with the words, Kyle worked to comprehend the text and was able to identify numerous features he liked about the story. Many students engaged with the authentic themes of Indian culture.

In their reflections, some students also shared other personal connections with the plot:

Amy:	It rmided [reminded] me of my holdya [holiday] shop because I was shoping [shopping] for my family.

Cindy: A Gift for Amma was good it ruminded [reminded] me of the sitey [city] in the sitey [city] has a market. it sells food and flawars [flowers]. I wunbar [wonder] is it nosey [noisy] like the sitey [city].

Brianna: it made me feel spesal [special] beuce [because] I feel spesal [special] when I get gifts for others it makes my hart [heart] feel loveed [loved].

Gabrielle: It reminded me of a super market called target.

As identified with the previous mentor text, students were able to make personal connections with the plot of *A Gift for Amma* without directly relating to the authentic Indian themes in the text.

Additionally, numerous students' reflections revealed that they independently identified personal narrative features within the story. Since this text was introduced and read for the first-time during Week 5 of the study, the students had studied features of personal narratives for a significant amount of time prior to the read-aloud. Their findings of personal narrative features seemed to encourage a positive relationship with the text:

Abby: The book's main charkter [character] was shoping [shopping] carefully for someone called Amma on market day. I love the ilastrasons [illustrations]. I think other kids will like because the book is very colorful.

Lauren: 1) The book is cute. 2) It made me feel happy. 3) It is colful [colorful]. 4) It dscribd [described] what it smeled [smelled] like. 5) I like that it had a lot of homs [homes]. 6) I like that she is on a hunt for a gift for Amma. 7) I like that she went to sowe [so] meney [many] stors [stores].

Penelope: We Read a Gift for Amma: Market day in India. The ilasashis [illustrations] and pichers [pictures] were saw [so] good. I rily [really] liked the book. And I think other people we [will] like it to becasue [because] it is saw [so] colerful. And the writing and the pichers [pictures] go good with the book. I think classes will like it to.

Shaun: my reackshin [reaction] of the story was I like the story. I like that each page is a difrint [different] color and the riming [rhyming]

and the flower at the frot [front] page.

In these reflections, the students described that they appreciated the plot and how the illustrations and coloring enhance the story. The students' identification of personal narrative features reveals that they were engaged with this multicultural text. As described by Piper (2019), multicultural literature can lead to increased student motivation in literacy.

As previously noted, Victor was very proud to share his personal connection with the text during the read-aloud. His journal reflection revealed a deeper response:

> I liked the ryming [rhyming] so much that I almost fell asleep. It reminded me of the time I was six months old and I went to India, it also reminded me of the time I was tring [trying] to find something for my dad at the school holiday shop.

Victor's response aligns with all three identified patterns: identification of exemplary personal narrative features, identification with Indian culture, and personal connections with the plot. Victor appreciated the author's voice and writing style; it made him feel calm. Although it is likely that he does not remember his trip to India as an infant, he could relate with stories told or pictures shared in his family. Lastly, he identified with the main character's problem of finding the perfect gift for a parent. Like many other students, Victor experienced an increased level of engagement during this multicultural read-aloud.

In my teacher research journal, I reflected on the experience of reading this second mentor text aloud:

> This second read-aloud experience was very similar to the first. The students were completely engaged; a variety of students were participating and sharing their thoughts about the story. I was full of pride as they commented on their observations of personal narrative features. Despite the increased difficulty due to the Indian words and phrases, they comprehended the plot. It really seems like they are completely invested in this process based on their participation. Although I am feeling very proud, I also have a pang of guilt. I have realized that these students also need time in their day set aside for read-alouds beyond our lesson anchor texts. Their engagement and behavior were both outstanding during this read-aloud. I will continue to think on how I can include more read-alouds after the research study.

As described in my teacher research journal, the students were able to identify the relationship between reading and writing during this read-aloud because of their engagement with the multicultural text. Piper (2019) and Kemmerlin and Wilkins (2020) discuss the relationship between multicultural read-alouds and increased student engagement in literacy. I witnessed growth as the students shared their knowledge regarding personal narrative features during the read-aloud. By taking the time to reflect, I realized that the students would benefit from continued multicultural read-alouds beyond this research project.

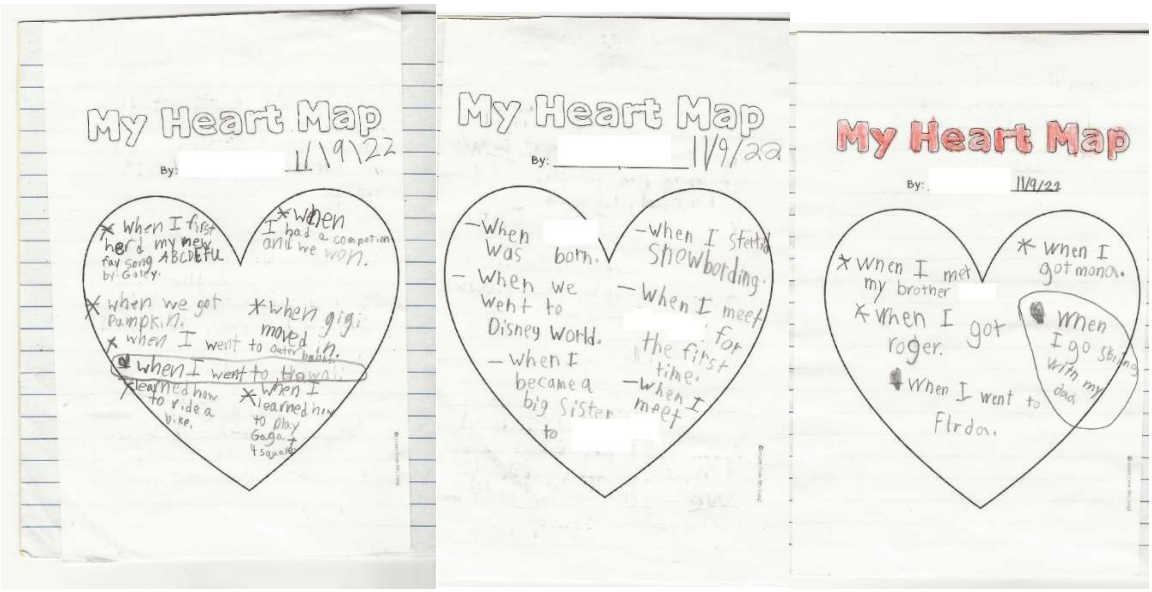
Multicultural Mentor Texts as a Guide for Writing

Writing About Families

The multicultural mentor text, *Bubbie & Rivka*, seemed to encourage the students to write about their own families for their personal narratives. The first two weeks of the study focused on understanding features of personal narratives, reading the first mentor text (*Bubbie & Rivka*), defining "small moment," creating heart maps, and choosing a small moment for the personal narrative. Throughout each step in this prewriting process, I modeled my own writing process alongside the students. As the students completed their heart maps, many brainstormed significant moments they shared with their families:

Figure 4.1

Examples of Heart Maps



Ideas on the heart maps such as meeting a younger sibling for the first time, getting a pet, and vacations all focus on significant, impactful moments within families. At this point in the study, the students had only read *Bubbie & Rivka* which highlights the bond between grandmother and granddaughter. This multicultural text seemed to inspire the students to think of significant moments that have occurred within their families.

Once the students transitioned to the drafting stage in the writing process, many children selected significant family memories to write about for their small moments. The chart below shows the 17 participants and their self-selected topics for their personal narratives:

Table 4.1

Student Writing Topics

Student Name	Personal Narrative Topic	Family Themes Present (yes/no)
Mike	Family vacation to the Bahamas	Yes
Mason	Learning to play Roblox	No
Tim	When my baby brother was born	Yes
Penelope	Ice cream on the beach with a friend	No
Brianna	7th Birthday Party	No
Gabrielle	Family vacation to Hawaii	Yes
Richard	Family vacation to Disney World	Yes

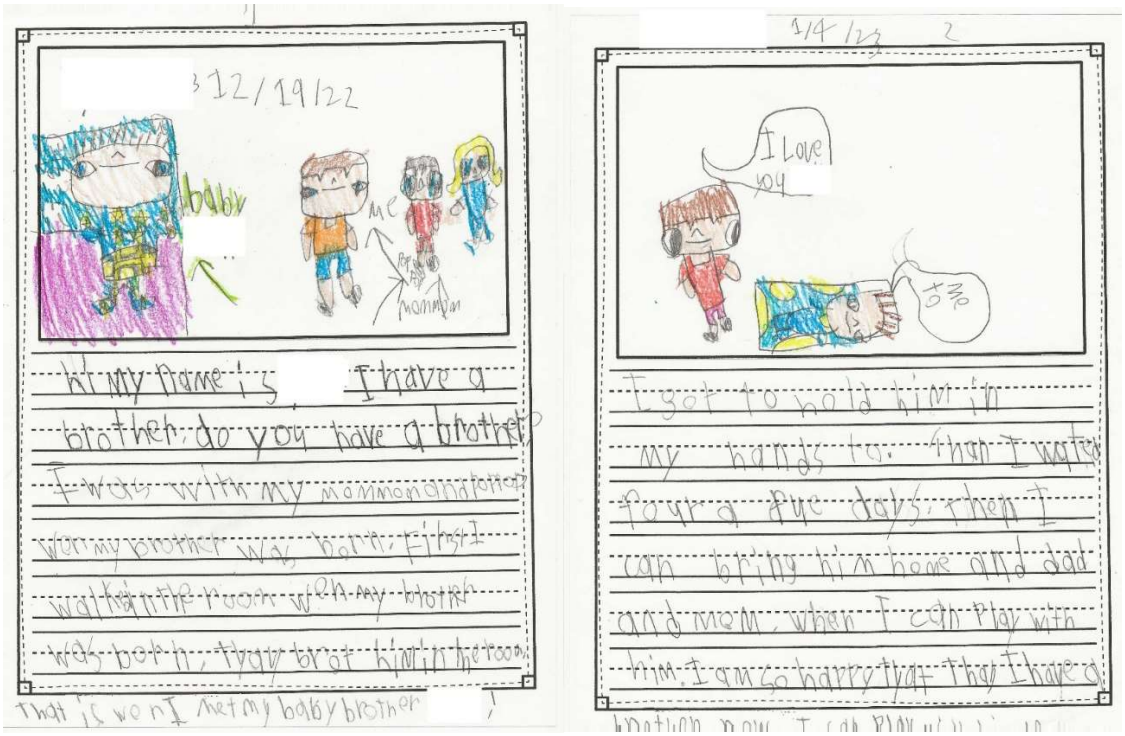
Student Name	Personal Narrative Topic	Family Themes Present (yes/no)
Amy	Family vacation to Disney World	Yes
Victor	Family vacation to Colorado	Yes
Lauren	Family vacation to Disney World	Yes
Abby	Getting ears pierced with family	Yes
Kelly	KIDZ BOP Concert with mom	Yes
Shaun	Family vacation to North Carolina	Yes
Cindy	Broken leg	Yes
Adam	Family vacation to Disney World	Yes
Claire	Skiing with dad	Yes
Kyle	Family vacation to Disney World	Yes

Note. As shown on the chart, 14 of the 17 participants chose topics with strong family themes.

While some students' personal narratives were evidently focused on their families, others had less apparent family themes. One student, Tim, wrote about meeting his baby brother for the first time.

Figure 4.2

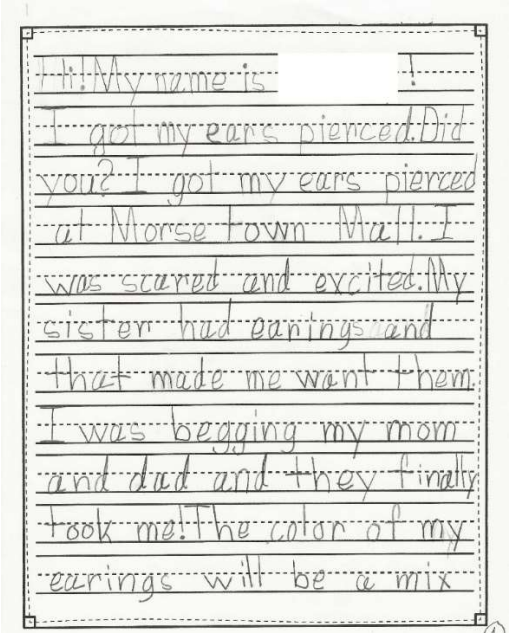
Tim's Writing Sample



His personal narrative explained the process from beginning to end: getting babysat by his grandparents, arriving at the hospital, meeting his brother, his parents and brother returning home, and presently playing with his brother. Another student, Abby, wrote about getting her ears pierced. Although her themes of family were not as obvious, upon reading her writing, the influence of her family was strong:

Figure 4.3

Excerpt from Abby's Writing Sample


Hi! My name is [redacted]
I got my ears pierced. Did
you? I got my ears pierced
at Morse Town Mall. I
was scared and excited. My
sister had earings and
that made me want them.
I was begging my mom
and dad and they finally
took me! The color of my
earings will be a mix

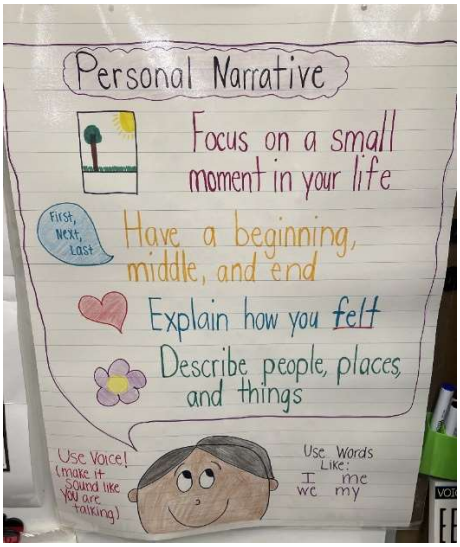
As written in Abby's personal narrative, "my sister had earings [earrings] and that made me want them. I was begging my mom and dad and they finally took me!" Like Rivka narrating how her and Bubbie learned to make challah bread together (Reul, 2022), both personal narratives highlight strong and significant family memories. Reading and revisiting this mentor text seemed to inspire the students to think about small moments with their families.

Personal Narrative Features

To introduce personal narrative writing, I used an anchor chart that highlighted numerous features of the genre. The anchor chart remained on display throughout the entire unit for teacher and student reference.

Figure 4.4

Personal Narrative Anchor Chart



Along with the anchor chart, the two multicultural mentor texts were also read and revisited throughout the unit. Upon analysis of the students' published personal narratives, three features appeared prevalent in their writing: plot development, detail, and author's voice. The data suggests that these multicultural mentor texts encouraged the students to focus on these key features.

Plot Development. Throughout the writing process, I observed how many of the students' personal narratives included strong plot development: beginning, middle, and end. Both mentor texts, *Bubbie & Rivka* and *A Gift for Amma* were selected based on their clear plot development. It is likely that the multicultural mentor texts functioned as models for the students to refer to for plot development.

At the start of the drafting stage, some teacher writing conferences focused on how to transition from a "hook" to developing the beginning of their narratives. Two recorded conferences with Victor and Abby highlight this process. During a recorded writing conference with Victor, I worked to support him with developing the beginning of his narrative about his family vacation to Colorado:

Teacher:	[re-reads hook]. I really like how you started with a strong hook and gave a lot of great background information with feelings.
Victor:	I was able to think of it because my favorite memory was the mountains.
Teacher:	Now that you wrote your hook, you can continue writing your beginning. What do you think would be good to write about next?
Victor:	I think I wrote my hook wrong because I started telling about Colorado before I even got here.
Teacher:	No no no! Let's go back to *Bubbie & Rivka* and see how she did it… [refers back to mentor text and rereads first three pages].
Victor:	Oh! Then I'll tell about how we got here and what we did there.

By referring to the mentor text, Victor was able to see an authentic example of how personal narratives "hook" readers in and then tell the beginning of the story. Revisiting the mentor text encouraged Victor to think about the start of his vacation to Colorado.

Another recorded teacher writing conference with Abby also focused on the development from the hook to the beginning of the narrative. As I reviewed Abby's personal narrative, I realized that she wrote her hook and then began writing the "middle" of her story about getting her ears pierced for the first time. As in the conference with Victor, we revisited *Bubbie & Rivka* during Abby's conference:

Teacher:	Now that we reread the beginning of *Bubbie & Rivka*, how do you think you can continue? Do you have any ideas for your beginning?

Abby: I can say I wanted to get my ears pierced because my sister got her earrings.

Again, revisiting the mentor text helped Abby understand how a hook introduces a personal narrative but that authors include a fully developed beginning.

Both students, Victor and Abby, continued to develop their personal narratives with strong beginnings, middles, and ends. Victor described nearly every step in his family vacation to Colorado: his parents informing him of the trip, his family's preparations for the trip, driving to the airport, arriving at the hotel in Colorado and exploring the hotel and local grounds, and finally heading back to the airport. Abby's personal narrative started with her explaining how she "begged" her parents for earrings, transitioned to the car ride to the local mall, followed by the process of arriving, picking earrings, and then getting her ears pierced, and closed with visiting another store. Both students' personal narratives represent a larger pattern identified through the study: multicultural mentor texts seem to inspire strong plot development in personal narrative writing.

Detail. Additionally, many of the students utilized elaborate detail in their personal narrative writing. Again, both mentor texts, *Bubbie & Rivka* (Reul, 2022) and *A Gift for Amma* (Sriram, 2020), were selected because of the high-level of detail in the narration. Three recorded teacher writing conferences highlight the process of students learning to utilize elaborate detail in their personal narratives: Lauren, Cindy, and Claire. Their published writing pieces also highlight the usage of elaborate detail.

One of Lauren's first writing conferences focused on brainstorming potential detail to her writing. I began the writing conference by reading Lauren's first paragraph

about her family vacation to Disney World and praising her usage of author's voice. During the conference, I realized that Lauren's writing lacked information regarding her arrival to Disney World; she had jumped from her beginning hook to going on rides in the park. In my anecdotal notes, I commented on how she needed support with both plot development and detail. We looked back at her initial graphic organizer that featured key ideas for beginning, middle, and end. Her idea for the beginning had initially been to tell about the drive to Florida. We revisited the mentor text, *Bubbie & Rivka*, and explored how Reul (2022) used clear details about the bread-making process. In the recorded conference, Lauren stated, "I could talk about the car ride and how I fell asleep, woke up, played my iPad, ate food, and then got there." Revisiting the mentor text encouraged Lauren to think about how she could elaborate on more details before jumping to the middle of her story.

A writing conference with Cindy featured me praising her for her use of elaborate detail in her personal narrative about breaking her leg. After Cindy wrote her first paragraph, we met together to conference. As I listened to Cindy read me the beginning of her personal narrative, I wrote in my anecdotal notes how amazed I was with her level of detail. The beginning of her narrative included details such as her friends coming over and playing in her basement, playing on a bounce house that was set-up in the basement, and a friend jumping on her leg which caused her to "burst into tears." After I praised Cindy for this high-level of detail, she responded, "I am just so excited! Can I keep on writing?" By selecting such an inspiring small moment, Cindy was able to utilize elaborate detail as did the authors of the mentor texts.

Alternatively, a teacher writing conference with Claire demonstrated how a mentor text could be revisited to brainstorm ideas for elaborate detail. When meeting with Claire, we reviewed the beginning of her personal narrative. While I praised Claire for providing background information, I recognized that her narrative would benefit from more detail. After I reread the beginning of *Bubbie & Rivka* (Reul, 2022), I asked Claire how she could add more detail to her narrative. Her idea was to talk about the things she had to pack and wear to go skiing. She explained, "So you need like special things to wear.. things that will keep you warm… special boots to get your feet hooked to the skis." By referring to the mentor text, Claire recognized opportunities that she could utilize elaborate detail in her personal narrative.

Excerpts of these students' published pieces highlight how their usage of elaborate detail continued to develop throughout the writing process. In Lauren's personal narrative about her family vacation to Disney World, she discusses waking up at the hotel on the second day of her trip and the process of getting ready to head to the amusement park (see Figure 4.5). Cindy's narrative includes clear details about her and her family's feelings and reactions to her broken leg (see Figure 4.6). She discusses how she and her family coped with the broken leg during the healing process. Claire's narrative about her ski trip with her dad details the process of packing and getting ready for the trip (See Figure 4.7). The multicultural mentor texts seemed to encourage these students to utilize elaborate detail in their personal narrative writing throughout the writing process.

Figure 4.5

Excerpt from Lauren's Personal Narrative

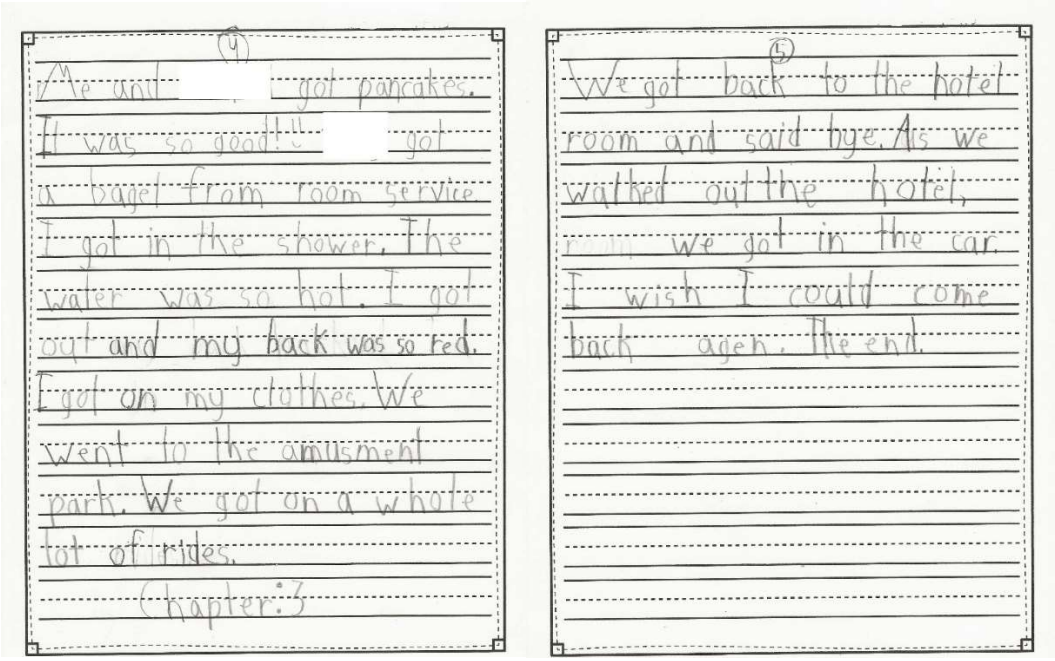


Figure 4.6

Excerpt from Cindy's Personal Narrative

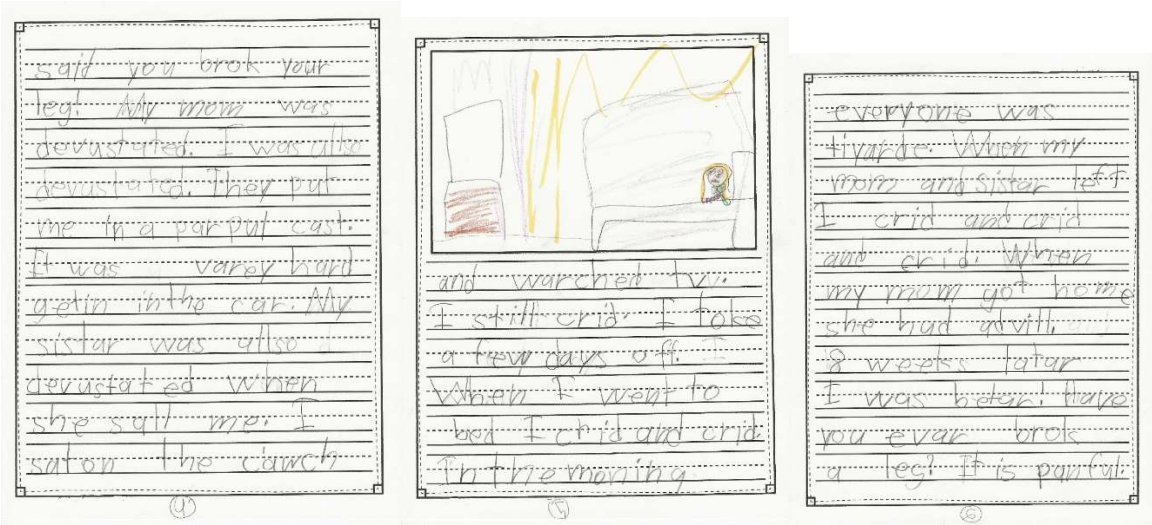
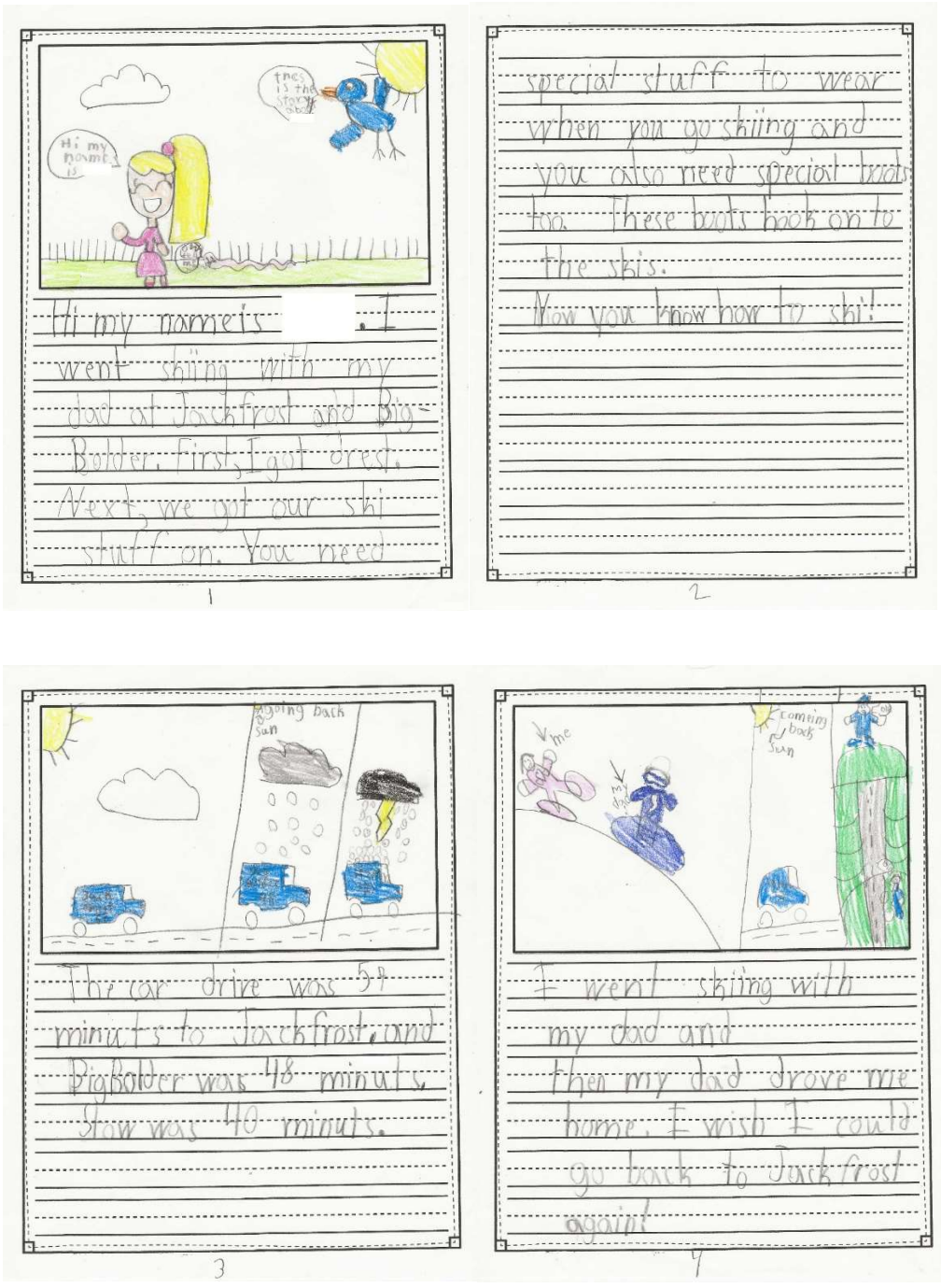


Figure 4.7

Excerpt from Claire's Personal Narrative

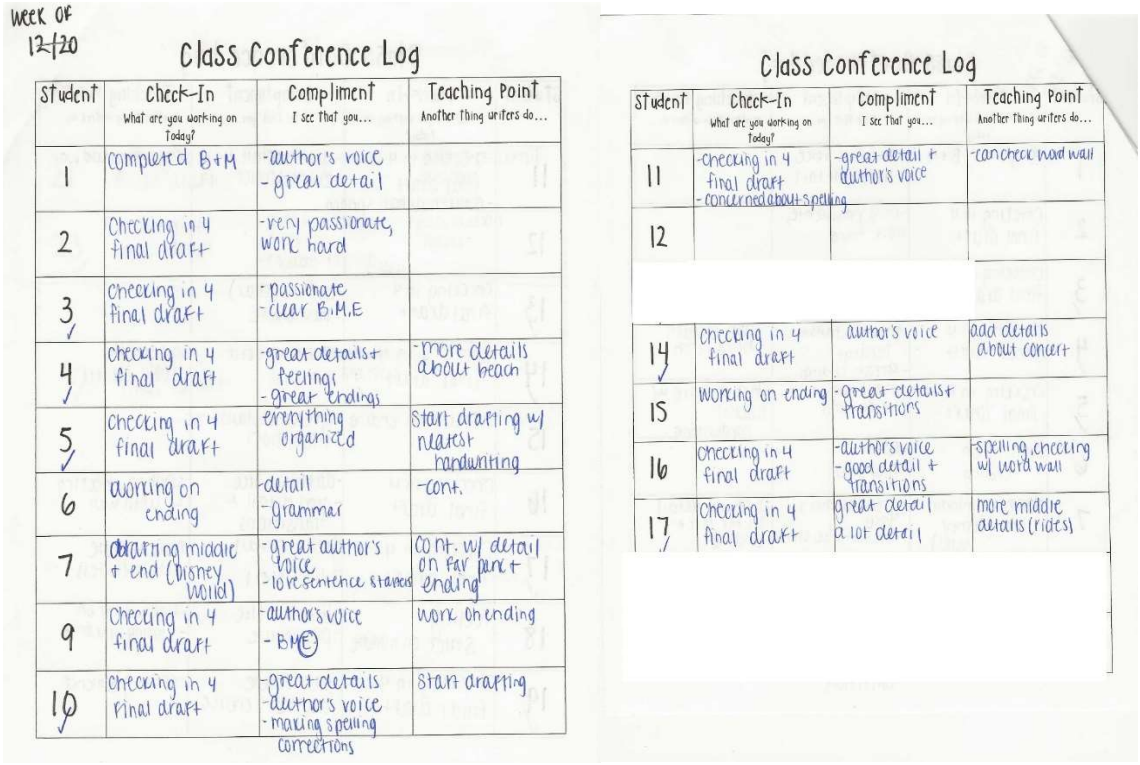


Author's Voice. The multicultural mentor texts helped the students recognize the significance of the personal narrative quality of author's voice. The Personal Narrative Anchor Chart revisited throughout the writing unit highlighted author's voice with the following guidance: Use Voice! (make it sound like YOU are talking). Both mentor texts, *Bubbie & Rivka* (Reul, 2022) and *A Gift for Amma* (Sriram, 2020) feature strong author's voice as young girls narrate their small moments. After the initial read-aloud of *Bubbie & Rivka* (Reul, 2022), the following mini-lesson focused on identifying personal narrative features in the story. As I noted in my teacher research journal, one student stated, "It sounds like Rivka is talking." I followed a similar procedure after the initial read-aloud of *A Gift for Amma* (Sriram, 2020). After the read-aloud, a student noted, "the author uses voice, and she says 'I' a lot." The students learned to recognize author's voice in writing through this unit.

Many students' personal narratives also featured exemplary usage of author's voice. During the seventh week of the study, I utilized a "Class Conference Log" to organize my anecdotal notes during writing conferences. I jotted down quick notes regarding "compliments" and/or "teaching points" for each student (See Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8

Class Conference Log



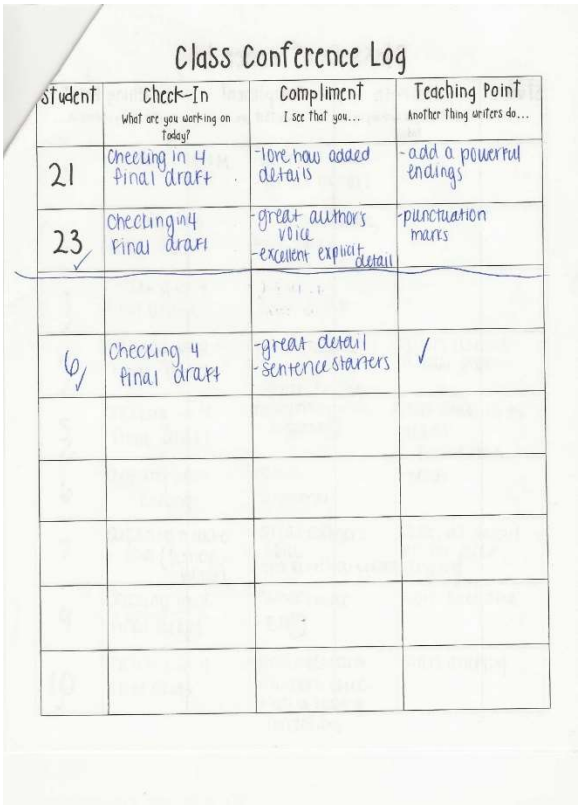
Week of 12/7/20

Class Conference Log

Student	Check-In What are you working on Today?	Compliment I see that you...	Teaching Point Another thing writers do...
1	completed B+M	-author's voice -great detail	
2	Checking in 4 final draft	-very passionate, work hard	
3 ✓	Checking in 4 final draft	-passionate -clear B.M.E	
4 ✓	Checking in 4 final draft	-great details + feelings -great endings	-more details about beach
5 ✓	Checking in 4 final draft	everything organized	Start drafting w/ neatest handwriting
6	working on ending	-detail -grammar	-cont.
7	drafting middle + end (Disney World)	-great author's voice -love sentence starters	cont. w/ detail on fav part + ending
9	Checking in 4 final draft	-author's voice -B.M.E	work on ending
10 ✓	Checking in 4 final draft	-great details -author's voice -making spelling corrections	start drafting

Class Conference Log

Student	Check-In What are you working on Today?	Compliment I see that you...	Teaching Point Another thing writers do...
11	-Checking in 4 final draft -concerned about spelling	-great detail + author's voice	-can check word wall
12			
14 ✓	Checking in 4 final draft	author's voice	add details about concert
15	working on ending	-great details + transitions	
16	Checking in 4 final draft	-authors voice -good detail + transitions	-spelling, checking w/ word wall
17 ✓	Checking in 4 final draft	great detail a lot detail	more middle details (rides)



Class Conference Log

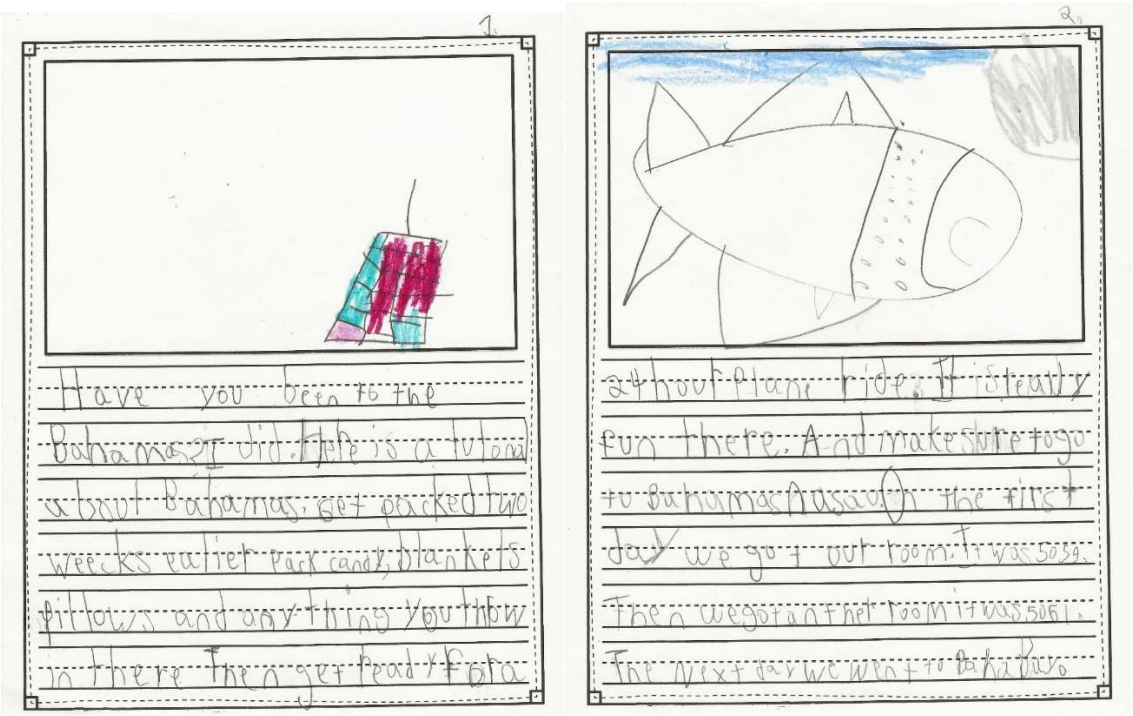
Student	Check-In What are you working on Today?	Compliment I see that you...	Teaching Point Another thing writers do...
21	Checking in 4 final draft	-love how added details	-add a powerful endings
23 ✓	Checking 4 final draft	-great author's voice -excellent explicit detail	-punctuation marks
6 ✓	Checking 4 final draft	-great detail -sentence starters	✓

On this Class Log, I complimented ten students on their usage of author's voice. By learning about author's voice through the multicultural mentor texts, the students were able to utilize this feature themselves.

Upon analysis of the students' published personal narratives, one of the features most utilized and noted was author's voice. The following students, Mike, Victor, and Kyle used exemplary author's voice in their personal narratives which demonstrates their growth as writers.

Figure 4.9

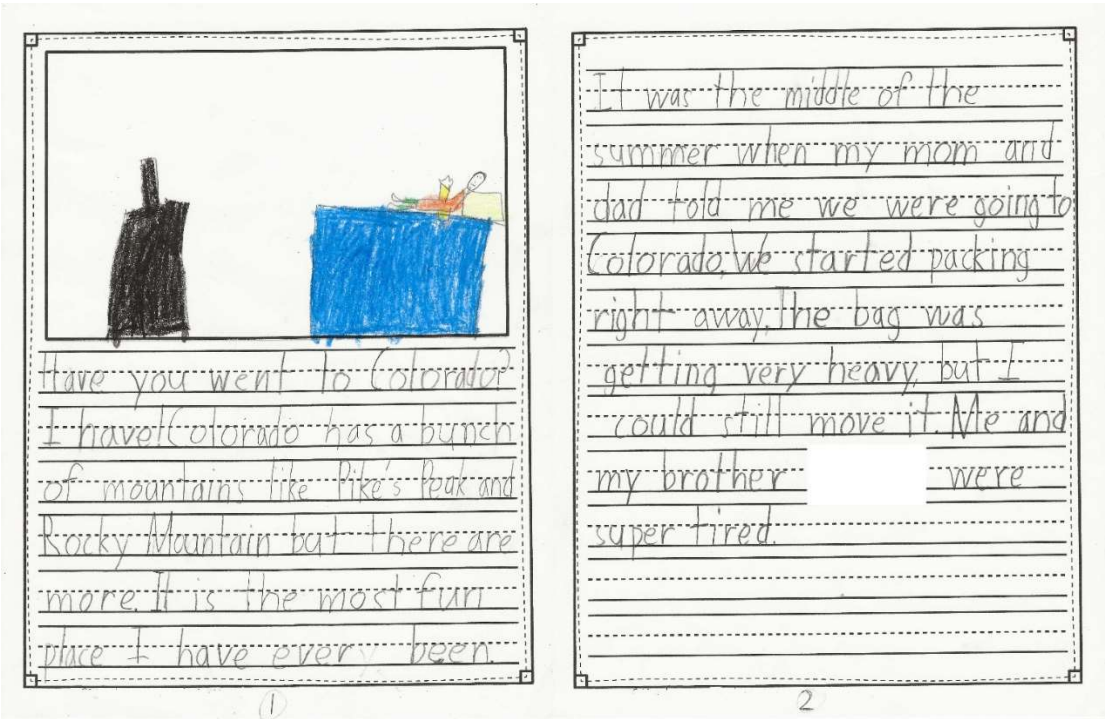
Excerpt from Mike's Personal Narrative

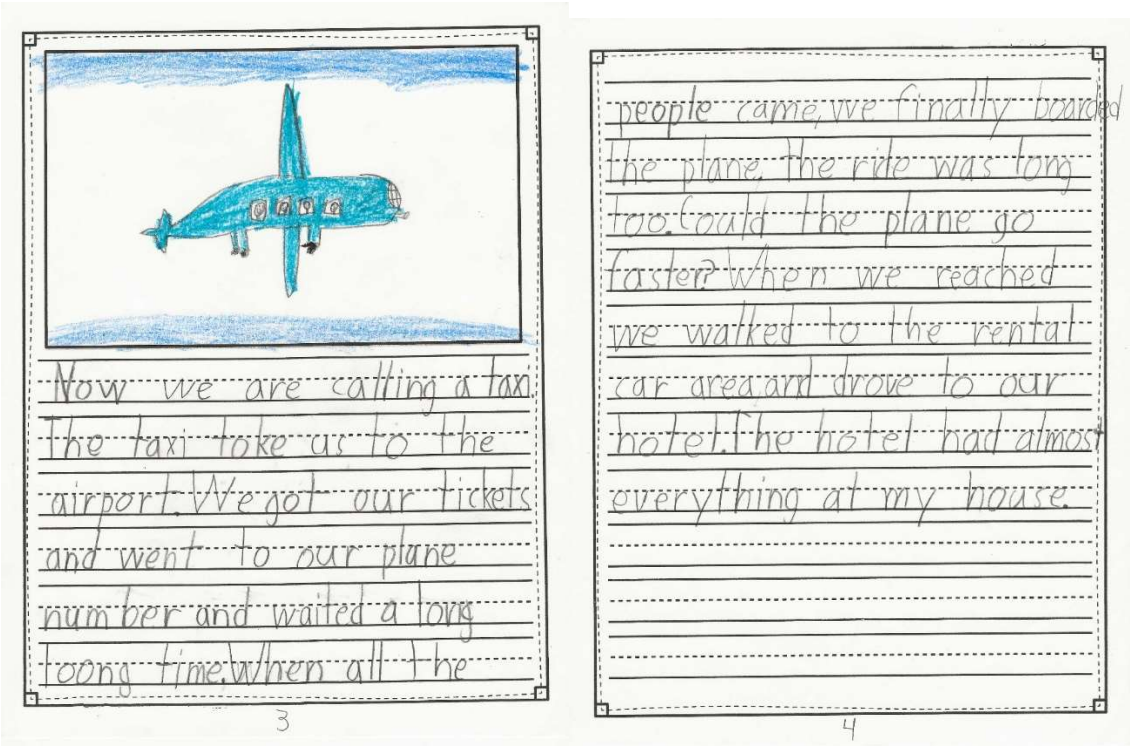


Mike's usage of author's voice aligns with his personality as a learner and student. Mike is a curious and creative student who enjoys coding and other online gaming activities. He begins his personal narrative with a question, "Have you been to the Bahamas? I did." He continues to say, "Here is a tutorial about Bahamas. Get packed two weeks earlier pack candy, blankets pillows and anything you throw in there. Then get ready for a 24 hour plane ride." While his usage of the word *tutorial* might not be accurate, he opens his narrative with a question to intrigue his readers. He also provides a "how-to guide" in terms of packing. Mike's usage of author's voice aligns with her personality as a child and learner.

Figure 4.10

Excerpt from Victor's Personal Narrative

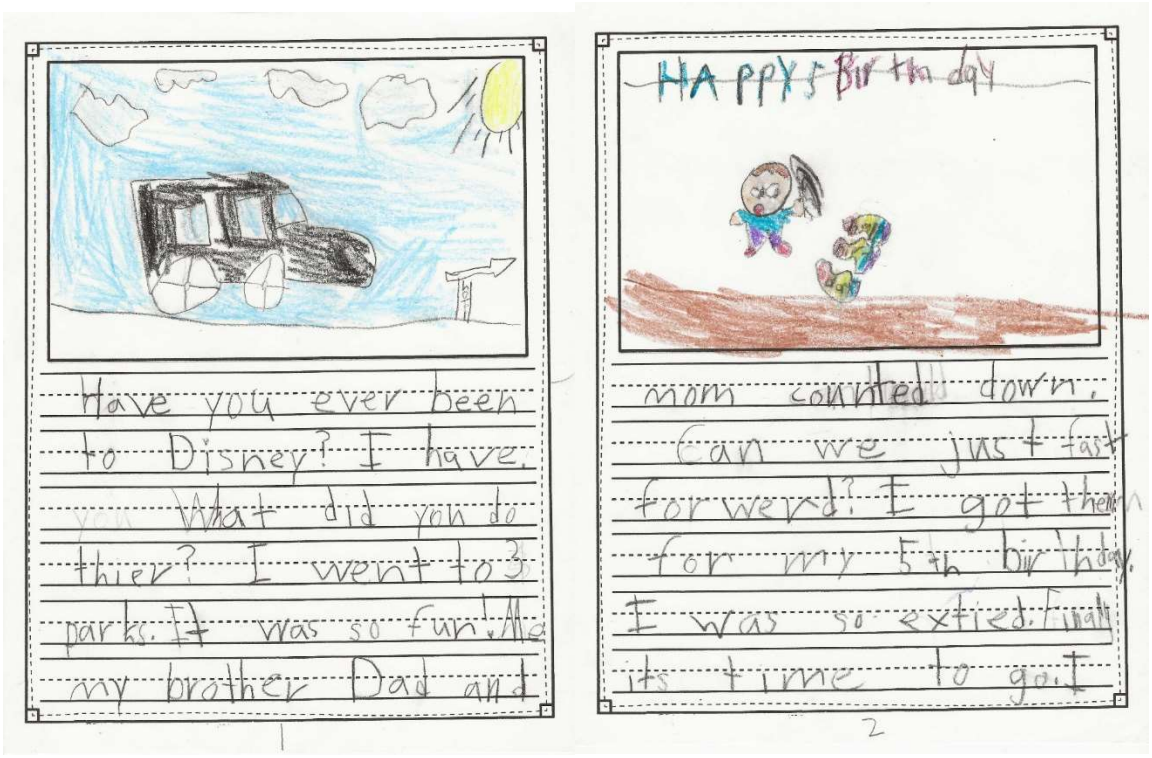




In Victor's personal narrative, he experiments with different sentence structures to enhance his voice. The beginning of Victor's personal narrative focuses on his departure to his Colorado family vacation. By opening his narrative with, "Have you went to Colorado? I have!", Victor attempts to get his reader excited to learn about his vacation. He describes Colorado as "the most fun place I have ever been" which further demonstrates his voice as a seven-year-old student. Regarding his time at the airport, Victor writes, "We got our tickets and went to our plane number and waited a long loong time." Once on the plane and eagerly awaiting his arrival in Colorado, Victor asks, "Could the plane go faster?" Victor seems to utilize a variety of sentence styles to emphasize his voice in his writing.

Figure 4.11

Excerpt from Kyle's Personal Narrative



Similarly, Kyle's utilization of author's voice enhances his personal narrative writing about his family vacation to Disney World. Kyle opens his personal narrative with, "Have you ever been to Disney? I have. What did you do thier [there]?" These questions mimic how he might discuss and compare Disney trips with a peer. Later in his opening, he states, "Me my brother Dad and mom counted down. Can we just fast forwerd [forward]?" Having the desire to "fast forward" to the start of his family vacation seems to align with something he might verbally say in anticipation of his trip. As Kyle describes his road trip to Disney, he states, "It was so boring at least we had are [our] nitendo [Nintendo] switch." He articulates how playing his hand-held video game distracted him from the long car ride. Kyle's usage of author's voice showcases his passion and excitement regarding his family vacation.

Writing as a Social Practice within the Writer's Workshop Model

Prior to beginning this personal narrative writing unit, my writing instruction lacked consistent structure. Often, I would introduce a writing topic, model my own response, and then facilitate check-in writing conferences. I decided to implement writer's workshop at the start of the unit because of past research on the effectiveness of this model of instruction (Jasmine & Weiner, 2007; Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012; Seban & Tavsanli, 2015; Grisham & Wolsey, 2011; Machado & Hartman; 2020, Troja et al., 2011). Most lessons within the unit began with a mini lesson, transitioned to writing time which included peer and teacher conferences, and concluded with an author's chair share session. As demonstrated through recorded peer conferences and author's chair sessions, the students had a positive response to this method of writing instruction due to its premise of writing as social practice. Students also shared their own positive testimonials

with me throughout the study. The writer's workshop model of instruction seemed to encourage the students to persevere and believe in the writing process.

Peer Writing Conferences

Peer writing conferences provided students a safe, intimate, and motivational place to experiment with writing moves as well as seek support with different writing tasks. Students often worked in partnerships or small groups (four or less) to conference during writing time. By analyzing recordings of peer writing conferences, I learned how students interacted with one another and supported each other throughout the writing process.

As I listened to a recorded small group writing conference that occurred during the second week of the study, I observed how students supported each other through the drafting process:

Victor:	What are you going to do? I am going to start with a question.
Shaun:	I am going to do …
Abby:	I am going to a blend between a question and introducing yourself.
Shaun:	That's a good idea.

Since my mini lesson of the day introduced a variety of techniques for starting open narratives, the students were discussing how they were going to start their beginnings in the conference. At the start of the conference, Shaun was unsure of how he would start his narrative. Abby helped him realize that he could "blend" different strategies. As the conference proceeded, the students continued to support each other:

Shaun:	So what are you going to do for your question?
Victor:	Have you ever been to Colorado? Yes.

Shaun: I could say, have you ever been to North Carolina?

Abby: Lauren, what are you writing about?

Lauren: Going to Disney World.

Abby: Oh! I am writing about getting my ears pierced.

Lauren: If I was smart I would know something important to write about.

Abby: You ARE smart!

In this segment, both Victor and Abby motivated their peers in different ways. After hearing Victor's idea for a question, Shaun was able to format his own question. On the other hand, Lauren felt like her idea for her personal narrative (a family trip to Disney World) was not "important" enough to write about. Abby reassured her by insisting that she is smart. After brainstorming ideas for their first sentences, the students continued to draft their beginnings:

Abby: Lauren, should I start with, "I got my ears pierced. Did you?"

Lauren: Yeah.

Shaun: How do you spell Carolina?

Victor: Care-oh-line-uh.

Shaun: This doesn't look like how you spell North Carolina. Look.

Victor: Yes it does. Wait, where's the 'r'?

Shaun: Oh!

Here, both Abby and Shaun sought support from their peers. Abby needed and received affirmation that her original idea was good to start with. Victor helped Shaun spell Carolina by breaking apart the syllables as well as proof-reading his spelling. After, the students continued working through their beginnings together:

Victor: Actually, I am going to describe the setting too. This place is all mountains.

Shaun: What, it's all mountains?!

Victor: Yup. Colorado is all mountains.

Shaun: North Carolina is like New Jersey.

Victor: We went to three mountains over there. With cars. Wait. It is covered with mountains or there are mountains all over it?

Abby: I don't know, I've never been to Colorado.

Victor: I know, I am just asking you what sentence you think I should use.

Shaun: I have only been to North Carolina. It was like a twelve-hour ride.

Abby: Wait, so it sounds like Colorado does have mountains.

Victor: It does! We were in a hotel, and it was on a mountain.

Shaun: Wait, the hotel was on a mountain?!

Abby: You could say um Colorado has a lot of mountains. If you went hiking on it, you could say, Colorado has a lot of mountains, and I hiked on them.

Victor: I went hiking and did some mountain biking. I also went on them… It's freezing! I am just going to say Colorado has a lot of mountains.

As Victor begins brainstorming and writing additional ideas for his opening, his peers seem to become invested in his personal narrative. Not only is Shaun surprised by Colorado's geographical features, but he begins to compare his topic to Victor's. He realizes that his family vacation to North Carolina will be more like his home state of New Jersey than Colorado. As the conference continues, Shaun asks an additional clarifying question about Colorado because of his interest in Victor's personal narrative. Victor answers these questions which encourages Abby to probe him for even more details. Abby seems to recall and understand that personal narratives feature elaborate detail. Lauren also demonstrates this understanding when she begins to engage with Victor about his narrative:

Victor: I don't know what to write next.

Shaun: Uh…

Lauren: Was it pretty? Did it look like it was gonna rain? Did you like the hotel? Did you see a lot of snow? Did you make a snowman?

Victor: There was no snow and no rain drops.

Like Abby's probing questions, Lauren asks a repetitive series of questions to encourage Victor to think of additional ideas for his opening. As I listened to this writing conference and reflected in my teacher research journal, I realized how much my students sounded like me. These types of questions are the things I would ask students in teacher writing conferences if their pieces were lacking detail. Not only were the students able to support each other through the early days of their drafting, but they were able to do this without my direct supervision and assistance.

Another recorded peer writing conference from the fourth week of the study reveals how a partnership of students supported one another as they drafted the middle of their personal narratives:

Abby: If you need any advice, you can tell me what you are writing about, and I can tell you a good idea!

Penelope: Okay!

At the beginning of the conference, Abby assures Penelope that she will be there to support her through her writing process. Penelope agrees and seems excited by the prospect of having her classmate's help. Throughout this conference, the girls took turns working independently, sharing writing, and offering feedback. First, Abby received feedback on her narrative:

Penelope: [Looks over Abby's shoulder]. Oh, I like yours so far!

Abby: Thank you. Should I add a little bit more to the beginning?

Penelope: Yeah, probably a little bit more, and then you can move on to the middle.

Abby: Okay. So, on my other page, I was thinking two more sentences.

Penelope: Yeah!

Abby: What do you think they should be though?

Penelope: Well, what exactly did you write so far?

Abby: Hi, my name is Abby. I got my ears pierced, did you? I got my ears pierced at the mall. I was scared and excited. My sister had earrings, and that made me want them. I was begging my mom and dad, and they finally took me!

Penelope: Say what kind of earrings did you get… like flowers…

Abby: Well, I am going to be saying that in my middle. In my other writing, I wrote, "my earring color will be a mix between purple and blue and their shape will be a flower." But, actually, I do think that should be in the beginning because the middle will be all about getting my ears pierced. Should I do that?

Penelope: Yes!

In this segment of the writing conference, Abby senses that her beginning needs more detail, so she asks Penelope for support. After Abby reads her first paragraph, Penelope suggests that she should give detail about her earrings. Although Abby was planning to include this in her middle, she considers Penelope's idea. Penelope's suggestion encourages Abby to add this detail in the beginning of her narrative. As the students continue to work, they reverse roles:

Penelope: Could I read you mine?

Abby: Yeah.

Penelope: First, we played at the beach for a little bit. Then, we got to the ice cream place. The drive was thirty-five minutes. Then, we got our treat. I got mint chocolate chip, and [friend] got chocolate and vanilla. Then, we ate it. It was a blast! At the end, [friend's mom] had to drop me off.

Abby: Wait, what's your story about?

Penelope: It's about me and [friend] going to get ice cream at the beach.

Abby: Cool. Wait, I have a good idea for when you start your writing. When you say, "First, we played at the beach for a little bit," maybe you could say what you did. You can say if you swam, made sandcastles, dug holes…

Penelope: Good! That's actually really good!

As Penelope shares her writing about a beach day with a friend, Abby realizes it lacks detail about being on the beach. She provides Penelope with clear feedback by suggesting a specific place to add detail: when they are at the beach. She even offers suggestions of things that Penelope could write about. Penelope values this feedback and immediately jumps back into her writing. Abby's suggestion mirrored my notes in my teacher research journal; I wrote down that I should meet with Penelope to help her add details about being on the beach. Abby's suggestions encouraged Penelope to elevate her writing in a peer-friendly manner. This peer writing conference demonstrates the effectiveness of peer support without the need for teacher intervention.

Lastly, a conference that occurred during the fifth week of the study between two students, Tim and Kyle, suggests that peer conferencing encourages students to meaningfully edit and revise their writing:

Kyle: Tell me if I need anything, okay?

Tim: Okay.

Kyle: [reading from draft] Have you ever been to Disney World? I have. What did you do there? I went on the rollercoaster and teacups. Have you been on the rollercoaster? Me and my brother, mom and dad, was… we counted… we counted down… we… oh my god. I gotta erase stuff. Give me a second. I'll just start a brand new page.

While Kyle was reading aloud to Tim, he realized that his writing had numerous mechanical errors that led to it being incomprehensible. Although Tim did not have the

opportunity to offer feedback, Kyle was able to recognize areas of improvement in his writing by reading aloud to his partner in the conference. After this realization, the boys begin to work together to provide support and feedback to each other as they draft:

Kyle:	If you need any help ask me.
Tim:	How do you spell 'when'?
Kyle:	W-h-e-n.

Tim, a student who experiences difficulties with phonics and spelling rules, relied on Kyle for support. By providing Tim with the correct spelling of the sight word, 'when,' Kyle enabled him to continue writing with feeling "stuck." During this conference, Tim also aided Kyle:

Kyle:	[orally reading the sentences that he rewrites] I got tickets for Disney for my birthday.
Tim:	How old were you turning?
Kyle:	Six. [Returns to writing]. I got them for my sixth birthday.

Here, Tim recognized that readers might be curious about what age Kyle was turning for his Disney birthday celebration. After, the conference continued with Kyle offering Tim additional support:

Kyle:	How are you doing?
Tim:	Nice!
Kyle:	Are you almost done?
Tim:	I am done.
Kyle:	Really? Let me read it.
Tim:	Okay!
Kyle:	[Begins to orally read Tim's personal narrative about meeting his little brother for the first time from the beginning]. I think that's

	good so far. See if you can add some more detail. Did you get to hold him?
Tim:	Okay! [adds sentence about holding his brother at the hospital].
Kyle:	How old were you when he was born?
Tim:	Four. Actually, I was three.

At the start of this conference, Tim believed that he was "done" writing his personal narrative. Similar to how Tim urged Kyle to add details about his trip to Disney, Kyle asked probing questions to encourage Tim to enhance his writing. Tim seemed to recognize that answering these types of probing questions would strengthen his writing. As the conference concluded, Kyle helped Tim edit for grammatical and spelling errors:

Tim:	Doesn't it look good?
Kyle:	[reads from Tim's writing]. I got to hold him in my hands. [has difficulty continuing to read Tim's narrative]. To?
Tim:	I need to add a period.
Kyle:	What does this say?
Tim:	To then. Wait I need a period.
Kyle:	What does this say?
Tim:	I waited for a few days. Then, I could bring him home, and I was so happy.
Kyle:	Why aren't you saying something like, "when can I play with my brother?" You have ten sentences. [counts sentences]. Why don't you say something…
Tim:	I know what to say! When can I play with him?!
Kyle:	Erase that. You can say, "I asked my mom and dad when can I play with him?"
Tim:	[begins writing].
Kyle:	A-s-k-e-d. You know how to spell mom and dad.
Tim:	[reads from writing] I asked my mom and dad when I could play with…
Kyle:	With him.

Tim: With my brother.

Kyle: Fix ‘when’ when you’re done.

Tim: How do you spell it?

Kyle: You already know!

In this last portion of the writing conference, Kyle helps Tim realize that his writing is difficult to read due to errors with mechanics and grammar as well as his handwriting. Tim seems to be motivated to improve his writing because of Kyle’s assistance. Again, this peer conference demonstrates how students can help each other through all steps of the writing process.

Author’s Chair

At the conclusion of each writing lesson, one or two students took a turn in the author’s chair. Students were selected for author’s chair for a variety of reasons. Many students approached me and asked for a turn in author’s chair in-between my writing conferences. After working with certain students, I might have thought they would benefit from peer support or would serve as an exemplary model for their peers. Regardless of the reason, the “author” and “audience” all benefited from this ending activity. The authors were proud to share their writing while the audience was motivated to provide thoughtful feedback.

Our first author’s chair session took place during the third week of the study. I asked Kelly to be our first sharing author based on our writing conference; she had a strong introduction, but she needed some support transitioning to the middle of her personal narrative about attending a KIDZ BOP concert with her mother. I decided to

record this first author's chair experience. After Kelly read her personal narrative, she received the following positive feedback from her peers:

Penelope:	She had a nice beginning because she said she put her clothes on and then got in the car.
Teacher:	I agree with that. That is something I really liked too. You have a clear image in your mind. You can picture being there and what is happening.
Claire:	I like how she said her name and that she was going to a KIDZ BOP concert because people want to know where they are going first.
Kyle:	I like how she said her name so you know who she is.
Amy:	I like how she said her name and that she was going with her mom.
Teacher:	You just read my mind! She told us who she is going to be with. Some of you might have heard me suggest that when I was conferencing with you. I can picture in my mind that it is Kelly, and she is going to a KIDZ BOP concert with her mom.

In my anecdotal notes, I wrote the following statement: "As Kelly listened to the positive feedback from her peers, she had a smile on her face." As I reflected on this, I realized that hearing this praise from her peers could have given Kelly the confidence to keep working on her personal narrative. Kelly, a student who often lacks confidence in her literacy skills, felt proud of herself after hearing her classmates' compliments. This experience also allowed audience members to hear an exemplary introduction as well as what readers look for. After receiving praise and positive feedback, I asked the audience if they had any suggestions for Kelly:

Mike:	She can write what the songs are going to be.
Gabrielle:	Where the concert is.
Richard:	How long the drive was.
Tim:	What she saw in the car.
Cindy:	Maybe she could say at the end how it was.

Teacher: What do you think, Kelly? Was this helpful?

Kelly: Yes!

All these suggestions offered Kelly ideas of how she could move forward with her personal narrative. Kelly seemed to accept and trust her classmates' suggestions based on her positive response. In my anecdotal notes, I noted how meaningful and effective this first author's chair experience was for the entire class.

For proceeding author's chair sessions, I took anecdotal notes in my teacher research journal. By analyzing these notes, I discovered that the author's chair sessions seemed to not only provide the students with helpful praise, but the feedback continued to motivate and inspire the students to improve their writing. In my journal, I noted that Claire "asked me multiple times" when she could take a turn in author's chair. Once it was her turn to share her personal narrative about going skiing with her father, she received the following feedback from her peers:

"The hook was good, but I think you could tell what you rode."

"I like that you told about the gear, but maybe you could tell more interesting details… like about getting there."

Claire's peers praised her writing, but they indicated that she needed to add more detail. On the same day, Victor had a turn in the author's chair and read the beginning to his personal narrative about his family trip to Colorado. His peers praised his use of elaborate detail:

"I really liked the beginning because it was nice… It had a lot of details."

"I love how he includes the mountain names."

"I like how he explained how heavy his bag was."

Here, the students seem to communicate their appreciation for the personal narrative quality of elaborate detail. Victor's efforts to use clear detail were praised and celebrated by the group. Both author chair sessions focused on the author's use of detail.

Similarly, other author's chair sessions reinforced exemplary writing moves and provided the authors with suggestions on how to revise or move forward with their writing. During the fifth week of the study, I asked Brianna and Penelope to take a turn in the author's chair. After Brianna read about her seventh birthday party at a boutique, her peers responded:

"I love how you said everyone drum rolled, and then you came out. Then everyone was standing."

"I like how she put how many minutes the drive was and that there were a lot of details."

"The story goes good with the writing from the beginning to the middle."

Not only did Brianna's peers communicate their appreciation for her detail and clear imagery, but they also indicated that they thought she did well with the transition from the beginning to the middle of her narrative. Again, the audience provided specific feedback based on the taught elements of personal narrative writing. Following Brianna's share, Penelope took a turn in the author's chair while she read her writing about having ice cream at the beach with a friend:

"I like how you decided to go somewhere else…"

"I like how you said how old you were."

"I like how you told who you were with."

"Maybe you could write about when you were there… like the flavors."

Once more, the author, Penelope, was praised for her positive efforts and offered specific suggestions. While the author's chair share might put students in a vulnerable position to share their writing, they felt confident and comfortable. Their peers provided genuine praise and significant, applicable suggestions. Additionally, the social-based practice of author's chair seemed to allow students to critique each other's writing without teacher interference or support.

Writing Motivation Based on Student Testimonials

Throughout the duration of the study, many of the students approached me and shared their positive testimonials about this writing experience. While I wish that I could have caught all commentary on audio recording, my authentic role as the teacher researcher forced me to document these conversations in the form of notes in my teacher research journal. Day after day, numerous students approached me at the start of the writing lesson and asked me if they could have a turn recording their peer writing conferences. As previously stated, students also regularly inquired if they could have a turn in the author's chair. As I facilitated writing conferences, I watched the students working together to read and listen to each other's writing as well as offer feedback and suggestions. By facilitating and encouraging a social writing environment, my students were motivated to not only write but also consistently improve their writing.

One of the most illuminating moments occurred during the eighth and second to last week of the research study. As soon as Claire arrived at school that Monday morning, she approached me and asked, “Can you tell me how to spell adventure? I thought of a title for my writing at home.” After writing adventure on a post-it for Claire, I immediately retrieved my teacher research journal and wrote about the experience:

> “Claire was thinking about her writing at home. This is how invested she is in her personal narrative. Once a struggling writer, she is actively thinking about her writing outside of school. She is bound to become a lifelong writer.”

Later in the morning, Claire came back up to me and inquired, “Are we going to do writing today? I’m excited. Everyone likes writing, but I like it best and the most.” Again, I had to reflect on this experience in the moment:

> “Writing was once the dreaded time in the morning, Now, students like Claire are looking forward to writing. They want to make sure that they will have time to work on their writing despite the fact that we have been doing it for weeks. My students have grown so much over these past few weeks, and I feel like they will look at writing differently forever moving forward.”

Based on these student testimonials, my research suggests that the writer’s workshop model of instruction helps students become motivated and invested in the writing process. Kelly et al. (2020) argue that the opportunities for socialization in the writer’s workshop model give students ownership and pride in their writing. As described by Seban and Tavsanli (2015), the pieces written during writer’s workshop instruction have the potential to shape students’ identities. Students like Claire now see themselves

as writers. Not only did the students look forward to collaborating on their writing, but they also had intrinsic motivation to enhance their writing without teacher intervention.

Conclusion

This research study offers numerous findings regarding both multicultural literature as writing mentor texts and the instructional model of writer's workshop. The multicultural mentor texts increased student engagement with literacy as well as encouraged students to write about their own families. These mentor texts also promoted the personal narrative writing qualities of plot development, detail, and author's voice. Lastly, the writer's workshop model proved to be effective for the students in this research study because of its support of writing as a social practice; this encouraged the students to become motivated and invested in the writing process. While promoting socializing during writing instruction might raise concerns related to classroom management, the benefits outweigh the risks as demonstrated in this study. Not only did the students grow as writers, but their motivation and engagement lead to a greater investment in meaningful writing. They developed as individuals as they wrote about their small moments and shared these meaningful memories with their peers. In Chapter 5, I will summarize the findings and discuss limitations and implications for the study.

Chapter 5

Summary, Limitations, Implications, and Conclusion

Introduction

Over the course of the ten-week study, the second-grade students wrote and published personal narratives. The following research questions were explored: *What happens when multicultural mentor texts are used during second grade writing instruction? How do second grade students relate and respond to mentor texts with characters who look like them? How do students discuss and refer to multicultural texts when conferencing with each other during writer's workshop?* Two multicultural mentor texts, *Bubbie and Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!)* (Reul, 2022) and *A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India* (Sriram, 2020) were used to model exemplary personal narratives and their related features. A writer's workshop model of instruction was implemented to provide consistent writing instruction as well as offer opportunities for socialization during writing. At the conclusion of my research, three major themes emerged: 1. Multicultural Literature Promoted Engagement with Literacy, 2. Multicultural Mentor Texts as a Guide for Writing, and 3. Writing as a Social Practice within the Writer's Workshop Model.

Summary of Findings

Student verbal and written responses to the initial read-alouds of the mentor texts revealed that they were significantly engaged with these two pieces of multicultural literature. During the first read aloud of *Bubbie & Rivka* (Reul, 2022), students participated by sharing comments about their observations as well as their personal

connections with challah bread. Responses in their writing journals suggested that many students had a positive relationship with the text because of their personal connections and reflections. Similarly, student verbal and written responses to the initial read-aloud of *A Gift for Amma* (Reul, 2020) demonstrated their positive engagement with the story. The students verbally commented on the personal narrative features they identified. One student, Victor, shared his personal connection with the text based on his Indian heritage. In their writing journals, students shared personal connections to India and/or Indian culture, personal connections to the plot, and identified exemplary personal narrative features. The students continued to engage with these mentor texts during mini-lessons and writing conference references.

Additionally, the research suggests that these multicultural mentor texts influenced the students and their writing in numerous ways. Many of the students chose writing topics with strong family themes such as family vacations and other special events and memories with siblings or parents. Three personal narrative features, plot development, detail, and author's voice, appeared prevalent in student writing. When writing about their self-selected small moments, the students thought about how to include and portray the beginning, middle, and end of their stories. Numerous students utilized elaborate detail when writing about their small moments by describing the events in the story, the setting, and their feelings. The students also incorporated author's voice by portraying their personalities and thoughts through their writing. The multicultural literature used in this study seemed to have a significant impact on the students as they worked through all steps of the writing process.

Lastly, writer's workshop proved to be an effective model of writing instruction because of its premise of writing as a social practice as well as the students' ability to persevere throughout the writing unit. In peer writing conferences, students worked together to draft, revise, and edit their personal narratives. As they shared their writing, they probed each other for detail and helped their partner(s) enhance their writing by suggesting edits and revisions. During author's chair sharing sessions, audience members provided praise of exemplary personal narrative features and provided specific feedback in the form of suggestions. Student testimonials suggest that the children were very motivated to persevere through the writing process because of the workshop model. Students were eager to record their writing conferences and volunteered for the author's chair shares. The workshop model seemed to motivate the students to produce thoughtful personal narratives.

Limitations of the Study

Within the study, there were several limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, only two multicultural mentor texts were utilized throughout the study. While each text represented a large population of the school community, Jewish and Indian, there are other cultural groups prevalent. Additionally, this research study only focused on one genre of writing: personal narrative writing. Future research could explore other genres such as informational and persuasive. Lastly, the research was limited because there was only one iPad used for recordings of writing conferences. While many students expressed the desire to record their peer writing conferences, only one session could be recorded at a time. In the future, it might be beneficial for students

to record their conferences on their district distributed iPads. This study offers a glimpse into the students' lives as writers because it captured only one unit.

Implications for Educators

This study offers specific implications for teachers and educators regarding the utilization of multicultural literature in elementary classrooms. During both multicultural read-alouds, the students were focused and engaged, which was evident through their active participation. The students connected with these texts because of the authentic characters, relatable plots, and their own personal experiences. Not only did I refer to these mentor texts during subsequent mini-lessons and writing conferences, but the students also borrowed the books during their independent writing and peer conferences. The multicultural mentor texts functioned as models for the students throughout the writing unit. Teachers should strive to utilize multicultural literature during their instruction rather than solely providing access to these texts in their classroom libraries.

Furthermore, there are implications regarding the significance of best practices for elementary writing instruction. Prior to the research study, my writing instruction was inconsistent and prompt-based. When students are limited to prompt-based writing, they have less opportunities for student choice which impedes their potential as writers because of decrease in motivation (Machado & Hartman, 2020; Grisham & Wolsey 2011). Offering student choice in writing through the writer's workshop model encourages students to invest in the writing process (Woodard et al., 2017). Once I implemented and established expectations for the writer's workshop model, the students adapted and began to respond. They understood that they were expected to write and participate in conferences each day. As observed through various student testimonials and

comments, the writing block transitioned into a favorable time during the school day. Not only did student writing skills develop, but they were eager to participate in the writer's workshop model.

In addition, this study suggests that it is important that educators incorporate opportunities for socialization during writing instruction. As demonstrated through the recordings, the students thrived in their peer writing conferences and during the author's chair sessions. The students collaborated and supported each other through the writing stages of brainstorming and pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. By conversing about their writing with their peers, the writing conferences seemed to serve as a place for the students to experiment with their writing without exerting significant, physical effort on paper. Therefore, these peer writing conferences encouraged the students to take risks to enhance their writing with the support of their classmates. Not only did the students look forward to working in their partnerships and/or small groups, but they asked to record their writing conferences. Therefore, this suggests that implementing a social environment for writing motivated the students to invest in the writing process, persevere week after week, and produce their best work.

Lastly, the impact of both the multicultural read alouds and the success of students published personal narratives can be attributed to the safe classroom learning environment. At the start of the school year, I began working to develop an environment in which the students felt confident in themselves as well as supportive of one another. When the study began, the students had clear expectations regarding their participation during read alouds, peer conferences, and author's chair sharing sessions. When both multicultural mentor texts were read, students verbally shared their personal connections

without hesitation. Numerous students seemed proud to identify with the main characters in each story. During peer writing conferences and author's chair sessions, authors shared their writing, and their classmates provided praise and suggestions. While sharing writing requires immense vulnerability, all students were eager to listen to and incorporate feedback from their peers. This study reinforces the concept that all students need a safe classroom learning environment to develop as readers and writers.

Conclusion

This study transformed my views on my role as a writing teacher and the teaching of writing in elementary classrooms. I realized how important it is to teach writing through a workshop model that is built on social collaboration. The timing of this study, during the first semester of the school year, was imperative to student writing and social development. As students shared their small moments and conferenced with each other, they bonded which resulted in a stronger classroom learning community. Each of the diverse students felt safe as they shared their writing; they were vulnerable regarding both the content of their writing as well as their presentation of their ideas. Additionally, I witnessed how the multicultural mentor texts captivated all my students; this initial engagement lasted throughout the duration of the study and encouraged them to invest in the writing process. Not only has this study been incredibly rewarding, but the implications are critical in our society that demands social justice transformation.

In conclusion, this research study suggests that utilizing multicultural mentor texts during writer's workshop instruction can help motivate students to develop as writers. By understanding the classroom community, educators can incorporate principles from culturally relevant education to select texts that are meaningful, engaging, authentic, and

relevant to the students' lives (Paris & Alim, 2017). Multicultural mentor texts not only provide models of exemplary writing practices, but this literature broadens the students' understanding of the impact of writing (Machado & Hartman, 2020; Leija & Peralta, 2020). Over time, students learn that writing is more than a school task. Facilitating a social model of writing instruction allows students to support one another and further enhance their writing without direct teacher intervention. In an ever-changing society, educators need to adapt their pedagogy and resources to the students in the classroom to make learning meaningful and lasting.

References

Alim, H.A. & Paris, D. (2017). What is culturally sustaining pedagogy and why does it matter? In D. Paris & H.S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 1-21). Teachers College Press.

Behizadeh, N. (2019). Realizing powerful writing pedagogy in U.S. public schools. *Pedagogies*, *14*(4), 261–279. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/1554480X.2019.1671847

Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Perspectives: Choosing and using books for the classroom, 6 (3). *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, *6*(3), ix-xi.

Bishop, R.S. (1997). Selecting literature for a multicultural curriculum. In V.J. Harris (Ed.), *Using multiethnic literature in the k-8 classroom* (pp. 13-31). Rowman & Littlefield.

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S.L. (2009). *Inquiry as a stance: Practitioner research for the next generation.* Teachers College Press.

Culham, R. (2019). Reading with a writer's eye: Why book choice matters. *Reading Teacher*, *72*(4), 509–513. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1002/trtr.1759

Delpit, L. (1986). Skills and other dilemmas of a progressive black educator. *Harvard Educational Review*, *56*, 379–385.

Dollins, C. A. (2020). A critical inquiry approach to mentor texts: Learn it with EASE. *Reading Teacher*, *74*(2), 191–199. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1002/trtr.1928

Evans, S. (2010). The role of multicultural literature interactive read-alouds on student perspectives toward diversity. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching, 3*(1), 92–104.

Flint, A.S., & Tropp Laman, T. (2012). Where poems hide: Finding reflective, critical spaces inside writing workshop. *Theory Into Practice*, *51*(1), 12–19. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/00405841.2012.636328

Grisham, D. L., & Wolsey, T. D. (2011). Writing instruction for teacher candidates: Strengthening a weak curricular area. *Literacy Research & Instruction*, *50*(4), 348–364. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/19388071.2010.532581

Jasmine, J., & Weiner, W. (2007). The effects of writing workshop on abilities of first grade students to become confident and independent writers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *35*(2), 131–139. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1007/s10643-007-0186-3

Kelly, K., Becker, W., Lipscomb, G., & Robards, A. (2020). Centering culture through writing and the arts: Lessons learned in new zealand. *Reading Teacher*, *74*(2), 147–158.

Kemmerlin, C., & Wilkins, J. (2020). Promoting elementary students' awareness of diversity and social justice through interactive read-alouds. *International Journal of Learner Diversity & Identities*, *27*(1), 33–48. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.18848/2327-0128/CGP/v27i01/33-48

Klehr, M. (2012). Qualitative teacher research and the complexity of classroom contexts. *Theory Into Practice*, *51*(2), 122–128. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/00405841.2012.662867

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465–491. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.2307/1163320

Leija, M. G., & Peralta, C. (2020). Día de los Muertos: Opportunities to foster writing and reflect students' cultural practices. *Reading Teacher*, *73*(4), 543–548. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1002/trtr.1871

Machado, E., & Hartman, P. (2020). "I want to be pè adedayo": Young children enacting resistance in/through translingual writing about their names. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *54*(4), 342–366.

Norton, D. E. (2013). *Multicultural children's literature: through the eyes of many children*. Pearson.

Paris, D., & Alim, H.S., "Author Interview: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies," interview by Larry Ferlazzo, *EducationWeek*, July 6, 2017.

Piper, R. E. (2019). Navigating black identity development: The power of interactive multicultural read alouds with elementary-aged children. *Education Sciences, 9*(2), 1-11.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1982). The literary transaction: Evocation and response. *Theory Into Practice*, *21*(4), 268. https://doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1080/00405848209543018

Reul, S.L. (2022). *Bubbie & rivka's best-ever challah (so far!)*. Harry N. Abrams.

Schrodt, K., FitzPatrick, E., Barksdale, B. A., Nunnery, B., & Hasty, M. M. (2021). Teaching writing with mentor texts in kindergarten. *YC: Young Children*, *76*(3), 44–53.

Seban, D., & Tavsanli, Ö. F. (2015). Children's sense of being a writer: Identity construction in second grade writers workshop. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, *7*(2), 217–234.

Sriam, M. (2020). *A gift for amma: Market day in india*. Barefoot Books.

Troia, G. A., Lin, S. C., Cohen, S., & Monroe, B. W. (2011). A year in the writing workshop. *Elementary School Journal*, *112*(1), 155–182.

Units of Study. (2021). *Overview of a day's reading or writing workshop* [Chart]. UnitsofStudy.com. https://www.unitsofstudy.com/resourcecenter/resource?id=560

Woodard, R., Vaughan, A., & Machado, E. (2017). Exploring culturally sustaining writing pedagogy in urban classrooms. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, *66*(1), 215–231. https://doi.org/10.1177/2381336917719440