Writers’ Workshop: Motivating Students to Become Better Writers

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April 23, 2008
Writers’ Workshop: Motivating Students to Become Better Writers: 2

Teaching Context

This inquiry was a collaborative project that was performed within two first grade classrooms. The first classroom, room 23, is the class in which Laura completed her yearlong internship, and the second classroom, room 22, is the other first grade classroom in the elementary school, where Keri completed her yearlong internship. Within each classroom there are a variety of ability levels, behaviors, and diversity.

Laura’s classroom is comprised of twenty-two students with a perfect ratio of eleven girls and eleven boys. There are a variety of ability levels within the classroom, which includes five students provided extra reading support, four to six students who participate in enrichment classes once a week, and a range of learners at a variety of levels in between. During the morning writing workshop, five students leave for out of class reading support.

Laura’s classroom participates in an hour-long writing workshop every day. The writing workshop includes activities such as writing stories of choice, writing responses to read alouds, participating in poetry workshops, and writing narrative stories. Usually the writing workshop is split between twenty to twenty-five minutes of instruction on the carpet and thirty to thirty-five minutes of students writing at their seats.

Keri’s classroom consists of twenty-one students. Of these students, nine are girls and twelve are boys. There are five upper achieving students, six upper-middle achieving students, five middle achieving, and five lower achieving. Of the top five achieving students, one can read and comprehend the material at
a second grade level. Five students receive writing enrichment due to their interest and ease in writing. Of the five lowest achieving students, all receive Title I support for reading, and one sees a speech therapist. The middle and upper-middle achieving students can read the benchmark first grade book independently.

Keri’s students participate three to four times a week in writer’s workshop. Depending on the extra activities that are occurring during the week, the sessions will be between forty and sixty minutes in length. In a sixty-minute session, students will generally participate in whole group activities for at least twenty-five minutes and write independently for approximately thirty to thirty-five minutes. Students have had experience with various aspects of writing such as story beginnings, descriptive language, sentence beginnings, synonyms for commonly used words and narrative story writing.
Wonderings and Research Questions

Main Wondering:

How can we (Keri and Laura) motivate and focus students during writers’ workshop?

Sub-questions:

Does providing teacher scaffolding at the beginning of a new activity allow students to become independent writers over a period of time?

How do writing centers created from students’ writing interests motivate students’ writing?

Does student choice in writing relate to the students' quality or quantity of completed writing?

How does daily writing increase students’ quantity and quality of writing?

How does the use of puppets motivate students in the writing process?

How does background music affect students’ focus during writers’ workshop?

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to collect data for analysis on students writing interest before and after the inquiry, we used principal approved parent and student surveys. The pre-surveys focused on students’ interest to write at home or at school prior to the implementation of the inquiry. The post surveys focused on how the students' writing interest or motivation changed or remained consistent over the course of the inquiry. During the inquiry, we wrote daily observations focusing on students' writing behaviors during journal writing, and center writing time. The observational notes helped to analyze the behaviors of students over the length of the inquiry; more specifically if students’ off task time decreased and student total writing time increased, or vice versa. We also collected the students writing
folders weekly to review the students’ center writing and journal writing. When analyzing the weekly center writing, we looked for completed writing activities as well as the quantity and quality of student writing produced. When analyzing the weekly journal writing, we looked for student total quantity of writing length, quantity of the total writing mechanics used, and the quality of students’ complex topic development.

Parent Surveys

Parent Pre-Surveys

Prior to implementing our inquiry in the classroom, we wanted to collect background information from parents and students. In order to obtain this information we sent home a principal approved informative letter and survey to the parents of each classroom’s students. The informational letter included details about our classroom inquiry project and the support that parents could provide for the research. Attached to the informational letter was a survey that included a set of five questions. (Appendix A) After the majority or parents returned their surveys, we analyzed the results by counting the responses to each objective questions and then placing the responses into a pie chart. We then analyzed the data by focusing on the calculated percentage for each response.

In response to the surveys, thirty out of forty-three parents returned a completed survey. The results from the objective survey questions presented to the parents are located in Appendix B. Some parent responses to the open ended question (Appendix A question 1), “What kinds of writing experiences
does your child engage in at home?” included but were not limited to: letters, notes, stories, lists, journals, puzzles, and character dialogues. In responding to the sub-question regarding students discussing in or out of school writing experiences at home, the majority of parents responded that their child discussed writing in different formats. When parents were asked to provide activities that might increase their child’s interest in writing, most parents responded that focusing writing on the child’s interest would benefit their motivation and focus during writing workshop.

**Parent Post Surveys**

Near the end of the inquiry project, we sent home a principal approved informative letter and post survey to the parents of both classrooms students. (Appendix H) The post survey included a set of four questions. The questions were objective and were similar to the set of questions found on the pre-survey sent home to parents. The post survey posed questions that were focused on the effect that the inquiry had on the students’ out of school writing interest and motivation.

Out of forty-three parent surveys that were sent home, a total of twenty-nine surveys were completed and returned. We found that most parents responded that they noticed a difference in their child’s interest in writing over the period of the inquiry. Although the percentages of parents that replied that their child was not interested in writing (10%) stayed the same from the pre-survey, seventy percent of parents responded on the post survey that they noticed a change in their students’ attitudes. The results of the survey are located in
Appendix I. From this data we concluded that the students’ were exhibiting a higher level of excitement at home, qualifying the home segment of the inquiry as a success.

**Student Surveys**

**Student Pre-Surveys**

Before implementing the inquiry project in the classroom, students were given a five-question survey. We asked the students to be very honest and not to worry about hurting anyone’s feelings. Of the five questions, one was open-ended, three were objective and the final question was a combination of both (Appendix C). Of the forty-three students in first grade, all but one were present and able to participate on the day the survey was given. After collecting the surveys, we counted the responses to each of the objective questions. We then placed the total number of each response into a graph and calculated the percentages of each response. The results of the survey can be found in Appendix D.

When analyzing the results of the survey, we noticed several interesting trends. In looking at the results of the question, “Do you enjoy writing at school?” the majority of students responded “yes.” However, a high percentage of students (29%) answered “no.” We were concerned by this statistic and the result furthered our motivation to pursue this inquiry.

Concerning the second question, “What is your favorite type of writing?” answers varied. It was very helpful to learn that the students had such varied interests because this helped we plan our writing center activities. Although, on
the survey the answer that stood out most was “none” because it showed that this student truly did not enjoy any type of writing.

The third question asked students, “Do you write in your free time at school?” The vast majority of students, at an alarming sixty-one percent, answered that they do not. Due to the overwhelming number of students who do not write in their free time, we wondered how this trend would affect the success of our inquiry project and writing centers.

The fourth question asked, “Do you write in your free time at home?” For the amount of students that answered this question with a “yes”, a similar percentage of students answered “no.” We were surprised by this result, as many parents responded on our survey that students often write lists, letters, and cards at home. The students who answered “no” may not consider these types of things ‘writing’ because it is not the type of writing they generally work on in a school setting.

The fifth question asked students to provide one or two suggestions that would make writing more interesting to them. Not surprisingly, students elicited suggestions based on their own interests outside of writing, such as dinosaurs, football, fiction story writing, and more.

Overall, we found a sense of varied interest and familiarity with writing. Due to the large number of students that said they do not write in their free time at school, we felt there was a lot of room for improvement and growth in student writing. And, with the many students who reported not writing at home, we felt
our own sense of motivation to increase student interest in writing, in and out of school.

**Student Post Surveys**

Near the end of the inquiry project, we gave students an in school survey that asked a set of five questions. (Appendix J) The first four questions were the same as presented to the students on the pre-survey, but the final question of the survey asked students to identify their favorite writing center and an explanation of why.

Out of the forty-three students in the two classrooms, two students were absent on the day the surveys were distributed, resulting in forty-one total surveys to be analyzed. When analyzing the student responses, we found that students’ favorite type of writing remained constant, while the amount of students that reported enjoying writing at school increased slightly (5%). We also noticed that the amount of students that responded that they did not enjoy writing at school decreased by twelve percent; likewise, there was also a decrease of twelve percent of students responding that they did not write in their free time at school. The results of the student post survey are located in Appendix K.

**Student Center Writing**

In order to collect data from student writing we created writing center folders. We gave our students the writing center folders when we first introduced the writing center project to our classes. The students were given a clear set of expectations for the use of their writing center folders. The students were informed that after they chose their center activity for the week, the students
were to collect their center materials and place them in their writing center folders. Throughout the week the students had the opportunity to work on their writing center activities while keeping the papers in their center folder until the teacher collection on Friday. Each week we would collect the folders and remove the students' writing for review. The folders were returned to the students Monday morning, and the classes followed the same routine for each week of the inquiry.

In collecting student work weekly we were able to see the total amount of work that students achieved in the time period of five days. In order to analyze the students' total amount of work, we categorized the students' work into a finished group, or an unfinished group. The two groups were dependent upon the students' ability to complete the center activity by following the directions at each center. For example, for the book review center, students were asked to write the title and author of the book, identify what genre the book was written in, sketch their favorite part of the story, write about the favorite part of the story, and rate the book. In order to be considered a completed writing activity, the book review had to have a response for each section mentioned; however, if the student was missing any section of the book review the students writing was categorized as unfinished. Depending on the center activity that each child chose, the amount of writing per student varied week-to-week. From analyzing student work, it was seen that although the total amount of student writing may have been different depending on the center, the students' ability to complete the center activity increased over the period of the inquiry. (Appendix E)
**Student Journal Writing**

In order for the students to have daily writing practice, we created writing journals for each student to keep in his/her writing center folder. In order to incorporate the student writing journals into daily writing activity, we created a fishbowl full of multi-colored paper prompts. The writing prompts for the journals were introduced as a fishbowl activity in which the students would go fishing for a new writing topic each day. Each classroom had a fishbowl filled with forty-five different prompts that were imaginative and creative. The fishbowl prompts included topics that required the students to write in various genres including: informative, persuasive, descriptive, instructional, and narrative writing. On occasions, we utilized puppets during fishbowl journal writing time to present social issues that were occurring in our classrooms. After the puppets visited the classroom and acted out the problem, we asked the students to find appropriate solutions to the problem. After the puppet problem was introduced, or the students chose the new topic from the fishbowl we allowed the students to write freely in their journals for five minutes. The students’ journals were kept in the writing center folder for the week along with the center writing work.

When the folders were collected on Friday we reviewed the daily student writing found in fishbowl journals. Appendix F contains fishbowl journal writing from six students, three from each classroom. The chosen students are a small percentage that represents both classes as a whole. Two of the six students were selected based on their higher level of excitement for writing as well as their higher previous success in writing. (Appendix F1) Two of the six students were
selected based on their higher level of excitement for writing, but an average success in writing. (Appendix F2) Two of the six students were selected based on their lower excitement for writing, as well as their expressed struggle in writing. (Appendix F3) In reviewing each set of journals, we feel that the quantity of writing as well as the quality of topic development increased over the period of the inquiry.

**Student Observations**

Prior to implementing our inquiry in the classroom, we observed students’ on task vs. off task behavior while our mentor teachers were teaching writers’ workshop. Some examples of the observed student off task behavior included, talking with peers, playing with pencils, eyes looking around the room, and students moving from their seats. The formats used for observations can be found in Appendix G. We were able to observe students over several days to collect well-rounded data. In analyzing the observations, we found that students were often off-task only ten to fifteen minutes into the whole-group work and even quicker while working independently at their desks.

After implementing our inquiry in the classroom, we used anecdotal observations of students and checklists to collect data. The checklists were used to document students’ on-task and off-task behaviors during a five-minute period of fishbowl journal writing each day. During the five-minute writing time, we used a class list to take coded notes on each student’s behavior while they were writing. While recording the notes, we used a code that focused on three behaviors, first if the student was writing, we recorded a W, second if the student
was participating in off-task behavior, we recorded an O, finally, if the student was using the tools provided in their toolbox folder, we recorded a U. Off-task behavior, in this circumstance, included all behavior other than writing or using a toolbox resource. During this short length of time we used the code and checklist to quickly survey each student’s behavior and record the student actions.

Depending on the topic, some students spent more time “thinking” and staring into space. The appeared thinking was coded as off-task behavior. Another behavior documented as off-task behavior was talking to peers; however, we noted that often the talk was related to the specific journal prompt; therefore, the notes coded as off-task behavior in this situation were negated. Conclusively, most students were on-task for the majority of writing time each morning. Some students even wanted to write more after time was up.

Another form of student observation we used throughout our inquiry was performed during student center time. At the beginning of the week, each student was given five minutes to explore each center option and to make his/her center activity selection for the week. We recorded observations of students’ behaviors, actions, and discussions while participating in the center choice time. We noted that in the first week of centers, students used the full five minutes of the given time to make their selection. As weeks passed, students used shorter amounts of time to make their selections, and they would immediately move back to their seats, indicating a higher level of comfort with the routine as well as a higher level of excitement for their selection.
Each consecutive day of the week, one group of students was given time to participate in ten minutes of center writing time to work on their weekly center activity. During this writing time we scribed anecdotal notes of the students’ behaviors, actions, discussions, and independent writing. In Laura’s room, students moved to a specified area to work on their center writing. In Keri’s room, students stayed at their desk to work on their centers. Generally, when students were given time to work on their centers, they worked hard and exhibited minor occasions of off-task behavior. As the inquiry progressed, it was noted that students completed center writing earlier in the week and on a more consistent basis.

**Claims and Evidence**

**Claim 1:**

Students exhibit signs of self-motivation in writing, when they go beyond using their writing center time and use free time to complete a writing task.

**Evidence:**

During the period of inquiry, we observed students using their ten-minute in-class writing time as well as their personal in-school free-time to complete writing center activities. We also noted that prior to each student’s ten-minute center writing time, we observed a few students that had their center writing nearly completed; likewise, we also observed students that had completed their center writing entirely.

The following information comes from experiences that occurred in Laura’s classroom and can be found in the observational notes. (Appendix G) Although in my classroom I did not witness one particular student writing during
her free time, the student approached me prior to her groups’ ten-minute center
time and asked, “What do I do if my center writing is already finished, and it is my
group’s turn to go to the center writing area?” I quickly reviewed the student’s
center writing and found that the student had in fact completed the entire task. I
told my student, “You may join the class for their writing lesson.” Before my
student joined the class, I followed up by asking the student when she had
worked on the center writing activity, and the student replied, “I used my morning
free time to finish it.” This student was not the only student in my classroom to
complete his/her center writing prior to visiting the center table for the week. It
was noted that two other students had completed their writing center activities
before their group’s assigned weekly writing time.

Not only did students complete their writing early, but some students also
displayed an interest in writing extra center activities during his/her free time
during the week. In order for a student to display an interest beyond the weekly
expectations, they would inquire about participating in another writing center after
they had completed their required one center per week. I had one student
approach me in the middle of the week during his free writing time and ask,
“Miss. Jacobson, can I please go back to the center table and choose another
center to write for the week?” Although in any other situation I would have
encouraged the students’ enthusiasm, in order not to skew any data collection I
informed the student that he was limited to one center per week.
Claim 2:

Daily writing based on imaginative prompts will maintain a student’s writing mechanics at a constant level to their previous work, in the case that an increase in the student’s use of writing mechanics is not shown.

Evidence:

Given only four weeks to work on fishbowl journals, students have not shown an increase in the quality of mechanics in their writing. The students who consistently use proper mechanics in their writing (punctuation, capitalization, and spacing) continued to use the same skills. The students who lack a consistency in using these mechanics have also continued to show room for improvement in their fishbowl writing. In reviewing student writing during and after the implementation of the inquiry, it was noted that none of the students showed a lack of mechanics in their writing; however, in their previous writing assignments they had shown a consistency in mechanical errors. An important factor to consider when reviewing the data is that we encouraged students to write freely during the five-minute fishbowl activity without any concern placed on students writing mechanics. The lack of mechanical focus placed on student writing during this time provided us with unaltered data of the students’ routine writing habits.

Although we would like to say that the fishbowl journal provided students with the opportunity to gain more mechanical writing skills, it could be said that the imaginative prompts did not make any difference in student use of mechanics. When we reviewed the journals at the end of the week, we found
students were consistently making the same errors that they had previously made in writing samples. For example, students did not capitalize the beginning of a sentence or the word I, students would omit punctuation, and students often misspelled high frequency words. Each particular student performed a few mechanical errors in their writing, with our highest prior success writers writing nearly flawlessly; however, the majority (two-thirds) of student writing displayed one or two of the examples of mechanical errors previously described. We feel that if the focus of the writing had been placed on writing mechanics, the students would have been more focused on making corrections to their writing. This assumption leads to a new wondering presented in the new wondering section.

Claim 3:

Daily writing based on imaginative prompts has shown to decrease the amount of student wait time prior to writing, while increasing the students' ability to develop more complex topic concepts.

Evidence:

On the first day of the inquiry implementation, students displayed problems starting the process of developing and writing their ideas on paper. By the end of the writing time, most students only had a short phrase or sentence written as an answer to the journal topic. At the end of the forth week, students were observed starting their writing as soon as the writing topic was presented, and they wrote several sentences in the given time. The students improved their time spent thinking about the topic, from a few minutes at the beginning of the
inquiry to less than a minute during the final writings. Therefore, we conclude
that they are writing for a longer period of time and increasing the amount of
writing produced, observations from which claim four was created.

The observational notes from the first week of journal writing were limited
and included students’ off-task behavior starting as soon as the topic was read.
The students were observed looking around, playing with their pencils, and
talking to neighbors about off-task ideas. As we reviewed the notes from the last
few weeks of the journal writing, it was clear that fewer students (about ½) were
not participating in off-task behavior after the topic was read, rather they were
writing in their journals. The less time that the students were participating in the
off-task behaviors such as looking around and talking the more opportunity and
time they had to write their responses to the topic.

When we read the responses, we concentrated on the content of the
students’ writing and the students’ ability to stay focused on the given topic. The
responses students provided at the beginning of the journal writing were single
sentences that often repeated the topic that we presented. The responses
students provided in the final journal writings were much more detailed and
included expanded ideas on the given topic. This evidence supports the idea
that with daily writing, students develop more complex and detailed responses to
given topics.

Claim 4:

Daily writing based on imaginative prompts increases students’ total
quantity of writing during a five-minute period.
Evidence:

After reviewing student writing at the end of each week, we noted that students' total amount of writing increased per day, and as a whole over the research period, students' writing increased quantitatively by week. A formative assessment was performed at the end of each week, when we collected and read each student’s fishbowl journal.

When reviewing the students’ journal writing, we saw that from the first journal entry through the final journal entry, students were able to compose a longer response that was more detailed. In order for us to find that the quantity of the students’ writing had increased over the inquiry, we counted the total amount of words and sentences that the students wrote. We noted that students in the higher prior success groups in both classrooms were able to complete lengthy responses from the beginning of the journal entries; therefore, these students’ writing had little or no change through the entity of the inquiry. Nearly all students that are writing on a first grade level showed an increase in the total amount of writing during the given five-minute journal time. This group of students went from writing one to three sentences at the beginning of the inquiry, to completing an entire page of writing in the final journal entries. The lower prior success writers in the classroom also showed progress in their writing. At the beginning of the journal writing, one particular student in Laura’s classroom was unable to write much more than two or three words in the five minute time period. In reviewing the same student’s final journal entries, the student is now consistently completing one or two sentences. A selection of three students from
each classroom is provided in Appendix F. In the appendix, there are examples of student writing from six students are a small group representing the whole. (Higher prior success, average first grade writers, lower prior success)

Claim 5:

When students are provided a regulated amount of teacher support at the beginning of a new classroom activity, students will gain independence with repeated exposure to the activity over a period of time.

Evidence:

When first introduced to the writing centers, students exhibited signs of confusion when selecting their center activity for the week. Students approached us asking, “What is center six,” or “I chose my center, what do I do now?” At this point in the inquiry, we provided extra support for our students to aid them in completing the task. We provided the students with reminders of writing materials, center directions, and how to act when at the center tables.

During the first week’s center choice day, it was noted that students took more than five minutes to make their center selections and perform the necessary steps to begin the writing centers in the following days. During the initial choice day, we stayed close in proximity to the center writing area and we provided students detailed instructions for the choice process. Each following week of the inquiry, students were quicker to choose their center activities, while requiring fewer reminders. We noted in our observations that during the final weeks of the inquiry, our students needed as few as one minute to complete their center selection and process.
During the ten-minute center writing time, students also followed the same routine. At the beginning of the inquiry, when students were given their ten-minute writing center time, the students often questioned us about what they needed to do, or they participated in off-task discussions with other members of the group. During the first week of center writing time, we stayed close to the students at the center tables and provided guidance regarding writing directions or staying on task. As the weeks progressed, it was observed and noted that the students work independently, while using the center folders or peers to provide support. Now that students are working independently, we are able to work with the rest of the class while providing minor support to the students at the center tables.

Claim 6:

Puppets, addressing social issues in the classroom as part of daily journal writing, capture students’ interest and increase excitement, but do not show any form of influence on increasing student motivation in writing.

Evidence:

In each classroom during the puppet presentation, students were very focused and motivated to pay attention to the skit acted out by the puppets; however, when it came time to write, students wrote briefly and moved off-task quickly. We found that the puppets proved to be a great vehicle to address social issues in the classroom, and writing was then used as a follow-up activity where students created solutions to problems that occurred often in our classrooms. When we reviewed the effect that puppets had on our students, we
found that students were motivated and focused when puppets were used to introduce the writing prompt, however, the puppets did not enhance the students’ writing product. The observational notes that we scribed for the journal writing time on the days when students were prompted by puppets showed that students began writing quickly after the situation was proposed. On the contrary, the students wrote for only a short period of time, and then were involved in off-task behaviors such as looking around the room, talking to neighbors, or playing with papers and pencils. We feel the use of puppets is an excellent tool to engage students in a classroom discussion, but more research needs to be conducted to find the puppets’ influence on student writing.

Claim 7:

Using music during transitions and as background music encourages students not to talk to neighbors, which in turn focuses their attention.

Evidence:

As the students sing and move to the new activity, they are too distracted to talk to their neighbors. By participating in a singing activity, students avoid distracting themselves with conversations, thus keeping them on-task with what we need from them. Although momentarily the classroom noise is louder than usual, it is all on-task behavior comprised of children singing and chairs moving.

We also observed that by playing music in the background, students are more concentrated on their work and make sure to stay quiet enough so that the music does not get turned off. They were motivating themselves to stay focused and were being rewarded with the continuation of background music.
The use of music in the classroom during transitions and writing time was introduced later in the inquiry. Although there was a positive response to the music, we feel that more research is needed to determine the total amount of motivation or focus music has on student work.

**Reflection and future practice**

When reflecting on our inquiry, we agree that in our future classrooms we will implement both writing centers and daily fishbowl journal writing to encourage student writing independence, motivation, and focus. We have found that the writing centers encourage student motivation and focus by involving students’ interests, as well as giving students sole responsibility for their work. We also found that writing centers are an excellent tool to use when encouraging student independence in the classroom. We feel that daily writing, such as the fishbowl journals, allow students to write freely about imaginative topics that would not likely be presented in normal writing workshop time. Not only do the writing centers and fishbowl journals motivate and excite students, but they also motivate and excite us when we are creating them.

We also plan to use puppets in our future classrooms to enhance writing workshop time and concepts that we teach our students. We would like to place more focus on puppets in hopes to find situations when they may increase student motivation and focus during the writing time, rather than the limited motivation and focus students displayed during the presentation. We agree that the experience using puppets was positive, and we hope to find ways to extend their use in our future classrooms.
We both plan to introduce writing centers, journal writing, and puppet use at the beginning of the school year and to continue their use throughout the remainder of the year. We both feel that the use of all of these tools will benefit our future classroom in not only writing workshop, but throughout other areas of the school day.

**New Wonderings**

How can we extend the use of puppets to not only motivate and focus students during the topic presentation, but also during their writing?

Can the visual presentation of the writing center area motivate students to write?

How will increasing the number of fishbowl journal entries affect student writing in a long-term setting?

How will starting centers earlier in the year affect the level of responsibility students exhibit during the school day?

Will implementing daily writing earlier in the school year affect student quality of mechanics in writing across the subjects?

If the focus of journal writing is placed on mechanics, will daily journal writing prove to benefit students' total quantity of mechanical errors used in their writing?

Does increasing the total writing students participate in during the school day temporarily withdraw students' interest in writing at home?
Appendix A

1. What kinds of writing experience(s) does your child engage in at home? Ex. lists, letters, etc.

Approximately how often does your child write independently at home during the course of a week?

2. Does your child generally write using the narrative genre (telling a story of an experience, event, or sequence of events)?

Yes  No

If so, does your child more often write a fiction or non-fiction story?

3. Does your child talk about writing, in or out of school experiences, with you?

Yes  No

If so, please provide an example.

4. How might you categorize your child’s interest in writing?

a. very interested
b. somewhat interested
c. not interested

5. Are there any types of activities that you think might increase your child’s interest in writing?
Appendix B

Does your child generally write in the narrative genre?

- Yes: 48%
- No: 52%

Does your child talk about writing with you?

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%
1. Do you enjoy writing at school? Yes No
Tell me a reason or two for your answer.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What is your favorite kind of writing? Make-believe? Informational or true story? Poetry?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you write in your free time at school?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Do you write in your free time at home?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
5. What are 1 or 2 activities that might make writing more interesting to you?
Appendix D

Do you enjoy writing at school?

- Yes: 71%
- No: 29%

What is your favorite type of writing?

- Fiction: 36%
- Non-fiction: 31%
- Poetry: 7%
- Other: 26%

Legend:
- Fiction
- Non-fiction
- Poetry
- Other
Do you write in your free time at school?

- Yes: 32%
- No: 61%
- Sometimes: 5%
- Other: 2%

Do you write in your free time at home?

- Yes: 43%
- No: 38%
- Sometimes: 19%
Appendix E

Writing Center Samples

Student 1

Once Miss L-C was going to have a surprise party for room 22. She was going to buy donuts, centerfily, goody bags, cake, decorations, cups, napkins, and cupcakes when she got in her car. It was 5:35 pm. It took 10 minutes to get Target. It wasn’t very crowded. Suddenly, she noticed Target was closing in 5 minutes. She had to hurry. She asked...

This student has had high prior success in writing and displays a lot of excitement. He generally writes longer stories with lots of detail, such as time, date, and place.

March 31, 2008

Dear Grandma Welsh

Student 2

This student is a middle prior success level student who expresses great trouble with writing. With the center on the left, he did not finish during the week and it was sent home as homework in lieu of other activities one night. He was so frustrated with writing it that his mother typed up the words as he dictated them to her.
Student 3

One day, Miss L-C was.
Getting rode for a
prend. She need suthing
to make the prend buder
like the others. She need
blawn and games to
She need supthing to make
She need cupcakes to.

Student 3 is a middle level prior
success student who shows a great
level of excitement for writing. She
generally writes in her free time.
To the left, the student wrote a story
for the first center she participated in.
As you can see, the work below, for
Center 4: Poetry, is about the same
length. She truly exhibited a growth
in quantity of writing.

A horse is my favorite animal.
And once I rode on one. And it
was going slow it was rile
fun. I really want to ride it again some
day.
Student 4

Dear [Name],

I hope you are having

a good time and miss you

very much. I have a lot of work to do, but I always think of you.

How is your family doing?

I miss you. You were my best friend.

You are still my best friend.

You are friendly. I wish you could have come to my birthday party.

Student 4 is much like Student 1. High prior success level and shows a genuine excitement for writing.

In writing her first piece, she used almost all of the space.

In her second piece, shown to the left, she also used a lot of detail and information to complete the center work.
Student 5

Student 5 is similar to Student 2. However, in her first week’s center, she only got the work presented below completed.

In her second piece of work, she filled up almost the entire page given the same amount of time to work as the first piece.

Student 6

Student 6 is most similar to Student 3 in that he has expressed a great struggle in writing at school. However, we see here that the amount he wrote increased from one center to the next. He had the same amount of time to complete both stations, and clearly put more effort and energy into the second.
Appendix F

Fishbowl Journal Samples

Student 1

June is 1
Your Life
Umrella...

Entry on the left is from the third prompt presented to students. At this point, Student 1 was able to write several entries on one page.

Entry below is from the third week of fishbowl writing. It is clear to see that the amount of writing increased in Student 1’s journal. Now, he can only write one and start a second entry on each page.

dryer. Paint...because there’s all diffrin kinds of colors and clay has one color all day recess...

Student 2

January it is hot and in Juvin I
don’t no yet.
In the first entry, Student 2 is unsure of herself and does not write much of a response. In the second entry, from a few weeks later, the student is able to get much more written.

Student 3 made great improvements from the first entry. In the first entry, he wrote the question in the answer as a way to waste time and avoid writing. In the second, a few weeks later, he answered the question in full with imagination and extension, too.
Student 4

Dear Allen,

On Earth we have the best food ever you know you want to try it! Come to Earth on Earth.

I was in the ocean and I heard two dolphins talking about a trip to Mars. It sounded pretty interesting. Then they said they were going to see one of their friends in Florida. I want to go too!

In a matter of only two weeks, Student 4 increased the quantity of words in her writing drastically. Interns believe this is due to the increased response of students’ cognitive thinking skills. They can form ideas faster, thus write more in a short period of time.

Student 5

If I visit the president I will say hello. My name is Tori and this is
Mikel coed gave him an eye messig and say I be not like it when you wont let me play or he coed walk any or tel on him.

Dear Ryan

I went to

Bat mara bkg
I want to driv the bat mo wool and dft the goki.

Student 6 struggles with writing, but look at his great improvement in a five-minute time period! The idea that he could improve so much in just a couple weeks is truly significant.
Appendix G

Before Implementation
Keri’s Room
Writers’ Workshop: Motivating Students to Become Better Writers: 43
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>T-W</td>
<td>T-S</td>
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</table>

Writing own sentences → getting 5 sentences checked + explaining to RTI

(Hands raised to)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Task</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<td>T-L</td>
<td>T-L</td>
<td>T-L</td>
<td>T-L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0-Off task:

- F-talking
- F-fidgeting
- W-wandering eyes
- P-sharpening pencil
- S-speaking
- W-writing
- Q-questioning
- L-listening
- R-repeating
- H-raising hand
- O-other
Writing Workshop (3/5)
11:10 - 11:35

Read it again
Read story

Teacher

[Diagram]

L1L1F1F1F1T
F1F1F1F1T
L1L1F1F1T
E1T1F1O1E
F1F1F1F1F1F
A lot of students walking around classroom.
  (Bathroom, Sink)
* Students moving around at desk.
  (Playing with erasers/hair things/pencils/sticker sheets)
* Students looking all over the room

* Is the story written ahead of time?
  * Could you do this part of the activity on the carpet?
  * Students are active in creating the story, but do they actually write any of the story?
  * Students aren’t spelling the words?
  * What skills are they practicing?
  * Kids had a hard time brainstorming words
  * Teacher does a lot (writing and creating) story.
  * Busy Feet / Busy Mouths / Busy Hands

* Kids are NOT want to read story
| Time  | A   | B   | C   | D   | E   | F   | G   | H   | I   | J   | K   | L   | M   | N   | O   | P   | Q   | R   | S   | T   | U   |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 9:55  |     |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 10:00 |     |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

**Legend:**
- RTI: Reading and Writing Intervention
- O-T: Off-task
- T-L: Talking and Listening
- T-S: Tapping and Shuffling
- 0-F/E: Inattentive
- 0-E/F: Other
- 0-W: Wandering
- 0-R: Other
- 0-T: Talking
- 0-L: Listening
- 0-S: Speaking
- 0-P: Calling out
- 0-O: Other

- **O-off task:**
  - O-E/F: Inattentive
  - O-W: Wandering
  - O-R: Other

- **T-on task:**
  - T-L: Talking and Listening
  - T-S: Tapping and Shuffling
  - T-R: Reading
  - T-W: Writing
  - T-P: Pencil sharpening
  - T-O: Other

- **0-off task:**
  - 0-E/F: Inattentive
  - 0-W: Wandering
  - 0-R: Other

- **0-on task:**
  - 0-L: Listening
  - 0-S: Speaking
  - 0-P: Calling out
  - 0-O: Other
After Implementation
Laura’s Room

Week 1

Day 1: Monday March 24, 2008

-Introduction was about 20 minutes up front and students showed excitement about the activities. They were happy about having their own journals to write in, and that they would have the opportunity to make their own choices about writing.

-There was some confusion at first with the student’s choices and when they would write

Large Group: Fishbowl journal

-Students were quiet when writing; confused about persuasion (teachable moment) after explanation was provided, they got right to work. A few students talked and one was off task and went to the bathroom twice. After 5 minutes students stopped, “That was a short time” – Student E

-Center Choosing time: Somewhat confusing, all students were excited, only 1 had trouble making a choice. Took less than 5 minutes for the students to make choice.

-After writing time 2 students started their writing activities. One students asked, “Miss Jacobson when we are done can we work on our centers?”

Day 2: Tuesday March 25, 2008

Large Group: Fishbowl journal

-Students work on fishbowl activity – 5 minutes uninterrupted

-Chatter at first (1 minute) then quiet (4 minutes)

-Student O played with pencil
-Student G looked around
-Student L looked around
-Student V messing with folder/talking, and joined the group late because of breakfast
-Student M helped student Q add words to the ABC list
-Student A used the ABC chart

Small Group: Orange

-Students T, K, and L went right to work
- Student C had a little confusion, slow to start

- Students were encouraged to use peer work, “Student L do you remember the date? Can you help Student C?”
- Students helped Student C with date and they go back to writing
- Time passed quickly (10 minutes)
- At the end- “I like this! It is FUUUUN!” – Student C
- Student T completed center writing
- Students K and L began writing a story
- Student C completed half the center

Small Group: Red

- Due to the fact that the intern won’t be in school during writing workshop on Wednesday, the Red group wrote for 10 minutes on day 2
- There was a little confusion with Student B at first, but they quickly figured out what to do
- Student N provided help for Student E to get work started

- Worked quietly
- All students slow to start
- Student N finished poem
- Students B and U worked on list part of center only
- Student E- started poem

- At seats after writing

- Student T continued his center activity and then talked to Student A about list
- Student A asked if they could work on center writing
- Student T shared the story with Student A and Student A helped edit
- Student T finished center writing and asked, ”Can I start a new center? I’m done with this one.”
- Student N asked if they could work on his poem/center after he finished his work at his seat
- Student K got out writing center activity
- Student C got out writing center activity
- Student N got out writing center activity
- Student E got out writing center activity
(None of the students were prompted by the teacher)

Day 3: Wednesday March 26, 2008

- Out for the day
Day 4: Thursday March 27, 2008

-Morning time: Student K was working on shopping list and story then shared it with Student A

Large Group: Fishbowl journal: #9

-Kids were excited to begin writing

-”We didn’t get to do a journal yesterday.” -Student S

- Back at desks students worked quietly even if they were not writing

-Student O looked around
-Student G looked around –slow to begin
-Students S and E talked
-Students A and T began to chat about the topic to each other
-Students N and E tried to correct Student S’s writing
-Student G told me, “I don’t know what to write” and the students was asked the question and then the student answered, but it was difficult for the student to write the answer
-After group writing activity, Student F had her paper sitting out ready to write.

Small Group: Purple

-Talked a little at first
-Student F started writing right away
-Student S started writing right away
-Student P started writing right away
-Student M started writing right away
-Student O was slow to begin
-Student M used the ABC lists
-Student O played with paper
-Kids chatted some during center time
-Student S finished work
-Student P finished work
-Student F was quick to finish shopping list, but slow to begin writing the story
-Student O NO writing
-Student M worked for the entire center time

Day 5: Friday March 28, 2008

Large Group: Fishbowl Journal #10

-The students were more talkative today. It took them longer to get started on their writing task
-Student G looked around
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- Student V looked around and talked
- Student O was slow to start
- Students E and N argued with Student S about the writing
- Student S played with pencil and put hands on head while other students talked to him
- Student O looked around and talked. “I’m done”

Small group: Blue

- Student A was finished before the center writing time began
- Students not directed by the teacher at all during time
- A lot of talking and silliness during writing center time
- Students V was excited to share their list with the teacher after the center time

Week 2

Day 6: Monday March 31, 2008

- At morning meeting, the teacher introduced the new center for the week. Reviewed other centers and the new directions.

Large group: Fishbowl journal #3

- The students seemed to enjoy the writing topic by their reactions to the prompt
- Student P chatted with Student G
- Student O talked to Students P and F
- Student Q talked to Student P
- All of these conversations seemed to be on task and topic
- Student V played with journal, pencil box, and folder
- Student A used word list and asked how to spell whole, then they added it to the list
- Students T, C, K, L, B, N, and E worked diligently for the entire 5 minutes

Small Group: Choice Day

- Orange: A lot smoother transitioning
- Student L helped Student T with center directions
- Kids checked off list on their own and moved their Kid Pins

- Red: Quick to make decisions
- A little bit silly
- Confusion about writing time and choosing time

- Purple: Chose center activity quickly
- Student F “I’m saving the best for last!”
- Group a little bit silly

- Blue: Very quick with choice
-Looked through materials
-Student Q “Guys we need to get all the materials out of the folder.”
-Student G reminded Student V “You can’t pick #1 again.”
-Student Q helped each student find materials for their center choices

-Total time for all 4 groups to choose: 10 minutes
-Students worked well making center choices and gathering materials
-Students worked well together and gave reminders to others in their groups
-A lot (12) of the students picked the new center for the week
-No student picked center 3 (poetry)
-A few students were eager to begin writing on this day

Day 7: Tuesday April 1, 2008

-The interns added visuals to the center boards. Most students noticed the pictures and made comments on how they looked
-Students seemed excited about the added visuals
-The visuals did not seem to interrupt any of the students writing during center writing time

Large Group: Fishbowl journal #28

-Kids smiled at topic some seemed a little confused
-Student A “Hmmm I have to think about this”
-Student T made a few comments on the topic
-Students got to work quickly and quietly
-Student G was looking around for a while, then would write a few words and look again, write a few more words and look
-Student Q didn’t write anything but sat quietly
-Student V started late, but wrote after joining the group
-After students “finished” they began to chat with neighbors
-Student T was very excited about having time to write when I said that the orange group would have their center time today.
-Student T exclaimed “WOO HOO”

Small Group: Orange
-Quietly pulled out papers from folder
-Worked on center activities quietly
-Student C had spelling questions
-Students K, L, and T all worked on book reviews quickly and quietly
-Student C thought some before beginning to write
-Student C asked to spell another work and Student T recommended her to use the ABC list
-Student C then looked up the word
-Students did a great job with the book review.
-Time went very quickly for this group
- Student C worked on shopping list most of the writing time and did not work on the story
- The teacher asked when the students could work on finishing their center writing
- Students responded during free time, recess, and morning time

Day 8: Wednesday April 2, 2008
- Students not in school because of field trip

Day 9: Thursday April 3, 2008

Large Group: Fishbowl journal #39

- Class discussed the question briefly
- Students showed excitement for topic
- Students worked quietly
- Student A used ABC list
- Student V chatted
- Student L looked around
- Student G squirmed around
- Student O talked to Student P, but on the writing topic
- Student A helped Student V spell a word
- Kids looking around
- Began talking after a while
- Normal students worked quietly and diligently

Small Group: Purple

- Group went back to table quickly
- Got materials out/ talked some
- Student F started quickly (already had some work written)
- Student P worked quickly (already had a small amount written)
- Student O pulled out paper/ began some ahead of writing center
- Student S appeared confused, and did not have any writing started
- Student M came up to ask what to do for center time because they had already finished. (The students group went on this day, but they were finished)
- The teacher asked the student when they worked on the writing and the student told the teacher “During free time”
- It was completed and Student M told the teacher that they really liked this center (book review) The student went to the class lesson at this time rather than going to the center table
- Student O did not have a favorite part of a story to complete the book review (resistant)
- Student S liked the whole book, “What should I do?”
- Students O and S were then slow to begin work, and they listened to the story from the class lesson
- Student O was reminded to put things away at the end of the center, but the student stayed at the table to work
**Day 10: Friday April 4, 2008**

Large Group: Fishbowl journal # 45

-Tricky topic, but as a class the teacher discussed what it means to compare. The teacher was very specific about the topic and how to compare two subjects
-Students went right to work
-Student O asked if they could use pictures, and the teacher told the student to make sure they used some words as well
-Student O went right to work (on pictures)
-Student V talked, but about writing
-Student S looked around some
-Student U was very slow to write
-Student O asked Student P about spelling the word school
-Student Q looked around
-Student S played with pencil
-Student O wrote first then did pictures
-Student B lost topic concept. They asked, “Which months are we talking about?”
-Student V’s desk set helped each other with spelling words
-Student V continued to write after the time limit was announced

Small Group: Red

Due to the weekday missed for a field trip, this group was given 10 minutes on Friday

-Went quietly to back table
-Student N seared for book in baskets to write the review
-Student E was slow to begin
-Students B and U re-read the directions for their center activities
-The teacher provided a reminder that the students had 10 minutes to write
-Students E and N talked some, but went to work
-Students U looked around and seemed dazed while writing. The student paid more attention to the other students in the group instead of writing
-Student B needed a small amount of prompting to begin writing
-Student U needed gentle reminders to write
-Time warning were given and students would get back to work
-Students N and E were silly at time, but they got the work finished
-Student N finished and left to continue the class work

Small Group: Blue

-Students got their materials and went to the center
-Reminder of time limit and students went to work
-Student A asked about writing to a family member and the teacher told the student it was okay
-Student Q had trouble think of a book title for the book review center
-Student A wrote some and looked around
-Student Q needed some spelling help from the teacher
-Student G had an idea but they had trouble spelling and writing
-Student V was confused about fiction, non-fiction, folktale, and biography
-Student A was worried about spelling words correctly
-Student G worked on the picture for the majority of the center writing
-Student V worked on the picture for the majority of the center writing
-Kids did a good job to work and ignore the teaching lesson that the rest of the class was experiencing
-Student G needed help with directions for writing sentences for the book review (worked quietly and diligently after directions provided)
-Student A was interested in the center board and visuals
-Time reminder was provided to students for 5 minutes remaining
-Students kept working
-Student Q was stuck on writing sentences
-Student V did a great job work quietly and for the entire writing time
-Students Q, A, and G finished early and put their papers away then joined the rest of the class
-Student V remained at the table even after a cue by the teacher that writing time was over

**Week 3**

*Day 11: Monday April 7, 2008*

The teacher introduced a new center activity. Center #5 is writing an ending, and the teacher then read the beginning and middle of the story to the students to prompt their interest in the center

-Students were so excited about the center
-The teacher read the beginning and middle to students and they were pulled into the story
-One student said, “I bet all of the students will choose center #5”
-Students were able to provide the steps that they needed to follow for this center

Large Group: Fishbowl journal #2

-Had a brief discussion about animals in the ocean and what it means to have a conversation
-Students showed excitement about topic by smiling and eyes getting larger
-Students were quiet during time even if they weren’t writing
-Student O looked around and played with paper
-Student S wrote and then looked around
Writers’ Workshop: Motivating Students to Become Better Writers: 57

-Student G wrote then looked around, then wrote
-Student G displayed signs of difficulty writing
-Students P and Q chatted some
-Student Q hid the paper when the teacher walked close to it
-Student Q told the teacher, “I can’t think of anything to write”

Small Group: Choice

-Orange: group went to center table
-Chose topics quickly
-Checked off center in folder
-Moved Kid Pins on board
-Put papers in folder and put center envelopes away
-Task completed in 2 minutes

Observations of Red, Purple, and Blue groups were not noted due to an absence in the classroom at this time

Day 12: Tuesday April 8, 2008

At morning meeting, the students were introduced to a new activity that they would complete each Monday after selecting center activity.

-Kids wrote reasons for choosing their center of the week
-Students were given 5 minutes to write the reason
-Great explanations provided
-Explanations are found the teacher folder

Large Group: Fishbowl journal # 15

-Discussed what a daydream is and the teacher provided an example for students
-The teacher told the students it could be a daydream that they have had or one that they are imagining right now
-Student Q got very excited and gasped, “I know what I’ll do!”
-Student T asked Student A if daydream was a compound word
-Student A replied “yes”
-Student S wrote and then looked around
-Student O wrote, and then looked around, and then wrote again
-Student G wrote and then looked around
-Student A was up blowing nose and looking around (wastes time/noisy)
-Student Q wrote and then looked around
-Student O was slow to begin, but wrote toward the end of the writing time
-Student A got to work after they were off blowing nose
-Student T looked around when finished
-Students E, F, M, N, and P were out of the classroom for enrichment during writing time
Small Group: Orange
-Students T and K wrote friendly letters, they were excited to share who they were writing to
-Student T, “I am writing to my friend John,” Very enthusiastic voice
-Students C and L did writing an ending center and they spent a lot of time reading the beginning and middle of the story
-The teacher reminded the students that they needed to write the ending. The students got right to work.
-Students C and L worked very hard and wrote ideas quickly
-Student C was very excited to share the writing with the teacher
-Student T explained, “I put a place for a stamp because I really actually want to send it to my friend.”
-Students T and K finished early and went back to seat to continue writing work
-Student L continued to write until the end of the center time. They would stop momentarily to think (assumption)
-Student C wrote a lot and then world take a break briefly
-As Student C added to the story they were very excited to read it to the teacher
-The teacher told Students C and L to complete their sentences and put things in their folder and go back to their desks
-Student C shared the entire ending with the teacher
-Student L continued writing for about an extra minute

Day 13: Wednesday April 9, 2008

Large Group: Fishbowl journal # 27

-The teacher read the topic and kids giggled and chatted briefly
-Students wanted to talk about ideas and choices prior to writing
-Student T explained, “I already started writing.”
-Student G was very excited
-Students V and A talked about super heroes
-Student A asked Student T about super heroes
-Student O looked around and wrote on the desk
-Student P looked around and at what Student O was doing
-Student S’s set was quiet and writing
-Student C’s set was quiet and writing
-Student T’s set was more talkative (Student A especially)
-Student V sounded words out very loud
-Students F and M chatted some
-Student G asked Student B some questions
-Student U looked around for a while then wrote. This trend continued
-Student P told the teacher, “I’m done.”
-Most students finished quickly and began to chat
-After writing time ended, Student V continued to write

Small Group: Red
Students got out center work and discussed with each other the writing center that they chose.
The teacher reminded students that they had 10 minutes to write.
Students E and B read the beginning and middle of the story.
Student N quickly started writing the friendly letter.
Student E tried to help student N with the date on his letter.
Student E then began their own writing for the ending.
Student U was slow to begin writing a poem, but had titled the poem.
- Student B chatted with Student U some.
The students did a great job working on their writing while the other students were involved in a class read aloud.
The teacher presented students at the writing center questions and the students lost their focus on writing.
Student E worked well with distractions.
Students N, B, and U could not concentrate on the writing.
Student N said that they were finished after writing 1 sentence on the friendly letter.
The teacher gave students a choice to take a break and continue writing after the read aloud was completed.
Student U finished their writing and joined the class.
Student E finished writing the ending and joined the group.
Student B finished and joined group.
This group of students was given an extra 5 minutes of writing time based on the distractions from the classroom.

Day 14; Thursday April 10, 2008

During morning free time, Student B had writing center activity out and was working on completing it.

Large Group: Fishbowl journal- prompted by puppets

- The teachers introduced puppets as friends having problems, and they needed help solving them. The teachers thought that the students could help them come up with solutions.
- The teachers read the script and acted out the scene.
- During the puppet show, students’ eyes were focused on puppets the entire time and no one said a word.
- Student C giggled a little during the show, but they were focused on the puppets.
- Student G was smiling.
- At the end of the show the students were asked to come up with some solutions or ways to fix their problem.
- On the carpet students raised hands to answer, and the teacher informed them that they would write their solutions in their journals.
- Once back to their seats, the teacher discusses with the students what happened to the 2 boys (puppets).
-The student’s responses included: Not playing, being mean, teasing, and not being a good friend
-Students got to work and the teacher asked if they understood and had solutions and students said yes
-Students E and S chatted after writing ended-Student N watched/listened
-Student O wrote right away, and asked Student P to help spell
-Student O looked around when finished
-Students looked around and appeared to be thinking, but would go back to writing

Small Group: Purple
-Students T and N pulled out the beginning and middle to read the story and read quietly and concentrated
-Student P got right to work on the ending but looked around a little
-Student F started book review quietly and quickly. First the student worked on the sketch, and was undistracted by the classroom lesson
-Student M worked on the shopping list, and then looked around
-Reminder of time left- 5 minutes
-Students O and S were very intrigued by reading the beginning and middle
-As soon as Student O finished reading they started writing
-Student S was slow to begin writing an ending
-Student M finished shopping list and went directly to writing the story wrote some of the story and then looked around and chatted with Student F briefly and then went right back to work
-Student F responded to Student M but went right back to work
-Student O was very hard working and did not say a word during the center time
-Student P finished early and joined the class lesson
-Student F finished early and joined the class lesson
-Student S claimed they were done and went back to desk
-Student P added more to the story before they returned to desk
-Student M watched the other students leaving the center, once the students were gone; the students went back to writing
-The teacher asked the students to find a good stopping point
-Student M finished up writing and went back to desk
-Student O stayed at the center until completing writing

*Day 15: Friday April 11, 2008*

Large Group: Fishbowl journal #8

-Student were excited about sharing game with someone else
-After reading topic to students the teacher said begin writing
-Student T responded, “I already began writing.”
-Student O called the teacher over to ask how to explain playing soccer. The teacher told him to think about what people did or types of equipment used
-Student F stepped in and began asking Student O “Do you sit on the sidelines? Do you kick a ball” Do you bounce a ball? Do you hit a ball?”
Students O changed the game choice and began writing
-Students were quiet, but when there was talking it was on task and topic
-Students T and U finished their writing and sat quietly
-The teacher reminded students of the folder collection later in the day

Small Group: Blue
-Students went to the center table
-Student V began asking what to do for the center
-Student A informed Student V to write an ending
-Student G was writing a letter and the students was expressing difficulty with writing the ideas
-Student V got frustrated with Student A wouldn’t help explain the activity in more detail
-The teacher explain the direction to Student V and Students A continued writing
-Student G worked quietly
-The remainder of the station the teacher worked with other students and did not take observation notes

Week 4

Day 16: Monday April 14, 2008

-Out Sick

Day 17: Tuesday April 15, 2008

-Introduced a new center, Center 6: Fact vs. Opinion
-Students talked about facts and opinions and examples of each
-Teacher gave directions for the center
-Teacher gave students another tool for in their center folder, writing checklist
-Teacher introduced the checklist and its use, and the students understood

Large Group: Fishbowl journal-#42

-Students did not seems to be as excited about this topic
-Students began to talk as soon as the writing time began
-A lot of students looked around and did not write
-Student O wrote and then played on desk
-Student V played with eraser
-Students A was giggling

Small Group: Choice day

Orange (2 mins)

-Right to work
-Chatted some, but about the centers and names of centers
-Student T asked, “I checked it off now what do I do? Oh yea, my kid pin!”
-Student C “I’m finished!”
-Completed choice papers

Red (6 mins)

-Students E and N did not come back when called
-Students U and B were quick to pick and were quiet
-Students E and N were talkative and slow to begin
-Writing reasons for center choice took a while

Purple (6 mins)

-Made quick selections
-A little loud and talkative, but on task
-Student F was quick!
-Students M, O, and P made quick choices, but had a few questions for the teacher
-Student S was loud and unorganized

Blue: (4 mins)

-Student G was all over the place (folder, papers, pencil)
-Student V chose center, but was not sure what to do
-Student A had a quick choice
-Student V told Student G what center 5 was about and how to complete the center

Day 18: Wednesday April 16, 2008

Large Group: Fishbowl journal #32

-Teacher read the topic and discussed what a message in a bottle is
-Students said they understood and the teacher gave them 5 minutes to write
-Student A looked around
-Students S, E, and N chatted
-Student A played with pencil box
-Teacher reminded the students to use their imaginations
-Student C looked around

Small Group

Orange:

-Students very quick to go to the table
-Very quiet
-Worked quickly
-On-task for entire writing time!!!
Writers’ Workshop: Motivating Students to Become Better Writers: 63

-Writing went smoothly
-Student T finished early
-Student L finished early
-Students K and C worked for the entire 10 minutes but they did not finish
-Teacher assistance was not needed during this groups writing time

Red:

-Students were quick to get to the table
-Students were quick to write, but quick to get off task
-Students chatted with each other
-One student finished early, and asked the teacher what to do
-Teacher assistance was not needed during this groups writing time

Day 19: Thursday April 17, 2008

-Puppets were used to introduce and act out a problem
-They both thought that an object was theirs. What to do?
-Student G and Student C retold the problem to the class

Large Group: Fishbowl Journal puppets

-Student A looked around
-Student U wrote and then looked around
-Student G wrote and then looked around
-Student S wrote then looked around
-Students O, N, and P wrote quickly then looked around

Small Group: Purple

- Very noisy when first at center
- Got out folders to read directions for the selected centers
- Student S was very talkative and loud
- Debates about topics
- Students T and P wrote some
- Students F, O, and M talked more than wrote
- Student P asked, “what do you do?”
- The teacher said for the students to read the directions for the center
- The teacher reminded students of 5 minutes left
- Students F and M talked
- Student O wanted to know a herbivore that is living today
- Talk a lot, but wrote while talking
- After time was up, Student P came to the teacher and asked, “Miss Jacobson I only got one done.”
- The teacher asked the student how many more he needed to do and the student answered 2
-The teacher told him he would need to find time to work on them because she would be collecting his folder on Friday

*Day 20: Friday April 18, 2008*

Large Group: Fishbowl journal #12

-After the topic was read, students got a little chatty about the topic
-Students settled quickly and began writing
-Student T said “Miss Jacobson I can’t wait for you to read mint it is really funny!”

Small Group: Blue

-Students did not write anything
-2 Students were absent from group
-Talked a lot
### Writers’ Workshop: Motivating Students to Become Better Writers

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**CODE:**

- **W** - Writing
- **O** - Off task
- **U** - Using Toolbox Materials
Writers’ Workshop: Motivating Students to Become Better Writers: 67

*Keri’s Room*
As students were writing, they were working on completing a poem for writer’s workshop and completing their center for the week. As many of Keri’s students finished their center for the week, they were already talking about what center they wanted to work on the following week, with a clear level of excitement.
Appendix H

1. Does your child talk about writing, in or out of school experiences, with you?
   Yes       No

2. Has your child mentioned any of the new writing activities they have participated in at school?
   Yes       No

3. How might you categorize your child’s interest in writing?
   a. very interested
   c. somewhat interested
   c. not interested

4. Have you noticed any difference, even slight, in your child’s attitude toward writing?
   Yes       No
Appendix I

Does your child talk about writing with you?

- Yes: 79%
- No: 21%
Has your child mentioned any of the new writing activities they have participated in at school?

- Yes: 55%
- No: 45%

How might you categorize your child's interest in writing?

- Interested: 49%
- Somewhat Interested: 41%
- Not Interested: 10%
Have you noticed any difference in your child's attitude towards writing?

- Yes: 70%
- No: 27%
- Maybe: 3%

Appendix J
1. Do you enjoy writing at school? Yes No

Tell me a reason or two for your answer.

2. What is your favorite kind of writing? Make-believe? Informational or true story? Poetry?

3. Do you write in your free time at school?

4. Do you write in your free time at home?
5. Do you have a favorite writing center? What is it? Why is that your favorite?
Appendix K

Do you enjoy writing at school?

- Yes: 76%
- No: 17%
- Other: 7%

What is your favorite type of writing?

- Fiction: 32%
- Non-fiction: 29%
- Poetry: 7%
- Other: 7%
Do you write in your free time at school?

- Yes: 29%
- No: 49%
- Sometime: 22%

Do you write in your free time at home?

- Yes: 30%
- No: 45%
- Sometime: 25%
Appendix L

Inquiry Brief

Context

This inquiry will be a collaborative project performed within two first grade classrooms. Within each classroom there is a variety of ability levels, behaviors, and diversity. A context of each individual classroom is provided in the following paragraphs.

Laura’s classroom is comprised of 22 students with a perfect ratio of 11 girls and 11 boys. There is a variety of ability levels within the classroom, which includes five students who are provided with extra reading support, four to six students who participate within enrichment classes once a week, and a range of learners between. During the morning writing workshop, five students are taken out of the classroom for extra reading support.

Laura’s classroom participates daily in an hour-long writing workshop. The writing workshop includes students writing stories from personal experiences, writing informational pieces based on unit read alouds, participating in poetry workshops and writing narrative stories. Usually the writing workshop is split between twenty to twenty five minutes of instruction on the carpet and thirty to thirty five minutes of students writing at their seats.

Keri’s classroom participates three to four times a week in writer’s workshop. Depending on what extra activities are occurring during the week, the sessions will be between 40 and 60 minutes. In a sixty-minute session, students will generally participate in whole group activities for at least 25 minutes and write independently for approximately 30-35 minutes. Students have had experience with various aspects of writing such as story beginnings, descriptive language, sentence beginnings, synonyms for commonly used words (like said), informational writing based on unit read alouds and narrative story writing.

Rationale
On the carpet, during instructional time, a handful of students in each classroom appear to have a lack of focus. Often times students can be seen looking around the room, moving around on the carpet, talking to their peers and playing with objects close to them on the carpet. Once students have been given directions and then sent back to their desks, it has been observed that students are slow to get out their writing papers and tend to talk to their neighbors. After students have their writing folders out, occasionally students ask the teacher questions about what they are expected to do. We feel that this is related to the lack of focus that students have when they are on the carpet for instructional time.

During the writing time, some students begin their task quickly when they return to their seats. Other students do not begin as quickly. In both groups, however, there are students who do not make much progress on their piece of writing during the allotted time. These are the students that we would like to reach through this inquiry project. In order to reach all students, we would like to implement a wide variety of techniques, such as writing centers, puppets and music students will be more focused and motivated during the writing workshop time.

We want to further research student motivation with writing because we feel that the strategies and tools used within writing workshop can be duplicated and used with other subject areas. We want to look closely into writing workshop because we realize writing is an important skill developed in first grade, and writing skills are necessary for all subject areas. We feel that this research will help us begin to acquire successful teaching practices, which will provide us with a foundation for our future teaching. Our hope is that this inquiry will also motivate our students’ writing in other subject areas throughout the day. By focusing on the area of writing, we think that we will be able to see how motivation helps our students’ progress.

Wondering

How can we motivate and focus our students during writing workshop?

Sub-questions

How does the use of music affect students’ focus when transitioning from large group to small group during writing workshop?
How does background music help students to focus on their writing during writing workshop?
How does the use of puppets motivate students in the writing process?
How do writing centers motivate students writing?

Projected Timeline
February
- Preassessment of students writing work
- Preassessment of student motivation and focus while writing
- Data collection begins through daily writing workshop activities
- Writing workshop inventory
- Interviews with teachers and CST’s
- Give student, parent, and teacher surveys (pre-surveys)

March-
- Data collection continues
- Give student, parent, and teacher surveys (post-surveys)
- Assessment
- Begin data analysis

April-
- Continue activities
- Complete data analysis
- Prepare paper for presentation

**Data Collection Ideas**

**Centers**
- Surveys sent home to parents
- Surveys given to students
- Surveys given to teachers
- Observations of student behavior
- Collection of student work (before, during, and after)

**Music**
- Record of time spent on transitions
- Observation of student behavior and peer interactions

**Puppets**
- Observation of student behavior
- Teacher artifacts (lesson plans, unit to be taught)
Appendix M

Annotated Bibliography


This book has many works written by a variety of authors. Split into categories, there are over forty works. This will help assure that many of the questions we have about why writing centers are beneficial and how to use them will be answered.


In looking for reasons why and ways to incorporate puppetry in the classroom, this pamphlet will be most useful. As stated in the publication itself, there is not much research published otherwise. This book provides answers to questions and suggestions that will help in the implementation of a puppet (or more) during writing time.


In this book is a section specifically about using music in the classroom. This will prove very useful for our inquiry research and implementation.

Transition Time has plethora of transitions including songs, chants, and games. During writer’s workshop, there are many times of transition where focus is lost and students take longer than necessary to move to the next task. Hopefully, using some transitions from this book will help students stay focused and move quickly so they will be more productive during writer’s workshop.


This book will offer insight into the purpose of writing centers as a form of community practice and building. It is based more on theory than explicit examples and will be helpful in writing a rationale and understanding the purpose of writing centers.


This book is an excellent resource for teachers looking for subject research on writing centers. There is an extensive amount of research on writing centers for all ages and it is reported in this book in an easy to read manner. There are also a large amount of references listed that would be beneficial in further research.


Doris Grove was a first grade teacher for 12 years and utilized many creative and involved writing centers in her classroom. We would like to interview her for ideas of centers and for implementation. We also hope to discuss the benefits she noticed of using the centers in her room, especially those that affected motivation and focus.


The chapters included in this bibliography deal with attentional states of students, using music to enrich learning, and rewards and motivation. In preliminary scanning and reading of these chapters, there is a lot of information that will be helpful in understanding and changing student motivation (or lack thereof).

This article illustrates 20 basic ways to use music in the classroom. Though it is doubtful that all 20 ways will be used, this article will definitely provide ideas and suggestions that can be altered or used as is to help with transitions and focus during writing time.


This article offers various ways and times of the day to use transitions. It will surely help in trying out different transitions that may or may not work with our own students.


This book is a quality reading resource for teachers of young children. This book is aimed toward preschool and kindergarten-aged children, but it would also benefit first and second grade teachers. This book goes into detail to discuss what learning development children go through at certain ages, and what centers and teaching points are important for students at those ages.


We think this source will be most useful in planning lessons and centers to use during our inquiry.


This interview, which will be conducted in the month of February 2008, will address the benefits of using writing centers, ways to incorporate them into writing time, and examples of types of centers. Mr. Rotz is a Curriculum Support Teacher in State College Area School District and was a teacher in the primary grades for many years. His own classroom utilized many writing centers, therefore his opinion will be from firsthand experience.


This book is a resource for writing and researching papers. This book gives specific examples of how to research topics in depth using various types of
resources. This book then helps to provide information that would prove beneficial in writing the report on the topic.


In looking at the title alone, this book seems as though it will have a plethora of information that can help us in planning and implementing our inquiry.