“I don’t know what to write”:

A journey to spark the writing interests of developing first grade writers.

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April 25, 2009
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Abstract

“I don’t know what to write”: A journey to spark the writing interests of developing first grade writers.

Since the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year, I have been instructing my first grade students at the writing station. Day after day, I found that a number of students were unhappy with the writing activities. The developing writers in our class particularly struggled each day. I had to find a way to make writing fun and to motivate my students, especially the developing writers. In my inquiry, I jumped into the writing station and used a variety of tools and strategies to allow students to find the joy and inspiration in writing.

Context

My first grade class, at Panorama Elementary School in the State College Area School District, is made up of twenty dynamic students. Thirteen are female and seven are male, which makes for a very interesting mix of social behaviors. Of those twenty students, five are in the Response To Intervention program (RTI) for the first time this year, for one hour every morning. Four students in my classroom are on behavior modification plans. Of these students, two are on the one, two, three, magic plan that gives them opportunities to change their own behaviors before being removed from the classroom to further discuss problems.

Within the academics they are homogeneously grouped with a wide variety of developmental skill levels. In my classroom, we include many differentiated instruction lessons in order to meet the individual needs of all students. Most of our students are making progress towards meeting the grade level standards. A handful of students are working above grade level, and are challenged daily to build upon their success.

The students in the classroom that attend R.T.I have a hard time managing their academic workload, which differs slightly from the other students in the room. In the last few months of school these students have made less progress in the area of writing instruction during station time compared to
fellow classmates. All five of the students are out of the classroom during the guided writing instruction in order to attend RTI classes. Although, I have attempted to differentiate instruction this group of students still requires additional structure and assistance while at the writing station.

**Wonderings and Questions**

**Main Wondering**

For struggling writers what instructional strategies or tools can be implemented to effectively motivate them to increase the quantity of writing?

Through my inquiry, I want to discover instructional strategies that can be used to help motivate struggling writers to increase the amount they write. My ultimate goal is to discover strategies that will allow my students to enjoy the writing process, while increasing the quantity of their writing.

**Questions**

How much can I expect the struggling writers to gain in developing a complete story?

In my inquiry process, I have classified the struggling writers as those writers that are not meeting grade level expectations at this point in the school year. They are making progress, but this progress is at their own individual levels. I am wondering how much change will be seen due to the instructional accommodations made.

How will differentiating for the struggling writers affect the quantity of work completed?

A teacher can attempt to create a stimulating environment for every student by using differentiated practices. Ultimately, differentiation means thinking of each student’s interests and learning styles and making accommodations to meet those needs. I am curious to see if including differentiations for each student in the struggling writing group will increase the amount of work that they complete.
How will student work change due to instructional strategies in struggling writers?

A great way to see improvement is to see the differences in student work throughout any inquiry process. Since my inquiry deals with the effects on quantity and writing, I would like to see how much changes in their written artifacts.

Data Collection and Analysis

For my inquiry project I primarily used anecdotal records and student work. However student interviews, checklists, and timetables were also used. I collected data before, during, and after implementation of instructional strategies.

Before

Before beginning the process of collecting data, I created a general timeline to follow to ensure the data collected would support my wonderings (Appendix A).

Student Interviews

Prior to implementation, I created student interview questions (Appendix B) that would provide me with insight into the thoughts of my students. I created questions that would have my students explain their likes and dislikes about writing, their interests, and what changes could be made to help meet their individual needs. I conducted the interview with each member of the group. My intention for creating and conducting the interviews was to find similarities and differences among group members that would provide me with strategies to meet their writing needs. For student responses see Appendix C.

Analysis

In order to see any correlations in interview responses, I had to decide what I was looking for. I chose to look for student interests, their thoughts on the productivity of the writing station, and their likes and dislikes for writing. With these four areas in mind, I was able to look back at the interviews
very critically. Once I had gone through each interview I was able to track patterns in those four categories. See Appendix L for full responses.

**Anecdotal Records**

Before I made any change to the writing station, I wanted to collect detailed written records that would allow me to see links among group members’ writing performance, on task time, and behavioral components. In order to collect these notes, I created a writer’s notebook (Appendix D) with a section for each student and also a place to keep general thoughts about daily writing station activities. I took daily notes including activity choices, on task time, and individual behavior comments. I was hoping to find patterns between students in order to increase on task time and how much writing was accomplished on a daily basis.

**Analysis**

I first started by looking for any major patterns in on task time and what motivated students to work. I wanted to find occurrences where students were able to write in the most productive manners and also what allowed them to get the most work done. I found two distinct patterns: a lot of behavioral problems were arising on a daily basis and I was not creating daily opportunities for students to write. See Appendix E for anecdotal records before implementation. From these patterns, I was able to effectively implement activities that I hoped would eliminate behavior disturbances and create daily writing opportunities.

**Student Work**

In order to have a general baseline of the quantity of writing for each student in the struggling group, I wanted to collect an extensive amount of student work. I was looking to see progress made throughout the course of my inquiry project. The samples in Appendix F were created at the writing station at the start of the project.
Analysis

When I analyzed students’ writing I was looking for quantity of writing and topic choice. I kept track of each student’s topic and how many complete sentences they wrote. On average, I found that all five students wrote one complete sentence at the start of my inquiry project.

During

Anecdotal Records

While implementing various changes at the writing station I continued to keep detailed notes about what was occurring. In my writer’s notebook, I kept track of the types of activities that I implemented, student quotes, on task time, differentiations, and also personal reflections. I wanted to be able to clearly see what strategies were effectively helping my students with their writing, what activities were increasing on task time, and what differentiations helped my students individually succeed.

Analysis

On a daily basis, I analyzed various strategies to see if they were working based on how productive the students were and their time on task. To see these patterns I created monthly calendars that easily allowed me to see time, activities, and the on task rate of my students, (Appendix M).

Student Work

During the implementation of my instructional strategies, I greatly changed the way that I collected my students’ work. From research I found that it is important to make writing seem like a big deal for your students, it should be fun and exciting in every way. Even the way that you collect student work should be enticing and motivating. One of my implementations was the introduction of student writing folders and compositions journals (Appendix G and H). These two implementations not only acted as an effective strategy to increase quantity of student writing they were also a great way to collect student work.
Analysis

With these journals I was able to clearly see the progress made by each student. I would look at them nightly to choose topics that would continue to increase productivity. To analyze writing topics, I looked at the types of activities I chose through my calendar notes. I also used student work to see a correlation between student chosen topics and the quantity of the writing. Appendix O shows an example of a student chosen topic, Appendix P shows an example of a teacher chosen topic.

Behavior Checklists

After collecting a baseline of data from my anecdotal records I was finding that a lot of the notes that I took were on the disruptive behaviors of the group members. I needed a way to keep track of these behaviors and an implementation that would hopefully make them less intrusive to the writing process. Together the students and I created a behavior checklist where they were scored in various categories, (Appendix I). I wanted to use the checklists as a way that I could collect data on the behaviors of the students. I was hoping that I would also be able to see links between what motivated individual students to increase their writing and what differentiations worked.

See Appendix J for examples of completed behavior checklists.

Analysis

To analyze their behaviors I made individual excel charts (Appendix N), which allowed me to see their behaviors throughout the inquiry process. I then looked for correlations between behaviors and writing quantity using my anecdotal records.

After

Student work

To conclude my inquiry data collection, I wanted to collect one more sample of student work. I wanted to create an opportunity for my students where I made accommodations for their individual needs, but also a time where they could show me their writing abilities. They were asked to write a story
of their choosing. Within this writing piece I took anecdotal records about the accommodations that I made and also what choices they made. I wanted to be able to mark their progress from the beginning to the end of the inquiry in a similar manner to the beginning writing piece. See Appendix F for the samples of the final writing artifacts.

Analysis

To analyze the final writing piece, I was looking for student progress in their quantity of complete sentences. I saw progress in a majority of the students. On average, they went from writing one complete sentence in the first student artifact to five sentences at the end. This analysis (starting with “I saw….”) tells more than the steps taken. It gives some results. I think, for the publication, the last 2 sentences of the section above would fit here best and the results here should be included with the evidence for a claim.

Overall Analysis

From my careful planning I was able to collect valuable data that helped me answer my two main questions: what strategies can be effectively implemented to increase on task time, and also what effects will differentiations make on the quantity of student work. From my data and analysis I was able to create my claims and support them with well-developed evidence.

Explanation of Findings: Claims supported by Evidence

Claim 1: In order to have struggling writers understand and work through the writing process a teacher must have established a clear behavioral management plan first.

My main wondering throughout inquiry was what instructional strategies can be implemented to increase quantity of writing. From my evidence taken in the first few weeks of implementation, I found that before I could effectively begin to help students in the area of writing I had to establish a way to eliminate the behavior disturbances. A majority of a daily writing time was taken up by disruptive
behaviors from all members of the group. From my student interviews I found that all five students agreed that writing time during stations was unproductive. One particular student was asked about what he didn’t enjoy and what affected our writing time, his response,

“I don’t like when I get in trouble for not following the rules, I know the rules but sometimes I forget.” He also added that it would be helpful to include an option that would review directions and lead him on the right path.

Together the students and I created a behavior checklist that would allow all members of the group to be held accountable for their own actions. From student input we decided that if their behavior progressively got better that they would be rewarded with computer time on a weekly basis. In the interviews, all students equally agreed that the computer would make writing more enjoyable and they would work harder.

“When we go to the computer with Miss B. it’s my favorite part of the writing station”.

Before I could implement the behavior checklist plan I had to clearly establish the expectations for my students. I wanted each student to understand both the positive and negative outcomes for their behaviors. I knew that my students needed to understand exactly what they were required to do.

After explaining the expectations of the behavior checklist and what it would help us accomplish, the students were very excited to use it. With the use of the checklist I also found that I could be much more clear and concise in the directions that I gave, because I was not having to clear up as many behavior problems. The following personal quotes shows how easily giving directions became after implementing the chart, “Today, I was able to give clear directions to create story ideas, I didn’t have to stop over and over again because of behaviors”.

From the implementation of the behavior checklists I felt like I was able to provide more writing assistance for my students. Within a few days of implementation I felt that they were able to see and understand their behaviors in an easy manner. At the end of inquiry I tracked their behaviors on a grid
to see the improvements over the entire eight weeks (Appendix N). In the grids I could clearly see the
differences that were made across the board. Now we were ready to work through the writing process.

**Disclaiming Evidence**

Some student’s points are down on certain days for two reasons. First off, two of the station days I was not there to mark and go over their points with them. From my mentor’s comments I was able to mark their behaviors, however the students were unaware. Secondly, some students are on other behavior plans in addition to the behavior chart. Two students from the group are on the one, two, three management plan, which is described in the context of my paper.

**Claim 2: Daily allotted time for the struggling writers effects quantity of complete sentences they compose.**

After a couple of weeks of implementation I found that I was able to effectively clear up behaviors and now we could focus on writing. However, I found that I was often verbally teaching students about writing, or creating lessons where we wrote as a group. I then found that when students were asked to write independently they were unsure how to begin and they didn’t want to write. I had to enforce a strategy and plan that would provide my students with daily individual writing times. I created a plan centered on daily journal writing for each student. I provided the students with a journal, (Appendix G). In these journals, students were asked to respond to letters, write short stories, or write about their own topics. I made sure that I had each student began stations with at least three minutes of writing time and then I increased this time to about five minutes a day. Appendix M shows my inquiry calendar with time marks.

I found that with the daily writing opportunities students were more excited to write. One student would come over to the station daily and say “Miss B. can we write in our journals first”. From their excitement to write in their journals students were also starting to write more. With their first entry students only wrote about one to two sentences (Appendix S). However, as time went on students wrote
more complete sentences. They would also show me how proud they were to write more sentences, these two students quotes show their passion to write,

“Miss B. can I write four sentences not just 2” and “Miss B. look I wrote on the entire page”.

Towards the end of inquiry I found that students were writing on average about five sentences (Appendix T), compared to the starting entry of about one sentence. To see a strong correlation between daily-allotted time and quantity of completed sentences, I had my students create one final writing sample. I worked individually with each student to help them develop their story ideas, they then wrote on their own for twenty minutes. Three out of five students were able to write more than five sentences, on this particular day (Appendix K).

*Claim 3: Allowing students to choose their own topic for writing affects the quantity of writing and on task time.*

When I analyzed the data I collected before implementation I found that many of my students had a difficult time writing when they were not given choices (Appendix P). Since I had these struggling writers write during station time I had the freedom to choose the writing pieces that they would create. I wanted to think of a strategic plan that would allow me to maximize on their writing abilities when they were given choices for their writing topic.

I used the data I collected from the student interviews and also writing pieces from their journals to examine topics that each student enjoyed writing about. I measured this by the quantity of writing and on task time while writing about a particular topic. Using the student journals, I would have students respond to questions that I would ask them about particular topics. I kept detailed notes about the days that seemed to really be enjoyable for each student. All students responded extremely well when asked to write about their favorite thing and draw a picture. Each student was able to respond in his or her individual way and their quantity of sentences greatly increased from days when they wrote from story
prompts. Here are two examples: Appendix V is an example of a story prompt writing; Appendix O is an example of an individualized writing choice.

On days that I allowed a choice in the area of writing topics I also saw an increased amount of on task time by a majority of the students. See Appendix M for a calendar marked for on task time. I believe students were able to stay on task because they enjoyed writing about their topic of choice. Overall, I found ways to provide students with choices for their own writing topics, which increased the quantity of their writing.

**Claim 4: Differentiated strategies of instruction for struggling writers affects the quantity of their work.**

When I conducted my research I found that incorporating structure, play, and fun materials would lead students to be consumed with motivation to write. I began to think about the differentiations that should be made for each student to produce more quantity to their work and enjoy the process of writing.

I started with the implementation of personal writing composition journals. In these journals I wrote a personal letter to each student to motivate them to enjoy writing. The first day that I gave students their journals, they were excited:

> “You got us notebooks, can we write in them each day”, “Can I bring my notebook home with me”, “Thank you Miss B. for getting these journals for us”.

In the journals I was also able to provide each student with clear differentiations. For one student I would have a place for them to draw a picture, a spot for that student to dictate sentences to me, and finally a spot to copy the sentences, (Appendix R). For other students, I would highlight the number of lines I wanted them to try to write, (Appendix R). With the journals I could specifically see what each student needed in order to produce quantity work.

When I introduced the journals I also implemented a station material bag with a supply bin and writing folders, (Appendix W). This allowed all materials to be kept in one space for all students in the
group. With the group members needs in mind I knew that it was important to keep every step of the writing process clear and concise for them to follow. This implementation increased amount of on task time, which then lead to an increased quantity of writing.

With my implementations of materials, journals, and also the incorporation of behavior checklist it gave me more teaching time. An increased amount of teaching time gave me the opportunity to extend and differentiate writing directions for each student. With clear expectations established, each student knew that they should begin each day by writing, “We want to write first”, said one student. They also knew that if they stayed focused that I would be able to help them each individually with their needs. One particular case where increased time and differentiations made a huge impact was with one student that needed additional assistance with his writing. By having directions established for all other group members, I was able to sit side by side with the student to help him practice his writing skills and develop more writing, (Appendix R).

Overall, I feel that without differentiations I would not have been able to see changes in the written work of the struggling writers. Each student came with their own strengths and weakness in their writing abilities. I had to maximize on their strengths to provide each student with the opportunity to succeed at their own level.

Reflection and Future Practice

Reflection

As my official inquiry came to a close I realized just how much I had accomplished and how much more I wish I had been able to do. My inquiry has taken me on a journey to understand the importance of instructing writing, thinking through implementations, analyzing, and reflecting on teaching.

Sub-Wonderings

When I started my inquiry project I think that I was slightly blind sighted. I thought that I would see these great advances occur. I thought that each struggling writer would develop and no longer need
so much assistance. However, how much can and should I expect the struggling writers to gain in their writing in just eight short weeks? From my inquiry I have come to realize that goals set must be achievable. I came to understand that the struggling writers would not be the best writers in the class but individually they could make huge leaps and bounds.

**Overall**

At the start of inquiry I am not exactly sure what I thought I was going to take away from this project. Possibly a list of strategies that I could implement with struggling writers, perhaps just a collection of student work that I would have to analyze and develop claims for. So, what did I take away? From this journey I have come to realize the importance of questioning ones practices as a teacher. Before, I began this process I believe that I got very comfortable with my teaching styles at the writing station. I never understood how to analyze anecdotal records, student work, and reflections on a day’s lesson to make effective changes before now.

**Future Practices**

**This classroom**

Although, my inquiry encompassed eight weeks of daily writing stations there is still so much to accomplish. For the rest of the school year, I will continue to carry out the instructional strategies that I have established with the struggling writers in my classroom. I think that it is important to continue to build on the progress that they have made. I feel like my students are now ready to think about punctuation, grammar, letter sound relationships, and other instructional areas of writing. I would like to create lessons with differentiations in mind for each student that would address some of these skills.

**Future classrooms**

As I look ahead to having a classroom of my own I think about the process of my inquiry. In the area of writing, I would like to include some sort of journal writing with my students each day. I feel very strongly that in order to have all students, especially struggling writers understand writing, they must first produce quantity in their writing.
I have also learned that being clear and concise with directions in every area of instruction is the most important step to effective teaching. Students and teachers must be ready to listen, learn, and work towards their goals. Until behaviors are cleared up the very best lessons will fail, in my experience.

Overall, I will use inquiry practices as a way to continue to question, challenge, and enhance my teaching practices in writing and all areas of the classroom.
Appendix

A. Timeline
B. Student Interview Questions
C. Student Interview Responses
D. Picture of Writer’s Notebook
E. Anecdotal Records Before Implementation
F. Student Work Samples Before Implementation
G. Composition Writing Journals
H. Student Writing Folders
I. Blank Behavior Checklist
J. Completed Behavior Checklist
K. Final Writing Sample
L. Student Interview Results
M. Inquiry Calendar Notes
N. Behavior Tracking Grids
O. Student Work – Student Chosen Topic
P. Student Work – Teacher Chosen Topic
Q. Anecdotal Records – Differentiation Efforts
R. Student Work – With Differentiations
S. Student Work – First Journal Entry Example
T. Student Work- Final Journal Entry Example
V. Student Work – Story Prompt
W. Differentiated Materials
X. Brief
Y. Bibliography

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M. Inquiry Calendar Notes
N. Behavior Tracking Grids
Appendix A: Timeline

February 2009
- Question Finalization
- Draft student interviews, surveys, and note sheets
- 2/15 – 2/27: Collect Base Line Data
  - 2/15 – 2/20
    - Student Interviews
    - Student Surveys
  - 2/15 – 2/27
    - Anecdotal Records
      - Notebook folder section for each student
      - Writer’s workshop notes from each day
    - Collection of student work

March 2009
- First three weeks
  - 3/2 – 3/27 Implementation
    - Collect Data along the way
      - Student Work
      - Anecdotal Records
        - Quotes
      - Student Reflections
      - Analyze data as I go
  - 3/23 – 3/26
    - Re-conduct student surveys (After)
    - Re-conduct student interviews (After)
    - Analyze Data
  - 3/30 – 4/3
    - Analyze Final Data
    - Write up findings

April 2009
- 4/6 – 4/10
  - Finalize Rough Draft of Paper
  - Edit rough draft
  - Presentation Work
- 4/11
  - Rough Draft of paper due
- 4/13 – 2/22
  - Fix rough draft
  - Finalize good copy
  - Presentation Work
- 4/22
  o Final Copy of Paper due
- 4/20 – 4/25
  o Finalize Presentation
- 4/25 - Inquiry Conference

**Appendix B: Student Interview Questions**

1. Do you like to write?

2. What do you like about writing?

3. What don’t you like about writing?

4. What topics do you like to write about?

5. Do you enjoy the writing station?
   a. What do you enjoy?
   b. What don’t you enjoy?

6. What would make you like writing more?

7. Would you enjoy writing projects? Like writing a book?

8. What do you think it means to be an author?

9. What do you think it means to be a good writer?

10. Do you think that you are a good writer?
Appendix C: Student Interview Responses

Student Interviews

1. Do you like to write?
   Yes, I don't know

2. What do you like about writing?
   I don't know

3. What don't you like about writing?
   I don't know

4. What topics do you like to write about?

5. Do you enjoy the writing station?
   Yes
   a. What do you enjoy?
   b. What don't you enjoy?

6. What would make you like writing more?

7. Would you enjoy writing projects? Like writing a book?
   Yes

8. What do you think it means to be an author?
   A good writer

9. What do you think it means to be a good writer?

10. Do you think you are a good writer? Why or why not?
    "I write funny"
Appendix D: Pictures of Writer's Notebook
Appendix E: Anecdotal Records Before Implementation

Appendix F: Student Work Samples Before Implementation
Appendix G: Composition Writing Journals
Appendix H: Student Writing Folders

Appendix I: Blank Behavior Checklist
### Appendix J: Completed Behavior Checklist

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<td>Asked for help</td>
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1: Rarely Ever  
2: Some of the time  
3: Most of the time  
4: All of the time

### Appendix K: Final Writing Samples
I have a talking dog. That has a tail.
My dogs are nice.

One day a ship went through the ocean with a bow wave.
My better first clo~e.
She is a fue cat. I play
her, toy I kiss her.
I pet her, they me.

On to~day I plad with my
cat, and dog. I have a
dog road colot. I took
my cat for e week. I
took my dog for a week.
I have a clinma and a 4u.9e.

In my cat brethum
is a lup. She is a cin.
She is black. She has
gue eyes. Her
She has Kos.
She has alluse.
Appendix L: Student Interview Results

- 5 students always enjoyed the writing station
- Writing Interests
  - Family
  - Animals
- 5 students said they felt the station was unproductive
- 4 students said they enjoy the computer lab

Appendix M: Inquiry Calendar Notes

![Inquiry Calendar Notes](image)
Appendix N: Behavior Tracking

### Grids

#### David

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Appendix O: Student Work – Student Chosen Topic

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Appendix N: Student Work – Teacher Chosen Topic

This is my truck I play with it when I get home. My Westie, Korn, had a hard time getting it fixed. Then it was fixed. It was fast. I woke up in the morning. I was tired. Then I went to the market and ate.
Appendix Q: Anecdotal Records: Differentiation Efforts

Appendix R: Student Work – With Differentiations
**Appendix S: Student Work – First Journal Entry**

Dearest Kyle,

March 25, 2000

I am so proud of the work that you have been doing at the Writing Station. You have been a great role model. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

Miss Braksato

Dear Miss Braksato,

I like story writing the best.

From,

Dearest Kyle

---

**Appendix T: Student Work – Final Journal Entry**

I woke up in the middle of the night.

From,

Dearest Kyle
Appendix V: Student Work – Story Prompt

I am a Dinos., I am a nek. I e qans. I drink wair. I am a plant wr. I am a pro. the kr is ar. and gaw ane "their war pret thn.

Appendix W: Differentiated Materials
Appendix X: Brief

Writing Station: How to Help Struggling Writers
Context

Since the beginning of the 2008-2009 academic year I have been an intern in a first grade self contained classroom, at Panorama Elementary in the State College Area School District. My first grade class is made up of twenty dynamic students. Thirteen of them are female and seven are male, which makes for a very interesting mix of social behaviors. Of those twenty students, five are in the Response To Intervention program (RTI) for the first time this year, for one hour every morning. Three other students participate in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for about thirty minutes a day, during language arts. Of the ESL students, one student is new to the district and speaks very little English; the other two students were in ESL last year and have a strong English language base. Four students in my classroom are on behavior modification plans. All of these students are on a one, two, three, magic plan that gives them opportunities to change their own behaviors before being removed from the classroom to further discuss problems.

Within the academics they are homogeneously grouped with a wide variety of developmental skill levels. In my classroom we include many differentiated instruction lessons in order to meet the individual needs of all students. Most of our students are making progress towards meeting the grade level standards. A handful of students are working above grade level, and are challenged daily to build upon their success.

The students in the classroom that attend R.T.I have a hard time with their academic workload, which differs slightly from the other students in the room. One of the ESL students is making progress, but needs additional writing strategies to implement independently. In the last few months of school these students have made less progress in the area of writing instruction during station time compared to fellow classmates. Five of the students are out of the classroom during the guided writing instruction in order to attend RTI classes. One other student is in the classroom, however lacks the English proficiency to make significant progress. So, the writing station is a crucial instruction time for all of them. It appears their struggles lie mostly within the areas of interest and motivation in writing. Although, I have attempted to differentiate instruction this group of students still requires additional structure and assistance while at the writing station.

Rationale

Since the beginning of the year as a first grade intern, I have been working at the writing station with four different groups for fifteen minutes each. The instruction day-to-day changes, but the group members have stayed consistent. Each group has their own strengths and weaknesses, which means differentiating instruction between each group is mandatory. I have become extremely comfortable developing diverse plans around one core lesson on a daily basis. With most groups I feel that they are making grade level progress and that with scaffold teacher support they will achieve high results by the end of the school year. However, the lowest achieving group has made the achievement gap much wider in the area of writing over the last few months. Each day these six students seem to struggle through the fifteen minutes of writing with a lack of motivation and interest for a variety of writing activities. As a teacher I am aware that I must make some changes in the structure and delivery of lessons to support the learning of these students.

My goal is to provide this group of students with tools and strategies that will provide them with skills and motivation, which will hopefully lead them to enjoy the writing station once again. Writing is a learning process that will continue to follow these students throughout the grade levels. I want them to enjoy the process for better understanding and enjoyment. I don’t want my
students to lose all interest in the area of writing at such an early stage in their academic career. From my passion and wishes for my students, I wonder how I can accommodate my students with various strategies and tools in order to motivate them to enjoy and increase the quantity of writing. Through the inquiry process I will pursue my wondering to be a better writing instructor for this group of students and for future struggling writers.

**Main Wondering**

In the early stages of writing what instructional strategies or tools can be implemented to effectively motivate students to increase the quantity of writing?

**Sub Wondering**

- How will motivation techniques help assist struggling writers to acquire writing skills?
- How will motivating struggling writers at the writing station affect the quantity of work?
- How will student artifacts change due to various motivational changes in struggling writers?
- How will writing skills develop in correlation to an increased sense of motivation in struggling writers?
- What effect would literature based instruction bring to writer’s workshop and to the struggling writers?
- How will sensory adaptations provide additional support for various student needs in correlation to writing?

**Data Collection Ideas**

**Student Interviews**

*Baseline:* I will conduct student interviews with each member of the struggling group in order to find out personal information about their ideas about writing, their interests, and their thoughts about the current situation during the writing station.

This information will hopefully provide me with ideas of implementation techniques and what strategies students find beneficial for their personal needs. From the interviews I will analyze the information to look for patterns between group members and what strengths and weakness each student seems to feel they have.

*Post:* After implementing changes within stations for several weeks I will re-conduct interviews with each student in the group. I will ask them the same questions to determine if their perceptions have changed about writing and what their individual thoughts are on the changes.

I will use this information to support my claims about what strategies worked and which tools students found unsuccessful. I will also analyze this data in order to see a correlation between my observations and how the students are feeling about the writing station.

**Teacher Interviews**

I will conduct either personal, telephone, or e-mail interviews to various grade level teachers asking their thoughts on writing, motivation, and what techniques they have used to increase the
quantity of writing from struggling writers. I will analyze this data for suggestions of
implementation backed up with found research to make sound decisions on implementing new
strategies. This information will provide direct support to my main wondering on what strategies
and tools can be used within the classroom.

**Anecdotal Records**
Throughout this process I will use anecdotal records in order to collect information about daily
writing activities, motivation, and the discussions between students. The notes will include what
was occurring prior to the observations, the environmental conditions, on task time, quantity of
work and also student/teacher reflections.

**Baseline:** Before implementation of strategies I will take baseline notes to see what patterns arise
from daily writing lessons. I will pay close attention to students’ behaviors, their motivation to
finish a writing assignment, on task time, and how well they seem to be following directions. I will
analyze my notes to look for consistent patterns of motivation, lack of motivation, and quantity of
writing to determine what types of activities need to be introduced.

**Throughout/Post:** After implementing a new technique at the station I will keep detailed notes
about the behaviors, reactions, quantity of writing, and comments from the students. I will analyze
my notes as I go to determine what strategies are working to enhance motivation and quantity of
work produced by group members. My notes will be a direct correlation to my main wondering
about what will work for struggling writers and what will not.

**Student Work**
**Baseline:** Before implementing new strategies I will collect a sample of students’ work to show
what they were able to do in a variety of activities. I will note directions and motivation levels in
correlation to anecdotal records. From their work I will analyze the collection to see what types of
activities students did that seemed to motivate them to generate writing pieces.
**Post:** When new strategies are introduced I will collect a sample of student work. This will allow
me to analyze and observe any correlation between the techniques used to motivate students and
the quantity of student work.

**Personal Reflections**
I will also keep reflections of my own personal interpretations of my efforts as an educator of
writing, to show how my thoughts have changed on instruction and the outcomes of new
strategies. These reflections will allow me to support various claims on what strategies educators
can use effectively. I will analyze my notes by looking for patterns in effective lessons and use
these notes to further implement strategies at the writing station.

**Implementation Plan**
After returning from spring break I plan on beginning to implement various motivational
strategies and also build in writing skills. My general plan will be to use read alouds as a source of
motivation to spark the week’s lessons. The rest of the week will be based on activities that
involve the read aloud story. For motivational techniques I plan on using timers, quiet
breathing/stretching activities and self-monitoring tactics that will maximize the quantity of work
during writing time.

**Appendix Y: Bibliography**

Chapman and King put together a wonderful teacher resource guide containing a multitude of instructional strategies for writing in the classroom. They stressed the importance of a strong environment, where teachers create writing opportunities which foster creativity. Although, teachers play a significant role in the area of writing instruction, this book describes the role that students must play as far as internal motivation and regulation. The tips that are mentioned in the book provide teachers with a real sense of what the classroom environment should feel like, look like, and contain as far as materials. With differentiated instruction techniques in mind this guide explains explicit writing strategies to implement in various content areas to promote writing throughout the grade levels.


*About the Authors* is an instructional guide for implementation of writer’s workshop in kindergarten through second grade. With a strong focus on the younger grades it allowed Cleveland and Ray to provide teachers with techniques with a defined mind frame of how this age group of students learn best. By incorporating structure, play, and fun materials students will be consumed with motivation to write. The book reminded teachers that they must make writing enjoyable for students and for teachers to instruct. A large focus behind the book was the idea of developmentally appropriate lessons that allow this age group of students to begin to explore the writing process and develop individual identities as writers.


Fletcher and Portalupi teamed up to write a guide for new teachers and veteran teachers to understand the concepts that drive writers workshop within the classroom. The book explains to readers what writer’s workshop is, what is implemented, and strategies to teach writer’s workshop. However, a focus throughout the book is on how writer’s workshop can foster motivation in students that are exposed to this writing continuum. Daily mini lessons provide students with a skill to focus and structured time to practice that skill. Teaching skills in context takes away the guesswork for students and provides them with time to explore their learning. This guide behind writer’s workshop allows teachers to explore another great option for teaching writing.

Fletcher does a wonderful job in his book *A Writer’s Notebook* to provide teachers and students with a clear depiction on notebook usage. Fletcher expresses that writers are unique individuals that have a lot to express, however, they need a space to express their thoughts. A writer’s notebook allows students or teachers a space to react on their thoughts. It can become a tool that takes writing to a new extreme. It moves student’s thoughts away from writing what a teacher wants, to writing what they feel and need to write about. Notebooks can act as an inspiration and motivation tool for students to appreciate writing. This book is geared more for upper elementary, however, with adjustments and modifications could be used in younger elementary grades. The passion behind the ideas within the book could foster creative strategies to implement within an elementary writing workshop time.


*Differentiation Through Personality Types* provides educators with a clear framework to develop lessons that allow all learners to learn in their individual ways. Kise provides many tips and suggestions about differentiating instruction. The main concept is that students are individuals with their own needs, however, students fall into various learning spectrums, which can be found in the book. When thinking about motivating students it is beneficial to keep in mind the type of learner that they are. It allows a teacher to expand lessons that spark motivation in all students. Although, students learn in specific ways they must be exposed to various learning styles so that they learn to use all styles within different contexts. This book provides readers with great tips about different learners and ways to incorporate adjustments to meet the needs of an entire classroom.

*Literacy Centers to Strengthen Your Reading and Writing Program Grades K-3*


In this video, viewers are exposed to various teaching strategies that can be implemented during literacy stations. The video exposed different teaching tips, while also demonstrating the outcomes in a classroom setting. All literacy stations were highlighted but a good chunk of time was spent on the writing station components. As far as emergent writers the video does a wonderful job of defining the writing station and incorporating the two most important characteristics: paper and pencils (writing materials) and progress through the stages of writing. Once viewers have a clear picture of a writing station they then can watch for the multiple of different techniques to incorporate during the very important literacy station. This video was very beneficial for definitions and ideas to implement in classrooms at the primary level of the elementary spectrum.

Susan Lunsford, a former State College Area School District Teacher and current Penn State University Professor, wrote this teacher reference book with literature and writing in mind. From her classroom experience, she gained insight that students can learn various writing strategies through the eyes of a writing master, an author of literature. This book provides teachers with teaching techniques to implement and mini lessons to teach students about the process of writing. As far as student motivation goes, providing students with opportunities to learn in context, use of literature, is a great way to spark interest in writing. From here Lunsford gives ideas about classroom space to create a climate for writing, and how to direct students to appreciate and learn the writing process. This book is an essential guide that provides teachers with lessons to engage students throughout the writing process.


This article provides readers with a review and context about the book *Because Writing Matters*. Within the article it explains use of instructional time within the classroom, expectations of writing, and the relationship between reading and writing. Although, this gave just basics behind the book, it gives a great sense of where writing instruction is now in the classroom and what techniques need to be included to provide students with the needed instruction. High standards are effecting instruction and the outcome is student regression in the area of motivation to write and also how well they understand the writing process. The article creates a call for action and change in the ways that teachers instruct writing. All educators should read the article and find motivation to read the book and change writing practices. Educators must juggle the needs of students, teach writing with real life context, and explain expectations of which are taught to students. This article sparked my motivation and I believe it would do the same for other educators to think about writing motivation and instruction.


Yatvin, a retired veteran teacher, provides educators with a guide on instructing individual students in her book *A Room with a Differentiated View*. Within this book on various instruction areas, Yatvin included an entire chapter dedicated to the process of reading and writing. She explains the importance of assisting students with the writing process but also scaffolding instruction to provide individual learning time. Instructions must be made challenging but at the same time manageable by each and every student. Yatvin provides readers with several problems behind writing to think about, including: immaturity, confusing language differences, and home and school variation. The importance behind the problems is for teachers to address these needs within writing instruction. One main focus is that students should be immersed into the writing process with an emphasis on main skills and various genres. This section of the book provides teachers with ideas on how to address and manage writing instruction to ensure equal learning and motivation opportunities for all students.

Best Practices in Writing Instruction is a wonderful resource guide for teachers who want to expand their thoughts on the process of motivation behind writing and also how to change writing instruction. A clear definition of motivation and writing is provided to readers to think about in context to the act of writing within the classroom. Two areas of motivation and writing are discussed in detailed, which include: competence of the student, and meaningfulness of the writing assignment. The section on writing motivation allows educators to think about the importance and meaning of writing instruction and how slight changes can mean a world of difference to student motivation. The book explains various interest levels of students and instructs teachers on their role to enhancing motivational levels through choice activities and interesting authentic assignments.


Instruction and assessment for Struggling Writers is a great resource for teachers that wish to help their struggling students in the area of writing. This book provides teachers with various areas to start with instruction and how to assess in order to maximize the learning potential for these at need students. One area that hit home is that all teachers vary in their instruction techniques; struggling writers seek consistency and structure. The subtle differences between teachers can affect their learning outcomes. In the book a clear depiction of these students is provided for teachers to think about various students and to plan accordingly to their needs. Instruction is often not geared towards these students, who seek the most attention. When planning lessons, struggling writers must be a focus in order for students to understand writing, but also for motivation to increase again. This book provides teachers with various implementations to help struggling writers.